

Happy Christmas

25 12 15

Almighty God,
you have given us your only begotten Son
to take our nature upon him
and as at this time to be born of a pure virgin:
grant that we, who have been born again
and made your children by adoption and grace,
may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit.

Our text may be found in today's gospel and is Luke chapter 2 and verse 7: 'And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger because there was no place for them in the inn.'

Happy Christmas. Joyeux Noël. Frohe Weihnachten. Buona Natale. But what have we got to be happy about at Christmas ?

Well, in brief, Christmas is about celebration: there's the chance to eat, drink and be merry. There are presents; parties; people. There is light, warmth colour, entertainment. Christmas is a good time to be alive.

But Christmas, as the name suggests, Christ's mass, is about a birth of a child; the birth of a first-born son of a virgin most pure, most holy, a virgin, as the story goes, who says yes to the will of God, accepts she will be overshadowed by the

Holy Spirit, conceive and, in due time, give birth to Jesus, the Christ Child; the Son of God; Son of Man; Son of David; our Saviour, Lord and King; our Teacher and our Friend.

Birth is one of the joys of living. Understandably, the actual process of giving birth, the labour itself, as the name implies, can't be that much fun for the mother while she's actually in the throws of giving birth. Thank God I'm a man ! But from that pain comes the gift of a new life and all that that entails.

But what is truly special about today is who it is who has been born. And this surprising claim is at the heart of our faith – that today we celebrate the incarnation of our God, the belief that God becomes embodied in the person of his Son, Jesus, that the Word has become flesh as John in his gospel so beautifully puts it.

And that my friends is what is so good about Christmas; why I'm so happy; why we can be so joyful – that God knows what it's like to be one of us. Now, of course, by definition God must know everything. But the knowledge God has here from the incarnation of his Son is to know first-hand what it is to be like us in the flesh, enfleshed, embodied. He knows what it is to see and to hear. He can smell and taste and touch and be touched. He is open to feel pleasure and to experience pain.

So God, who is necessarily perfect and apart from his creation, has come into the world to be among us as one of us for a moment in time, as a part of our history,

our story - Emmanuel, God-with-us. And that act of love, of kindness, of compassion, means that we who are necessarily less than perfect, we who make a mess of things and who get dirty and sweaty and smelly, we will still be welcomed home by God because we have been touched by God's love in the person of his Son, Jesus, who knows first-hand what it's like to be human. And that makes all the difference.

Happy Christmas !

I have spoken in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Preached at the Eucharist

St Bartholomew's, Dinard

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G: Sermons 33 : Happy Christmas

