



Roman Catholic Archdiocese of St. John's, NL

Archbishop's 2020 Christmas Message

Dear People of the Archdiocese of St. John's:

When I was reflecting on what to put in this year's Christmas Message, the words and tune of the Christmas song recorded by Bing Crosby in 1943 kept coming to mind:

*I'll be home for Christmas, you can plan on me.
Please have snow and mistletoe, and presents on the tree.
Christmas Eve will find me, where the lovelight gleams.
I'll be home for Christmas, if only in my dreams.*

Apparently, the song was originally written to honour U.S. soldiers overseas who longed to be home at Christmas time. However, I think this year the song may take on special meaning for many of us.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic and the rules, restrictions and precautions presently in place to prevent its spread, many of us will not be able to be "home for Christmas" this year. Depending on how we define "home for Christmas", it may mean not being able to celebrate Christmas with extended family and friends and/or not being able to attend Christmas Mass. Whatever our personal situation may be, I think it is probably safe to say that this Christmas will be far from normal for all of us.

Hopefully, each us will be able to find something good and special in the way we will have to adapt our celebration of Christmas this year. The physical absence of loved ones may make us more appreciative of these people who are such an important part of our lives. The inability to attend Christmas Mass may bring us new insight into the importance and beauty of shared public worship. Social distancing and limitations on physical contact may make us more sensitive and understanding of the ongoing isolation and aloneness felt by the homeless, the unemployed, the refugees and the oppressed.

The story of the first Christmas is a story of a young couple who were isolated, alone and afraid. It is a story of God coming to them in person in the midst of their challenges and fears and bringing them peace and joy. Asking that you join with me in praying for the blessing of the joy and peace of that first Christmas for all the people of our Archdiocese and world, I remain,

Yours in Christ,

+Peter Hundt
Archbishop of St. John's, NL.