

Noon Session - The First Noel

One of the best ways in which we can celebrate Christmas is to give thanks to God for those who are accompanying the poor today – those handing out food to the hungry, those giving shelter to the homeless; those befriending refugees and migrants with no recourse to public funds; those who care for the elderly in their homes or in care homes; those doctors and nurses who are working with the sick in hospitals.

The news of Jesus' birth was announced by the angels not to the rich and powerful. From the beginning to the end of his life, they were the ones who tried to do away with him. No, the angels gave their tidings of great joy to shepherds, the poorest of the poor, who lived with the sheep they pastured on the hillsides above and around Bethlehem.

These were the ones who heard the angels' message and having heard it they obeyed it. They went to see the child lying in a manger and when they left, St Luke tells us that they praised and glorified God for what they had seen.

Jesus was born in poverty, into a family that was homeless. He chose the life of an itinerant preacher who announced good news to the poor. He said that the poor were blessed and he died in poverty, on a cross, as though he were a common criminal.

Another way in which we can celebrate this Christmas is to remember what we often choose to forget: our own poverty. We are all needy people, dependent on others and dependent on God. Rejoice and be glad because the angels speak to you this Christmas those words once spoken to the shepherds: "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord."

In the joy of these words, let us rest awhile this afternoon, and may that joy be yours this Christmas.