



2021 Christmas Message

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

Thursday, 9 December 2021

*What other nation is there that has its gods so near to them as our God is near to us?
(Deuteronomy 4:7)*

The truth of these words, spoken by Moses to God's Chosen People, was revealed when *God, who loved the world so much, sent his only Son, not to condemn the world but so that the world might be saved through him* (cf. John 3:16-17).

This is what we remember and what we celebrate as Christmas comes around again this year. Saint Augustine, one of the greatest Christian leaders of the early Church, once said in a beautiful prayer: *"You have made us for yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you"* (Saint Augustine Confessions Book 1). This thought of resting in God, of finding peace and stillness in God, of realising that the true meaning of life can only be found in God, is really what lies at the heart of Christmas. It is why the child whose birth we celebrate is called the Prince of Peace; it is why He is called Emmanuel, a name which means *God is with us*. It is why the angel Gabriel told Mary to call her son *Jesus*, a name which means *"the one who saves"*.

At this time in the history of the Church in Australia as we continue the work of the Plenary Council, and as the whole world continues to confront the daunting challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for peace, the need for stillness, the need for something solid upon which to build our lives, is particularly pressing. If we were ever tempted to think that we had within us, as individuals or as societies, the capacity to determine and control everything, then the pandemic which continues to ravage the world, the ecological crisis which is proving so difficult to resolve, and the fragility and complexity of relationships within our families, within the Church community and within our wider society, surely all point to a deep unease and restlessness. This restlessness invites us to look beyond ourselves to something greater, something deeper, something more solid and substantial, than those many things upon which we often seek to build our lives and security.

Our hearts are restless until they come to rest in you. Our Christian faith points the way; our Christian faith points to God; our Christian faith points to Jesus.



Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB
Archbishop of Perth

In Jesus, the one whose birth we celebrate at this time, God comes as close to us as we are close to those we love most deeply. Indeed, God comes even closer for His love never fails, knows no end, and is never limited by the brokenness of our humanity and our proneness to let our love of self, get in the way of our love for others.

This is what we celebrate at Christmas. It is what all our beautiful Christmas carols proclaim in song. It is what the wonderful tradition of gift-giving symbolises. It is what the gathering together of family and friends, both in our churches and in our homes, represents and deepens. It is what inspires so many people to reach out with generosity at this time of the year to those less well-off than themselves.

God is real, even for those who do not know Him. God is active and present in people's lives and hearts, even though they do not recognise Him. God's love is not reserved only for those who acknowledge Him, and God's power to work through people to bring light and peace and joy into the world is not hindered by those who have not yet come to know Him. The true meaning of Christmas can certainly be obscured when selfishness and self-indulgence begin to take over, but God can and does work in and through anyone whose heart and mind and spirit are not closed completely to the power of goodness.

You have made us for yourself O God and our hearts are restless until they rest in you. May we all find peace in the hope which comes to all those who welcome the Christ-child, who sit with Him in stillness, and who allow themselves to be loved by Him.

I wish you all, and all those who are dear to you, a very happy, holy, and hope filled Christmas.

+ Timothy Costelloe SDB

+Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB
Archbishop of Perth