

The Bishop's Christmas Message 2025

Bishop Martin writes:

Knowing that we are loved

A new generation attending Chichester cathedral have shifted the atmosphere. Buggies now take their place alongside the Zimmer frames, to the delight of everyone.

We are being reminded what it's like to be a baby. The needs are basic: warmth and security, food, sleep, and clean clothes.

In early childhood we need people to notice us, and we need one or two people who always do this. That's how we know that we are loved. We need things to play with, capturing our imagination and teaching us communication and how to work with what we see.

We never really grow out our earliest needs which guarantee our human dignity.

I was reminded of this at the joyful celebrations of baptism and confirmation just before Christmas. Candidates spoke of their need of being loved, feeling safe, finding kindness and knowing that you can be forgiven.

Some of the most moving testimonies came from our asylum seeker and refugee brothers and sisters. They spoke of how the local church has shown them the kindness of God our loving Father, which we see in the face of his Son, Jesus Christ.

This kindness has done much to restore their sense of dignity as the children of God. And because words can sometimes be a barrier, the symbolic gestures of worship become more important as a form of communication.

The washing with water in baptism, like the laying-on of hands and anointing in confirmation speaks powerfully. It says that the love of God is as tender and reassuring as the gentle touch of a parent is to a new-born child.

So, with Christians young and old we rejoice this Christmas that what God the Father sees and loves in the new-born Christ, he sees and loves in you and me.

The Virgin Mother looks on with love. Joseph is a friend and guardian. Angels enchant us with music promising peace on earth. And all for your sake.