



OFFICE OF
BISHOP WILLIAM WRIGHT

Monday 22 December, 2014

Happy Christmas, by whatever means.

I wish a 'Happy Christmas' to all who chance to read this. I'm not fanatical on the point, but I prefer '*Happy* Christmas' to 'Merry', simply because of the ideas that are mixed up in 'getting merry'. I hope you will still be *happy* on Boxing Day, not half dead and hung over from the excesses of being *merry*. I wish we were, as a people, better at happiness and less given to desperate merriness!

So what makes a *Happy* Christmas? For some, young and old, it will be all about what we get. Are the presents any good this year? If that's you, I wish you a Happy Christmas. There's no doubt that getting something great can be a source of joy and excitement. And that can be great to see, especially in children. Often, of course, the greater happiness comes to the person who has given the just-right present. May you have that happiness.

For most of us, however, the happiness of Christmas will be measured by more than the gifts. Most people still feel that just getting together with family and catching up with friends is more important than the presents. Even seeing Auntie Maude (who always gives you socks!) can somehow remind us that we have a story, a place in the world, people to whom we belong no matter what. I might not ever have chosen Auntie Maude as a friend, or even my brother or cousin or the old man, but there they are: people who are evidence that I do belong somewhere, I am someone, quite independently of what I have achieved, owned, done with my life. I wish all readers that happiness this Christmas.

Yesterday I drove past a fast food place that had up a big banner: 'Open Christmas Day'. It gave me an uneasy feeling. All of the teenagers who will be sweating away making burgers at Christmas instead of being with their families! Is it really so important? I wish a Happy Christmas, at some stage, to all those burger jockeys (and to police, ambulance people, etc, who really do have to stay at their posts). May there be a point at which you can have a real Christmas, too.

And, of course, to Christians, I wish a 'Happy and Holy Christmas'. For us, Christmas is not fully happy without also being 'holy', that is, 'set apart as a special time', a time of feeling blessed. May you have the graced moments in which you realise your place in God's family too. May it come home to you afresh that God came to our place, as one of us, and gave us the greatest of his gifts in Jesus. To those who 'get it', I wish you that truly, deeply *Happy Christmas*.