

Share the message of peace and good will to all

EVERY seafarer I know is an optimist, with so much hope for and belief in the future. Hope that the next job will have better living and working conditions than the one you have now; belief that while you are away from home your family remain safe; and hope that one day you will no longer have to go to sea to provide for your loved ones.

Christians share the hope and belief that the world is a good place. Especially now in this season of Christmas, the Christian focus is on celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. It is Jesus who is the one that brings hope to a world that desperately needs to believe that all can be better.

Christmas is traditionally the time for the giving and receiving of presents. This all started when the wise men visited Jesus just after his birth and presented him with gifts. We all have great joy when we receive a gift and hopefully equally feel the pleasure in giving presents to family and friends. It was God's great joy to give His world the most remarkable gift of His son. The Son of God, in human form, was born into this world to share in our humanity. To live an earthly life, to experience love and happiness, pain and suffering; this precious gift to us all was God's great blessing for us.

The gift of Jesus, the Christ child, has changed the world forever because having the experience of earthly life means

that God can identify with us in all that we are. Whether we are happy or sad, rich or poor, in good health or in pain and suffering we have Jesus to follow in our lives.

So much of your life is spent away from your family and friends but it need not be away from God. He can be your constant companion. The joy of Christmas can remain with you all year round, sustaining you in your bleaker moments, encouraging you through difficulties, congratulating you on all of your achievements, sharing your laughter and rejoicing at your homecoming.

The richness of all of your experiences is something to celebrate. It is this celebration that you are invited by God to share in this Christmas. How can you share in Christmas? Even if you are not a Christian there are some universal truths about Christmas that you can consider. One of them is the call that Christmas shouts out, "Peace on earth and good will to all people". You are asked to share in this, to speak and act in love and peace, to be seen as someone who seeks only the wellbeing of those around you.

When you see injustice, when people are oppressed and treated with disrespect remember that this is not the way the world should be. Counter such behaviour by being someone of integrity and peace. In so doing you will share the Christmas message and the peace of the Christ Child will be yours.