

St James' Church, Weybridge

Christmas Day – 25 December 2025

Today's Readings

First Reading Isaiah 52:7-10

An exiled people hear a message of peace and hope that echoes our own. Full of the pain of loss, distance and displacement, they hear the joyful footsteps of the messenger telling them that peace is at hand.

Gospel John 1:1-14

John sketches out the introduction to the Gospel of Christ. It is a story without cuteness, but full of the glories of the universe in human form.

HOMILY

"The Word became flesh and lived among us." (John 1:14)

Since the beginnings of humankind, people have sought for something beyond themselves – something to explain who we are and what life is all about. Today we have various mediums to help us explore and comprehend life – from books, or the theatre, or a google search on the internet, we look for answers. In film, we explore the meaning of everything and ponder what more there could be – blockbuster movies are filled with stories of light over coming darkness, good triumphing over evil, life over death. In the making of such dramas, the clapperboard is an essential tool. Whether digital or analogue technology is involved, the clapperboard is still used on movie sets and in television studios as it connects sound and visuals. That connection between senses, is at the heart of storytelling, and understanding all that truly matters to humanity – what it means to be human and in relationship.

Connecting our senses is central to this Christmas Day Eucharist, as we watch, listen, smell and even taste. Our senses help us form relationships, just as a media can help us to learn and find our place in this complicated world. From the beginning, people have wrestled with identity, relationships, and the world in which we have the gift of life. And most challenging, our relationship with that which is 'other.' How can we, humanity, utterly understand and know God? How can a God who is supremely "other" really relate to us, as society, community, church, family, and individuals?

John, the named author of the Gospel from which we read today, tries to weave a picture of who God is and how the birth of Jesus has an important, indeed essential place in our understanding of relationship. John states, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." John sets the scene, uses his clapper board of images, and puts the flesh on the bones of the hitherto unseen creator God. He, as do the other Gospel writers in their own way, seeks to painstakingly reconstruct the identity of God in the person of Jesus, re-telling the drama of our salvation.

Luke and Matthew's Gospels contain more details of the Christmas story – the Angels visit, the decree of Ceasar that all must be registered, the journey to Bethlehem of Joseph and Mary, the shepherds visited by angels, no room at the inn, the stable out back with animals, the Wise Men, the Star and all that we depict here in our Christmas Crib – our own re-telling of Christmas – it sounds like a blockbuster movie! By contrast, John's Gospel comes at the story from a different

perspective, we journey right back to creation and the beginning of all things, and the Words of God he Creator, 'Let there be light', which overcomes all darkness – God speaking, literally breathing life into existence, before even the stars shone brightly. And it is there, right at the start, John places Jesus and the Holy Spirit – the Trinity of unity. And this God of whom John writes has finished – oh no, God has only just begun creating and recreating as light and new life are seen in human form; the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

But this is no Hollywood movie. This is the earthy reality of the birth of God's Son, the light which enlightens all people. And so, we may well ponder how it is that God and humans can understand each other – and why on earth that which is other, should care so much to be a part of our lives?

That very question is right at the heart of the Christmas story, the greatest story, that in the birth of a baby the Creator has reached out to us, the created, in love. And if you would like to know more about that love, that faith promised in Jesus, do take part in our Faith Confirmed course which begins on Tuesday 6th January, 1pm or 7.30pm, at which we will try to answer that question further. For God is love, even if we fail to love, God loves us first.

Christmas is a time for celebration, for family, good food and joy as we celebrate God's love poured out for all people. It is a time when we celebrate the greatest story ever told – of how the creator of the universe chose to enter our experience as a human child – for at Christmas God becomes real to us in the person of Jesus, born in Bethlehem. Through that incarnation, our lives relate to the divine in a way never known before, as God knows what it is truly to be created – God understands what it is to live as one of us. God loves us and God knows us, through the birth of the baby born in Bethlehem some 2000 years ago.

Indeed, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. This is better than any blockbuster film – indeed, you simply could not make it up! Amen.

Fr Damian Harrison-Miles, December 2025.