

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

One of the great themes of Advent is that of *watching and waiting*.

It seems we are a little ambiguous about that: on the one hand COVID seems to have put us into a perpetual state of both watching and waiting; watching and waiting for the pandemic to end, waiting for everyone to be vaccinated; on the other hand we actually find ourselves becoming more impatient and more anxious; anxious to get back to our usual ways of life; waiting to get back to just being able to meet family and friends, to church in a way that is not on a screen.

Normally we are people of action and we do not want to really sit around watching and waiting after all it seems like such a waste of time. As we come to end of another challenging year, I invite you to do just that: **watch and wait a little**. When we do just that it is a chance to reflect a little on what has happened this year, and there has been a lot happening this year. During the year no doubt you have been on the lookout for many things; waited for many things.

This year has seen three events that we have watched and waited for: our first Diocesan Assembly for many years in September; the first session of the Plenary Council of the Church in Australia in October and recently the launch of the preparations of the 2023 Synod on synodality. All three have been an experience of “journeying together”, that’s what that word ‘synod’ means. We have been asked by Pope Francis to reflect on three words: *Communion, Participation and Mission*. Those three simple words sum up all our watching and waiting. We watch and yearn for *communion* with God, our sisters and brothers, our deepest self and the whole of creation; we wait eagerly to *participate* in the life of God and the world in which we find ourselves; we watch and wait as a people on *mission*. We are not there yet but we are remembering to journey together in Hope.

As a people of hope we do celebrate our watching and waiting in a hopeful way during Advent and Christmas. We see that God fulfilled the longing of the Chosen people for the promised Messiah and dare to hope that he might do so for us; we stare down the apparent silence of God and prepare a welcome for the Word made flesh in our own hearts. We even, by our watching and waiting dare to say that Jesus is Emmanuel, God-with-us, and even though at times it has felt other, we are not alone.

At Christmas we celebrate not only that the true light has come into to our world over 2000 yrs ago, but that light, Jesus Christ come to us today, each day and especially in our darkness. Our mission then is to be that light in the world for others.

In a year when it seems that light has dimmed.

This is my second Christmas in Adelaide, and once again I thank you for your welcome. I know strongly that despite all the challenges that this year has presented, and often it feels otherwise, we are not alone. Christmas shows us that even in chaos and uncertainty God is with us.

May Christmas 2021 be a time of great peace, trust and forgiveness, for you and your families and friends. May we rediscover Jesus Christ our true light for God is good, good indeed.

Archbishop Patrick O'Regan

Archdiocese of Adelaide