



Remain in my love
Jn 15:9

2019 Bishop's Christmas message: Hope in our world

Without hope, our days are like a shadow
1 Chronicles 29:15

We have witnessed continually throughout this year the innate goodness that resides within each of us, as people have responded to those most in need and most at risk. Images of volunteer rural fire-fighters battling blazes whilst their own homes are at risk; school children assisting in drought appeals; fleets of trucks bringing food for cattle; ordinary mums and dads providing temporary accommodation for those fleeing for their lives have been accompanied by stories of compassion and love.

It is only through working together that we can create communities where people can find their identity, feel they belong and are safe. Strengthening relationships amongst our communities is the key. If we can give of ourselves to each other, we can build communities which are integrated and strong. I know that churches across this diocese will take the lead.

What makes Christmas memorable for children is the sharing of gifts. Gifts have the power to change relationships. Gifts are the measure of who we are. It is in our capacity to give of ourselves that we find ourselves. God gave of himself in Jesus Christ, he made himself vulnerable and changed his relationship with us, with the community and with the world.

The gifts that have the most significant impact are not those brought at a great financial cost; it is the gift of our time, attention, encouragement, respect, grace, kindness and compassion, or love and trust.

We live in a world which encourages us to put a price on everything, and yet we increasingly find it hard to know the value of things. We are what we give, and some gifts are much more valuable than others. Kindness, gentleness, respect, openness, love and honesty are in a different league of value to the kinds of possessions we will spend our time gratefully gathering this Christmas.

The most pressing area of concern across the entire diocese is the difficulties affecting people due to the ongoing drought situation. Even with widespread rain in the near future, the turnaround will take many years to occur. With this situation in mind, the Christmas collection this year will be divided between CatholicCare which provides counselling and support services and Drought Angels who offer personalised and discrete support for families.

I am very grateful for the gifts you give, of your time to support our young people, to reach out to those who seem isolated or lonely, the time you take to get to know your neighbour, to build communities and to speak of the love of Christ Jesus.

As we journey towards the great celebration of the birth of Jesus, may we be open to the power of the Holy Spirit who transforms and renews. Let us be a beacon of love to all we encounter, and may Christ's mercy and compassion be evident in the way we generously respond to those around us.

May the joy and peace of Christmas be with you and your loved ones now and throughout 2020.

Most Reverend Robert M McGuckin

Bishop of Toowoomba

PO Box 756, Toowoomba Qld 4350

Tel: (+61 7) 4632 4277 • Fax: (+61 7) 4639 2251 • Email: bishop@twb.catholic.org.au • www.twb.catholic.org.au