



DIOCESE OF FAIRBANKS

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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Merry Christmas! Remarkably, our faith captures the imagination even of secular society at this time of year and provokes a desire to reach toward something bigger and contribute to the common good.

Once in seminary, I headed out to shop for Christmas gifts. As I neared the ATM (not everyone had a credit card back then), I saw a long line of people. Ahead of me was a young man with chains on his clothing. It was the “punk rock” era and his hair was shaved on the sides, spiked on top, and sported several colors. I mentally sized him up, thinking that his appearance reflected nothing of the Christmas spirit.

Minutes later, a man drove up and tried to cut in front of everyone. We had all waited patiently and you could sense people’s irritation. Within seconds, the “punk rocker” spoke up loudly: “I don’t think Santa is going to bring him anything this year.” I wanted to yell, “Tell him like it is, Punk Rocker Guy!” Then I realized I had misjudged the man. Despite his appearance, he had demonstrated a keen sense of justice on behalf of us all.

This experience expressed the instinct within each person to move toward the good. God shows us what is truly good through the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. As the angel Gabriel proclaimed, “I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord” (Luke 2:10-11). God is always crying out his love for us, if we have ears to hear.

Yes, our world is deeply wounded by sin. But deep down, people still desire to encounter true goodness--the person of Jesus Christ. Our Lord knows we are capable of great love and we see this reflected after the Resurrection, when he asked Peter three times, “Do you love me?” By calling Peter to a deeper capacity to love, Christ spoke to the potential in each of us to become holier and more loving, too.

This Christmas season let us reflect on the great capacity to love that God has placed in each person. For everyone you encounter is ultimately asking, “Do you love me?” as Christ did to Peter. Through our actions and words, may Jesus give us the grace to answer their question with a resounding YES!

Sincerely in Christ,

†Most Reverend Chad W. Zielinski
Catholic Bishop of Northern Alaska
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