



Christmas, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Last Christmas, we never could have imagined that in just a couple months, our lives and our world would be forever changed by a global pandemic. In faith and love, we have striven to persevere through these difficulties. This year we have also been shaken once again by racial tensions in our nation. With trust in God, we continue to seek the transformation of our society, that it might more fully reflect God's Kingdom. Now, the celebration of Our Lord's birth renews us in the hope and peace that comes from him alone.

When we seek models of encouragement, especially in times of trial, we need look no further than the Holy Family. Mary and Joseph traveled a long and dangerous road to keep Jesus safe. They experienced exhaustion, and yet they remained strong in faith and trusted in God's plan for them.

As we celebrate this sacred season of Christmas, may we imitate Mary and Joseph and celebrate with reverence and joy the majesty and wonder of Christmas: "the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (Jn 1:14). By taking on human flesh, he joined us in our earthly existence. Christ endured the pain, disappointment and struggle of this life but also sanctified those moments. This Christmas, may we become more fully a dwelling place of the Word by entrusting our challenges, crosses, and very lives to his infinite love and divine mercy. In him, we will find the strength and grace we need.

In this Christmas season, God invites us, through the words of St. Paul, to "let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in one body" (Col 3:15). May we be instruments of his peace and compassion in a world that desperately needs the witness of our faith and unity. Let us encourage and support one another in faith with a renewed commitment to serve our brothers and sisters in most need, striving daily to imitate Christ.

It is my hope and prayer that Our Lord and Savior will bless you and your family with the peace that only he can give. May this precious gift be yours throughout the Christmas season and always.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Michael F. Burbidge
Bishop of Arlington