

## **Christmas Midnight Mass 2015**

### **John 1: 1 – 14**

Christmas is the time of year that unashamedly tugs at the heart strings. The Christmas story is quite simply, at all levels, the best story ever told. It's got every ingredient required to produce a compelling narrative – underdogs triumphing over adversity, the joy of new life, comical rustics with their fluffy sheep, a quite simply heavenly sound track, and all against the backdrop of a star-lit night. And all the visual aids are there to help it run and run and run – cute kids with tea towels and tinsel wrapped round their heads, children's choirs singing Away in a Manger, the candle light of a Christingle, the glee in a little one's face.

You'd have to have a heart of stone not to be stirred by the message it all bears: peace and goodwill to all. And you can feel it in this church. As we hear again the story of God stooping down and heaven touching earth, there is a palpable feeling of goodwill. Life's not

quite the same, the edges are taken off it, and there's a glow and feeling of rightness about things. If we could just bottle this spirit of Christmas, everything could be different.

It's not so much that tonight we feel that God is in his heaven and all is right with the world. Actually it's quite the opposite: God has slipped out of heaven, God is with us, God is lying in a manger, and all is well with the world. All is well with the world because of that story which we're retelling tonight.

It's set 2000 years ago; it's set in a distant country; it's set in a culture utterly alien to ours. And if that were all there is to it, those factors would disqualify the story from having any relevance to us, in Brid, in 2015. But that's not all there is to it. They're not just events that happened at that time, in those circumstances, in that location. They're events that interrupt the space/time continuum.

The Revd Matthew Pollard, Rector of Bridlington Priory

Those events, although located in that time and place in the story we retell, are events that occur in every time there ever has been or will be, and for all time. That's what it means when it says in the Bible "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the life of mankind."

We don't need to bottle the spirit of Christmas. It's more than events that happened 200 years ago; it's more than a story we hear once a year. It's the God's-truth about how things really are. It's the default setting of how we are created to be. The phony stuff, the unreality, is all the other stuff with which we are overwhelmed for the other 364 days of the year when we don't allow this story of all time and every time to break through and melt our hearts.

The phony stuff, the unreality, is the warfare, the hunger, the crime, the poverty, the hatred, the racism, the homophobia, the inequality, the bigotry, the bitterness, the pain – it's as if these things don't exist on this most holy of nights: they're dismissed, dispelled, replaced by peace and goodwill.

And they don't need to exist, either. They only exist because of our failure and stubbornness and hardness of heart. All the problems of the world are capable of being solved. And the resources with which they can be resolved are present in this church tonight. The resources are: us, and God living with us; as we hear of him being born to live, against the odds, in a stable, to a couple driven from their homeland by oppression.

He has come to dwell among us, in Brid, in 2015. Peace and goodwill are freely available. They are tugging at our heart strings. And they are offering to change our world.

Amen.