

## CHRISTMAS 2021 (Children)

*There is a story about a schoolboy in a nativity play who had his heart set on being Joseph but alas was assigned as he innkeeper. At the crucial moment instead of slamming the door behind the retreating figures of Mary and Joseph he ran after them shouting: 'It's alright you can have my room. Now, that's the spirit of Christmas*

Jesus was born in a stable where animals were housed in winter and was wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed in a manger which was a feeding trough for animals. We'd be ashamed tell anyone we were born in a stable. The reason why Jesus was born in a stable was because Mary and Joseph were turned away from the nearby inn which was full of guests on that particular night because throngs of people were in town for the census. We should thank God that we have a nice bed to sleep in every night where we can feel warm and safe. Many children are not so lucky. Despite the cold thousands of migrant children will have to make do with sleeping in tents tonight and every night.

But you don't find Joseph or Mary complaining when they saw the 'no vacancies' sign in the window of the inn. They had to make do with a stable. The only heat in the stable, for instance, was the body heat from the animals which would have helped to keep Jesus warm. The swaddling clothes in which baby Jesus was wrapped were a godsend on a night so cold. The door of the inn may have been closed to Mary and Joseph but thanks to Jesus, the door of Heaven is opened for all who live good lives.

Getting lots of presents from those who love us at Christmas is great but it's not the whole story. When we live with people who love and care for us, that is the best present we could get and it's not confined to Christmas. Look at the people in the crib

tonight. Mary and Joseph love each other and they both love Jesus.

The shepherds who thought they were unlovable were 'over the moon' when the angels appeared to them in the middle of the night and told them to go to Bethlehem where the newly born baby was. A lot of people didn't like the shepherds because they weren't always clean and wore scruffy clothes. People would steer clear of them. But when the angels appeared to them they must have felt ten foot tall. They were first in the queue to hear of Jesus's birth. The shepherds felt at home and loved in the stable with Mary and Joseph and it didn't matter what kind of clothes they were wearing or how scruffy they looked. I'm sure there's a lesson there for all of us. We should never judge a person by the way they look or the clothes they wear or how they speak. God loves everyone without exception.

Mary and Joseph were turned away from the inn but Jesus turns no-one away who is genuinely seeking Him as their friend. May he be our friend always?  
A happy and blessed Christmas to you all