



## **Reflection -**

### **God is not terribly interested in religion**

**By David Chillingworth, Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church.**

**God is interested in life transformed, not the business of 'religion' for its own sake, the Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church declared in his Christmas Eve sermon at St Ninian's Cathedral, Perth.**

**The Most Rev David Chillingworth is Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church, part of the worldwide Anglican Communion, and Bishop of St Andrews Dunkeld and Dunblane.**

**He began his Midnight Eucharist homily by observing the challenges facing communities and churches today.**

"In the midst of all the Christmas spending, the payday lenders are there, reminding us of the plight of the most economically vulnerable in our society – forced to borrow at ruinous interest rates. And of course war continues to take away life, dignity and well-being – in Syria, Sudan and the Middle East and in many other places.

"It's the best of human life and the worst. No doubt it has always been so and it was so in the time of Jesus," said Bishop Chillingworth.

Reflecting on the meaning and impact of the incarnation of God in Christ, the heart of the Christian message, he continued: "You may be surprised to hear me say that God is not likely to be terribly interested in the business of religion with all its fussiness and tradition for its own sake.

"Think for a moment about what really challenges us in the depth of our being – suffering, sickness and pain, betrayal and denial particularly in our personal relationships, humiliation, loss and death. None of us is immune to those. We are profoundly challenged by them because they happen in our lives and, for the most part, we can't do anything very much about them. They can't be fixed by wanting to or by determination or by strength of character. They can only be transformed and redeemed by sacrifice, love, truth and generosity and by healing at the deepest level – and those are the things which we see embodied in Jesus Christ.

"At its heart, Christmas is about God offering an answer to the pain of human life – of light shining in the darkness and the darkness not overcoming it – of John who came as a witness, of God's creative and loving answer to all the pain and sadness which has ever been and will ever be. 'The word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth' Jesus sings these words into our hearts so that we know who God is – knowing who God is we know who we are as well. And we sing them too," he said.

The Scottish Episcopal Church describes itself as "a welcoming and inclusive Church that traces its history back to the beginnings of Christianity in Scotland".

\* The full sermon is reproduced here: <http://www.bishopdavid.net/2013/12/christmas-sermon/>

\* Scottish Episcopal Church: <http://www.scotland.anglican.org>