



Diocese of Worcester  
Office of the Bishop  
49 Elm Street  
Worcester, Massachusetts 01609

My dear brothers and sisters in the Lord,

*"I bring you good news of great joy to be shared by the whole people."* (Luke 2:10)

The coming of Christ at Christmas brings joy to our world and peace to our hearts. Born of a woman, Jesus Christ is God's promise that, united in his divine love, we can live in peace. From a manger in Bethlehem, God's love reaches out to embrace us. For his birth tells us that in each moment of time God breaks into our lives. In the birth of Christ we experience the birth of divine life in our own life.

Christmas is that new beginning for which we long. The Son of God comes not as a prince to dominate us but as a child to love us. He comes not to condemn us but to forgive us. He comes not to burden us but to teach us the joy that unselfish love offers us.

Bethlehem speaks to us of poverty. Poverty can be an opening to God and a means to deepen our trust in Him Who saves us. Jesus' own poverty makes us attentive to the cry of the poor and aware that by serving our needy brothers and sisters, we serve the Lord himself. His poverty compels us to speak for the oppressed, to comfort the despairing and to strengthen the weak.

There is no burden Christ cannot lift, no worry he cannot console, no sin he cannot forgive. From the manger, he calls us to leave behind the addiction that grips us, the hatred that imprisons us, the worry that cripples us, the loneliness that gnaws at us, and to welcome into our hearts the abundance of God's love and saving power.

Come to the manger this Christmas and with God's grace, make the decision to let go of the sins that have a hold on you, of the burdens that weigh you down and the despair that seeks to overpower you. Leave your prayer at the manger and come away refreshed and renewed, accepting God's love for you as if for the first time.

May the gift of the Christ Child, born into the world for our salvation, fill your hearts and your homes with abundant blessings! May His peace and joy be with you and your family throughout the New Year!

With every prayerful best wish, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Robert J. McManus  
Bishop of Worcester