



Reflection - We All Matter

The Archbishop of Armagh's Christmas Message 2013

From The Most Revd Dr Richard Clarke, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland:

The Gospel stories of Christmas, read properly, are about deprivation, hardship, danger and defencelessness, all of which most definitely have a topical ring to them across the island of Ireland of today, rather than about good times for a minority and for 'people who matter'. If we were to look closer still at the biblical stories of the Nativity, we see that they are saying startlingly contemporary things to every



The Archbishops of Armagh prior to recording their Christmas message

community and to every individual. The most important of which is that *we all matter*, regardless of who or what we are, or what we have. The sheer insignificance of the holy family in Bethlehem on that first Christmas Day cannot be over-exaggerated. They didn't count (except in terms of a census), and they had no-one and nothing behind them, except perhaps a marginal kindness by one individual who was persuaded to find somewhere private where Joseph and Mary might have at least a modicum of dignity for the birth of a child.

Yet for all of the squalor and deprivation recounted, this sad little story was of eternal and universal significance. This muted and pitiable little episode in history was, in the theological language of Saint John's Gospel, nothing less than the Word of God invading the world. And by the Word of God we mean that which is the real meaning of everything, that which is the underlying logic and reason behind all creation. As you and I seek to relate usefully, practically and even sacrificially – as we all must do – to those who are being crushed by what is happening to them here today, very probably through no conceivable fault of

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their own, we can surely see the crucial connection with that event in Bethlehem. No matter how much we have tried to wrap up the Nativity in tinsel and pretty wrapping paper, it was the embodiment of real need and danger, and yet was the Word of God in its fullness.

The message of Christmas is clear: the Word of God was and

is to be found in all its power and love in the most ordinary and even the most pitiable of places, and it is there that we must continue to seek Christ. Above all, we must never doubt for one moment that we all matter infinitely to God and that we must therefore all matter infinitely to one another.

+Richard Armagh