

## Tuesday 25 December 2018: Christmas Day

### *Triumph through vulnerability*



The Gospel stories of Christmas speak of God's love invested in a defenceless new born baby. Through him come salvation, joy and promise of peace for people of good will. This message is always at odds with the news headlines at any Christmastime. These are always full of war, tyranny and the doings of people of bad will.

For many Christians the gentle images of the first coming of Christ in Bethlehem have often clashed with the images of the second coming of Christ at the end of time. The strange beasts of the Book of Revelation joined in cosmic battle before God's ultimate triumph can inspire terror and foreboding that overwhelm the fresh promise of Christ's birth.

The Irish writer W.B Yeats wrote a poem, *The Second Coming*, at the end of the First World War with its massive slaughter and social change, and at the beginning of Civil War in Ireland. It evokes fear of the loss of any sense of stability and decency. It still speaks powerfully today in the threat we see to democratic institutions and to peaceful relationships between nations.

Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.

Yeats expresses his fear for the future through the symbolism of the Book of Revelation. He portrays his age, not as a Second Coming, but as a Second Birth, as full of menace and chaos as Christ's birth was full of reassurance and humanity: and what rough beast, its hour come round at last, slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

In Christian faith neither the domestication of the Christmas stories nor the terrors inspired by the images of the Book of Revelation catch the seriousness of Christmas nor the hope expressed in Christ's Second Coming. The Christmas stories tell of the hardships of travel forced by the Roman authorities in order to collect taxes, of homelessness, and of flight from a murderous tyrant. They remind us that the life promised us will come through Christ's later execution. In Christ God is with us for the long haul, and life comes through death.

For the early Christians, too, Christ's Second Coming of Christ was a source of hope in their reality of persecution and expulsion from their Jewish communities. Christ's second coming

speaks about hanging in and trusting that God will triumph in our lives through vulnerability.

The baby in the stable became the man on the cross and the Christ who will come again. The birth, death, Resurrection and second coming of Christ all speak of God's great love for us. For us at Jesuit Communications, who come from many religious and other traditions, our work and our relationships are based in love. Nothing else will keep us hanging in through times that are always testing.

Fr Andrew Hamilton SJ | Image courtesy of [pixabay.com](https://pixabay.com)

**The Richmond Catholic Parish pray that you and your family have a Happy and Holy Christmas and New Year.**