

All about children

Heather Smith *reflects on* Isaiah 63:7-9,
Matthew 2:13-end and Hebrews 2:10-end

Today's readings are about children, both flesh and blood and spiritual. The Holy Family flees into Egypt. How ironic to return there, when the founding stories of the nation tell us that the Israelites escaped from Egypt with great drama many years before? In an equally dramatic escape Joseph flees with Mary and Jesus is the middle of the night – surely a terrible path to have to take. We can imagine Mary saying, "Egypt? Are you really sure?" It must have seemed like a physical and spiritual backward step.

Like the Holy Family, we flesh-and-blood children are vulnerable beings. For the infant Christ, human inhumanity caused misery and danger, and still does for so many today. But we are also spiritual children of God, saved, Isaiah tells us, by God's presence. And God's presence brings together the physical and spiritual. The letter to the Hebrews explains that it takes the form of Christ, who became like us in every respect.

Our responsibility is to bring God's presence, both physical and spiritual, to those who suffer, confident of Christ's saving grace in their lives and ours. Even those who have fled, like the Holy Family, from physical or spiritual danger, can find God's saving presence if we point them in the right direction. 🍵



Saving God, give us courage to recognise those who are living in danger and to stand beside them, pointing them in the direction of your saving presence. May we follow your word, wherever it leads, confident that we are your beloved children. Amen.

People of the New Testament

Luke

by Caroline Fletcher

*Luke's Gospel; Acts; Colossians 4:14;
2 Timothy 4:9-11; Philemon 23-24*

Most of us associate Luke with the third Gospel. But he also wrote the Acts of the Apostles and contributed around a quarter of the New Testament – even more than Paul.

Luke appears to have been a modest and faithful man who was a tremendous support to Paul and recorded momentous events in church history without feeling the need to draw undue attention to his own involvement in those

events. We certainly owe him a great deal. His Gospel has left us much better informed about Jesus' life, providing a wealth of information, including details about Jesus' birth, that isn't found in the other Gospels.

In Acts, Luke documents the years that followed Christ's death, including the growth of the early Church and its spread to the Gentiles. Without him we'd know far less about the work of Paul and other early Christians, who helped the Gospel move out from Jerusalem to the rest of the world. 🍵

Christmas isn't over

by Ricarda Witcombe

Even if your tree may have lost its needles and your festive food has all been eaten, the truth of Christmas is here to stay. As the African-American writer Howard Thurman put it: "When the song of the angels is stilled, the work of Christmas begins: to find the lost, to heal the broken, to feed the hungry, to release the prisoner, to rebuild the nations, to bring peace among

the people, to make music in the heart."

What might that mean in your own context, as this year draws to its end but the light of the Christmas star continues to shine? We may carry all sorts of fears and stresses into 2026, but the truth of Christmas changes things. God is with us, making a home right in the midst of our lives. That gives us such a deep place from which to draw strength and life, for ourselves and others. 🍵

“The object of a new year is not that we should have a new year, but rather that we should have a new soul.”

G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936), writer, philosopher, theologian and critic