



CHRISTMAS MESSAGE 2020

Warmest blessings to you as we prepare to celebrate the Feast of Our Saviour's birth.

How different our lives are as we gather to celebrate Christmas this year! So many things have changed. Yet, Jesus has been born for us.

The beginning of this year was marked by the tragedy of the bushfires which ravaged land, homes, livelihoods and precious lives. In our own Diocese of Sale, and beyond, so many grieved the loss of livestock, land and infrastructure. Others sifted through ashes searching for precious memories held in the rubble of their homes. Others huddled in fear awaiting safe passage as roads and highways remained closed. Holiday centres no longer filled the sound of joyful holiday makers became centres of refuge and welcome for the weary.

Yet, Jesus has been born for us!

And as the haze began to settle, a new crisis emerged with Covid-19. Life for all us was changed. Lock-downs and restrictions halted our freedom and our contact. Our hearts broke as we heard of the aged and frail being isolated from those they loved, and for the many lives taken by the virus. Families and friends could only gather in small numbers to honour their beloved dead. For our Catholic community church doors closed, we were unable to gather to share in the Bread of Life and Word of the Eucharist, and to gather and connect with our brothers and sisters in faith. The buildings were closed but the Church was alive.

And in all this we were not alone: Jesus has been born for us!

As we celebrate the Birth of Jesus, we remember that he has been born for us, and he is with us - Emmanuel.

In spite of the challenges, grief, suffering and sadnesses of the year, a child was born for us, a son given to us...and the name given him is: Wonder-Counsellor, Mighty-God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

Jesus has been born for us. It is into this 2020 reality of our life that he is born.

For did we not see him in the faces and courage of those who came to rescue the afraid, lost and despairing? Did he not reveal himself in the gentle hands and words of those who cared for the Covid afflicted as they gently reassured those separated from their loves ones that they were not alone? Did we not feel the surprise of the “hello” phone call knowing someone was thinking of us? And when those once strangers reached out to help, to care, to heal? Did not our hearts connect in a new way with the creative beauty of music, poetry, story, and as we learned to unmute the mute button on Zoom so others could share their lives with us, and we with them? Did we not feel a call within to go beyond, to reach out, to be mindful of others? Perhaps we found new empathy for those who live alone every day. And as we lived in the enforced quietness that this Covid time brought, perhaps we reflected on our lives, our meaning and our purpose in a new way.

Jesus has been born for us. We yearn for his return.

We listen once again to this familiar story as we celebrate Christmas: Mary, her husband Joseph and their precious baby a gift given and received. The story is the same, but perhaps our ears have been opened and our hearts have been shaped by the griefs of this very different year.

And as we draw breath and remember that “Silent Night – that – Holy Night” of long ago, may the God of Promise, who has sent his Son to us, be light in our darkness, joy in our despair, consolation in our grief, and bring peace for our journey!

Jesus has been born for us! Allow him to be born in you!

+Greg Bennet

This was recorded as a video.

View at: <https://www.cdsale.org.au/news/bishop-greg-bennet-s-christmas-message-2020>