

BISHOP PAUL'S CHRISTMAS MESSAGE 2022

In these days leading up to Christmas, I'm very pleased to have the chance to say hello and offer you my best wishes as we prepare for this wonderful feast.

We sometimes speak of Christmas as a season of good will. It's a time when many people make a special effort to show kindness to others. Why is this? I believe it's based on the very meaning of Christmas.

As we know, Christmas is the feast of the birth of Christ, and the birth of Christ brought a special kindness into our world – the kindness of God. It was as though all the kindness of God was wrapped up and given to us as a present in the form of a little child – the child Jesus. This is what we read in the Scriptures. With the birth of Jesus, “the kindness and love of God our Saviour were revealed.” On the face of Jesus, we see the kindly face of God. In the compassion that Jesus showed all through his life, we see the compassion of God.

Charles Dickens wrote a little book called *The Life of Our Lord*. He wrote this especially for his own children and he used to read it to them every Christmas. The book begins with these words: “My dear children, I am very anxious that you should know something about the history of Jesus Christ. For everybody ought to know about Him. No one ever lived who was so good, so kind, so gentle, and so sorry for all people who did wrong, or were in any way ill or miserable, as He was.” Dickens highlights Christ's love for all people, especially for the poor and those who were suffering. He writes about Jesus choosing followers from among the poor.

“When Jesus had grown up he would choose some special followers to go about with him. These are called the ‘disciples’. He chose them from among the poor. He did this so that the poor might know – always after that, in all years to come – that heaven was made for them as well as for the rich, and that God makes no difference between those who wear good clothes and those who go barefoot and in rags.”

Dickens goes on to encourage his children to follow Jesus' example and be kind to those in need. “Never forget this, when you are grown up. Never be proud or unkind to any poor man, woman, or child. Think how Jesus Christ went among them and taught them and thought them worthy of his care.”

When Dickens spoke about Jesus he said, “No one ever lived who was so good, so kind, so gentle, as He was.”

As we celebrate Jesus' birth, we rejoice in the goodness and kindness and gentleness He has shown. May we also learn from Him to be good and kind and gentle towards one another.

In this spirit, I offer you my very best wishes for Christmas. Merry Christmas, one and all. God bless us, everyone.