

A GENEROUS CHRISTMAS

Mon 17 December 2012



Generosity is at the very heart of Christmas. It is how most Australians will celebrate the day: families sharing gifts and hospitality with one another.

But Christians believe the best free gift of all was wrapped by God. When Jesus was born, it was God giving himself to us as a means to rescue us from evil, to usher in his reign of peace and joy.

It is what the Bible means when it says “The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus”. (Romans 6: 23).

It is also why the angel said to the cowering shepherds on that first Christmas: “Don’t be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. Your savior is born today in David’s city. He is Christ the Lord.”

Christmas reminds us of the generous love of God. This Christmas open your heart to those in need.

Asylum seekers

It is no accident that Jesus was born in an animal trough; his parent’s homeless travellers, soon to be refugees; his people oppressed, crushed by a brutal empire.

That God chose for himself to be born the lowest of the low, shows that his pathway to peace is to turn the world’s values upside down. As Jesus said: in his kingdom the last shall be first; the meek shall inherit the earth. Jesus ministry made clear that God’s blessing was available to all people. He teaches us that our generosity must extend to everyone.

Jesus’ own story reminds us to be especially mindful of the plight of asylum seekers this Christmas.

Of course, what makes this issue particularly complicated is that our compassion must take into account measures that discourage people from risking their lives by taking dangerous crossings by sea. Yet, it should concern all Australians that recently implemented, harsher policies have yet to make an impact on this score. It is also clear that Nauru site was not ready to take asylum seekers when it opened. The fear is that this will cause further harm and suffering to already-damaged people.

I continue to have concerns that the new arrangements are diluting Australia’s responsibility for the well-being of asylum-seekers. Prolonged, indeterminate detention has been shown to have adverse impacts on the health of asylum seekers and to contribute to mental illness.

My prayer this Christmas is that arrangements are put in place in 2013 to ensure the mistakes of the Pacific Solution are not repeated.

By **Bishop Stuart Robinson**