



**ANGLICAN MEDIA**  
**DIOCESE OF CANBERRA AND GOULBURN**

LEVEL 4  
221 LONDON CIRCUIT  
CANBERRA CITY ACT 2601

**17 DECEMBER 2013**

**BISHOP'S CHRISTMAS MESSAGE 2013**

Songs about Santa, mistletoe and snow fill our shopping centres and living rooms. In parks and public places all over the nation, communities gather to sing tunes about the messiah's birth.

Our heart's can swell as these tunes remind us of the power of love, the importance of generosity and that light overcomes darkness. Yet, they can also give us heartache as the season's commercialism can obscure its spiritual core.

At Christmas, we declare that 'for us a child has been born for us, a son has been given to us, authority rests upon his shoulders' (Isaiah 9.6 NRSV).

The spiritual core of Christmas is that genuine authority does not rest in power, pomp or parliaments but in God who chose to come to us as an infant.

Jesus was born in a world characterised by cynical tyrants, ethnic conflict and intense religious dispute. Yet, the spiritual consequences of such a world did not imprison him.

At Christmas, we remember how Jesus' life yielded a different kind of spiritual harvest where love swallowed up violence, hope dispelled death and faith diminished opportunism.

Our world is filled with broken trust and promises betrayed. These events have a spiritual impact because they shape what we become.

Abuse by sporting, business and church leaders prompts suspicion and derision when they use their position for personal gain.

Each new spying revelation fosters mistrust when agencies overstep important ethical boundaries.

When partisan advantage by governments trump sensible long-term decision-making our belief in democracy grows slack.

Such experiences can make us bitter and cynical. As trust evaporates, our hearts can turn spiritually to stone. Nevertheless, it does not have to be that way.

The passing of Nelson Mandela, the father of the rainbow nation that is South Africa, reminded the world that a new future requires a different spiritual harvest. Mandela discovered the authority of compassion at a time when many thought that apartheid was inviolable and that self-interest was insurmountable.

Mandela saw that a new and just South Africa could only be born through gentleness and inclusion rather than by more violence and exclusion.

Whenever we sing the traditional carols once again may we listen carefully to their spiritual story. What we value in Mandela's life is writ large in Jesus and celebrated at Christmas time by people everywhere.

My prayer is that a different spiritual harvest might grow as we renew our commitment to love, that our resolve to hope strengthens and we discover once again that God redeems humanity daily.

The Right Reverend Stuart Robinson  
***Bishop of Canberra and Goulburn***  
17 December 2013

Bishop Stuart will be available for interview and comment, in person or over the phone (0439 340 088) as follows:

- Canberra on Thursday 19 December from 10-11am and from 1-2pm
- Goulburn on Friday 20 December from 9-10am.

To arrange a time or seek further information, please contact:  
The Revd Wayne Brighton, Bishops' Media Officer on 0407 408 333.