

Subject: FB

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A Christmas letter from the Archdeacon who is overseeing the new appointment of a chaplain at St. Philip and St. James.

Christmas Letter 2020

Coming from South Asia I am often reminded of the Tsunami as one of the natural disasters that affected many communities I personally know. Even today I cannot help but be aware of that tragedy on the last Sunday of December 2004. The struggle of countless people, often the poor fisher folk, continued for many years after the disaster. So, for many of us dates for one reason or another are stamped in our minds.

This December we have been coping with the COVID-19 virus for almost a year. Some of us may have lost loved ones. For those most directly involved it has brought much pain, a brutal loss and a break of relationships. But for all of us 2020 will be remembered in our minds as a period in our lives that has made huge changes to the way in which we live and go about our usual rounds of duties and concerns. 2020 stands for another sea change in history.

I am by far not alone this Christmastide in seeing that precious family scene, which we cherish, overlaid by the heart wrenching news of people and nations trying to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic; disturbed by images of refugees from war torn regions or marked by oppression and struggle; jarred by those mourning the loss of their babies and young children during the desperate attempts to cross the seas in unseaworthy vessels.

All this literally 'brings home to us' and makes us contemplate afresh the ground realities surrounding the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. God's Son was born as a frail, human child into a simple human family. The harsh and even cruel realities surrounding Christ's entry into our world can, however, help us to better comprehend why God made the ultimate choice of joining his lot with ours. God speaks to us through his Son with the promise of life in the most adverse of circumstances, so that we can grasp how important this relationship between God and us really is. And, friends, this continues to echo even today. The writer to the Hebrews notes that the Son is heir of all creation; "the Son is the life-giving principle of all reality; the Son radiates and reflects the unimaginable beauty and light of the source from which he comes" (Rowan Williams).

Yet, in the birth of Christ we see God taking on humanity, living and suffering every aspect of human life. By his birth, life and death we can discover God's great love for us in showing us the way back to our true humanity of walking in fellowship with God. God in Christ offers us the way to respond to God's love with our love for God. And this love will be reflected in our love for others. Friends, how can we not be captured by this news? God relies on us humans to tell God's story: to bring hope where there is despair, to bring succour where there is need, to bring comfort where people are sorrowing, to bring healing where there is brokenness, to bring liberation out of bondage, to give courage where there is weariness. People the world over and through the centuries with their own struggles, upheavals and pandemics have been called to worship Jesus. So, we too with them and the angels are called to rejoice at the actual presence of Christ, the promised Saviour among us and in the hope that he brings to the world.

May each of us be drawn afresh into this special relationship and discover anew the joy of being God's agent in sharing these Good News through prayer, through reflection, through our words and our actions.

Warmest good wishes,

Leslie Nathaniel

Archdeacon of Germany and Northern Europe.

Sent from my iPhone