



BISHOP OF HAMILTON

Christmas 2017

Dear friends,

We settle in for another Christmas season. Christmas is always a blessing, a time for giving thanks – especially for the Father’s gift to us: Jesus, Emmanuel, God-with-us – even though many struggle at this time of year.

A good friend, a brother Priest, and a member of the Religious community to which I belong, *Father Chris Rushton*, is being cared for at Emmanuel Hospice in Hamilton, one of the many Good Shepherd ministries. It means, simply, that he is in the process of dying. (I am glad that “The Good Shepherd” is caring for him!)

Father Chris is a remarkable person. He accepts the inevitable with great faith and serenity, and he expresses profound gratitude for every act of kindness he receives – a visit, a gift, a service, a chat, and he is *always* looking for ways to “give back”. He is an inspiration to those who experience both his joy and the enthusiasm he brings to each day.

His is the example that might guide us: gratitude for each day – the fundamental gift – the gift of life. Aware of such a great blessing, we find ways to “give back” – precisely by the decisions we make each day to respond generously to those whose needs may be greater than our own.

A word of affirmation is an easy way to do that. It does not cost two cents – but for the recipient it can be solid gold, a life-saver: “*Someone thinks I am worth it!*” A word of affirmation can be the boost needed for the day – or for a lifetime.

This Christmas affirm someone – anyone – a child, a sibling, a friend, a neighbour! Watch how it affects them. You have done something that will have a ripple effect touching many! It is truly a gift that keeps on giving!

Merry Christmas! May your faith be deepened during this Christmas season!

Sincerely in Christ and Mary Immaculate,

+Douglas Crosby, OMI

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