



In Year 5A, our preparations for Advent have begun. This is a time when we look back on another 'unprecedented' event. An event which happened 2000 years ago, during a time of challenge when – the Bible tells us – people walked in darkness, longing for signs of light and hope.

Similarly, 2020 has been a year when people have needed signs of hope. Perhaps the most obvious were the rainbows of hope that we all displayed in our windows to express our gratitude for the courage and compassion of our NHS and key workers. 2020 has been a time when we have needed these signs. For many, it has been incredibly difficult: some people went through lockdown feeling terribly lonely; some have experienced illness and loss; some continue to feel anxious about the months ahead.

Soon we'll remember the beginnings of another unlikely saviour. A small baby, born in a poor stable, to unknown parents from an ordinary town, who from his birth became the greatest sign of hope the world had ever seen. Whose arrival, or advent, had been dreamed about for centuries, as revealed in this Bible reading by prophet Isaiah, written 700 years before the first Christmas:

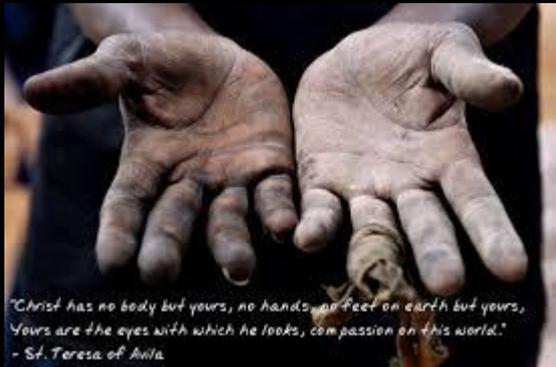
'The people who walked in darkness has seen a great light; on those who live in a land of deep shadow a light has shone...

For there is a child born for us, a son given to us, and authority is laid on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.' Isaiah 9:2, 6-7



This unlikely sign of hope has, for over 2000 years, inspired billions of others to bring light to the world too. Similarly, we are called to reach out with love to our sisters and brothers in need, sharing our hope for a world transformed. There are so many little acts that we can do, that will make a big difference to somebody else: forgiving errors, acting with kindness, supporting the needy, promoting peace, striving for justice. By living like this, we continue to make Christ's presence known on earth every day: delivering to all people the true gift of Christmas, God's love.

These sentiments are captured well in a prayer written by St Teresa of Avila.



Christ has no body but yours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,  
Yours are the eyes with which he looks  
With compassion on this world,  
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,  
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.  
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,  
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.  
Christ has no body now on earth,  
But yours

In the words of Pope Francis ...



Let's finish with some prayers of hope written by the children, asking Christ to encourage us to fan the flame of hope and faith in our world.

God of hope,

You are our God who saves us from hard times. We cling to you with hope through the gifts of your Son. We enter our way down the right path with you in our hearts. As we become closer to you at this special time of year, we pray and worship you every day. You help us to break out of our sins for you to forgive us.

Amen

God of Hope,

Travel with us to when your Son, Jesus, was born, bringing us hope and joy to the world. Guide us to be like Jesus, being strong even in the toughest of times like now as we face the Coronavirus pandemic. Let us have strength, faith and hope to get through it with your love.

Amen.



Advent brings us closer to Christ who is with us. We are reminded that no one is beyond the reach of God's love. We wait with joy for the Lord, the hope of the world.