



*Glory to God*  
in the Highest and on Earth

*Peace*

Luke 2:14

Christmas 2008

Cast your imagination back a century to the First World War. The soldiers were in their trenches, with devastation, barbed wire, frigid temperatures and snow all around. On Christmas Eve, of their own volition, one by one, the soldiers of the opposing sides stopped shooting and began to sing in their trenches. The music of the hymns reached out across the divide. They observed their own cease fire, walked out towards each other, and joined together in singing Christmas carols. Or, another half century before that, think of Scrooge's accounting office and all the characters in Charles Dickens' wonderful story, *A Christmas Carol*.... Give yourself a treat, and read it again.

We are surrounded by many huge challenges at this time. Yet, in our personal lives or in society generally, whatever else goes wrong, or right, there are things that matter more, things 'which are noble, and of good report', things which endure always.

To gather around a small candle, a little wood fire dispels a great darkness. Let us gather together this Christmas, and remember together all those things which matter more than anything else: The love of God for all of us everywhere through all time which we apprehend in the coming of God in the infant Jesus Christ; a loving word and gesture to family, to friends, to a poor neighbor, and yes, even to those who might fall into the category of "enemies". What we do in mutual recognition does not need to be expensive -- just a word, just a greeting, just a little thoughtfulness, a little loving, a little sharing. And then, recalling these simple things which are also the most important things, let us try to take them forward into the days ahead, into the year, and into our whole character.

And then at St Mary's Castleton: For our Patron Saint, St Mary, surely amidst all the pain, the awkwardness of her circumstances, and the enmity of Herod, still, this was the best of nights. Come and share with the congregation at the Midnight Mass, or Christmas morning. If there are babies, and children, it will help to remind us of the birth of Jesus. Bring someone along. Surely to share this moment together will be the best kind of memory for them. Even if you are rushing home, find some way of sharing the blessings of the season, perhaps with an invitation to someone who might otherwise be alone. And then take this friendship into the Sundays following - with a visit, a conversation, a note, a telephone call, or a lift to an event.

The Parish (including the Girl Scouts group, led by Nancy Nix) was involved in Thanksgiving Day food distribution, through Christ Church; and is sending care packages to our soldiers overseas. We are giving \$500 to the Diocesan program, "Carpenters Kids", which is already supporting 4000 children from families with AIDS in Tanzania. We are sending another \$500 to "Food for the Poor", which is supporting poverty struck families in Haiti. As an individual, please do think about your own way of sharing during this season in which we recall the way God shared the divine love of the Trinity with us here on earth.

With love,  
*Fr John Stubbs*