



# Bulletin from the Diocese of Santa Rosa



## *Advent: The Star of Hope Arises*

December 2009

My Dear People,

The season of Advent inspires us with hope, hope for the coming of the God who became man, one of us, one with us. As Advent comes to a close, our hope does not. Christmas is above all, the celebration of God taking on our flesh. His name is Emmanuel: God with us. This is the reason for our hope. God is with us.

In his second encyclical, Pope Benedict examines Christian hope at length and in great detail. Two points he makes are worth pondering this Christmas. First, true Christian hope is not a “me” virtue but a “we” virtue. In speaking of the great hope promised us in Christ, the Holy Father writes: “We become capable of the great hope, and thus we become minister of hope for others. Hope in a Christian sense is always hope for others as well.”

It seems that just behind every door, in every neighborhood, office, workplace and classroom, there is someone who is struggling with darkness, listlessness and hopelessness; perhaps on the brink of despair. In the midst of the cacophony and clutter of the season, perhaps the greatest gift we can offer another is some small glimmer of hope – a gift to us and to others.

Pope Benedict writes: “From the hope of those who have been touched by Christ, hope has arisen in others.” The reason for our hope is that God is with us – all of us, not just this one or that one among us.

The second point to ponder at Christmas is this: The savior we celebrate at Christmas is sent to be one of us, even and especially in our suffering. “God cannot suffer, but he can suffer with. The human person is worth so much to God that he himself became human in order to suffer with human persons in an utterly real way – in flesh and blood. In all human suffering we are joined by one who experiences and carries that suffering with us; hence consolation is present in all suffering, the consolation of God’s compassionate love – and so the star of hope rises.” (No 39)

Suffering is part of our human existence. But it does not end there. God, who comes to us this Christmas in the fragile flesh of an infant, suffers with us so as to transform our own pain and suffering into something for the good of others. No one can experience the pain, anguish and suffering of another. We are called to suffer with others for the sake of love and justice. As the Pope writes: “We must do whatever we can to reduce suffering. These are obligations both in justice and in love, and they are included among the fundamental requirements of the Christian life and every truly human life.”

In hope we are saved. It is the season of the Child of Bethlehem: Come, let us adore. But it does not end there; for the infant in arms will one day stretch out his own arms on Golgotha. Emmanuel is in the crib and on the cross. The God who is with us in the manger comes to suffer with us. And so, the star of hope arises!

Assuring you of my prayers, I am

Your Brother and Servant in the Lord,

Most Reverend Daniel F. Walsh  
Bishop of Santa Rosa