



DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Christmas 2014

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

This past year I found myself twice in the Holy Land, first in my role as a member of the Board of Catholic Near East Welfare and second as part of a Pilgrimage of Prayer for Peace by eighteen United States bishops. Both visits brought home to me in a vivid way what all of us see and hear in the media: the land made holy by the birth, life, death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior is anything but a land of peace, joy and fraternal love. If we were to stop there it would be very difficult to be hopeful.

Yet we know that the Feast we celebrate on December 25th is the very reason why the worrisome facts of today's world are not the end of the story. They are the context into which the Lord enters in order to reverse the spiral of violence and death and to found a new order, "the new heaven and the new earth" that are the fruit of the Son of God Who came into the world to reveal God's plan of salvation.

He is the true history of humanity because He alone is the Word through whom the world and human life are created. And that Word, the eternal Son of the Father, becomes flesh so that we might be saved from all the darknesses that lie hidden in human hearts. He is the true light that dispels the darkness. He is the one sure hope of the world. And He comes to become part of the human condition so that He and He alone can reverse the destiny of humankind by giving us a new destiny, life in Him, life in the Spirit which is the gift of God's love.

This Christmas I greet you all in the light of that love that came into the world that first Christmas in a Bethlehem stable. This Christmas I invite you all to join with me in a pilgrimage of the heart to that very place where Mary brought forth Jesus into a world that so needs the gift of divine life that He is and so yearns for the peace that only He can give.

My prayer for each of you and all of you is that we might let Him transform any of the darknesses that control our lives and endow us with the newness of life that His birth has made possible. May the light of His life shine on us all, without exception. May the example of Mary and Joseph be the model for all our families. And may we be found with the shepherds adoring the Prince of Peace while angels sing and all the world rejoice for *Unto us a Son is given, unto us a child is born and He is Savior, Mighty God, Prince of Peace.*

Faithfully yours in Christ,

Bishop of Rockville Centre