

When I went into the supermarket a few weeks ago to pick up their Christmas food order leaflet, I got far more than I expected.

I thought I'd come away with one small hand-out: but, oh no! It was a book the size of 'War And Peace!'

Christmas is the most lavish, and elaborately celebrated of all the secular seasons in the year – but hang on!

Surely, Christmas is all about Jesus; the name gives it away – it is 'Christ's Mass.'

Yes, it is; but we can easily forget that, and get swept away by all the glitter and glow, all the tinsel and show.

Giving at Christmas is wonderful, especially if you have children in the family.

The Lord wants us to give to Him; but the present He desires is for us: "To do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God." Mic. 6: 8 as he says through Micah, the Prophet.

Micah also says that the Saviour will do just that – He will come from the small, obscure village of Bethlehem. See Mic. 5: 2

'O little town of Bethlehem,' we sing in the carol; 'In thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light.'

There is no place too small, too dark, and no life too troubled, where Jesus can't enter in.

The first simple truth of Christmas is that Jesus comes to open any heart.

We don't have to indulge in a great deal of expenditure; we have to open our life to Jesus, which, of course, may be very expensive personally for some people to do.

The message of Micah about the little town of Bethlehem is that the light of Jesus is among us wherever we may be to illuminate the darkest streets of any person's life.

The second simple truth of Christmas is that the gift of ourselves remains the very best we can give to Jesus – not the 21st. Century equivalent of gold, myrrh or frankincense.

Just as the most magnificent gift Jesus gave to His Father was the gift of His life for us.

As Jesus says to His Father in Hebrews: "God, here I am! I am coming to obey your will. [And] you have given me a body to offer [to you for the salvation of the world.] Heb. 9 & 5

To offer Himself for our salvation: "For God's will was for us to be made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all time." Heb. 10: 10

This is His great gift to us, which begins with Jesus coming as a helpless baby that first Christmas night.

Our thanks to the Lord for this wonderful Christmas present is the commitment of our life to Jesus. It WILL change us: it WILL change the world around us on levels we least expect, and can't imagine.

The third simple truth of Christmas is this: that ordinary, daily life is where the Lord's grace and human beings meet.

Mary's visit to Elizabeth shows us that truth.

The Lord's work of salvation takes place, not just in moments of high drama, but in ordinary moments of human compassion and care.

Mary's simple, compassionate stay of three months to help her elderly cousin in her pregnancy was Mary's 'Christmas present' to Elizabeth.

Ordinary human kindness from one woman to another; and yet: "At the sound of Mary's greeting, Elizabeth's child leaped within her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit." Lk. 1: 41

John the Baptists leapt in his mother's womb because in Mary's womb was the Saviour.

He: "Whose origin is from of old, from ancient days." Mic. 5: 2

but is now taking flesh in Mary's womb.

Jesus came to birth in Mary – He must come to birth in us too.

Each of us is to be a God-bearer; to carry Jesus in our lives out into the nitty-gritty of everyday living.

Letting the Holy Spirit fill us as it filled Mary so that we can make her 'Yes' to the Lord our 'Yes' too: "I am the Lord's servant. May your word to me be fulfilled." Lk. 1: 38