

Bishop Robert Byrne CO - Christmas Message 2020

If there is one thing that Christmas proves to us it is that God loves us. Before the birth of Jesus, we were lost in the darkness, but now “*the people that walked in darkness has seen a great light*” (Isaiah 9:1).

On the first Christmas night the shepherds were the first to witness the glory of the Lord and to see for themselves the light of the world. Today we encounter that same glorious light and celebrate it joyfully even in these strange days of the pandemic. We know from our own experience that the darkness can be all consuming and frightening but the light of dawn brings us joy and hope. Our fears are swept away. It is the same when we encounter the light of Christ breaking into our lives. Only he can give us the joy and hope that we need to steer us through life and bring us to the eternal light we all desire.

This year we have had much to endure. The pandemic has left many of us frightened, frustrated and uncertain about the future. Many of us have felt the pain of not being able to receive the sacraments and we had the added trial of keeping a distance from our friends, loved ones and even our families. We shall probably need to bear this pain for some time yet but at least we know that the birth of the Lord gives us the possibility to come together once more and to appreciate ever more deeply the deep ties of friendship and love we have with others.

More than that, the birth of our Saviour tells us that God is so great that he can become small. God is so powerful that he can make himself vulnerable and come to us as a defenceless child simply so that we can see him and love him. He becomes like us in all our weakness and vulnerability so that we can learn to become like him. God becomes one of us so that we can see God and change our lives to live like him. The Lord alone renews our history, liberates us from evil and fills our hearts with peace and joy. He is our greatest Christmas gift. His love does not force us or frighten us but gently invites us to come to him in friendship and gratitude.

Our Christmas celebrations will be different this year but if we look beyond our present situation, painful as it may be for some, we can still see the light of the Christ child shining in our lives. Let us turn to him then with faith and confidence that he will transform us into his sons and daughters.

I wish you all a happy and holy Christmas and pray that the love of the Christ child will remain with you in the year ahead.

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