



Diocese of Fall River
Office of the Bishop
Most Reverend Edgar M. da Cunha, S.D.V., D.D.

Dear Friends in Christ,

Welcoming the Prince of Peace

One of the questions faced by humanity which theologians, spiritual writers and thinkers throughout the centuries have tried to answer is: Why did God chose to save the world the way he did, by sending his only Son Jesus, to come and become one of us, to be subjected to the human condition, to suffering and death? Could God have done it differently, by the simple act of His word? There is a passage in the third chapter of the Gospel of John which may shed some light on this question. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life." (John 3:16)

God knew that with only His word we would not be convinced of his love and mercy; He knew we would need much more to change our lives and be converted in order to be saved. He knew we would need the presence of Jesus, we would need to see Jesus' acceptance of God's plan, Jesus' willingness to empty himself of His godliness and become one of us. God knew we would need Jesus' witnessing to the Father's love and mercy for all of humanity to the point of giving His son to die for us. As pope Francis said when he announced the Jubilee Year of Mercy, "Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's mercy". Therefore, Jesus' presence made all the difference.

The importance and meaning of Christmas is the gift of Jesus' presence. First, we need to recognize His presence within ourselves, in our lives, our families, and our world. Then, once we accept His presence in our lives, we too become signs of His presence in the lives of others. In a time when individualism is emphasized, defended in every aspect of life and in every corner of the world, we need to recognize that none of us was made to be in isolation or to live for oneself.

During this year that is coming to an end, our world has seen so much suffering, violence and pain. We have witnessed terrorist attacks, endless wars, the shed of innocent blood, loss of innocent lives, so many hopelessly leaving behind their homes, their land, their history and seeking a future as refugees. We have seen children, too young to understand what is happening to them and their families, losing their lives too early.

When Jesus was born, the angel appeared to the shepherds and told them: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." (Lk. 2:14) When we welcome Jesus, embrace Him, hear His word, accept his teaching, and see his presence in our brothers and sisters, the peace that only God can give, will be truly ours.

My profound desire this Christmas and my wish to all my brothers and sisters in the Diocese of Fall River, is for the gift of the peace of Christ to reign in their homes, their hearts and their lives. My prayer is also for peace to prevail in our troubled and suffering world. My hope is that in 2016, all humanity may experience harmony and understanding regardless of race, color or religion. My wish is that there may be an end to racial discrimination and to religious persecution; that refugees find homes, orphans find families, the unemployed find jobs, and that we all find enduring peace.

Sincerely yours in the Lord,

Most Reverend Edgar M. da Cunha, S.D.V.
Bishop of Fall River