



# St John's Cathedral 聖公會聖約翰座堂

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Anglican Diocese of Hong Kong Island  
Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui

## Message of Hope: Reflecting on the first Christmas

25th December 2020

*The Rt Revd Matthias Der, Dean*

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Merry Christmas to all of you.

Welcome to the Message of Hope. I am Bishop Matthias Der, the Dean of St John's Cathedral, Hong Kong and Bishop Coadjutor of the Diocese of Hong Kong Island. May the love and joy of the birth of Christ fill your hearts today!

No doubt, this year Christmas is not the same. Due to the Coronavirus, we are not able to gather for Christmas Eucharist, singing our familiar carols at church nor are we able to gather with friends and family for celebration. For many around the world and here in Hong Kong, people are grieving the loss of their loved ones and many are saddened by the loss of their livelihood due to the economic impact of the virus. Many people have to spend Christmas in quarantine in isolation. If you are in a situation like this, our thoughts and prayers are especially with you. This is truly a frustrating time for all of us. How we wish we could spend time with our family at this festive season? How we wish we could celebrate this joyful season just like how we always have? How we wish we could turn the clock back and everything goes back to normal like before. This has been a difficult year and we are frustrated that we are still battling this pandemic at Christmas.

In the past, joy, peace and gathering of loved ones were the mood for Christmas. This year, frustration and anxiety have dominated our hearts and minds instead. Yet, if we look more carefully, the first Christmas came in the midst of great uncertainty as well. Mary, a young virgin was found conceived with a baby not of her own doing. How would her future husband and others treat her from now on? Just think about how frustrating that must have been for Mary. The Holy Family travelled for days to Bethlehem only to find out that no room was prepared for them. Just imagine how anxious that must have been for Mary and Joseph? Soon after the birth of Jesus, King Herod ordered the massacre to kill all those under the age of two in the region. Baby Jesus and his family became displaced refugees and were forced to leave their comfort zone.

It was in this kind of frustrating atmosphere that God almighty came into the world. Little protection or special treatment, no fanfare, no marching band and no big celebration were there for the arrival of Jesus. It was quiet, it was almost degrading and insulting and yet that was how God came. We cannot understand why God chose this way to come- so fragile and so vulnerable. But that was how he came.

It was through this baby, in his vulnerability, that the world was transformed. The incarnation of this great God has come forth. Thirty three years after that, it was also in humility and powerlessness that Christ was crucified on the cross which led to the fulfilment of his salvation to humanity. In Christ, the weak had become strong, the poor had become rich. Jesus says, 'My grace is sufficient for you.'

Yes, this Christmas, we may all feel vulnerable and even helpless at times. But, we should remain hopeful. Christmas tells us that the loving God is in the midst of us. God, through his incarnation, loves us and cares for us in ways beyond our understanding. So, do not be discouraged and do not be in despair! Maintain our good faith and hope in him because his power and love are stronger and greater than our troubles. When we do that, we can overcome this pandemic not only in terms of stopping the spread of the virus, we can come out stronger as a human race. That is the power of his love. Likewise, when we serve and care for others following God's own example of love, we will experience the power of God in a special way. This Christmastide, go and find someone in need and extend your love and care to them. In doing so, you will experience that powerful God in your life in ways you never expected.

Before I finish, I would like to say how thankful I am for my ministry and time among you over the past 8 1/2 years. This will be my last Message of Hope as your dean. It has been my great privilege to have journeyed with you as your priest and pastor serving as this great cathedral. You have enriched my life and allowed me to see God more dearly. As I assume office as the Diocesan Bishop of Hong Kong Island soon, please do continue to pray for me.

Thank you. May God bless you all. Merry Christmas!