



Kia tau te rangimārie ki a koutou

In ten days' time we will remember once again that *“The Word became flesh and lived among us.”* Amid Christmas festivities, in families and communities we will hopefully pause from time to time and give thanks that God's Word, Jesus, lives among us.

In 1969 I was working at a nursery in Napier, I thought my life's career was going to be in horticulture. On 20<sup>th</sup> July that year human beings walked on the moon for the first time. The following day there were headlines in the paper saying that this was **“the greatest event in human history”**. That headline was followed a couple of days later with the question **“Have they not heard of the Incarnation?”** and **“that was the event that changed human history.”** Those words though did not make the front page of the newspaper.

*“The Word became flesh and lived among us.”* God lives among us. Ourselves, and our own words and thoughts are not at the heart of our journey of faith, at the heart of our lives is God and His Word. Jesus has made known to us the face of God who cares for us in our needs, who takes to heart our destiny, who follows our every step. God is no cold, detached bystander, we have God-with-us, Emmanuel. We have God who is passionately concerned about our lives and engaged in them. The first Christmas was the event that changed human history.

Throughout this year, which has been difficult and challenging, I have seen so many examples in our schools, colleges, and parishes, in community groups and organizations, in families and in individuals, of people caring for one another. Whenever you show compassion and tenderness, brighten someone's sadness, support the faltering steps of others, you are showing the goodness and love of God. Thank you for rekindling the hope of those who struggle, for helping others to find joy in times of sorrow, for bringing light to the lonely and for being the presence of Jesus the Word who became flesh and lived among us.

I thank you for everything throughout this year and wish you every joy and blessing for Christmas and for 2023.

With every blessing.

Nāku noa. Nā

John

### Synodality

I thank you all for the way you have engaged in the Synod process through this year. Pope Francis has reminded us many times that ‘Synodality’ is what God wants for the Church today. He has re-captured the teaching of the Second Vatican Council that we are all, as baptised, “the People of God”.

Please remember and reflect often on these words of Pope Francis: *“It is a slow and perhaps tiring exercise, learning to listen to one another - bishops, priests, religious and laity, all the baptized - and avoiding artificial and prepackaged responses. Let us not soundproof our hearts, let us not remain barricaded in our certainties. So often our certainties can make us closed. Let us listen to one another.”*



### **A Prayer for the Holiday Season**

God of caught breath,

God of welcomes pause:

so much has happened so quickly,

that we can lose a sense of time.

As we continue our pace and prepare ourselves for more unknown to come,

we are grateful for the faithfulness you promise:

the 'strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow'

that we find morning by morning.

Give us that song.

Have us hum it by heart.

May we share the new mercies we see. Amen

Meri Kirihimete

+ Hoane



The following words from Pope Benedict the 16th's last discourse as Pope  
28th of February 2013

“The church is a living body, enlivened by the Holy Spirit and which is really brought to life by God’s power. She is in the world but not of the world: she is of God, of Christ, of the Spirit. That is why Romano Guardini’s famous saying is both true and eloquent: “The church is reawakened in souls.” The church is alive, She grows and is reawakened in souls who, like the Virgin Mary, welcome the Word of God and conceive it through the action of the Holy Spirit; they offer to God their own flesh. It is precisely in their poverty and humility that they become capable of begetting Christ in the world today. Through the Church, the Mystery of the Incarnation lives on forever. Christ continues to walk through the epochs and in all places.”