

## Advent 4A

*One Christmas day a father was helping his children to build a snowman. As plane was passing overhead his three year old son gazed at it and said, "Daddy how do people climb up into the sky to get into planes?" "They don't child," replied the father, "the plane comes down out of the sky to collect the people". This little anecdote captures the message of Christmas. We don't have to go up into the sky to find God; he came down on Earth to find us.*

Christmas is about the second person of the Blessed Trinity joining our human family. He is Emmanuel – God with us. In some non-Christian religions God is still very distant. He is utterly transcendent. The Christian image of God is quite different. He shares our human condition in order to save us. His reassuring words to Mary and Joseph are also addressed to us: "Do not be afraid, I am with you".

Jesus becomes localised in a special way at Mass. He is present in the material elements of Bread and Wine and comes to each of us personally in Holy Communion making His home with us and in us. He want us to return the compliment when He tells us in John's gospel: 'make your home in me as I make mine in you'. That's one of the main reasons why we come to Mass not just at Christmas, but every Sunday.

But the question is; do we want Him to be that close to Him? The people of Nazareth, his home town, were hesitant. On returning there, Jesus was given a very cool reception by the people He might have expected more from. If we keep Jesus at a distance His loving plans for us might not be realised. When Adam and Even fell from grace they hid from God and the plan of god for the human race was thwarted. When people say that they don't believe in God, it could be they just want to live their lives without reference to Him. That's a recipe for disaster.

The Christmas story tells us there was 'no room at the inn' for Mary and Joseph or the baby. When addressing certain hot religious topics these days, some people jokingly say that the Church should keep out of the bedroom. Some would push it a bit further and say there should be no mention of God in the classroom or the sickroom or the boardroom or any room for that matter? The same could apply to the shops. I know if you look hard enough, the main stationary shops do sell Christmas cards with a religious theme but they are getting harder to find. I got mine from a charity shop. This is the slippery slope of removing Christ from Christmas altogether. But those who call themselves Christians must not allow this to happen. Just like there would be no Monarchy without the Queen so also there would be no Christmas without Christ at its centre.

The Christian message proclaims that the Son of God became Emmanuel (God with us) for a specific reason. He wants us to be his partners in localising His presence in our corner of the world and become the embodiment of His message. Since the spread of Christianity is a divine human enterprise we become his front-runners in establishing His Kingdom of love and peace on earth. The Christmas story never let us forget this.