

HOMILY FOR CHRISTMAS. A,B.C.

There is a story about a schoolboy in a nativity play who had his heart set on being Joseph but 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.'

Adults like to pretend that Christmas is for children – an engaging deception. Christmas is surely for those who need **to recover hope**...to find a Saviour.

If God has died on us the world is a wintry place but we find hope **alight in the eyes of a child**. It is very painful to live without hope.

A child still believes in salvation. Each of us needs a Saviour but the **grey years** persuade us there is none and the world is a forsaken place.

The politician, the entrepreneur, even the priest keeps making promises but doesn't always deliver. Some conclude that they must **walk alone** through life without knowing where they are going.

Others, however, persist in believing in better things, hope remains adhesive. Berries grow in winter.

Christmas celebrates the **birth of the newborn** which is full of mystery and promise – it's the mystery of the dawn, flush with possibilities.

The sick at heart can find in the newborn a re-birth of lost expectations and innocence. A dead candle is rekindled.

Because the baby is weak and defenceless we can identify with its condition. It speaks to our pity, even our self pity' for there is a crying child within the hearts of all of us.

The child is strong with promise and the magic of a new personality. Grown-ups saddened by too many sorrows, fall silent in the presence of the newborn. Something stirs, something

dawns – it is the dawn of new hope without which life has no meaning.

All human hopes converge on someone – someone who will save us from past follies and present fears.

God promised a Saviour and the world waited **for a super-man**. But He sent His Son, a child of weakness and of winter.

At the crib the image of God as **dread** finally dies. So also at the crib our cleverness and lost innocence, begin to melt and dissolve like the snows of winter.

We see God as He is, not over us but **with us**, not against us but **for us**.