Christmas 2021

To All the Faithful of the Diocese of Prince Albert,

"Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." (Luke 2:15)

Every Christmas we journey in faith to Bethlehem "to see this thing that has taken place." The Shepherds go in search of the Messiah, the Saviour, "a child wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." The nativity scenes or crèches which we set up carefully in our homes and churches (and often outside in public places) are a powerful invitation for us "to see this thing that has taken place" and to ponder the meaning of this new birth.

I remember how as a child that crèche in the house fascinated each of us and how my sisters and I would quietly rearrange the figures a little according to his or her own taste when no one was looking. This good-humoured sibling tug-of-war over the crèche was a sign that we were indeed looking carefully, grappling in a childlike way with "this thing that has taken place" and which was somehow our business, our concern.

As we grow up, the meaning of Christ's Birth in a cave in Bethlehem continues to deepen in our hearts and minds. Like the shepherds on Christmas night, we are struck by the reversal of expectations. God's only Son, Jesus, becomes a human child. The long-expected Messiah, born in royal David's city, is found, not in a palace, but in a place where animals are housed. Jesus not only becomes one with us in our humanity but knows immediately what it is to be mistreated, unwelcomed, cold, hungry, an exile, and a refugee from a tyrannical earthly king.

We start to experience how the true King, God's Son, is with each of us in our poverty and weakness and how we can welcome and shelter Christ today whenever we assist our neighbour in love and kindness. May this Christmas find us making pilgrimages to the manger where we see God's love made visible and our own nature a cradle for God.

Sincerely in Christ,

+ Stephen A. Hero

✠ Most. Rev. Stephen A. Hero
Bishop of Prince Albert