



December 25, 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In these final days before we celebrate the birth of our Lord, an unmistakable spirit of Christmas fills the air. Unfortunately, for many people this is also a time of anxiety and distress.

Advent is a season of hope. Yet many of us are so busy doing and worrying that we are left with a sense of unhappiness rather than peace.

We are so involved in trying to manage all the details of our lives that fear of failing often dominates us. When life goes according to our plans, we take all the credit. But when things go off the rails, we're quick to blame others, or question God.

As a result, we are afraid of doing the wrong thing or being open to unplanned developments. We try to remain in control rather than letting God direct our lives.

It can be difficult to let go and trust in our Merciful Father who "so loved the world that he gave his Only Son" (Jn 3:16), so that men and women might have life in abundance (Jn 10:10).

Christmas celebrations enable us to remember that God has not forgotten us and that he comes to us in our daily lives. He came among us 2,000 years ago, born in Bethlehem. But he also comes to be with us today in every situation of our life, the good times and the bad. He dwells among us; he lives with us and within us.

As we journey toward Christmas, the Church takes us by the hand and helps us to experience once again the joyful expectation of the Lord's coming to his people long ago, and to us today.

As we approach Christmas during this season of hope, I urge everyone to invite Mary to be your companion on the journey. At the Annunciation, when she affirmed, "Let it be done unto me according to your word" (Lk 1:38), she was saying: "I don't know what this all means, but I trust that good things will happen because the Lord promises this."

Mary believed, and she invites us to believe and trust in God's goodness and faithfulness. She gave up control over her own future and let God define her life. She was willing to let him set the agenda, for she trusted that he leads us according to his love, casting out our fear. Mary hoped in God and she leads us to hope.

During this season of light, let us cast our eyes upon Christ our light – the God of glory and light, the God who constantly lightens our way. As we once again prepare our hearts for the great light of Christ among us, let us also give thanks for the other lights that have touched, lit up, and enlightened our own lives. They are filled with the light of other people, who give us joy, challenge us, and sometimes call us to account or correct us. Each person who has touched our heart is a point of light.

Among all the lights, the great light we commemorate at Christmas is, of course, the light that shone in the stable in Bethlehem, the light that comes from the birth of the Son of God in the flesh. That light is a light that cannot be extinguished. Indeed, it has never been put out. The light



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of Christ remains the light of the world. It is because of his light that all the other smaller lights can glow and give us hope.

With my prayers and blessing, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ J. Michael Miller, CSB
Archbishop of Vancouver