



Christmas Message 2023

**By The Most Rev Bishop Donald Sproxton VG
Auxiliary Bishop of Perth**

12 December 2023

While reflecting on Christmas, I am thinking of all of you that I have met in the course of the year. To you all, I send my best wishes and prayers.

Of course, I remember all of those who have shared the celebrations of Christmas with me over the years. Those Christmases of my childhood were very special where the whole family gathered. Hot days, hot Christmas lunches and the busy mornings of preparation for the women. Memories come back of happy days despite the tiredness; we children singing carols for the adults; and the decorations that honoured the infant Jesus and St Nick.

Many years later, I still cherish those times and the places, the homes of our families where we took turns year by year to come together to celebrate the birth of the Saviour.

Times and places are part of the story of the birth of Jesus. For St Luke, the birth of Jesus was tied to the edict of the Roman emperor at the centre of the world that there should be a census taken throughout the empire. The emperor would have had little knowledge or interest in Judaea and Galilee, except for the potential taxes he could enforce on the people. He would have felt all-powerful and in control of all. Yet looking back, St Luke could see how the edict provided God with the opportunity to send his Son, so that a descendant of David could bring about the promised freedom of the human heart. The time was right.

So, Jesus came to be born in Bethlehem. This place has its significance. Promises had been made by God through the lips of prophets. These were fulfilled with the birth of the One he sent, his own Son, who is the light for the world, in this place. We can say that heaven and earth were joined by the incarnation. The long-held desire for this reconciliation on the part of God became a reality with the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, a nowhere place in a growing empire centred in Rome, the place of power and might in the world.

The emperor would one day be replaced by the new King born in obscurity. Jesus announced the kingdom of God that would transform the hearts of people wherever it spread. And the Church would be the means of spreading the kingdom, the presence of God, for people to know and embrace.



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A tiny light began to flicker on the outskirts of that town. It has spread to the hearts of millions and millions, and will reach many more, through the missionary disciples that we are. We have come to know that light, Jesus Christ, and we are called to announce him and what he has been able to do within us. This is what people thirst for in our time. They are asking: How can what is hard in us be softened? How can we find a way to be free of the burdens we have been left to carry through life that cripple us? How can we have the strength to forgive?

Christmas offers us the answer. It is Jesus Christ whom we have received and continue to open our hearts to receive each day who is that light and power.

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