



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP OF NIAGARA

ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

*Love came down at Christmas, Love all lovely, Love Divine,
Love was born at Christmas, Star and Angels gave the sign.*

*Worship we the Godhead, Love Incarnate, Love Divine,
Worship we our Jesus, But wherewith for sacred sign?*

*Love shall be our token, Love be yours and love be mine,
Love to God and all people, Love for plea and gift and sign.*
- Christina Rossetti, 1885

Dear friends,

I have always loved this poem. It seems to me to encapsulate—in just its first five words—the doctrine of the Incarnation: that Love embodied in Jesus, God’s only Son, was born into this world to show us what God’s love looks and feels like, and to task us with living and loving as Jesus did in our here and now. That love is the sacred sign of God’s presence among us.

As I’ve meditated on these words, I’m very aware that the context that Jesus was born into is very familiar to us: war, occupation, poverty, and oppression were the backdrop to the Son of God’s arrival on earth. And so too, they are today. And if ever we needed to find and practice that sacred sign—it is now. It is the only antidote to the nihilism and fear that stalks us in this postmodern and post-secular age. Martin Luther King Jr. famously said, “Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that.”

In this season of light when we intentionally welcome love into our hearts again, may we allow ourselves to be remade as God remakes the creation around us. And may we vow again as the body of Christ to embody and enact the holy reversals that are promised to us in Isaiah and all the prophets because of God’s presence among us. “Love is our token” and love is our posture toward this world that God loves so much that God gave their only Son so that we might know that love truly and deeply.

So, as we celebrate the Feast of the Nativity, may we know “Love for plea, and gift and sign.” Blessings to each one of you – and to your families and loved ones – this Christmas and always.

Sincerely,

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Bishop of Niagara

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