

A Christmas like no other - Bishop of Chichester's Christmas homilies

"This Christmas, like no other that most of us have ever known, is one I hope we shall never forget," the Bishop of Chichester, Dr Martin Warner, said in his Christmas morning address at Chichester Cathedral this morning.

Reflecting on what we have all experienced in recent months, Dr Warner observes that "in the gloom of this social - and global - reality, the fragility of the Christ child demands one thing of us: that we respond to his kindness by kindness to others and, in right measure, to ourselves."

Hidden and heroic kindness, of which we have witnessed much in recent months, is defined by the Bishop as "the practical definition of the shaft of light that startles the shepherds, that guides Magi in search of wisdom, and that shines out from the Bethlehem stable as the Virgin Mother offers us her divine child."

The Bishop also reflected on the impact of 19th century traditions which continue to form and fashion some of our approaches to Christmas including the works of Charles Dickens.

Dickens, says Dr Warner, may have had a "cool and remote" attitude towards established Church and religion but this did not prevent him from understanding "the deeper significance of the moral nature of the Christian faith and its outworking in human behaviour and relationships as a theological statement about the dignity of the human person." He was also skilful in using the media of his day "to present the issues of poverty, disease, exploitation and despair" and, in doing so, built bridges of understanding.

In his homily at the Midnight service the Bishop reflected on the huge success this Advent of the Chichester Nativity. The artwork, created by Visual Arts Advisor and Curator Jacqueline Creswell, and Artist and Photographer Ash Mills, is an immersive photographic installation, sharing the familiar story of the Nativity in the style of a renaissance tableau.

<https://www.chichestercathedral.org.uk/art/chichester-nativity>

Comparing the effect of this stimulating project to the "wonderfully rustic and lyrical paintings that adorn St Michael's church in Berwick, East Sussex" Dr Warner described the Cathedral Nativity as "a solemn and sombre gift, as it expressed a response to the reality of death and the precarious uncertainty of the future, in the pandemic and in our new economic and political status."

CLICK [HERE](#) FOR A LINK TO THE MIDNIGHT HOMILY

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