



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP
DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER

December 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Christmas often gets burdened with so many layers of expectations and responsibilities. These things distract us from what we really want to celebrate in our Faith: the gift of a new kind of freedom; a sudden, new spiritual insight that should ultimately lead us back to God through Jesus, true God and true man. The Divine nature of Jesus is never separated from the human nature that we recognize in his birth. The Virgin Mary was the first human being to accept him as the Son of God and brought him to birth for all humanity to see and experience the closeness and the goodness of God. The Divine Presence is then never separated from human daily life.

A Christmas blessing - a wonderful thanksgiving to God - invokes Almighty God's hand to continue to guide creation each year through that nearness of God as a light, a hope, a promise on which we rely to find the way to come home at last to God in the company of the blest.

A word of cheerful greeting of "Merry Christmas" invokes mankind's most noble course toward sincere friendship, pardon and peace. It speaks of and symbolizes a deeply held and personal gratitude for the gift which comes from the source of the greatest and Eternal Good. This greeting represents a spiritual joy that the soul, accepting grace, longs for us to enjoy.

Recent circumstances throughout the world brought us to recognize the need for human helping hands and, through prayer, the hand of the Lord, to touch many hearts. Jesus desired this through people's selfless service that brought help and comfort to many in times of need.

The Christmas blessing and the word of cheerful greeting, together through our Blessed Lord, can gradually consecrate a whole year and, maybe a whole world one day, and begin to direct hearts toward a renewed relationship with God in peace. Let this be the Christmas during which we can draw closer to him whose birth we celebrate.

"One of them (a scholar of the law) tested him by asking, 'Teacher which Commandments in the Law is the greatest?' He said to him, 'You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.'" (Mt. 22: 35,40)

As we celebrate Jesus' holy birth, let us honor His life among us daily.
Through His gracious gift of mercy, let us live with mind and heart renewed.

Blessed Christmas and Holy Peace to all.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Peter A. Libasci, D.D.
Bishop of Manchester