

What story do you need to hear at this moment in your life? What story will bring you joy, reinforce your sense of life's purpose, gladden and open your heart?

Is it the very human story of good cheer and companionship, of feasting and merriment, of gathering with people who make you happy? Of presents and trees and eggnog and excited happy children? Of stranger greeting stranger with 'Happy Holidays', smiling at a moment of connection and shared celebration? If so you are in the right place because that is the story of Christmas.

Is it the other very human story of a teenage mother giving birth in the dirt of a stable because there was no clean safe space for the likes of her? Of refugee parents fleeing with their baby to another country in search of safety? Of these poorest and most displaced being the chosen family of God? If so you are in the right place because that is also the story of Christmas.

Or is it the divine story of the almighty, eternal God, transcendent, mysterious and wonderful loving you so much that they chose to become like you? Chose to experience the pain and delight of a human life. To know what it is to cry with laughter and with sorrow, to love and be loved, to grieve, to dance and to die. A God who says 'you matter infinitely', who says 'I love you without question or restraint', who says 'I am with you now and always'. Because that is also the story of Christmas.

Whichever story you need to hear today let it become part of the narrative of your own life. Let it grow in you a sense of deep gratitude and the generosity that springs from thankfulness. Let it grow in you a passion for justice for all who are poor and marginalized. Let it grow in you a sense of wonder and hope, knowing yourself deeply, deeply loved and called to cherish this human family and this holy ground on which you walk.

And whatever your own story know that you belong here – here where we weave stories of thanksgiving, of justice, of love into one great narrative of meaning and hope. Here where we build community, fight for the marginalized and worship the divine with truth and beauty. Here where the story of Christmas is the story of our shared life and where the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the persistence of the wise men, the faith of Joseph, the courage of Mary and the peace of the Christ Child are always waiting to bless you.

Happy Holidays, and Merry Christmas to you all!