

Bishop Fabbro's 2020 Christmas Message

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Christmas will be different this year. Because of the coronavirus pandemic, we will not be able to enjoy all the usual festivities: gatherings with family members who are far from us, concerts and pageants, and parties with friends and coworkers.

As we experience the government restrictions during this pandemic, we find inspiration in the example of Mary and Joseph. They respected the Emperor's decree and made the difficult journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem to be registered for the census. Mary was expecting a child. There was no place for them in the inn. They were away from home and family, isolated from everything that was familiar, but the promise of a child was fulfilled – a child who was Emmanuel, God-with-us. So much was taken away, yet so much more was given.

By his coming among us in such humble circumstances, Jesus blesses every home and family. Confident that he is with us in all things, we can celebrate his birth simply and genuinely in our homes – putting up the crib, telling the Nativity story, exchanging gifts, eating and praying together. Practices such as these build strong families of faith.

Yes, Christmas will be different this year, but it can be an especially graced time – an opportunity to enter into the mystery at the heart of this holy season. Christmas without the usual extravagance and busyness. Christmas as it is meant to be.



On December 8, Pope Francis proclaimed a *Year of St. Joseph*, which extends until December 8, 2021. “Joseph’s attitude,” the pope writes, “encourages us to accept and welcome others as they are, without exception, and to show special concern for the weak, for God chooses what is weak (1 Cor 1:27). He is the ‘Father of orphans and protector of widows’ (Ps 68:6), who commands us to love the stranger in our midst.”

Christmas has always been a special time for us, and for our parishes, to help the poor on our streets, the working poor struggling to make ends meet, single mothers, refugees, and those who are isolated, marginalized and vulnerable. When we love “the stranger in our midst”, we encounter Jesus and discover the true gift of Christmas.

I thank you for your continued support of our parishes this past year, and I extend my special thanks to our parish teams and volunteers who have worked so hard to ensure the faithful can safely access our churches and celebrate the sacraments.

During this holy season, I want to assure you that you will be in my thoughts and prayers. May it be a blessed time for you and your loved ones.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Ronald Fabbro, C.S.B.

Most Rev. Ronald Fabbro, C.S.B.
Bishop of London