My Dear Parishioners,

With only a few days till be celebrate the birth of Christ on Christmas Day, there must be a sense joy and gladness for we are in a much safer position than many other countries in the world. We might consider those who will not be able to visit and share with their loved ones over the days of Christmas due to the restrictions surrounding them. We might also think of those who are not able to come home for Christmas. Perhaps you may know some who are in this situation. May we remember them as we gather with our family and friends on Christmas Day. Perhaps you may include them in your prayer as you gather to share your meals.

This fourth Sunday in Advent we reflect upon the impending birth of Jesus. In response to the Angels message Mary replied: ***‘I am the handmaid of the Lord,’ said Mary ‘let what you have said be done to me.’***

In many ways we are also able to echo her words as we accept the invitation to follow, or perhaps the responsibilities entrusted to us. Think of it this way. If you have children you have accepted and undertaken the task to care for and guide of them as they grow. If you share your life with those around you in a supportive and engaging way you likewise are undertaking the responsibility to do the same as Mary – to do as our God invites us to do. In other words, to recognise our lives are a gift from God, who asks us to accept his invitation to care for and watch over those who come our way. Perhaps the words of Jesus help us, for when he was questioned about how to follow his message, Jesus said, ‘Love your God with all you have and love your neighbour as yourself’.

In the Gospel this Sunday as we listen to the words of the angel who came to Mary, we might place ourselves in Mary’s position. What might your answer be? When we believe in the loving guidance of our God, as we do in the loving guidance of our parents, then with trust and faith we know we are supported in our journey through life. This we celebrate during the season of Christmas. God coming to dwell with us to show us how important we are to the Creator of life.

May we all find strength and courage to know we are loved and supported by the coming of Christ amongst us this Christmas. The words of the Psalm echo for us a song we might pray:

*For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.*

I will sing for ever of your love, O Lord;

through all ages my mouth will proclaim your truth.

Of this I am sure, that your love lasts for ever,

that your truth is firmly established as the heavens.

‘I have made a covenant with my chosen one;

I have sworn to David my servant:

I will establish your dynasty for ever

and set up your throne through all ages.

‘He will say to me: “You are my father,

my God, the rock who saves me.”

I will keep my love for him always;

with him my covenant shall last.’

*For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.*

The three Masses for the Vigil of Christmas are fully booked and unfortunately if you have not registered then you are not able to come. The same applies for the Christmas Day Masses. I will celebrate a Mass for Christmas and place on YouTube early next week, which will offer those who are not able to be here in person a time to celebrate and reflect upon the coming of the Lord on his birthday.

A copy of the Scripture and children’s worksheets are attached. Also a Christmas message from myself to you on YouTube at: <https://youtu.be/3xo3wnxfk_Y>

A Very Happy and Holy Christmas to you and your loved ones,

Peter