



# Diocese of Port Pirie

## Chancery

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### **Pastoral Letter to the Christian Faithful of the Diocese of Port Pirie for the Feast of Christmas**

Dear Sisters & Brothers

In previous Pastoral Letters at Christmas I have described Christmas Day as the Feast of Affirmation. No matter what people do or do not think of us, or how harsh some people have been with us, the truth is that God so loved us, barnacles and all, that He sent His only Son, "who pitched His tent" and lived among us. The immensity of God became a mewling baby, for me. What greater affirmation?

It is a Christian gift to celebrate life. Christ said that He came that we might have life and have it to the full. We are in a society that is losing its respect for life, as can be seen from the social acceptance of abortion to the recent endorsement of euthanasia in Victoria. Other States will follow. Remember that euthanasia was defeated by only one vote in the SA Parliament earlier this year. Family is under stress, not made lighter in the same-sex marriage debate.

Christ entered fully into our humanity, and was born in a context of beast, sheep manure, urine, cow pats, and dirty straw. Where was Mary to lie down that was clean? The Incarnation was as earthy as it gets. But it took place in a family, the context of all our lives.

Christ still enters our own age fully, even with all the developments that seem to contradict the Gospel, from euthanasia to commercial greed, to a seemingly deliberate campaign to ignore Him. Here in Pirie there are many Street signs wishing us all the best for "The Festive Season" but none mentioning Christ. What motivates Local Council and Government officers to make such decisions to ignore "the Reason for the Season"?

So do not be influenced by your Christmas cards with their picture of reindeers wearing Santa hats, and say to people, not just "Happy Christmas", but add a prayer in your hearts, "Be happy for the birth of Christ".

The dirtiness of the cave in Bethlehem was transformed by the golden grace of angels, shepherds in adoration, and a Love beyond all telling. May this faith of ours continue to strengthen us in all that occurs.

In Him

+ Gregory O'Kelly SJ  
**Bishop of the Diocese of Port Pirie**

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