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BISHOP'S CHRISTMAS MESSAGE 2015

Christmas can appear fragile or even shallow in a world filled with hatred, violence and ideology. The tinsel, trees and tinned puddings of Christmas can seem like weak and trifling distractions in a world filled with pain, hopelessness and despair.

Christmas may feel anything but joyful to the scores of people walking wearily across Europe seeking haven from those who perpetrate atrocities in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka.

Christmas may feel empty to those who lost mothers, fathers, daughters and sons in outrageous attacks whether in the cafes of Paris, holiday celebrations in San Bernardino or walking home from work on the streets of Parramatta.

Christmas may be a time for tears, especially for all the precious lost daughters of Chibok who were marched off into the night and remain enslaved.

Christmas may be a time of worry for all women and children who grow tired of men having one more drink and offering one more empty apology.

Yet, Christmas has the capacity to change the world more than any weapon, program or law court yet devised. How is this possible?

Christmas celebrates God coming among us in the person of our Lord Jesus. *And* it commemorates the reality that God chose not to leave us alone. By taking on flesh and blood, the best and the worst that humanity has to offer, our Lord Jesus, through his Passion, opened a way for love, hope and faith to deal with pain, hopelessness and despair once and for all.

Christmas reminds us that God's love, bundled up in the life of vulnerable baby, overcomes any and all obstacles. The true gift of Christmas is that love has the power to turn swords into ploughshares. The wonder of Christmas is how hope unites strangers irrespective of their race, religion or gender. The encouragement of Christmas is that faith in our risen Christ enables us all to get up, push on and expect the impossible every single day of the year.

So as we gather around the tree to swap gifts, will you think about this strong and unstoppable love we share? As we sit around the table, will you share your hopes and dreams for a new year? And as we snooze away in the company of those we hold near and dear, will you dream or imagine and pray for a better world for your children?

My prayer is that in the company of loved ones, friends or strangers, you might discover and enjoy this powerful, unstoppable and ebullient 'heart' of Christmas.

The Right Reverend Stuart Robinson
Bishop of Canberra and Goulburn

To arrange an interview or seek further information, please contact:
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