



# The beginning of hope



CHRISTMAS PASTORAL MESSAGE 2025 • BISHOP BRIAN MASCORD

The Annunciation to the Shepherds (1656). Oil on canvas, 107cm x 144cm. Bristol Museum & Art Gallery, UK.  
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My dear sisters and brothers,

We gather at the manger this Christmas, having walked together as *Pilgrims of Hope* in this extraordinary Jubilee Year. As we hear the joyous sound of the choirs of angels celebrating the birth of Jesus, we find something precious and extraordinary: Christmas, for us, is not the end of our pilgrimage in this Jubilee Year—it is a new *beginning of hope*.

This year, we have walked *with* Hope—Hope has a name, and his name is Jesus Christ. We have walked *towards* Hope—Jesus draws all people to himself. And we walked *for* the hope of the world—witnesses in word and deed to the hope we find in the Light of the World, who shines brightly in the darkness. And as we arrive here at the manger, we are invited to *encounter* Hope—In the birth of the Christ-child, God does not give us a message about hope; He gives us a person who wants to dwell in and with us.

Truly, this is the miracle and the promise of Christmas: Hope is born. Hope is near. Hope is with us.

We have never been called to naivety or blind optimism. The Hope we are given today does not deny reality; it transforms it. This Hope does not silence our doubts; it walks beside us in them.

Hope does not pretend life is easy or without challenge; it proclaims that, “Our God is faithful to his promises!”

My sisters and brothers, the same light that shone for the Magi still shines for us. The same God who guided the Holy Family is still guiding us. The same Jesus who was born is still beckoning us to become his disciples and share his love with a world beset by violence, fear, loneliness and oppression.

On this holy day, I simply pray the following for you:

May you encounter Jesus afresh this day. May his light shine into the darkness in and around us. And may we, as disciples of Emmanuel—God with us—be where hope can begin for all those who seek God, all those who feel lost, and all who long for the hope and peace that can only be found in Jesus.

With every blessing for a holy Christmas and a grace-filled New Year, I remain, as ever,

Yours in Christ

*+Brian Mascord*

**Most Rev Brian G Mascord DD**  
Bishop of Wollongong

*Christmas 2025*

