

CHRISTMAS 2020

Dear Everyone at St Peter's

When I think about Christmas, I am always reminded of the words carved on the reredos of St Peter's, 'Verbum Caro Factum Est'; 'The Word was made flesh'. In Jesus birth, the Word of God became physically part of the life of the world. And this continues in our world today. We receive the Word of God through our ears as we hear the Bible read; we receive the Word of God in our hands and mouths as we receive Holy Communion; we receive the Word of God through the Church, through our eyes and ears and in former days, and we hope again, through touch, as we gather together to worship our heavenly Father. We know God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in a spiritual way; in the grace, help and guidance we are given as we pray, as we turn again in hope and longing.

The Christmas story is such a rich story. Gabriel comes to Mary. She and Joseph have to travel from their home in Nazareth to Joseph's city of David his ancestor, Bethlehem. Jesus is born in a stable, laid in a manger, visited by shepherds. They move to a house and are visited by the magi. They are warned in a dream to flee for their lives to safety in Egypt and then advised to return to their hometown of Nazareth. So many people, today, experience at least part of this journey in their lives today. I hope that pondering this amazing story will bring some comfort, hope and sustenance amid the challenges facing so many people today.

This Christmas, for most of us, will be unlike any recent Christmas. Many more of us will spend Christmas day on our own. Many will feel the loss of those usually with us. Some 65,000 persons in the United Kingdom have died having tested positive with Covid – 19, a terribly high number. After Christmas many of us meet up with our more extended family and friends but not this year. Many of our family and friends we have not seen at all in 2020.

There is hope on the way. Yes, for the next three or so months we have to continue to be very careful. The vaccine is coming for us, and as long as enough people will allow themselves to be vaccinated, it will become easier to start again those important elements of life we have had to put aside: singing in church, shaking hands, talking with each other at normal distance, meeting and eating with each other.

In the meantime, we continue to thank God for the many blessings in our lives and pray for God's grace, help and guidance for ourselves and for other persons as we travel with hope and longing into the year ahead.

With best wishes for a joyful Christmas and for the New Year.

Fr Chris