

God came in Jesus to offer peace and healing

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With the omicron variant mucking up everyone's plans again, the really big story has been how we all just want Christmas to be normal. Everyone longs to be safe together in a simple gathering of friends and family; longs to simply celebrate our love for each other and by sharing gifts, to show our thanks for each other. But then there's this terrible adversity which separates us and controls us. A lot of people are feeling allergic to government control. Something in us rejects pressure to think more widely than just our own circles; our own needs and wishes – to reject pressure to shape our behaviour around global priorities.

All this can give us a new insight into the holy family and the many adversities they faced at this Christmas time. Where we face lock-downs, they were away from home and on the road because of an over-controlling government. They couldn't find lodgings at a critical time in a pregnancy thanks to that interfering regime's lack of compassion and flexibility. They had to improvise managing the danger it all posed to their child's health and well-being, not to mention their own. Their tense relationship with authority and safety is the experience of so many people around the world now that it sounds almost subversive to tell their story.

Yet this experience we share with them may help us see for the first time how God really, really became one of us with all the adversities we face; facing all the barriers to our desire just to be allowed to live a normal life. The infant Jesus didn't come into the world in a sanitised palace. Jesus and

his family weren't spared the adversities and inconveniences that normal people endure every day. And yet we believe that this Jesus *is* God. How do we piece that together? Maybe we begin by thinking of this baby Jesus as a picture of how close God is prepared to be with us; immediately exposed to our struggles and our vulnerabilities.

God came in Jesus to offer peace and healing – full connection between physical being and divine eternity. Christ's incarnation – Christ's taking flesh is the opposite of the virus coming among us. Wonderfully healing, his coming into physical being is the epicentre of a divine healing spark which grows exponentially in us, through us and between us to infuse the whole of creation with its healing glow. Christ's incarnation transforms all life, all physical being by introducing the divine spark into us Earth creatures. The virus is one of many counterfeits of this. But knowing this, seeing it in the light of this story, we get to glimpse the staggering significance of the incarnation; Emmanuel; God with us. Thanks be to God! Amen