

## **Bishop Kevin's Christmas Message**

**Dear Friends,**

People constantly attempt to make the Christian faith much more complicated than it actually is. The whole of Christian preaching and teaching can be summarised in one short word – LOVE. And the paradox is you can't write about love, you can't read about love, you can't preach about love, you can only ever *experience* love. And that is the abiding fascination of the Christmas story because we first experience love in the love of family and of friends, the warmth the affection, the security of being held: there is love. Love that is of God, love that is real and experienced and is secure and in which we are understood, cherished, wanted.

They are all facets of the story of Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus. It is a fascinating story because it is so real, so human, so ordinary and the real magic of Christmas is that we are reminded again of just how extraordinary the story of human love and birth actually is.

Who can fail to be moved at the sight of a small infant? Tiny hands, tiny feet, big blue eyes, a baby sleeps. The vulnerability, the need, the dependence of such tiny hands and tiny feet. At the same time, even the most hard-bitten bishop, is moved at the sight because there in those tiny hands and tiny feet, looking through those big blue eyes, is so much potential. In the baby Jesus we see the true hope, the potential of being human.

How many parents have looked at their new-born baby and resolved to be better people, more caring, more understanding, more accepting? How many of us have read the story of Jesus and have longed, yearned to be more kind, generous, caring and loving? The importance of the story of Christmas is that it is the story of each one of us.

The babe of Bethlehem grew to endure misunderstanding and loneliness, pain and suffering, disappointment and failure. Jesus brought out of all those facets of our lives that we would rather be without. He brought joy that is profound and real, life-giving and peace-making, experiences of love in which God makes himself known. Covid has taught many of us to recognise God in the most surprising small acts of generosity and kindness, through which we have recognised the full human potential to love and have heard again the message of the angels - to allow ourselves to be loved. That is the simple lesson of faith in love, which we experience new every morning and yet it is the message which is eternal.

This Christmas time – look at a baby and see God.

May all God's blessings be yours this Christmas time!

+ Kevin

Glasgow and Galloway