



St John's Church St. Raphaël

We send you our best
wishes for a blessed
Christmas full of the
joy of the new born
King

With love
Ben and Anne
and all the family of St
John's

*“Sing choirs of Angels, Sing in exultation,
Sing all ye citizens of heaven above,....
Glory to God in the highest.”*

The lines of one of the most loved of all carols. There are so many carols that feed our souls at Christmas, we sing them gladly, but why not sing them throughout the year, after all the meaning of the truth of Christ being born, and born in us, is alive and present to us every day. Most of us know many lines from many wonderful carols. I suspect all of us know by heart for example these lines, *“Silent night! Holy night! All is calm, all is bright.”* We can savour these lines well beyond Christmas, even in the darkest of our days, for it tells us again and again of God's presence ever with us in Christ. The Christ, who is Emmanuel, God with us, who carries us through turmoil and pain, and shows us God's pure light *“The dawn of redeeming grace”*. None of us can forget the story of that Christmas morning, when, in the terrible battle fields of death and hell, the guns fell silent. German and allied soldiers sang, in desperate hope, the lines of this sublime carol of human longing. In the midst of carnage it was a taste of *“heavenly peace”*.

In every age carols speak of the God, who himself, sings a love song to humanity as *“heavenly hosts sing alleluia”*. We find this tellingly expressed in the lines *“Still their heavenly music floats o'er the weary world; and ever o'er its Babel sound the blessed angels sing.... And man at war with man, hears not the love song that they bring”*

We sing these carols, these love songs between God and man, as prayers for the new creation being brought about in Christ, The Prince of Peace the Light of the World.

Another of the carols I love so much says this beautifully, and so appropriately for us as we pray for peace on God's holy earth, in God's Holy Land. ***"O little town of Bethlehem ... the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight. Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light"***.

Christ born of Mary, is named Emmanuel, which means God with us. That means that God is with us in all our desperate hopes and terrible fears. The lines of that same carol go on ***"God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His heaven. Where meek souls will receive Him still, the dear Christ enters in."*** In faith in Christ we believe we can be transformed, indeed, the Christmas vision is that we be born again in Christ and he be born in us. The line of that carol, and all these carols, can be considered a prayer, that we, and all humanity, might be more Christ like, "not I but Christ in me" as Paul prayed. The Christian vision is that we, all humanity, might incarnate the spirit of God and become a genuine blessing to one another, to God's world. These carols celebrate the sublime joy of this vision becoming the reality of our Christian faith, so that we all might sing, heaven and nature together, ***"Joy to the world the Lord is come let earth receive her king; let every heart prepare Him room, repeat the sounding joy of the wonders of His love!"***

Christmas and Epiphany, with these wonderful carols reveal to us the meaning and the truth of the Christian vision for every day of every year until *"Thy Kingdom come O God, thy rule O Christ begin!"*

May the blessings of our Lord Jesus Christ give you joy and peace, and new life in this New Year.