

This will be a Christmas like no other. Restrictions may be eased, but we will still have to cope with registration, distancing, sanitising and all the other things that have become part of our lives through this extraordinary year. We won't have the crowds at Mass; the parties will be quieter; the sights and sounds of Christmas will be more subdued.

Yet the star will still rise and lead us, like the Wise Men, through the desert of COVID-19 into new territory. The star will still shine in the darkness, coming to rest over the strange place where the royal Child lies, leading us to him with our gifts. Nothing – not even the virus – can stop the star from shining and doing its work. Nothing – not even the virus – can stop the Child being born; and nothing can stop us from making our journey to offer him our homage. We will come with all the searchers.

We will come with the shepherds, who were not led by a star but sent by angels who shone around them as light in the darkness, telling them who the Child was and where he could be found. We will come with poor shepherds who bring no rich gifts, only the gift of themselves, our faith, our hope, our love. We will come with the outsiders.

The virus has been no respecter of personages; rich and poor alike have been struck, though the poor have suffered more, as they always do. But so too the love of God which takes flesh in the Child is no respecter of personages. It touches rich and poor alike, though the poor are given preference, as they always are with God. We will come with the poor.

We will also come with the animals, with the camels of the Wise Men, the sheep of the shepherds, the ox and the donkey sheltering in the stable. We will come with them because this birth is for the whole of creation. Our common home becomes God's home too once the Child is born. We will come with all of God's creatures.

When heaven and earth become one, as they do in the Child, all things are woven together in the vast ecology of love. God, angels, stars, humans, animals, plants, earth: all hold together gloriously in the Word-made-flesh in whom they came to be. With him at the heart of it, this Christmas like no other will be just like all the others.

+Mark Coleridge
Archbishop of Brisbane