

DECEMBER 24 2025 FATHER MICHAEL COUTTS

Well, it's Christmas Eve. There must be the Christmas tree in your house covered with fairy lights. At the bottom of the tree, there will be gifts that you have wrapped with great care and love for the people that you care for. And as we look at that, I think about all the people around the world praying for one thing that Jesus came to bring, and that is peace on Earth.

And as you gather around on this Christmas Eve, some of you will be singing some secular hymn—songs like *I'll Be Home for Christmas*, *It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas*, or perhaps some of the Christmas tunes like *Silent Night* or *Away in a Manger*. Here, many of us will have a crib. And every year, I silently protest because cribs that we have are tradition, but not reality.

Mothers can relate to this. You have carried a child for nine months, and then when the child is born, would you just leave the child there and look at it like a doll? Or would you like to cradle that child, especially if it's your firstborn, and you would like to hold them as long as possible? My favourite picture of Christmas, of a Christmas card, is Mary lying asleep, exhausted, and Joseph carrying the child Jesus in his arm, and the child is crying. Crying, perhaps, because it's hungry; crying, perhaps, because it's thirsty; crying, perhaps, because its diaper needs to be changed; crying, perhaps, because it wants to be held and feel secure. This is exactly my picture of what the first Christmas was like.

But as we look at the manger, a flood of Isaiah's prophecies that we have been listening to over the last four weeks come back to me. In Zechariah, at the end of his prophecy, he said, "The people who lived in darkness." And Isaiah spoke about the same thing. Days seem to be dark,

late in the morning, and evening comes and it's dark so quickly. Isaiah said the people who lived in darkness have seen a great light, and the land of deep darkness on them light has shone.

We are indeed in darkness because our leaders and our people seem to abound with selfishness, self-centredness, not caring for people who are in need. So where is—who's going to bring us this hope? And Isaiah tells us in Chapter 7, the Lord will give you a sign. Now, the Lord, a young woman will bear a son, and she will call Him Emmanuel. Now, Isaiah was speaking to King Ahaz, who felt that the line of David would come to an end because he had no son. And after the resurrection, our Christian believers began to believe that this was the prophecy of Mary—Mary, beholds, having a child, a child who was born in flesh. A child called Jesus, who although was equal with God, did not take this as an advantage, but decided to be like one of us in everything but sin.

So, who was this child Jesus? Again, I go to Isaiah, and he says, "Unto us, a child is born. Unto us, a Son is given. He shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." And so, what will this Prince of Peace, this child that had been born to us, bring to us? He will bring what Isaiah will speak of in Chapter 11. He will bring paradise once again. "The wolf will sit with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together, and a little child will lead them." Once again, we will have harmony—harmony between human beings, between the birds of the air, the fish in the water, the animals on the land. There will be peace, harmony, a balance. It will be Eden once again. There will be not carnivores, but rather all will graze on grass, and they will live at peace because that is what God wants on God's Holy Mountain.

In Psalm 95, we say, God has created the entire world. He's got the world, all the land belongs to Him, and the seas are in His hands. This is the Lord that is going to bring peace and harmony to the world if only you and I have eyes to see, ears to hear, but most especially, a heart to be open for this love.

On Christmas Eve, my mother would cook some delicious food, and the smells of this food would be all over the house, and you would see smiles on the faces of everybody. There was joy in the heart. Little petty quarrels and things were put aside. We were ready to forgive, and that is exactly what John Paul II said: "In order to have peace, there must be justice, and in order to have justice there must be forgiveness." And so, the Lord will prepare for us, as Isaiah says again, "The Lord of Hosts will make for all people a feast of choice pieces, a feast of wines, of fat, full of marrow, and on the surface of the Lord, the veil will be taken away. That will have no longer a sway, and all the tears will be wiped away."

And so, as we get ready for this day when we will celebrate the vigil of Christmas, many of you will go for midnight Mass. Bring all those prophecies of Isaiah—we are no longer in darkness, we are in light. He is the Son that is given to us in order that we may have peace with all mankind, when with the birds, with the fish, with the animals, there will be peace on Earth and goodwill to all people that God favours.