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Christmas Message 2011

Dear Friends in Christ,

Before I was ordained a bishop, I had the privilege of teaching at a seminary and at university and for the last few years, of being the dean. As a result, the end of each semester involved course evaluations and opportunities for reflecting on teaching. It seemed that I was more conscious than ever of beginnings, endings and the spaces between. Christmas can act in a similar way for all of us, for we can look back over our year to consider our learnings, look ahead to how we might reorganize our lives for deeper experiences and savor the graces that are with us at present.

Some questions that might help us in this process of reflection include: In five years time, what do you think you will remember about this past year? Are there people you will remember and others you hope to forget? What were the best and worst moments during the past year? How did your relationships begin and evolve? What was new, different and exciting about this past year? Did you enter deeply into the various experiences you had this year? Will others have memorable experiences of you? If you could change one thing about the past year, what would it be? What do you plan to do in the coming year to assist in your human and spiritual growth?

My hope for you is that, in the midst of the difficulties and trying times of your lives, you will find moments full of life, moments when you experience love, moments when God touches your heart with peace and hope, moments that give you the strength to face your anxieties, moments when you encounter Christ in the members of your family or your work place or in your neighborhood, moments when you recognize the gentle action of the Holy Spirit within you, moments when you welcome the word of God as Christ speaking to you in the here and now, moments when you experience a real renewal of your faith and your relationships with others.

As we celebrate this Christmas, may you find cause for celebration in your life as you review this past year and cause for joyful anticipation as you look to the year to come. May you be renewed, refreshed and re-energized during this season of love and peace. I want to thank you for your support and prayers during the past year and I pray that your openness to God's presence will bring you a generous share in the rich abundance of God's blessings. May you and your families have a wonderful celebration of Christmas this year and may God accompany you with friendship and grace during this coming year.

Sincerely in Christ,

† Brian Joseph Dunn
Bishop of Antigonish