



For all things give thanks.
1 THESS 5:18

PASTORAL LETTER FROM BISHOP BRIAN MASCORD TO THE FAITHFUL OF THE DIOCESE OF WOLLONGONG



Reconnect

Christ came into this uncertain world to help us *reconnect* in loving friendship to God and to each other as God's children.

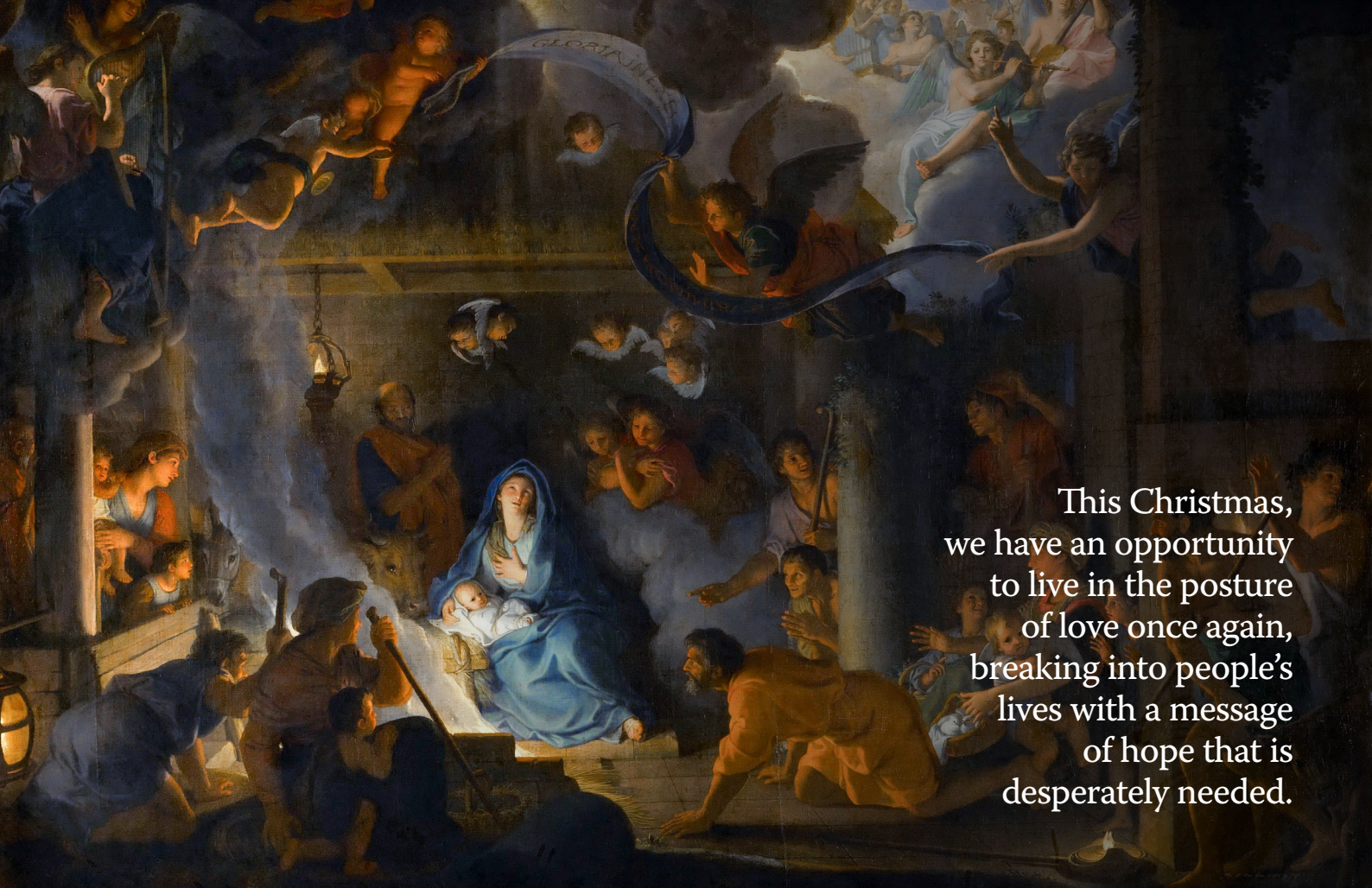
Christmas celebrates the first coming of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, into what was at that time a world of dislocation, sometimes filled with political instability and military violence. Joseph and Mary would experience this uncertainty when they had to escape the murderous intent of Herod and travel as migrants to the temporary security of Egypt. Christ came into this uncertain world to help us reconnect in loving friendship to God and to each other as God's children.

Many people will mark the event of Christmas by reconnecting with those who are important in their lives. For some this will be a time of reunion with loved ones separated for considerable lengths of time. There will be first-time introductions to new family members born behind invisible borders. And sadly, there will be grieving for those who have died during lockdown. As Christians, this

Christmas will have that sense of breaking into each other's lives again, just as God broke into our lives with the coming of Jesus—and we were never the same again.

As we come together as families and communities at this time of Christmas, we do so with an incredible amount of joy and excitement, but there will be anxiety. Having been apart and separated for so much of the last two years, there has been a real sense of disconnection as we lived through and with this pandemic. It has altered our lives and our way of thinking. More so, it has divided opinions and—tragically—divided people, because we have not, at times, been prepared to tolerate differences. Sometimes we have lived in fear and not in hope.

continued on next page ►



This Christmas,
we have an opportunity
to live in the posture
of love once again,
breaking into people's
lives with a message
of hope that is
desperately needed.

This Christmas, we have an opportunity to live in the posture of love once again, breaking into people's lives with a message of hope that is desperately needed. For that is what Christmas is all about. In Jesus, the child born at Bethlehem, God has spoken definitively to all of us and all creation: "You are loved deeply by the God of all love."

In these days of reconnecting, let us be open to receive all that the God of love wishes to offer us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. We know these as the fruits of the Holy Spirit, ways by which we can respond to God, and one another, for the sake and the hope of the world. It is our responsibility as disciples of the child Jesus to offer His love through these gifts, that in and through our lives we may be bearers of Christ's love to the world. We see in the Nativity the vulnerability of God. What seems at first glance to be a contradiction, is in fact the means God has chosen to enter our lives through His gift of gentle love.

Throughout the scriptures we will listen to this year, we will hear of the Lord pouring himself out for the sake of others. Let us carry this throughout the coming year as we reconnect with our families, friends, parish communities and parish families. Allowing all these experiences to help us reconnect with our God and Saviour.

My hope and prayer for everyone in our diocese is that we will all know that God has come close to us through Jesus and that we are therefore closely united with each other as members of one family, God's family.

I wish you all every blessing for Christmas and may the love of God revealed in the child of Bethlehem be with you all.

Yours in Christ

+ Brian Mascord

Most Rev Brian G Mascord DD

BISHOP OF WOLLONGONG

Christmas 2021

MOST REV BRIAN G MASCORD DD
BISHOP OF WOLLONGONG

Xavier Centre, 38 Harbour Street (PO BOX 1239), Wollongong NSW 2500 Australia
T +61 2 4222 2402 • F +61 2 4222 2419 • bishop@dow.org.au • dow.org.au