

Christmas and covid

“And here is a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger”

And suddenly with the angel there was a great throng of the heavenly host praising God and singing

And here is a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in scraps and lying in a feeding box.

As a child one of the most formative Festive season I celebrated was when my Father had got sacked in the run up to December and my mother was terrified that she would not be able to provide a proper Christmas.

She actually sat me down individually and told me I could not ask Father Christmas for too much.

That encounter with reality taught me more than any tinsel or plate of sprouts. I remember the conversation but not the Christmas morning. I remember the loving concern of my mother and not what was under the tree for me that year.

I was and indeed am rich

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I had the honour of working in East Africa with people who celebrated Christmas with extra food, singing, and a bit of travel.

But very little else

It was fun and to add to the festivities I went to the City and bought some great big plastic bags of cheap sweets

After mass the children were all told to go outside the clay walled building we used as a Church, and to make an orderly line. Then they were allowed back in one by one and were issued with five sweets. A few climbed through the open window casements to re-join the queue.

But these children were not the most wondrous thing I observed. After the whole service was over I noticed some of the little ones collecting up the colourful discarded sweet papers.

They then used these to wrap up small stones so they could play at having sweets.

I realised again how rich I was.

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Today I pray with you in the centre of a pandemic of historic proportions.

There have been foolish comments talking about the cancellation of Christmas.

Christ is born

That act has been done and will not be undone

I have a friend who died at the beginning of the crisis and will be so deeply missed by his family

I know of family's who have faced the reality and separated from each other for safety

I read one of the Christmas tree decorations upon which a child stated that he was praying for
Marcus Rashford and the work he was doing.

I live within a community that is not without its faults

But is never the less beautiful

The place I live in is beautiful

The people I work with are beautiful

There is a vaccine for the virus which will almost certainly clear the danger in the coming months.

So again I am rich

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What do you need for happiness

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Do you have enough

If so then recognise that enough is the feast

If you are grieving I pray with you

If you are hungry I will work for change

But if you have enough

Recognise this Christmas how rich you are

Then celebrate your wealth to the very best of your ability

Enjoy Enjoy Enjoy

“Listen I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people”

