

## **CHRISTMAS SEASON MESSAGE FROM BISHOP MARGARET**

My dear Clergy and People of False Bay and elsewhere,

We have made the walk through 2021 and here we are at Christmas, celebrating the birth of Christ and celebrating each other. This Covid year has transformed many of us into an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.

Thank you for helping others through difficulties, strengthening the faith of others. Some of you have cared immensely for loved ones and finally placed them in the grave. For them all the suffering, all of the pain is over. We remember them in our hearts.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. For unto us a child is born: Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Peace reigns where people are kind and compassionate to one another. Let us choose to be to others a tidal wave of the bottomless sea of God's love.

During this festive season go and make peace to those who you owe it to. If you owe someone something in life, you will always meet them again. Christmas reminds us that we too are born into God's family.

Like Jesus, we are to become one with the most fragile of humanity – the destitute and the wealthy, the healthy and the ill. Jesus is truly the Saviour of all races, classes, walks of life. Allow Jesus to change and turn our hearts inside out. May Jesus enlarge our awareness and increase our generosity.

How do we relate to hearing the Christmas story once again? Look Jesus in the eye and make your response.

Shepherds spread the Word of God. We fail and sin, but the Word remains the Word, remains the revealer of God and remains with us Jesus is God's Word and reveals the Father's heart, presence and grace. Go to the manger and give thanks.

Mary treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart. Do we spend enough time reflecting, pondering, praying?

Christmas gifts are a symbol of another gift – the Greatest gift of all – a life changing gift – a vulnerable baby Jesus who meets us where we are.

Jesus knows who you are and where you are. Invite Jesus into your life with simple faith like the shepherds, with the quiet trust of Mary and Joseph. May we also know that same capacity of joy and wonder even in the midst of a world shattered by the Covid 19 pandemic.

All of us in the Diocese of False Bay want you to hear the message: *“goodwill and peace to all people; yes, you.”* Sit back a little and enjoy the greatest gift of all – Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

God bless you and your loved ones this Christmas. The blessing of Christmas cannot be annulled or recalled.

*“I am, because we are, because God is ... Embracing a world shattered by the Covid 19 pandemic.”*

Love, Peace, Prayers and Joy,

Bishop Margaret B. Vertue

Bishop of False Bay

25 December 2021

