

## Christmas 2021

- What a two years it has been, & things won't ever be the same again.
- Our categories & ways of thinking have been shaken up; our priorities & lifestyles have been challenged.
- We can resist change often, but what we have been going through, has forced us to change the ways we live, do things & interact with others.
- The question at this time is how we are going to come through this crisis – in what ways are we going to change.
- One thing is for sure, when we come through this, you, I, & all the world is going to be changed, we will not be the same; the question is – do we come out better or worse - & the choice is up to us.
- Crisis exposes our hearts & reveals what is truly deep within us, & so it brings out the best & worst of human behaviours – from the self-sacrificing men & women, doctors, nurses & carers who spent themselves in the service of those in need, to those, who like vultures are profiting from people's financial vulnerability. The state of our hearts & priorities are exposed.
- Maybe at the end of this year we can examine ourselves as to what this time has exposed to us about ourselves – both the good & the bad, the things we can be pleased with & those we may feel ashamed of, & determine what is it about ourselves, our virtues, characteristics, behaviours & priorities, that we can choose to take into the future as changes we want to implement in our lives.
- We often hear that the greatest joy in life is the birth of a child – it is wonderful & extraordinary, & with that birth, everything changes for a woman, a couple & a family; you who have had children well know how life for you changes radically with the birth of each child.
- The world & human history has changed forever with the birth of this child that our faith holds – is the human child of the invisible God – a baby boy by the name of Jesus, born in Bethlehem & raised in Nazareth.
- And we are told several times throughout the scriptures that this child was born **"for us"**, not just a solitary birth into a human family, but "for us" – as a gift for all humanity, & not just for human beings, but for all creation.
- Jesus is the mould, the blueprint of created order – the universe infused with the very life of God – & so all created order is holy.
- From the outset God's very life is the soul of the universe, but in Jesus, God physically becomes one with his creation.
- And in Jesus we all become the children of God, & in this God says clearly that we are loveable & individually he says to us – "You are amazing & wonderful".
- So, if we ever feel that we are inadequate, or a failure, or that we can't emerge from the pit of depression or despair, God says to us – "Have courage because I am with you" – not just in these words, but by making himself a child with you & **for you**.
- This birth clearly states that we are God's children – all of us born into this sacred universe, & this is what can give us hope & meaning to our lives.

- Underlying all our strengths & weaknesses, stronger than our past hurts & failures, or guilts from what we've done or not done, or our fears & concerns about the future, there is this great truth: we are beloved daughters & sons of God - & this is pure gift, not something we've earned.
- God didn't give us a thing, he gave his son because he is madly in love with us – he is born to free us from all things that keep us from being who we deeply want to be; he heals us from within by loving us.
- It is in accepting his love that can change us.
- The birth of Jesus is the newness that enables us to be reborn each year & to find, in him, the strength needed to face every trial we come to in life.
- Since that Christmas of over 2000 years ago something quite radical has happened - the world has been changed forever, the world is no longer just the creation of God, but the place where he gets his hands dirty living the human life, not just 2000 years ago as Jesus of Nazareth, but continually among us & within us in the beauty & the messiness of our lives.
- The fact of Jesus birth in the night, in a darkened stable, in poverty & rejection is meant to enable us to understand the immensity of God's love for the human condition – God enters into the depths of human poverty with his concrete love into our weakness & vulnerability so that we can accept ourselves with patient love & to discover something amazing – God loves to work wonders through our poverty, mess & chaos.
- God is not afraid of them, so we can allow his love to transform them completely; God changes things, he enables us to do things we have not thought of before.
- So Christmas exists, Jesus was born, to feed our deepest hunger for love & fulfilment in life.
- How often though, in our hunger for fulfilment, we try to feed ourselves with entertainment, success, money & worldly pleasures – food that does not satisfy & leaves us empty within.
- True nourishment in life comes from letting ourselves be loved by God & being instruments of his love for others.
- Jesus Christ was born into our world because God loves us, & in him enables us to love & care for others; Christ brought a message & was the message & inspiration to live more humanely.
- At Christmas God comes to take possession of our hearts, if we are open to it, just as in the first Christmas he came & took possession of the world to transform it & set people free to be who God calls them to be.
- And now he says to us what he already said to the world through the birth of Jesus - I am with you. I am the hope for change.
- Christ has changed the world with his presence & can continue to do that through us.
- This Christmas, let us reflect on this gift of God, that knowing our personal need to be strengthened & changed, he entered human history as a baby out of love for you & me to give us the capacity to be more than we are.
- In turn, may we be able to be agents of change in our own time.