**Christmas message 2019**

The Word was made flesh,

he lived among us.

To all who did accept him

Jesus gave power to become children of God.

From his fullness we have, all of us, received

yes, grace in return for grace. Jn 1:

Nollaig shona dhíobh go léir.

God is real, the creator and the sustainer of all that there is. The heart of Christmas is to simply gaze at a crib, gazing until we sense that the scene points to the presence of God, to the meaning of all life, to the life’s journey of each one of us.

God is love. God never stops loving each one of us. God knows and sees goodness in each one of us. God’s mercy is ever there for us, a mercy that supports us amid life’s difficulties, a mercy that gladly forgives us when we do wrong. All are of the one family of God: young and old, rich and poor, citizen and immigrant.

The birth of Jesus was all about simplicity. There was no room at the inn, but the stable was offered and it was made comfortable for them. Baby Jesus was born safely. Neighbours and strangers, the shepherds and the wise men, visited and brought loving companionship and gifts. The Holy Family were joyful and, the angels rejoiced too.

Christ shares with us his great secret of simplicity. Living simply is living well. Living simply gives hope for the good care of the environment. Christmas excess ultimately does not satisfy. The heart of Christmas is helping anyone who is in difficulty, helping the sad and the lonely, helping the poor and the needy, as the innkeeper and the shepherds helped. The heart of Christmas is HOPE in God’s goodness and love and offer of salvation, - a HOPE that leads us to sing with the angels:

Glory to God in the highest heaven,

and peace to all who enjoy his favour”. Luke 2:14

Christmas is about family and community. Families gather in the home and, communities gather in church. How beautiful for those families with a young baby. God is present in the love in every home and family. He is as present as he was in the Holy Family in the Christmas stable. God is present when we gather in church, just as God was present in the Christmas stable when the shepherds visited.

Celebrate Christmas at home with family, celebrate Christmas by visiting friends and neighbours, and celebrate Christmas with your parish by joining in the celebration of the Christmas Day and Sunday Masses. Have time for God this Christmas.

A word of appreciation and thanks to everyone for your participation in your parish and in your community in the past year. A Christmas blessing of joy and peace on one and all.

Um Nollaig agus ar feadh na hAthbhliana, síocháin an Linbh Íosa libh go léir.

Bishop Ray Browne,

Diocese of Kerry.

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