

# Christmas Message 2008

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It is a simple fact of experience that some things change and some things stay the same. At one level Christmas always remains the same: its meaning is perennial. Jesus Christ, the Son of God became man for our sake. He is our saviour and our annual celebration of his birth takes us to the heart of the meaning of Christmas. And yet Christmas is always different because the context in which we celebrate it and the vantage point from which we remember it are always changing.

This year we celebrate Christmas during a world financial crisis which is source of fear and anxiety for us all. The cycle of human suffering is a constant in life but the focus of that suffering can shift and change. This year once again we grieve for the suffering in the Middle East and not least in the land of Christ's birth. We think too of the continent of Africa, so beset by poverty, sickness, and violence. And we have the threat of environmental disaster which threatens all life on our planet. In the diocese we have also been deeply affected by the violence that tragically has become part of the life of London.

What is crucial is that these concerns do not distract us from our focus on the child born in the manger. Only in contemplation of the Christ child can we find perspective and hope. There is nowhere else to look. As we visit the crib this Christmas and as we celebrate Christmas Mass let us bring in our hearts both our own troubles and the troubles of the world in which we live. Let us ask for the grace to be able to join with the angels in singing with joy and conviction "Glory to God in the highest and peace to his people on earth."

I pray that you, your families and those whom you love will receive every blessing and happiness this Christmas and throughout 2009.