

Stressing Peace & Goodwill!

Isaiah 52⁷⁻¹⁰; Psalm 98; Hebrews 1¹⁻⁴; John 1¹⁻¹⁴

And the Word became flesh and lived among us... full of grace and truth. (John 1¹⁴)

Christmas is such a risky thing - it should have a health warning!

- ✦ So much stress goes into choosing presents - then you take the risk of handing them over with all the anxiety there is in giving and reading the appropriate and positive responses.
- ✦ So much stress surrounds one meal - it is little more than a traditional Sunday lunch and shared with those closest too us (so it should be relaxed) but it gathers to itself a significance beyond the sum of its parts.
- ✦ The potential for stress in gathering together in one place (fuelled with food and other consumables) people so close that they know which buttons to press to get a reaction is enormous.

Stress makes us vulnerable - all our weaknesses become exposed (and generally we don't like that).

Christians believe that in the Christmas Story - especially with the reading from John 1 - Christians believe that God becomes human and so becomes vulnerable.

- ✦ After the first attempt in IVF in human history - the Angel Gabriel told Mary she was pregnant - it must have been stressful for God the Son to be limited within the confines of a human womb for 38 weeks (I can't imagine that he was premature or late!). Having lived without any limitations of time and space growing from a foetus to a child must have been, at least, interesting.
- ✦ I don't imagine that the encounter between Mary and Joseph and their families was without stress: how would your family have reacted to a pregnant fiancée when you weren't the dad?
- ✦ The birth itself must also have been stressful. 9 months in the womb must have made that a familiar place but there can't have been any immunity from all the pushing and grunting associated with babies making their appearance.

Follow that with all that comes next - learning to feed; to grow out of nappies; to learn to walk; to learn to talk - and you have stress: knowing everything about the world and the people in it doesn't make survival automatic if Jesus was truly human.

We celebrate Christmas with a Eucharist because we celebrate the stress and the risk of Jesus birth precisely because God became vulnerable and continued to be vulnerable in Jesus until his death on the cross.

Peace and goodwill only comes through experiencing the stress of accepting vulnerability - the vulnerability that is faith: of trusting God more than we trust ourselves. It is a gift that does not disappoint!