

Christmas Message

I pen these words on return from our pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Pilgrimages to Lourdes and the Holy Land have punctuated my almost 10 years as Archbishop. Once again it was with Glasgow's former Lord Provost, Alex Mosson, as organiser that I made my way to the land and city of Christ's birth. With fellow pilgrims I stayed in Bethlehem, combining devotion with the desire to be in solidarity with a dwindling Christian community there.

On my return I was delighted to learn that Glasgow's civic card this year will feature a painting from the City's rich collection of art. It represents the adoration of the child Jesus by the Magi. This painting will be central to a major exhibition of Italian art in the Kelvingrove Art Gallery to be held in 2012 entitled, "The Essence of Beauty".

It is said that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Beauty and truth go hand in hand, and for all the poverty of the manger, the eye of faith sees only the beauty of the mother and the child who is the Son of God. Is there anything more beautiful than the mystery of the incarnation; the truth that God made his dwelling in our midst? This year I hope that many of your cards will feature the traditional Nativity scenes which reveal the true reason for our celebrations. I am delighted that the Post Office will enable them to be sent with stamps that do likewise.

My own card will show, through the open door of our restored Cathedral, the glory within.

May our hearts, their doors opened, glow with the joy of the Lord, a truly happy Christmas.