

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

Every year we enjoy singing traditional Christmas Carols- at least, most of us do. Well I do, anyway!

Christmas carols can evoke happy childhood memories and give us that warm, Christmas glow.

Today's psalm tells us to sing a new song- but we like the old ones, so why do we need a new one?

There's nothing wrong with the old carols and hymns, especially once their language has been tidied up if necessary. However, we do need to try to look at the familiar Christmas story with fresh eyes, and to tell it so it comes alive for us.

Today we heard from the beginning of John's gospel, which doesn't tell us anything about babies and mangers, shepherds and wise men, or any of the stories about Jesus' birth. Why then does our lectionary set this reading for Christmas morning?

John's gospel is thought to be the last of the four gospels to be written, and the writer takes a different perspective to that of the other gospel writers.

It's as if the writer has drawn back from the intimacy of the stable and taken a cosmic view of Jesus; looking back, and realising who Jesus really is, and then trying to convey his sense of wonder and awe.

I'm sure you have seen the famous photo of planet earth, called The Blue Marble. It is an image of the Earth taken on December 7, 1972, from a distance of around 29,000 kilometres from the planet's surface. Taken by the crew of the Apollo 17 spacecraft on its way to the Moon, it is one of the most reproduced images in history.

A lot of people have written about their feelings and thoughts as they see this view of our world.

From this distance and this perspective, the world does look like a beautiful blue marble. From this distance there are no visible boundaries, no way of telling where one country ends and another country begins.

From this perspective all our concerns about borders and territories fade away, as we see the world as a whole- one small blue planet, on which we all live out our lives.

When we read about Jesus in John's Gospel, we are being drawn into a vision of him as the eternal Christ. From this perspective we see Jesus as the Word, the one who has always existed in God, who took part in creation itself.

We see Jesus as the light coming into the world: being born like any other baby but carrying so much more within that tiny, vulnerable little body.

We see John the Baptist witnessing to the Light, to let everyone know Jesus was there.

We catch an ominous glimpse of his future, as we hear that his own people did not accept him- but some did, some received him, as some still do to this day.

And we hear that the Word, the Light, became flesh and lived among us. The divine Word who is embedded in creation becomes real to us in Jesus, the human being who was born, lived and died in a specific place and time.

Jesus unites old and new in his person: he was always there, in the beginning, in creation and in God's relationship with humanity; he was there for a time in Judea, breathing and eating and teaching and healing, suffering and dying; and he is here in the church, in the Spirit, and in all that is good and beautiful. He is with us when we sing, or pray, or laugh, or cry- always, and everywhere.

Jesus is with us in the Eucharist; every time we celebrate Holy Communion he is right here with us, feeding us with his body and his blood, strengthening and inspiring us for our work in the world.

Verse 4 says, 'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.'
Sometimes our world feels like a dark place. We can feel surrounded by bad news: wars, famine, violence, climate disasters- and burying our heads in denial won't make the darkness go away.

The Good News is that Jesus is the light of the world, bringing light and hope and peace into every situation, if we can just open our eyes to see. Christmas is a great time to look for the good in the world and to sing our thanks to God.

Our new song needs to be sung so that everyone can hear it. Our lives as well as our voices can sing of the Lord's goodness as we work and play, celebrate and pray.

Our new song is about a baby who embodied God's love, and that's a song worth singing.

The Lord be with you.