

## ***Christmas Message 2016***

*...and Mary gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger.... (Lk 2:7)*

Dear brothers and sisters of Christ of the Archdiocese of Regina,

Warm greetings to each and all of you. In this holy season we enter into a mystery, the mystery of the God of all creation coming not in overwhelming display of power and majesty, but in vulnerability, in poverty, in an act of self-emptying which speaks of a boundless love. When we kneel before the Christ child, we kneel before the mystery of the Master of the Universe becoming small for our sake, the eternal Word becoming 'abbreviated,' so that we might see with our own eyes, and touch with our hands, the word of life.



Pope Francis invites us to think of the Incarnation as God going in search of us. With a loving weakness for those who are lost, the God revealed in Jesus is a God who searches us out, searches for us especially in our darkness, in order to lavish forgiveness on us, to pour out a cascade of consolation, of tenderness. God finds joy in this; the Lord is the Lord of consolation, the Lord of tenderness.

Early on in his pontificate, Pope Francis used an image to speak of the birth of Jesus which totally caught my imagination. He said it was to have hands that God became human. "God meddles in our miseries, he approaches our wounds and heals them with his hands; it was to have hands he became human."

This reminded me immediately of the sublime poem 'somewhere i have never travelled', by the American poet E. E. Cummings. He speaks about the gentle subtlety of God's presence in our midst, with the line "nobody, not even the rain, has such small hands."

What do we learn from this? It tells us that God loves what is human; loves human life, loves this human condition that we so often struggle with. God loves what he has created, loves so much as to become what he has created; to become one of us, to draw so near. God loves this created world, loves us stumbling human beings, loves us enough to give himself to redeem us.

In the Incarnation we learn of the great dignity of what it is to be human, for being human is the language God uses to speak his very self. We learn that the designs and dreams of God are woven into the fabric of what it is to be human. We come to God, God draws us to himself, through our humanity, in our living and in our dying.

So come, let us kneel in a moment of silent wonder before the God who comes in search of us, who loves us into life. And let us kneel too, in a different way, before the vulnerable and the wounded in our midst, mindful of our own great need for God's mercy, and for the holy calling of bringing God's gentleness and mercy to others, pouring out a cascade of tenderness on the lonely, the strangers in our midst, the longing souls, the suffering. Let us find God's own joy by being bearers of that joy and hope to others.

Wishing each and all of you a blessed celebration of the Lord's birth, and every good blessing in the New Year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don Bolen".

✠ Donald J. Bolen  
Archbishop of Regina