

2025 Christmas Message

“To always be close to Jesus, that is my life plan.”

Saint Carlos Acutis

Greetings Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As we journey through another Advent and Christmas season, we again enter together the darkening days of winter, awaiting the joy of celebrating the “...light that pierces the darkness” – the dawn of Light and Hope for the World, our One Saviour, Jesus Christ.

The simple quote above – from St. Carlos Acutis, who was canonized earlier this Jubilee Year by Pope Leo XIV – provides focus and inspiration for our journey: “to always be close to Jesus.” Indeed, Jesus – who comes as a little babe in the poverty of the wintertime – is our *Way, Truth, Life!*

At this time, I am particularly aware that the journey we take together – as children of our One God – is a journey guided by the Holy Spirit into ever deeper *communion, participation, and mission.*

Communion, participation, and mission are the goals and the focus of the ongoing “Synod on Synodality” that was first launched by Pope Francis, and is now being implemented around the world under the encouragement and leadership of Pope Leo.



Synodality is described as a way of walking together through mutual listening, dialogue and discernment – wisely using the gift of our human faculties to determine what God’s will for us is. And we don’t just do that personally, we do that together, guided by the Holy Spirit.

I have also witnessed *communion, participation, and mission* being lived out here in the Diocese of Saskatoon, through our many ministries, programs of support and service, and through the prayer,

worship, and sacramental celebrations in the parishes of our diocese. I thank each one of you for all you are doing and living in order to be the heart, the hands and the feet, the entire Body of Christ, for our world. Together let us deepen our commitment to that journey during this year's Christmas season, and as we enter another New Year.



During these darker and colder days, in the midst of a world dealing with much violence and strife, our hearts are stirred by the meaning of the call to be alive and to seek God's grace and peace in all things. As St. Paul reminds us: "Now may the Lord of Peace Himself give you peace at all times in all ways ...the Lord be with all of you." (*see II Thessalonians 3:16*)

We also recall that the Saviour who comes to us at Christmas takes on anything that can come between us and the love of God. He does this through His amazing life, His passion, and His cross – *His holy cross which redeems the world!* (*St. Francis of Assisi*) The *way* of Jesus Christ calls us to be excellent human beings in all things, in all circumstances.

Jesus is the great light and hope that has come into the world. This is the reality that we celebrate joyfully at Christmas. It is the great good news that **GOD IS WITH US.** Emmanuel has indeed come! Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is loving us, suffering with us, caring for us, holding us.



I invite you to take time during this season of preparation and celebration to take a personal inventory of *what we gaze upon*, and *...what is the source of our hope?* It is so easy to be distracted by temporary or false hopes, as it is easy to be distracted by false gods that at best endure only for a short time. Jesus is the Way, the Light. He is our Peace, or source of Healing. He is our real Hope.



I conclude with the words of Pope Leo as we conclude the Jubilee Year 2025 and find the pathway forward in the coming New Year: *“...be authentic Christians and honest citizens... [who] share a vocabulary capable of expressing things as they are, without duplicity, cultivating harmony among peoples...Peace, is the duty that unites all humanity in a common search for justice... peace is the definitive and eternal good that we hope for everyone.”*



You and I are called to the hope that finds its source in the Saviour who comes to us at Christmas. The Incarnation – Jesus who is the Word of God made flesh among us – is the inspiration and source of all hope. This hope was the focus of the Jubilee Year, and continues to be our inspiration as we seek to be teachers and patterns of hope for each other – and for the world.

I take this opportunity to thank each one of you for your love and faithfulness to God and His people, and his salvific desire for all the world. I also thank you for all that you do every day to respond to the needs of those you care for, with compassion and care.

I wish you, your families, and communities, a blessed and joy-filled Christmas season!



Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads '+ Mark A. Hagemoen'.

Most Rev. Mark A. Hagemoen
Bishop of Saskatoon