

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE 2018

By Archbishop Mark Coleridge

THERE'S a lot of death around these days – I guess there always is.

We've had abortion and now euthanasia in Queensland, and right around the world the shadow of death seems long.

In such a moment, it can seem forlorn to celebrate life as we do at Christmas.

But it's all the more necessary as the culture of death makes more ground.

Christmas is all about the gift of life, which is always a blessing, a sign of God-with-us.

We remember the birth of one particular child, Jesus of Nazareth, who is quite literally God-with-us.

In him, the God who is life, the source of all life, chooses to become one of us, to enter into the life of his creatures.

No other religion makes the claim that Christianity makes – that God took flesh.

Some religions even find it scandalous.

But for Christians, it is absolutely fundamental; and any heresy that's ever existed has in one way or other denied that God took flesh.

In the Christmas story, death stalks life from the beginning, as King Herod sends his men to destroy the child.

The shadow of the cross falls across the crib; the child is born to die.

Herod's lethal plan fails, and the child survives to grow "in wisdom, age and grace".

But he becomes the man who will go to his death on Calvary, victim of another murderous plot by the decision-makers of a later time.

Again the plot fails as the final solution of Easter trumps the final solution of Golgotha.

Life, not death, has the last word.

Everything we find in the Christmas stories is written in the light of Easter; there is nothing pre-Easter in the Gospels.

If the shadow of the cross falls across the crib, so the Christmas stories are shot through with the victory of life over death – which is why both Christmas and Easter are about the triumph of hope.

That's why at this time we think especially of people who are in seemingly hopeless situations – and what a procession they are here and far away.

We not only think of them: we pray for them and, where possible, act for them.

May the hope of Christmas touch every heart, so that the birth of the child will really be the "joy for all the people" promised by the angel of life.

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of Brisbane