

Bishop of Coventry Christmas 2020 Radio Message

What a year it's been! 'Keep a safe distance from others'. 'Stay at home as much as possible'. Words written in our places of work, our schools: I even have them on the door of my house. It's been the message we've needed to hear. The message we've tried to live by – not so much to keep ourselves safe but to keep others safe.

And now here we are at Christmas. At the heart of Christmas is the story of God who didn't keep a distance, safe in heaven but came to the dangers of earth, came to be born where animals eat and feed, soon to be a refugee fleeing threats to his life. God didn't stay at home in the top tier of heaven but came to the lowest tiers of earth. Because God had the power to save.

There's some respite for us over these festive days. Many of us are with our loved ones, and we rejoice at being together. But the shadow of Covid hangs heavy, and the dangers of getting too close with more than a small number remain, and our sacrifices for each other's safety continues.

As I think of my own mother alone at Christmas for the first time in her 91 years, I'm strengthened by the faith that has sustained her and that she passed on to me.

- The faith that God is with us in every circumstance: war and peace, poverty and prosperity, sickness and health.
- The faith that God came down from heaven at the first Christmas to bring us hope in every condition: a hope in the midst of Covid that the world saw fulfilled in Coventry when Margaret Keenen became the first person to receive the newly approved vaccine.
- The faith that God's love is so powerful that it can empower us, wherever we are, whoever we are, and whatever life is throwing at us – empower us to love each other and to love this wonderful world that God has given to us.
- The faith that trusts that God will overcome our troubles and transform our lives, our world.

Christmas has come! Jesus is born! 'Emmanuel' shall be his name, the prophets foretold. 'Glory in the highest heaven', the angels sang, 'and peace be on earth'. God has come to us!

May the Christmas Faith bring you hope, love and joy: God is with us, here to help us, here to save us. Happy Christmas!