Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Christmas greetings!

Christmas is the season of giving and hope. However, against the backdrop of all the challenges we have been living through this past year, the real question that confronts us, as Christians, is how the basic qualities of our faith i.e. giving and hope, enriches and impacts our day to day living?

Christians ought to be conscientiously aware that giving begins with God. God is the giver, and everything is a gift from God. God has given us the earth. God has given us our talents and abilities, our families and friends, our opportunities, our possessions, and everything else.

God’s generosity is bounteous. At Christmas we celebrate that God, our Creator, gave us the best by giving us our Redeemer. John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world he gave his only Son.” And then the Son loves us so much He gives His life for us that we might have life. God loves, so God gives.

Since God is a generous giver, growing as followers of Christ means growing in generosity. If we are becoming more like Christ, then we will be generous as He is generous. Nearly every moment of every day we have an opportunity to give something to someone else: of our insight, of our encouragement, of a smile, of our recognition of an accomplishment, of our time, goods and money.

Let us thank God for the ways, during these past months, that our people, throughout the Diocese and beyond, were moved to share generously of whatever they have with those in need. We pray that more of us will be open to the nudgings of the Holy Spirit to identify opportunities to be generous and for the grace to act more generously.

We all need hope, more so during these dark days of the COVID - 19 pandemic. Hope in our health system. Hope for those who are sick, hope for the Young and the elderly.

Jesus is the light of the world and the hope of every person and nation. We need Christmas for we need generosity and we need hope.

We need to change the gloom and the darkness with the generosity of God and with the light of Christ. Jesus was born for all the world. He came to bring hope for all peoples and nations.

No one falls-outside the reach of God’s grace and hope indeed, Jesus came to bring light and hope to a dark world. The everlasting light of the One born in Bethlehem shines upon every street that we have ever walked, or house that we have ever passed or entered. He is who dispels all fears and who touches all fragile and broken hearts to restore all hope.

This is why the birth of Jesus is such a shining hope to a world on its knees. There is hope even in the middle of a terrible pandemic with all its consequences and complications. We do not need to pretend that life is fine or to be confident that next year will be better. All that we need to know is that God, in and through Jesus, is with us, in the messiness of life; in the struggles and stresses; and in the lonely moments. He understands the darkness, more than we can ever imagine. From the manger to the cross Jesus is dispelling the darkness. This includes the darkness that is hidden in us and sometimes seems to overwhelm us. This is truly wonderful.

Let us celebrate Christmas 2020 like never before. We need to do things differently this year by staying safe and looking after others.

We can, however, and should put Jesus right back into the centre of our celebrations and let His light shine in the darkness.

Our parishes will continue to do what they have been doing throughout the year by caring for others through acts of kindness and generosity. There will also be carols and readings online (and hopefully also in-person) as well as in-person celebrations of the Eucharist.

There is something we can all join in: each time we turn on our own Christmas lights, whatever form they take, we can say a prayer for those we know and those in need. Pray for our neighbours, pray for our loved ones far and near and pray for our world.