



CHRISTMAS MESSAGE 2019

Dear Friends in Christ,

Some of our most beloved Christmas carols emphasize the peace and stillness of that very first Christmas: “Silent Night,” “O Little Town of Bethlehem,” “Away in a Manger:” they all convey a mood of serenity and calm. Since Bethlehem was filled with people who came for the census, one wonders if things weren’t a little noisier and more chaotic in that town than the popular images portray. Yet there is a deeper spiritual truth that the Gospel writers express – that our Lord came to us not with fanfare as a conquering king, but quietly and humbly, born in the most poor and ordinary of surroundings. Jesus is truly “Emmanuel,” God with us.

It is ironic that the build-up to Christmas in our society is anything but peaceful and serene. Many of us are busier than ever as we attend to the various demands of preparation, shopping and socializing. At their best, those things often become a part of the festive celebration of the season. Sometimes they can become onerous and distracting, as our Christmas to-do lists seem to grow ever longer. We may find ourselves yearning for the much-advertised silence and calm of that first Christmas.

There is surely much in our lives and the world around us that deprives us of peace: hectic schedules, family anxieties, political and economic uncertainty. Yet, during this holy season we recall that Jesus came into our often messy and chaotic world in order to bring the precious gift of peace. Our God came to be with us in our frail humanity, to save us and bring us new life. The assurance that God is with us invites us to set our hearts always on God. It is there that we will find peace even when we experience strife, anxiety and uncertainty. And, in the words of St. Francis of Assisi, it is by divine grace that we will become channels of God’s peace in our world.

I wish you all a very joyful Christmas day and season, and a New Year filled with hope and peace.

Yours in Christ,

+Daniel Miehme
Bishop of Peterborough