

### **Kildare & Leighlin Christmas Message 2024**

At the very centre of the word '*incarnation*' is the noun '*caro*' meaning flesh. God assumes our flesh. He who is everywhere, allows himself to be restricted in our human body, in our broken and bruised world. Christmas is once again marvelling at this becoming flesh, the fact that He "*became flesh*" (Jn.1:14).

Christmas reminds us that God completely assumed our human condition. We sometimes ask, why did He do it? Because He cares for us, loves us, wants to hold us close to Him and particularly those who are fragile or tender.

As we contemplate the mystery of the Incarnation this Christmas, our hearts are filled with joy and gratitude for God's immense gift to humanity. But we can't just leave it there, Christmas calls us to be to be that gift to others.

As Pope Francis reminded us in his homily at Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve 2023 in St. Peter's Basilica "*Christ does not look at numbers, but at faces*". This Christmas, as we prepare to step into a Jubilee Year of Hope, may we realise He sees our face and He smiles at the greatest gift we can give, the gift of being present to and for one another, the gift of our hearts. Pope Francis' latest encyclical *Dilexit Nos* means "*He Loved Us*". He invites us to draw closer to one another and to allow our hearts to be transformed. Looking on the crib at Christmas allows us to do just that.

May our hope, this Jubilee Year, be grounded in the incarnate Christ. As the Jubilee Prayer prays "*may your grace transform us into tireless cultivators of the seeds of the gospel*".

Blessings and good wishes to all for Christmas and 2025.

✠Denis