



James Goold House
P.O.Box 146
East Melbourne Vic 8002
Australia

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE - 2016 ARCHBISHOP DENIS HART

Dear Friends,

Christmas is a special time when we remember God's closeness to us and *our* responsibility to become peacemakers. In this season of peace and goodwill we see our God, the maker of all things visible and invisible, reduced to the most vulnerable of creatures; *another* little Middle Eastern boy caught up in homelessness, poverty and a cruel cycle of violence. Yes, our God gave up *everything* in order to become one with us. You cannot get closer than that! He comes to us, and stays with us, especially in times of difficulty and loneliness.

We might say that Christmas is the feast of "closeness". It is the time when family and friends who are separated – by geography, by hurt or anger, or simply by the distances created by time – come together again to celebrate this joyous feast and to renew their bonds with one another and, we hope, with Christ.

Christmas reunions can be wonderful. They can also open old wounds and bring back painful memories. To make Christmas joyful we must be able to forgive one another and let go of past injuries – real and imagined.

My prayer for you and for all Melburnians, therefore, is that you will feel God's closeness this Christmas and become instruments of peace in the New Year ahead! Let us keep the lost and abandoned close to our hearts.

+ Denis J. Hart,
Archbishop of Melbourne.