

In recent years we have seen the emergence of the “must see” television programmes be they the so called ‘reality TV’ programmes, We have had the likes of ‘Big Brother’ or ‘Strictly Come Dancing’. Coverage of these can attract as much air time on Breakfast TV as war in the Iraq and Syria – which in itself says something about relative values in contemporary society.

I must confess that by and large these programmes leave me cold but one that often fascinated me is the series ‘Who Do You Think You Are?’ Well known personalities are helped to research their ancestry and in the progress they come to a greater understanding of their background, the circumstances and events that helped mould their forebears and so helped make them the people they are today.

On the Sunday before last, in the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols, we traced the Biblical story from the very beginning to the birth of Jesus. Our Gospel reading from John reflects on the Word present from the very dawn of time becoming flesh in the person of Jesus. Christmas is a time to reflect on who this child is, whose teaching we follow, whose death and resurrection is celebrated in the bread and wine of the Eucharist.

Christmas is more than understanding who this Jesus is. In the process we are invited to enter into a deeper understanding of who we are, as individuals and as a community, before God. John shares with us a wonderful insight about ourselves:

.¹² But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God,¹³ who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

Made in the image of God, we are, each one of us, a child of God. In our service yesterday morning we celebrated Baptism, as we welcomed young Olivia Beckett into the family of the Church. Immediately following the signing with the sign of the cross, the priest prays for the child with the words:

May almighty God deliver you from the powers of darkness,
restore in you the image of his glory,
and lead you in the light and obedience of Christ. **Amen.**

Restore in you the image of his glory. I think of that old prayer that reminds us:

He became like us so that we might become more like him.

Well what is he, who is he? I rather like the description I came across several years ago, 'Jesus is the face of God towards us'. In other words, in him we encounter God. In the poverty of his birth he reveals the majesty and power of God. In him we experience the power, the peace, the reconciling, self forgetting, self emptying love of God for all mankind.

He became like us so that we might become like him. So who do we think we are? Through him, in fellowship with him we are ones called to show something of the love of God as revealed to us in the coming of his Son, to be the hands, the feet, the eyes, the lips of Christ in the world in which we are placed, to be living effectual signs of his reconciling, redeeming love in our homes, our places of work and recreation.