



**Anglican Church
Diocese of Sydney
2024 Christmas Message**

She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).

Matt 1:23,24 (NIV)

As this year ends, one human problem seems more common than ever. Loneliness.

A special inquiry in New South Wales has been told that almost half of the population experience loneliness – and many experience it often. It easy to think that no one understands our loneliness. But when we turn to the Bible, we see that the child Jesus had another name - Immanuel, which means – *God with us*.

In the Christmas child, God is present among us, as one of us. Our experiences of anguish, disappointment and yes, even loneliness have become his. Our experiences of joy and friendship and love and longing have become his. God knows what it is like to be human from inside human skin. *God with us* not only knows our loneliness, He comes to cure it as well.

The Bible uses many words to describe what Jesus does for us – forgiveness, cleansing, adoption, welcome. But the angels use just one word: peace. Peace to those on whom his favour rests. Shalom.

The peace of God that passes understanding – rest, freedom, hope, re-creation. The gifts of Immanuel. God does not leave us alone in a vast, silent universe. God is with us, and for us, in Jesus.

May I wish you and those you love a very happy Christmas.

Kanishka Raffel
Archbishop of Sydney
Christmas 2024

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