

## **The Reader Writes – April 2024**

It may seem strange to be looking back over my shoulder to Christmas when here we are approaching Holy Week and Easter. But in the Reader household, elements of our Christmas celebrations still remain. A branch of our hornbeam hedge, that once held seasonal decorations, is now bare except for its rust coloured leaves. Somehow it looks good on an otherwise blank wall, and so remains. That, and a few dried pine needles, that occasionally emerge from beneath the carpet, still bring memories of Christmas.

Scripture tells us very little – if anything – about the childhood of Jesus. But there is a fascinating story in the ‘Arabic Apocryphal Gospel of the Infancy of the Saviour’ that has a direct link between the birth and death of Christ.

It is said that during the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt they were stopped on the way by two young robbers, Gestas and Dismas. They seized the donkey, but then one, Dismas, returned to see what Mary was clutching to her breast. When he saw the Christ child he was overcome by the child’s unusual beauty and said; “If God were to take upon Himself the flesh of a man, He would not be more beautiful than this Child.”

Dismas then persuaded Gestas – a bribe of forty drachmas is mentioned – to return the donkey and all else he had taken, and allow the Holy Family to continue their journey unharmed.

Thirty-three years later these same two thieves were crucified either side of Christ; Gestas to his left and Dismas to his right.

Seeing the innocent Christ crucified, Gestas reviled Him, whilst Dismas defended Him and repented of all the evils of his life. It was to Dismas that Christ said; “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.” (Luke Ch23 V43)

It is a little late – or far too early! – to wish you all a Happy Christmas. But it is never too early to wish you all a Happy Easter!

Alleluia! Christ is risen!  
He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Yours in Christ

Reader David

