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***In a stable ...*** By Bishop Gary Gordon

*“Glory to God in the highest heavens, peace on earth and goodwill to all!”*

Those are angelic words from the Christmas Feast, and yet for so many in our families and towns it is a prayerful hope that may feel so far away. Jesus, born in a stable, is the Incarnate way for the Angelic announcement of “Peace on earth and goodwill to all who enjoy God’s favour.” I ask myself on this Christmas Feast, “Is there anyone or anything in creation, that does not enjoy God’s favour?” because we read in the Gospel of John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” So perhaps this Christmas the question is, “Where shall we find this Love, this only begotten Son?”

The answer comes from the place Jesus was born: in a stable!

The birth of Jesus, the Word made flesh, is God’s great “yes” to all the people and places of the earth that are in deep darkness, where only moments of light shine, and where only cracks in the walls of dark prison cells allow glimmers of hope to peek through.

Yes, the darkened stable of human anguish can be found in places like the 9-10 Club soup kitchen at St. Andrew’s Cathedral; the winter shelter in the basement of St. Peter’s Church in Nanaimo; St. Paul’s Hospital Overdose Prevention Site; in broken-hearted, grief-stricken refugee camps; in the self-inflicted burial of God’s garden under mounds of consumer trash; and in the explosions and shrapnel of wars waged in God’s Eden. But the dark stable of Christ’s birth is where the light shines brightest, and that is where the people of God will want to be (Cf. *Evangelii Gaudium* #23).

This year, as we sing the glorious hymns of Advent and Christmas in elegant churches and at beautifully set tables, may we imagine the stable where God came among us, and began to show us the way from pain to hope, from darkness to light. As Christians, may we endeavour to follow the true light coming into the world (John 1:9). My prayer and hope for the Church in the Diocese of Victoria is that we will bear gifts of hope, love, compassion, and light to the Prince of Peace where He is gloriously present—in a stable. And I pray that all will ponder the lessons of the place where the searching kings of this earth and lowly shepherds of the land met and found a mutual welcome and healing grace—in a stable.

May every Christmas blessing come to you and your family. As we remember and celebrate the birth of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, let us say “yes” with Mary and Joseph to the stable. May our whole being proclaim the greatness of the Lord, and we may live rejoicing at the nearness of our God. Yes, to peace and goodwill to all!

*In the tender compassion of our LORD  
The dawn from on high shall break upon us,  
To shine on those who dwell in darkness  
and the shadow of death,  
And to guide our feet into the way of peace.*

*~ Stanza Five from the Canticle of Zechariah*