



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

Bishop da Cunha's 2019 Christmas Message

Dear friends in Christ,

During these dreary, cold and dark days of December, we long for light and warmth. As we are affected by the darkness of these winter days, we also feel the impact of what is happening in the world around us. If we pay attention to what is happening in our political discourse and even what is happening in the Church, we have reason to be discouraged. We long for light, wisdom and guidance in times of turmoil, uncertainty and confusion.

This is why God sent His Son Jesus, and this is where faith comes in. If we think of the time and place Jesus came, those weren't much better than our time and place. Darkness, doubt, confusion, violence, and wars were all around. It was exactly to that situation that God sent Jesus to bring light and peace.

As we celebrate Jesus' coming this Christmas, let us pause to reflect, remember and recognize that He comes in the midst of all this brokenness, darkness, confusion and sin, to rescue us. He did just that in Bethlehem more than 2,000 years ago and He still does it today, if only we open our hearts to welcome Him.

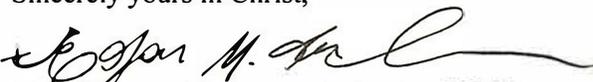
This year, more than ever, we need the light, guidance and presence of Jesus in our lives and in our world. We recognize that we need the presence of Jesus, we recognize that without His presence the world is in trouble and we are going to pay the price. But the problem is that sometimes we say we need Jesus but we may not be ready to make room for Him. We may be too busy with too many preoccupations of this world and we may keep the doors of our hearts closed. Unless we open the door, allow Him to come in and make room for Him, we will not experience His presence. What is Christmas without the presence of Jesus? Take Jesus out of Christmas and it will not be Christmas at all. It will just be another social event that comes and goes and the world remains in the same darkness.

So let us truly make this Christmas all about Jesus, all about the celebration of His birth, all about His coming and becoming human like us; about His emptying of Himself to take our human condition, so we may experience the love God has for us. I hope the words of Scripture will take a different meaning for us this year, that we will hear those words in a different way, in a manner that penetrates and transforms hearts, minds and lives. Let us listen to the words of the Gospel of St. John telling us: "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn 1:14), or "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. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him" (Jn 3:16-17). These beautiful, inspired and inspiring words from the Gospel of John can have a special significance when heard in the Christmas context.

So, my dear friends, I invite you to gather as families this year in faith, hope and prayer to make this a real celebration centered on Jesus, Who is the reason for the season. As you open the doors of your homes to welcome relatives and friends who come home or come to visit during this Christmastime, make sure you also open the door of your heart to welcome Jesus. I send you my prayers and sincere best wishes for a truly blessed and Merry Christmas to you and your loved ones.

Merry Christmas! Feliz Natal! Feliz Navidad! Joyeux Noel!

Sincerely yours in Christ,


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