

Bishop Fabbro's 2023 Christmas Message

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

At Christmas, we will listen once again to the Gospel accounts of the birth of our Saviour, the story of God's great love for us. We who have seen his light and experienced the joy he brings us are called to make him known to the ends of the earth.

In our Families of Parishes, we will continue our efforts to be a missionary Church that forms disciples of Jesus, to go out and proclaim the good news of his coming. Reflecting on the past year, we have much to be thankful for. Many of our parishes are reporting an increase in Mass attendance over the past year. This is a sign of hope for us. I am very grateful to see the Cathedral full at the 11:00 a.m. Sunday Mass, with many young people, college and university students, from all parts of the world.

We need these people – young and old – to be part of our communities and must ensure they are warmly welcomed. We need to be living signs of Christ's presence in the world, active in works for justice, peace and the ecology. I ask you all to get involved, by volunteering for a ministry in your parish or for Catholic groups like the Catholic Women's League, Knights of Columbus or the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

Last year at Pentecost, we launched the Year of Prayer for Vocations to the Priesthood, which lasts until Pentecost 2024. Take some time to pray for Vocations. Pray alone, with your families, with your parish. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide men to a life of faith and service as priests of our diocese.

In his address to the donors of the Nativity Scene that was placed this December in St.

Peter's Square in Rome, Pope Francis noted that the creche pays tribute to the first Nativity Scene set up by St. Francis of Assisi in Greccio, 800 years ago, in 1223. After his journey to the Holy Land, St. Francis wanted to reproduce the Nativity of Jesus. To mark this anniversary, the pope approved a Plenary Indulgence* that can be obtained at any of the Franciscan churches in our diocese until February 2, 2024.



The creche is particularly meaningful this year, the pope said, as we witness the tragic war in the Land where Jesus was born: “While we contemplate Jesus, God made man, small, poor, and defenseless, we cannot help but think of the tragedy that the inhabitants of the Holy Land are experiencing, showing to these brothers and sisters of ours, especially to children and parents, our closeness and our spiritual support. These are the ones who pay the real price of war.”

This Christmas, we will be praying with Pope Francis for peace and an end to the violence that plagues our world today, in areas such as the Holy Land and the Ukraine.

May the blessings of the season be plentiful for you and your loved ones. May Christ, born to us of the ever-virgin Mary, shine his light on you and bring all of us an abundance of peace and joy in the coming year.

Yours Sincerely in Christ,

+ Ronald Fabbro, CSB

Most Rev. Ronald P. Fabbro, CSB
Bishop of London

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*www.dol.ca/plen