

You Don't Need Wings to be an Angel - A Christmas Message from The Bishop of St Albans, the Right Reverend Alan Smith

In this year's family Christmas film 'Nativity', you might spot a fourth wise man and camel. Don't worry. It doesn't affect the real Christmas story one bit.

We know that there were three gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh. But we don't know how many people brought them.

Most years there is a row about whether or not some aspect of the Christmas story is true. Take angels, for example: familiar in art, literature and Christmas decorations, complete with wings. Now, I wouldn't for a minute put a wingless angel on my tree, but actually angels in the Bible don't have wings. I've recently seen a Christmas card with an angel portrayed as a postman, which is a good modern take. After all, it was angels who first brought the good news to Mary and then to the shepherds. But don't let modern interpretations of angels with or without wings spoil your Christmas.

The truth is that Christmas can't really be spoiled except by removing Jesus Christ from its heart: the holy miracle child, teacher and Saviour. Perhaps that's why 85% of the recently surveyed British population voted against such things as 'Winterval' and want to keep Christ in Christmas.

So this festive season don't just give presents - recapture the true spirit of Christmas and give hope. Saying you don't have wings is no excuse any more! Make a few changes in your lifestyle to help protect the planet. Help those in need, support someone who's ill or visit a lonely neighbour. Give generously to a charity to help those worse off than you.

Go on: be an angel this Christmas!