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**Rt Rev. Joseph Toal** STB KC\*HS  
**Bishop of Motherwell**

### **BISHOP TOAL'S CHRISTMAS MESSAGE 2023**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

At Christmas we enjoy singing Christmas Carols. We also enjoy listening to others singing them, particularly children and those in our parish and Diocesan Choirs. I express a special word of thanks, therefore, this Christmas to all our musicians and singers, and acknowledge the time and effort you put into preparing for the Carol Services, and most especially for the Christmas Liturgies.

In the Sacred Liturgy we celebrate the Mystery of the Incarnation, the Birth of Our Saviour, Christ the Lord, at Bethlehem. In recalling his birth, as we celebrate the Holy Eucharist we renew our faith in his living presence within and among us, and place our hope in life in Christ in its fullness in eternity. As Christians we desire to be "other Christs" as we journey through life and seek to show the love of Jesus in our relationships and activities. What we celebrate at Mass we strive to put into practice in who we are and in all that we do.

This year Christmas falls on a Monday. We have two important religious days – the 4th Sunday of Advent and Christmas – on top of one another. We have a fine opportunity to make it a particularly spiritual and holy Christmas by attending two Masses, from the time the Vigil on Saturday Evening to Christmas Day itself. We always have plenty to pray for and this Christmas will be a particularly good time to do so. St Paul offered us great words of encouragement last Sunday in his letter to the Thessalonians:

"Be happy at all times; pray constantly; and for all things give thanks to God, because this is what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus."

Our Christmas Carols often refer to Bethlehem, *O Little Town of Bethlehem* being especially well known and loved. Our thoughts and prayers at Christmas this year are particularly for the people of the Holy Land, Palestinians and Jews, and for a lasting peace to end the war and hatred. May the Angels' song as they appeared to the shepherds in the fields near Bethlehem ring true:

"Glory to God in the highest Heaven,  
and peace to men who enjoy his favour".

I wish you all a holy, and peace-filled Christmas, and the blessing of God for 2024.

Yours in Christ

**+ Joseph Toal**