



Reflections

The joy of Christmas

IN the lead up to Christmas everything and everyone around us is busy.

Families, friends and neighbours are busy with hectic preparations for Christmas parties and dinners. Businesses are finalising sales and deals before year-end.

Hotels and restaurants are busy serving meals to diners. Mass media is flooded with attractive and alluring advertisements. Churches have special services lined up, both for the preparation and

celebration of Christmas.

There is so much discussion, planning, and organisation involved, which can at times be demanding and laborious, yet most of the time is joyful.

The whole idea of preparing to celebrate Christmas is to remind ourselves about our vocation to be 'joyful' despite the inevitable hard realities, pressure and pain that daily life can bring.

We are very good at enjoying the positive perks of life such as good health, success-

ful relationships, economic success, parties and dinners with friends and family.

But when it comes to coping with life's challenges such as ill health, failure and poverty, most of us struggle and some of us just can't cope. Some people struggle to find anything to look forward to, and life seems miserable.

The thought of baby Jesus in the manger, surrounded by Mary, Joseph, angels, animals and shepherds, invites us to reflect on the complexity and

reality of our life, and to live in joy and happiness.

The good news that Mary was to bear a child must have brought both joy and anxiety. There was certainly joy at the birth of baby Jesus, but also anxiety and challenge with a birth in a strange place, at night and in a simple manger surrounded by livestock.

The evangelical Christian pastor Charles R. Swindoll said 'Life is 10% what happens to you and 90% how you react to it'.

Mary and Joseph reacted

joyfully to their baby's birth and we share in that joy. The message of Christmas is not only for Christians but for everyone. We must learn to continue life joyfully however hard and challenging the realities of life might be. 'I want you to be happy, always happy in the Lord; I repeat, what I want is your happiness' (Philippians 4: 4).

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