



CHRISTMAS MESSAGE 2018

**By The Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB
Archbishop of Perth**

13 December, 2018

I would like to begin my Christmas message this year by recalling two phrases of Jesus from Saint John's Gospel. The first is from Chapter 10:

"I have come that you may have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10).

The second is from chapter 17:

"This is eternal life: to know you, the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (John 17:3).

These two phrases touch something very deep in us as Christians. We all long to live our lives to the full, because we know that life itself is the first and most precious gift God has given us. Not to live it to the full would be in a sense to throw the gift back in God's face. All the wonder and beauty of creation reflects the wonder and beauty of God, and the fact that God has called us into being means that God has deliberately chosen us – created us - to enjoy this gift, to cherish it and to care for it.

We also know as Christians that the life we live now will continue, but in a new and transformed way, in the life to come. As we live our lives now we are building our lives for the future. We are already caught up in the drama of eternal life and, to the extent that we open our lives to God's merciful and forgiving love, are cooperating with God in shaping our own eternal destiny.

This is what Saint John's Gospel is hinting at when it talks about eternal life as knowing God and knowing Jesus Christ. It is also what one of John's letters is referring to when it says that *"what we are to be in the future has not yet been revealed; all we know is that when it is revealed we shall be like him for we shall see him as he really is"* (1 John 3:2). Although we shall only truly know God when we *"see him as he really is"* we already catch a glimpse of the mystery of God in the tiny child whose birth we celebrate this Christmas.



Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB
Archbishop of Perth

We Christians make the astounding claim that, far from being simply a good man, or a great prophet, Jesus is our Emmanuel: Jesus is God with us as one of us. We no longer have to wonder about how much, if at all, God loves us because we see this love before our eyes in the person of Jesus as he enters our world and from within reveals the face of God to us. We no longer have to wonder if we matter to God because we have Jesus's word that God even knows when a sparrow falls to the ground and *"you are worth more than hundreds of sparrows"* (Matt 10:31). We no longer have to agonise over whether or not God will forgive us our sins, because we hear Jesus pray from the cross, *"Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing"* (Luke 23:34).

The child whose birth we celebrate at Christmas will grow up to proclaim with courage and absolute fidelity the love and mercy of God. It is true that God calls us to greatness, and true that we often fail, but God also and always holds out the hand of forgiveness to anyone who asks.

This is the source of the joy and the peace we sing about in our Christmas Carols. It is the freedom which comes from knowing that I am loved, and cherished, and forgiven, and delighted in by God. May you all experience something of this love and joy as you gather with your family and friends to celebrate Christmas this year.

+ Timothy Costelloe SDB

+Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB
Archbishop of Perth