

Christmas Message from Most Reverend Alphonsus Cullinan
Bishop of Waterford and Lismore.

Hello there,

I greet you all very warmly wherever you are. I hope that you are doing O.K.

I wonder what message would Christ Himself give us today if He were there beside you?

Well in fact He has already given us His message. It is Himself. He has joined us. He knows what human life is about, with all its struggles, ups and downs. We celebrate His birth in a simple stable in Bethlehem. Jesus is completely at one with you and me and all humanity. He shares our human nature. Like us all He was born of a woman. His purpose and mission is to save us, to bring us to eternal life.

I take up the song of the angels who appeared to the shepherds in Bethlehem on the night when Jesus was born.

The angels sang: *Glory to God!*

Let's try to do that, to give glory to God, for He is good, He is faithful, He is merciful. Today I hope that everyone will come to know the true face of God, the Father who has given us Jesus, that you will feel God's closeness, live in His presence, love Him and adore Him.

May each of us give glory to God above all by our lives, by lives spent for love of Him and of all our brothers and sisters.

The second part of the angles' message is – *Peace to mankind*

Peace is the consequence of giving glory to God. If I put God first in my heart then I am at rights with the world and I can carry peace within me.

Looking at the Child in the manger, Child of peace, our thoughts turn to those children who are the most vulnerable victims of wars, especially in Aleppo. But we think too of the elderly, of broken families, of the sick, of victims of natural disasters...

As we look at the crib and Child of Bethlehem, let us pause. Let us allow our hearts to be touched. Let us not fear that our hearts be moved. We need this!

As Pope Francis once said: "Let us allow ourselves to be warmed by the tenderness of God. God's caresses do not harm us. They give us peace and strength. God is full of love.

God is peace: let us ask Him to help us to be peacemakers each day, in our lives, in our families, in our towns and city, in the whole world. Let us allow ourselves to be moved by God's goodness.

Pope Francis gave us a new prayer for the crib for World Meeting of Families in 2018. Hopefully he will be here himself in 2018. This is the prayer of Pope Francis and also my prayer for you:

Jesus, Mary and Joseph,
in you we contemplate
the splendour of true love;
to you we turn with trust.

Holy Family of Nazareth,
grant that our families too
may be places of communion and prayer,
authentic schools of the Gospel
and small domestic churches.

Holy Family of Nazareth,
may families never again experience
violence, rejection and division;
may all who have been hurt or scandalized
find ready comfort and healing.

Holy Family of Nazareth,
make us once more mindful
of the sacredness and inviolability of the family,
and its beauty in God's Plan.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph,
graciously hear our prayer
Amen.