



天主教澳門教區
DIOCESE DE MACAU

2019 H.E. Bishop Stephen Lee Christmas Message Humble oneself, care for one another

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Recently, Pope Francis wrote in the Apostolic Letter *Admirabile Signum*: "The enchanting image of the Christmas crèche, so dear to the Christian people, never ceases to arouse amazement and wonder. The depiction of Jesus' birth is itself a simple and joyful proclamation of the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God. The nativity scene is like a living Gospel rising up from the pages of sacred Scripture" (*Admirabile Signum*, 1) He added, "we are invited to set out on a spiritual journey, drawn by the humility of the God who became man in order to encounter every man and woman. We come to realize that so great is his love for us that he became one of us, so that we in turn might become one with him" (*Admirabile Signum*, 1)

I remember that in the midnight Mass at St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican last year, Pope Francis specifically reflected on the experience of Jesus' birth in the manger, reflecting on the luxuries and consumerism that abound in human life: "Let us ask ourselves: Do I really need so much material things and complicated lifestyle? Can I live a simple life without need of too many material things?" (*Homily at the Midnight Mass*, 2018)

"Since the market tends to promote extreme consumerism in an effort to sell its products, people can easily get caught up in a whirlwind of needless buying and spending" (*Laudato Si*, 203). Indeed, if we do not correct our mindset and allow consumerism and materialism to spread, people will become even more possessive. We need to understand that the meaning of life is not only in material possessions, but also love, which is the bread of life. "For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world" (John 6:33).

The Pope often reminds us to live a simple life, not a culture of profligacy and abandonment. Drawing from what the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew said, he "asks us to replace consumption with sacrifice, greed with generosity, wastefulness with a spirit of sharing, an asceticism which entails learning to give, and not simply to give up. It is a way of loving, of moving gradually away from what I want to what God's world needs. It is liberation from fear, greed and compulsion" (*Laudato Si*, 9).



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The key to changing this unhealthy culture cannot be based on technology alone, but should come from a change in man. Otherwise, it will only cure the symptoms and not the root cause. "Culture is more than what we have inherited from the past; it is also, and above all, a living, dynamic and participatory present reality, which cannot be excluded as we rethink the relationship between human beings and the environment." (*Ibid*, 143)

In this Christmas season, I encourage you to imitate Jesus in the manger and approach the people around you with a simple, warm heart and attitude. Let us first give more time to infect our family and friends around us with the spirit of joy, gratitude and care; listen to the joyful songs; cherish our moments together; and also use this time to do some voluntary work together. For those whom we do not know so well we can send Christmas greetings and gifts and welcome them. Let us be grateful for every good thing and prepare together to celebrate the coming of Jesus Christ.

I would also like to remind everyone that the spiritual value of the universal Christmas celebration is the most important and worthy of repeated emphasis. So the gifts, food, or Christmas parties should have the simple and loving character of Christ because "Love, overflowing with small gestures of mutual care, is also civic and political, and it makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world" (*Ibid*, 231).

I ardently ask the intercession of the Holy Family, humbly present in the manger, so that the Lord Jesus, accompanied by the warmth of Mary and Joseph, may make his joy, peace, blessings and care descend upon you in the coming New Year.

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