

24 December 2017 – Midnight Communion

Reflection – Christ of poverty

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.”

2 Cor. 9.9

However much we sanitise it, the nativity story is a story about poverty.

We bear it for a short time ... in the same way that we bear ... and may even enjoy a camping holiday, away from the luxuries and the mod cons for a couple of weeks – closer to mother earth ... But it only works for most of us as a holiday.

And so we sort of revel in the poverty of the story-line – the stable, the animals, the manger ... but this was no holiday.

This was, if you pardon the pun, God setting his stall out in sending his Son.

“though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor.”

He entered into the lot and the lifestyle of the poor. The people who get pushed around by governments, so even though the baby is due, they are forced to travel to Bethlehem. The people who do not have the ready cash or the connections to make sure that they have a bed to sleep in.

So, forever more, in order to look on God, we need to look into the face of poverty ... and that is uncomfortable for all of us.

God invites us not to avoid the stories of the poor in our world, but to enter into those stories as best we can ... because in Jesus we discover that that is where God is to be found at work in our world.

Not to glorify poverty, nor to glorify the poor – but through solidarity and compassion, love and welcome, to bring good news to the poor.

So are only the poor welcome? Well of course not. While Luke tells the story of the shepherds ... very much the working, underclass of their day ... coming to visit Jesus, Matthew tells us of the magi – the wise men – who clearly had wealth to distribute, otherwise they would not have brought their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Both rich and poor are brought together in the coming of Jesus in poverty ...

... but the rich have a decision to make ... to loose themselves of all complicity with the powerful Herod ...

... they travel back by another route ... but I suspect they travelled back quite differently because of all that they had seen.

Jesus comes with the inexhaustible riches of love and compassion, of solidarity and welcome –

He comes with nothing in his hands to give ... except himself, his friendship, his love, his forgiveness ... and of course the giving of himself is the giving of his Father's heart.

He shows up our supposed riches for the sham and unreality that they are.

He invites us to discover the riches of life in a different way, from a new perspective –

What it means to be rich and what it means to be poor is transformed when we meet Jesus.

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.”