



The Diocese of Rupert's Land

The Right Reverend Geoffrey Woodcroft
Bishop of Rupert's Land

Christmas Message 2019

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

Mark 1.9-11

Greetings in this most holy season!

The Gospel of Mark is expedient in the way it introduces Jesus to us: God tells John that Jesus is coming, John tells a bunch of people that Jesus is coming, and then, indeed, Jesus arrives for John to baptize in the river Jordan. Jesus has arrived, amidst the prophecies, expectations, chaos and idols. Jesus seeks a path away from poverty, oppression and idols, the same as many looking toward John to lead. His baptism, and subsequent holy affirmation, offer humanity the notion that something has changed, that God is moving in this realm, and the people of God must enter that movement. I suggest that we should not over-look Mark's brief introduction to Jesus in the Christmas season, because it offers us a unique view of what a fledgling and newly birthed Church might be about.

Mark's Advent, Christmas and Epiphany moments show the heavens torn apart, and God speaking in a way that humans could clearly and simply hear. Like a little baby in a manger, Jesus embodies one who relies upon the strength and presence of his parent, its like Luke's telling, if of course one uses rich imagination. The example is clear, you need God, and God chooses a Body made of human members to be hands, eyes, etc. here and now.

2019, and Jesus arrives in the here and now, amidst the prophecies, the expectations, and amidst the chaos and idols of life. Jesus seeks the same path of life that so many are looking to be led upon. We are his Body, we are his story and we are his sign of true abundance upon this earth. We are more than just a social agency of volunteers distributing donations, we are more than a regular weekly meeting of the like-minded, we are more than just a religious entity. Jesus arrives as we have rediscovered the prophetic voice that cries, "in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord", hear the voice of God's children yearning to be heard concerning climate action, hear the voice of God's children who ask, "When will you be ready to reconcile with me?". Jesus arrives here and now to haul his Body into the market-places, schools and workplaces to challenge the idols and *isms*, that prevent any person from having clean drinking water, enough food, adequate shelter, and abundant life shared in loving communities.

We are an essential part of Christ's Body, here and now, hearing God through heavens torn apart, called to embrace kindness that promotes security for all, called to stand-up for Justice that tears-down the idols and *isms* that destroy Creation, and we are called to teach many others how to walk humbly in God's home.

May you find God's deep and sustaining blessings in rekindled relationships, the power of God's word upon your heart, and most fully in your body as you are fully embraced in Christ's Body.

May this Christmas bring you renewed excitement and love in God.

Diocesan Office: 935 Nesbitt Bay, Winnipeg, MB Canada R3T 1W6
Bishop's Office: (204)992-4212 General Office: (204) 992-4200 Fax: (204) 992-4219
E-mail: bishop@rupertsland.ca