

25th December 2020

Gifts

“As for any independent life which Bashan might lead without me during these hours – that is not to be thought of.”

Thomas Mann, Herr und Hund (A man and his dog)

My three children are all in their 40s. But I remember the birth of each of them as if it was yesterday. The gift of each child was all my Christmases rolled into one! With deep emotion, I remember the moment of delivery. With a beaming smile, I remember each one coming home. And, with a frisson of excitement *and* anxiety I remember feeling that the gift which had now been put in our hands was unbelievably precious.

These tiny babies placed a great responsibility on me and my wife – for feeding, toileting, bathing, understanding, teaching, protecting, supporting, and much more besides. In each of them there was frailty and vulnerability. Like Thomas Mann’s Bashan, any independent life for them during the hours, days and months of their infancy, and, indeed, for the ensuing years, was “not to be thought of”. The responsibility was for us to do our very best with the gifts we’d been given.

This Christmas Day, Emmanuel, “God with us”, is the best gift of all, as Love is given birth in human form. With deep emotion we remember the story of its delivery. With beaming smiles we remember this Love coming home, to your world and mine. And, with a frisson of excitement and anxiety, we remember that the gift which has now been put in our hands is the most precious gift of all. How will we help this Love grow, feed it and further it, nurture and protect it, and help bring it to its fullness?

There is vulnerability, frailty and dependency in the Christmas story. By the Grace of God, the gift of Love is given to us today. We have the responsibility to use it well, so we can see Love grow into something amazing that can, and should, change the world.

May I wish you every blessing this Christmas. Amidst all the joys and regrets, plans and changes, excitements and anxieties of your day, I pray that the blessings of the gift of Love will fill your homes and your lives, for today and all the days to come. God bless you all.

A prayer for today

Love is our gift. Love is our responsibility. Love is our celebration. Amen.

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon

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