

Christmas - and Baby P

Written by Administrator
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The agonizing story of Baby P is etched on all of our minds as we approach Christmas this year. This poor defenceless child had had 60 points of contact with the children's services in Haringey before his death. It is almost too painful to contemplate. How can such things possibly happen? In a society which prizes children and offers them layer upon layer of protection how can any little child fall so completely through the net?

I'm not about to offer answers. Others can do that ... they will be queuing up to do so! And let's hope that the enquiries and reflections that flow from this hellishly tragic tale will cause effective action to be taken.

I wanted to reflect on this story in the light of Christmas partly because it seems so incongruous. What possible connection can there be between the baby of Bethlehem and the baby of Haringey? We would like to keep our comfortable pictures intact of that first Christmas – the loving parents cooing over their beautifully lit first-born, lying in the carefully arranged golden hay of the manger. We want to be able to see the shepherds kneeling adoringly at Jesus' feet and (unworried by the fact that it happened at least a couple of years' later!) we want to see the magi with their carefully positioned crowns offering their precious gifts.

I totally understand the desire to preserve that idyllic scene intact. However, it won't help us unless we recognize that there is a direct link between Jesus and Baby P. For Jesus came into the world precisely because of the appalling reality of failure and evil that is so graphically illustrated by the Baby P case. He came not to offer a Hollywood scene of choreographed perfection, but to immerse himself in the ugliness and failure of a world that had lost its way. Jesus came to a country that was under a violently oppressive occupation. He came to poor parents who were on the road because of the whim of a Roman administrator.

We will hear the Christmas readings again this year and will hear that the coming of Jesus brought light into the darkness, followed by the wonderful reminder that that darkness has never been able to put out the light. There is so much darkness about us this Christmas. The incredible story of the father in Sheffield who beat and raped his two daughters over a 25 year period, fathering nine children by them. Unimaginable darkness. The ongoing agony of Iraq and Afghanistan. Darkness that has become a way of life. The appalling mass killings in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Deep, deep, agonizing darkness. And so on, and so on.

But the darkness has never been able to put out the light. The light of Jesus shines. As I wish you a very, very happy Christmas I pray that the reminder of Jesus' birth will take you to deep

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places. It is in every way appropriate for us to party and to enjoy Christmas, for we cannot possibly keep the joy out. But let us not forget those for whom the darkness of their present lives is so dense that light is unimaginable. And let us seize every opportunity for telling our hardened and cynical society that even amidst this year's darkness, the light of Jesus still shines.