



Christmas, 2023

A Christmas Message from Bishop Ketlen

Dear Friends,

The Christmas carol written by Charles Wesley, *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*, is one of my favorite Christmas carols. The joyful announcement of the Royal Birth in Bethlehem, mingled with God's promise of personal and global new birth, re-anchors me, and, I hope, all of us, in the mind-boggling miracle of the Incarnation. The miracle of the Incarnation assures us that God is eminently present with us and is at the ready to bring us renewal. Such deep and lasting renewal is what we hope to obtain for our personal and communal lives, and what we long for to emerge in our midst as a diocese.

The season of Christmas highlights anew how God has done the unexpected—having come to us as a vulnerable Babe in a manger and, in this way, having fully embraced our human experience of deep vulnerability. Life gives us so much joy and so much pain, and the world is full of both this Christmas.

It is wonderful to celebrate and highlight anew the Great Gift of God to the world, and to allow the knowledge that Jesus has overcome and is overcoming the world to fill our hearts with fervent hope, steadfast peace and inner joy. It is also my hope that you will find a degree of comfort during this holy season if your personal circumstances are not ideal at this time. In the midst of this Christmas season, no matter what your circumstances may be, perhaps these words of promise conveyed by the third stanza and the refrain of Wesley's carol will fill your hearts with warmth and awe:

Mild he lays his glory by,
born that we no more may die,
born to raise us from the earth,
born to give us second birth.
Risen with healing in his wings,
light and life to all he brings,
hail, the Sun of Righteousness!
Hail, the heaven-born Prince of Peace!
Hark! The herald angels sing,
glory to the newborn King!

May God richly bless you and your loved ones this Christmas and always.

+ *Handwritten signature*



Image: Detail from Domingos Siqueira's "[The Adoration of the Magi](#)" (1828). Public Domain

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