



“And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (Jn 1:14). This was the dramatic and pivotal moment in the history of humanity, when the God who created the world and entered a loving covenant with humanity, sent his only Son into the world to bring redemption through his incarnation, death, and resurrection.

The past nine months of pandemic have tested us, have tested our patience, have tested the resilience of our spirits, and we are weary. How welcome is this celebration of Christmas, as we ponder the kept promise of our God: “I myself will pasture my sheep; I myself will give them rest” (Ez. 34:15). Jesus comes in the darkness of night to bring light to humanity. He comes to a world hungry – so many literally hungry and all spiritually hungry – to be the “bread that comes down from heaven” (Jn. 6:50). He comes to a world divided by racial injustice, choked by smoke from raging fires, wounded by economic hardship, weary of political strife.

“While they were [in Bethlehem], the time came for [Mary] to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger...” (Lk 2: 6-7). This scene, cloaked in serenity, of Mary placing Jesus in the manger, in the dark of night, as food for the world, speaks to our own hunger and hope. In the darkness of the pandemic, we hope for light. In stress of distancing and isolation, we hunger for love and security. Jesus would later say, “I am the light of the world” (Jn 8:12), and “I am the bread of life” (Jn 6:48). In a time when the world is especially weary from the darkness of a most difficult year and hungry for comfort and peace, we welcome Mary placing Jesus in the manger as bread to feed our hunger and light for a world in darkness.

As the Diocese of San José enters the new year, one of jubilee as we thank God for 40 years since the creation of the diocese, we are grateful that Pope Francis has declared a Year of St. Joseph, one of our two diocesan patron saints (together with St. Clare). St. Joseph protected and cared for Mary and Jesus, especially in moments of threat, difficulty, and challenge. May he protect and watch over us today!

Be assured of my prayers for a joyful and peaceful Christmas!

Bishop Oscar Cantú