

A few words from the Vicar

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

So it's December. The time of year when, writing in Church magazines up and down the land, vicars bang on about the true meaning of Christmas!

And why should I be any different!

Let me start with a question. What does Christmas mean to you?

For you does Christmas mean hard work and lots of shopping? I must admit, shopping (at Christmas or at any other time of year for that matter) is not my idea of a good time. An odd admission, I know, from someone recently appointed as Bury Town centre Chaplain. Then again, God does have a sense of humour!

Does Christmas mean for you expectations of a decent year-end bonus for a job well done or does it mean thinking up some convincing excuses for failing to hit your annual performance targets? Having earned a living as a manager for many years, more than once I've had to explain to staff that their self-assessed score of 'outstanding' is way off the mark and that 'fail' or 'working towards' is a much more realistic assessment. And, by the way, this means there's no bonus this year!

Or does Christmas mean for you quality time with the family, a time for giving and receiving presents, Christmas dinner (turkey with all the trimmings – yum!), a few drinks and a snooze in front of the telly? I think you can tell the sort of Christmas I like!

Well, life would be dull if we didn't party from time to time. And, believe me; I intend to enjoy myself at Christmas just like everyone else.

The fact is, at Christmas we have something truly amazing to celebrate. A little over 2,000 years ago God as Jesus came amongst us so that we can live life in all its fullness and look forward to spending an eternity in his love. As Jesus, God was on a mission, a mission to save humanity from the mess we've made of things.

Let's be honest, all of us do things we know to be wrong. And if we're honest with ourselves, we know only too well that we don't always do good when we have the opportunity to do so. The Bible calls this sin and it also tells us that that when we sin an eternal separation opens up between us and God.

Our sin results in an automatic 'fail' in the performance appraisal of life and, with failure, there is no heavenly bonus to look forward to! And if there's one performance appraisal we can't blag our way through that's when, with our lives over, we stand before our maker as he examines our record.

But, and this is the reason I'll be celebrating at Christmas, when Jesus grew up he died on the cross and, in doing so, paid the penalty for our sin. So, if we choose to follow Jesus, we have no need to worry about the result of the only performance appraisal that really matters. For, in dying on the cross, Jesus fixed the result of our end-of-life performance



appraisal so that, no matter how abysmally we've performed, we'll be assessed by God as 'outstanding'.

So, as far as I'm concerned the coming of Jesus amongst us is the best Christmas present ever!

Every Blessing

Dave