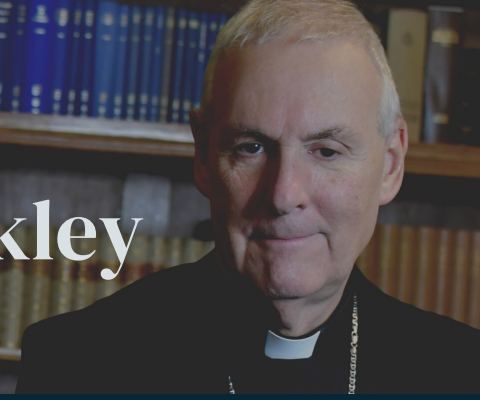




Bishop David Oakley

Bishop of Northampton



Letter for the First Sunday of Advent 2023

December 3, 2023

To my dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

In this first week of the advent season, I wish to consider the theme of 'Hope'. Let me share with you some words from the Prophet Isaiah,

“Let the wilderness and the dry-lands exult, let the wasteland rejoice and bloom, let it bring forth flowers like the jonquil, let it rejoice and sing for joy”.

I love the words of the prophets because they speak to us so eloquently of what hope involves. They looked forward to a time they could not imagine in their own life experience. They looked forward to a time when God would do something new, then the Lord would renew and refresh his people. I think that pinpoints the meaning of hope, we do not hope in ourselves or what the human race can achieve by its own effort. Hope is rooted in what God will do. Hope is founded upon the concept of salvation history that the Lord has made promises to his people and he will fulfil them. And so, you may imagine that God has already fulfilled his promises by sending his beloved Son, the word made flesh, Jesus.

However, some of God's promises still remain to be fulfilled. Jesus has promised that he will come again at the end of time, in glory he will return in majesty and the whole of creation will recognize him. There is a tremendous amount of Hope involved in that promise. Some days when we look around our world, its darkness and its shadows, we simply cannot imagine a day of glory that the scriptures speak to us of. And yet that is the meaning of Hope.

Maranatha, come Lord Jesus, come and make the wastelands blossom and you come and let the desert sing for joy.

Sincerely,

Bishop David Oakley

Bishop of Northampton