

# Jesus brings us a new level of faith, hope and love

My dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

It's hard to imagine what life must have been like for the people living on the edge of the birth of Jesus. I suppose it might not have been much different from our times, with how some people today want to celebrate Christmas without considering Jesus.

Faith, hope and love surely must have been part of everyday life.

Those living peacefully under Roman rule must have had a sense of contentment and faith in government. Those who struggled and felt oppressed, like the Jews, had a different kind of faith – a belief that God or some stronger nation would overthrow the Romans and help reestablish a Jewish kingdom that would rule Palestine. Roman leaders hoped for a continued expansion of the empire, while others, like the Jews, hoped for its demise. And love – love is timeless: Fathers and mothers have loved their children, and children loved their parents without regard to time or state in life. In short, days were loosely wrapped in the mix of culture, politics and the breadth of human activity. Most folks probably thought life wasn't so bad.

That could be why the birth of Jesus in the caves outside Bethlehem could have been so easily overlooked as the beginning of a new era dawned. In fact, were it not for a heralding angel and a wondrous star, the unique nature of this birth would have been known only to the Blessed Mother and St. Joseph.

You and I have the advantage of 2,000 years of historical reflection. We know that what happened on that night changed the course of history. We know that the babe was not just another baby boy, but the Son of God. We know that he would take human faith, hope and love and bring it to a new level generated from the heart of a loving God. We know, as we celebrate Christmas around a manger, the hearth of our redemption, that the swaddling clothes keeping him warm will later be replaced by the robes the soldiers divide at the foot of the cross at Calvary. With that knowledge, we catch with human eyes a glimpse of what awaits us all because of Easter – our own new birth in the Kingdom of God.

The gifts brought to us by the infant Jesus are the faith that God loves us and shows it in life's most innocent and fragile creations; the hope that God remains with us and sustains us through whatever dark days await; and the love that a divine Father has for his only Son - yet the willingness to sacrifice that Son because his love for us is so great.

I feel humbled by those thoughts, and that draws me back to the cradle of our salvation, of the Christchild laying in a manger. May Christ be reborn in your hearts and in your families this Christmas, and may you continue to share in his faith, hope and love throughout the year.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Rev. Michael P. Driscoll

Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Boise, Idaho