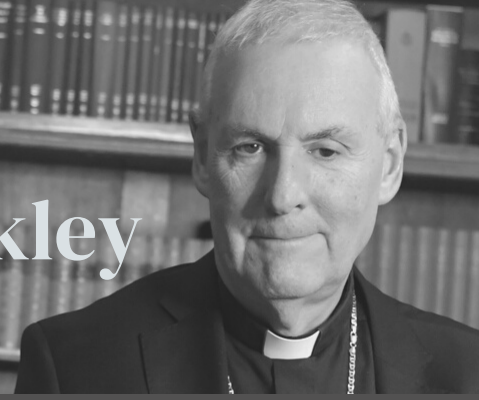




# Bishop David Oakley

Bishop of Northampton



Letter for the Fourth Sunday of Advent 2023

December 24, 2023

## To my dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

On this Christmas Eve, our season of advent is nearly completed, now we are going to think about the theme of Love. We have reflected over the weeks on hope, joy and peace, and now we are going to think about love.

That single English word has so many meanings and in the Greek Language, there are many words for love. As always, with our themes during this advent, we can only begin to comprehend the meaning of Love when we think about God's love for us. That is agape love, it is the complete and perfect love that is self-giving. 'Greater love has no one', Jesus tells us, 'than that they would lay down their lives for their friends' and we must be invited into that circle of the blessed Trinity's love for all people. I love the words that we will hear at the beginning of the reading in tonight's Mass during the night.

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light and those who live in the land of deep shadow a light has shone.

Love shines a light upon our world in its darkness and shadow, Love brings to birth the mystery of God's great sacrifice for us. God's word became flesh and dwelt amongst us and we saw that light in Jesus.

We are invited to undertake our own personal journey of Love into the heart of Christ. Our Love is not to be something which is limited just to a few, those we get along with, those we feel obliged to care for, and our love for ourselves. All these things are important, but above all, there should be in our hearts that great deep love for what God has done for me, for us, and for our world. There's no doubt about it, that our world is crying out parched for Love, and these days of advent we have been preparing for the birth of Love in Bethlehem.

We make our own pilgrimage in love to the King of Love, and my prayer for you and your families is that you will experience a renewed Love of what God has done for us and a renewed Love for each other. Life's too short. Let's put aside all those arguments and disagreements and resentments that we have. Let's do what we can to build a world that is built upon love.

Sincerely,

**Bishop David Oakley**

Bishop of Northampton