

Words of Welcome

Mary Hunt lives in Roscommon.



‘You are welcome to Cloonfree’ was the greeting my father gave to visitors to our house when I was young. Cloonfree was the townland where we lived, and the greeting was a warm and genuine one.

This Christmas, as I pray at the crib, I will think of my father’s words of welcome. Is the infant Jesus truly welcome in our world? There is no doubt that we need him. Life in 2024 is challenging for all of us. The news is hard to watch with wars and tragedies. What we need so badly is hope, and I believe the Christ child offers that. He will grow to become a great teacher, worth listening to. He will light the spark of hope in our hearts, hope that each person has value and our lives do not end in death.

We should, however, welcome him as he is. There is nothing more joyful than the birth of a child. His was a humble beginning. It did not conform to human standards befitting a king. He may have done this to teach us what is important in our lives. To me

he is primarily the king of our hearts. That is where love originates. It is easy to feel love for a baby. Imagine Mary’s joy as she held her new-born son. We have a share in that joy, and we ought to partake of it. We should welcome into our hearts Jesus as a baby. He will teach us how to love. Indeed that is his main message ... love one another. It is what the world needs most.

The seed of love in our hearts has what it takes to provide us with all we need. During his mission Jesus makes this point. Out of the heart comes all evil thoughts and actions. So too, I believe, his life has sown in our hearts the seed of love. He has shown us through his life, death and resurrection what it truly means to love.

If you do one thing this Christmas, let it be to kneel at the crib, recognise what God has done, let the love of Christ embodied in a tiny baby enter your heart and bid him welcome to the world.