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Subject: A Light for the World

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"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them light has shone."



These words from the prophet Isaiah reverberate during our celebration of Christmas. Our experience of life is at times an experience of darkness. This year, there are many who feel plunged into darkness and are finding it difficult to enter the joy of Christmas. People are troubled as we confront yet another wave of the pandemic. We lament not being able to be with family and loved ones. We have become perhaps increasingly impatient with restrictions on our movements and gatherings. Many are struggling with loneliness, financial or health issues, family struggles, the death or illness of a loved one, concerns about the future. In so many ways, we have all been walking in darkness.

The birth of Jesus, which we celebrate, during the darkest time of the year, is a celebration of light. Jesus' birth, God's entry into our humanity, is a source of pure light that can penetrate and remove all darkness. Jesus' birth speaks to us of the value of every person before God. The light of Jesus' birth announces that the human family is one; we who inhabit the earth are all brothers and sisters. Jesus' birth proclaims that God, who is the source of light, is with us and in us. Indeed, we have every reason to rejoice!

The shepherds at Bethlehem came out of the night into the warmth of the stable drawn by the message of an angel. The light of God's Son filled their hearts with wonder as they gazed upon the Holy Family, Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

The Magi saw the light and made a journey of faith to search for him, to discover him and to worship him. With the journey of the Magi, there is another underlying story within the story, that of travelling in faith toward God. They remind us that God came as a light to the nations. They are a summary of all who journey in faith to Jesus and find in him, their heart's desire. Every time people encounter Jesus, he changes their life. Matthew, the Evangelist tells us, that the Gentile visitors from the pagan lands of the East left for their country by another road, guided no longer by the light of a star but by the light of faith. Like the Magi we too journey in faith - it may be long or short journey we do not know. The important thing is to be open to our God and continue on the same journey of faith.

The Christmas celebration calls us to draw near to the Lord Jesus in faith and hope. When we listen to his words and when we try to follow his way, we allow the power of his love to shine in the darkness that surrounds us. The presence of Christ that illuminates our lives becomes a light for the world, a light for those who live in a land of deep darkness.

May our faith be so deepened during this holy season that in the midst of any darkness, we may help one another see and appreciate that we are bathed in the glorious light of Christ. With Christ our Saviour who said, I am the Light of the World, we will never be overcome by darkness. May you enjoy a peaceful, happy and blessed Christmas.

Fraternally,
+ Wayne Kirkpatrick
Bishop of Antigonish

New Guidelines for Faith Gatherings

take effect December 22. These protocols, announced Dec. 21 by the Nova Scotia Department of Public Health, are challenging at this time of year but necessary in this latest wave of the pandemic.

However, COVID does not get the last word.

As we celebrate the Birth of Our Lord, we are reminded that the Light of the World remains bright in us and among us, shining in smiles and kindness, ringing out in acts of sharing and prayer. May these moments offer comfort and joy this Christmas season.

