

Christmas message for the Diocese of Blackburn

From Rt Rev. Dr Joe Kennedy, Bishop of Burnley

I've always loved Christmas lights. And as I record this Christmas message here in Burnley this evening, I'm surrounded by them. Lights in shop windows, in street decorations – and at home too, lights on our Christmas tree.

Whatever else these lights are doing, surely – above all else – they point us to Jesus Christ, whose birth we celebrate at Christmas time.

For Jesus is the light which shines in the darkness. Across two thousand years, and in our day too, billions of people have discovered that, in giving their lives to Jesus, their hopes are fulfilled and their fears are cast out.

As 2025 draws to its close, we look back over these 25 years, and we can see lots of light but lots of darkness too. So, as we look to the future – in our communities, on the international stage, in each of our lives – we know that life is complex and ambiguous: sometimes beautiful and glorious; sometimes fractured and anxious.

And this is why Christmas matters. The best news we shall ever hear is that 2,000 years ago, at the birth of Jesus, the light overpowered the darkness. The angel choirs lit up the night sky. The riches of God's own life filled to overflowing the poverty of the stable. And all this because in Jesus, God came to earth and threw open the door which leads to heaven.

However you are spending Christmas this year, I wish you very happy celebrations. And I invite you to experience the joy of Christmas at your local church community – where you will be warmly welcomed. You can easily find your local church on the church near you website.

Most of all this Christmas, I invite you to look again at the Christmas lights, which point us to Jesus, the Light of the world – and to put your trust in him. Whatever fears step in front of us, his everlasting light can cast them out. Whatever hopes inspire us, we can discover their deepest fulfilment in giving our hearts and our lives to him.

Merry Christmas.