



Christmas 2025

Dear brothers and sisters,

As we gather as a pilgrim people of hope to celebrate the birth of our Saviour the words of the prophet Isaiah echo deeply within our hearts as we reflect on all that has happened in recent times and especially the horror which occurred at Bondi Beach:

*The people that walked in darkness has seen a great light;
On those who live in a land of deep shadow a light has shone (Is 9:1)*

It is difficult to understand what is in the heart of someone who inflicts violence upon another. We all know that terrible things can happen in life – illness, accidents, disappointments – but violence such as we witnessed in Bondi is shocking. The attack on our Jewish Australians has cast a shadow over this year's Christmas story.

In the face of this shadow many directly affected spoke of their experience of light: light in the goodness and care of others who had come to their aid and light in the lives of those who died. This the light of love which dwells in our hearts, which cannot be vanquished, and which must be nurtured to shine forth. The people with whom God had made his first covenant of love revealed to us their spiritual and theological understanding of God's liberating presence.

As part of the universal church, we have been on a pilgrimage of hope this year. In opening the Holy Door of St Peter's Basilica in Advent 2024, Pope Francis provided a guide post for the journey: 'Everyone knows what it is to hope', he said 'in the heart of each person, hope dwells as the desire and expectation of good things to come, despite our not knowing what the future may bring.'

And what joy these Jubilee celebrations have brought. The extraordinary engagement of our people in schools and parishes has been both humbling and enriching. Together, we have become signs of light to one other and, through our prayer and good works, become signs of that light to all in our corner of the world.

And now our pilgrimage leads us to the manger in Bethlehem, and we are once again drawn into the story of the birth of the Emmanuel: God-with-us. We will remember that Mary and Joseph responded to God's call and stepped into the unknown – their future something neither had imagined but sustained by their deep faith and trust in God.



We will remember that others were drawn by a star to the place where God dwelled in Jesus. We will be invited to stop for a moment at the manger – because for people of faith the hope of the world lies there.

May we be blessed on our Christmas pilgrimage. May we ponder what it means to be a follower of Jesus and how we are to grow in love for each other and the world. May those who are suffering and experiencing the pain of loss know that the God of the Emmanuel also trod this path. May the joy of Christmas ease any burden and inspire hope in even the weariest of hearts. We do not know what the future may bring, but we do know that Jesus was born, lived, died and rose again and continues to bring life to our world.

The poet GK Chesterton wrote

Good news; but if you ask me what it is, I know not:
It is a track of feet in the snow,
It is a lantern showing a path,
It is a door set open.

May we step with joy through the Christmas door. God is with us.

Bishop Greg Bennet
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