

There is a sacred power in every newborn. They are full of life and curiosity, and a touch of cranky indignation, having been transported so suddenly from the safety of the womb into this large, mysterious place we call home.

If you have had the privilege of attending a birth, and holding a child as they make their initial protest over their changed situation, you will know what I mean. There is power in this tiny being that is mysterious, and out of proportion to their size - parents, grandparents, even medical staff (to some degree) - are held in awe of the birth event.

It never gets 'old' – it is never routine – and never ceases to amaze us.

A birth gives us hope that all is not lost - that the future needs to be considered – that plans had best be made. And that is certainly true of our celebrations of Jesus birth.

To begin with, this birth was fraught with all the sacred wonder that attends every human birth. The promise – the joy – the awe – and the indignation – all as it should be when a new life is welcomed in the midst of our lives.

Matthew writes of angelic visions for Joseph, and regal visitors from foreign lands. Luke brings us Mary and her heavenly heralds and the not so regal shepherds' chorus. Both gospels make much of the sacred wonder of this particular birth – and our faith is richer for their attention to detail. But it is to John's gospel I turn this morning.

Not our usual 'babe in the manger' – John chooses to tell it as it has been and 'as it will be' - tracing Christ's beginnings to the very beginning – and the opening of This gospel offers us a glimpse of the full-grown redeemer as a starting point for our celebrations –

What could be more wonderful!

For those tales of angels – those songs of praise – the royal gifts of the traveling trio - all these things are memories applied (well after the fact) by those who met in Jesus the truth of God's saving grace.

We celebrate the birth of Christ by retelling these ancient memories, and memorizing this chain of events in poem and song. We have elevated the story of this birth above all other births in history, by virtue of the accompanying cast of characters - but what matters most (it seems to me) is not HOW Christ came, but THAT Christ came.

"The word became flesh and lived among us", John says, "and we have seen his glory..."Glory that brought the heavenly host to earth. Glory that woke the sleeping multitude, and incited a riot of joy. Glory that revealed, well after the fact, that this birth – so like every other birth - marked the beginning of a life like none other.

For in Jesus, we met the very principles of God; unbounded love – unlimited compassion – an unbending sense of justice - all directed at those who had no right to expect any favours from God.

In Jesus we find hope like no other – hope that frees us to live out the promise that is in each of us from the moment of our birth - the sacred potential to make something wonderful of the future.

Take strength from these celebrations – and rejoice again in the mystery of this blessed birth that brings us, through the infant Jesus, into the very presence of God.

Amen