



Bishop Paul's Christmas Message 2018

In the dark, small hours of the night, the time when our sleep is most disturbed as sombre thoughts invade our minds, a child is born. No ordinary child. A child born to banish the darkness and shining a light of hope into all our hearts.

On that night, fearful shepherds gathered around the child to worship him in wonder before going out to tell others. Shortly afterwards the child would be visited by wise people from the East, again worshipping him before heading off to share the news. And throughout his life Jesus would be encountered by many who reflected in wonder and then shared what they had seen.

Was there a common thread?

Of course. Everyone who encountered Jesus was transformed. Transformed in different ways. The shepherds found strength. The Eastern sages had their intellectual curiosity satisfied. The blind were given sight. The outcasts received friendship. The hungry fed. The poor given hope.

They were transformed. How were they transformed? An encounter with Jesus transformed them. How do we know they were transformed? Because they stepped up and spoke about that transformation. In other words they had an inner journey of encounter and an outer journey of proclamation.

Over the last year in the Diocese we have been developing our Rule of Life. I have been talking about both the inner and outer journey. The inner journey where we Pray, Read and Learn as we try to deepen our faith, and widen our understanding of what it means to know Jesus and to act as he did. The outer journey where we put that action into practice - we Tell, Serve and Give. In these ways we show what it is to be a disciple of Christ, part of a transforming movement that longs to make a bigger difference so that more people know Jesus and there is more justice in the world.

Because the world is longing for that justice. From the massive political uncertainties and conflicts between nation states, to the fearful parent wondering how they will feed their child. We see darkness

surrounding us, we have our own pressures, the fears and stresses of the world engulf us. In such a world we need hope.

Some seek for hope in luxury, in the excessive commercialism of Christmas. Expensive presents, lavish parties, over-indulgence. Attempts to find release from the day to day. But as people of faith, we find hope in Jesus. In the precious Christmas gift who transformed the lives of those he encountered. Who can, and is, and will, and wants to transform you, and me.

I pray for you, friends, that you seek hope in Jesus, I pray that you encounter that living and transforming Jesus - and I pray you tell others about that Jesus in word and action, this and every day.