



CHRISTMAS 2011 – Isaiah 9.2-7, Luke 2.1-14

Who knows what plant this is and why we have one in Church today?

= A poinsettia. But in its native country, Mexico, it is called the flor de Noche Buena (Christmas Eve). Anybody know why?

It goes back over 400 years, to a Mexican legend about a little girl called Maria who was sad because she was too poor to provide a gift for the celebration of the birth of Jesus. The story tells how an angel inspired the girl to gather some weeds from the roadside and put them in front of the church altar. Her brother Pablo supported her, saying “it doesn’t matter what you give, as long as it is given in love”. The other children teased her, until they saw the plants turn from green to red on top, right before their eyes as the Maria knelt before the altar.

Everybody in the village then realized that a miracle had taken place and from that day on the plant was known as the flor de Noche Buena – a reminder of that wonderful night when Jesus the Son of God was born to save the world. Which leads us to that reading from Isaiah.

#### Isaiah’s extraordinary vision

A vision of the transformation of the world from what human beings have made it into what God intended it to be

At the centre of the vision is the birth of a new king, a new son of David who would bring to the world

- LIGHT (v2) instead of darkness and ignorance and fear
- JOYFUL UNITY (v3) instead of boundaries, suspicion and hatred
- PEACE (v5) instead of war and plotting
- FREEDOM (v4) instead of oppression and exploitation
- JUSTICE and RIGHTEOUSNESS (v7) because these qualities truly reflect the character of God.

This is the kind of world human beings long for.

Let this Noche Buena plant represent this ideal world.

This is perfection, this is the way we’re wired to live, although looking around us we don’t seem to be very good at it.

NOW for most of us the biggest question is  
How ON EARTH (not just in heaven) do we get from this (crib figure of Jesus) to this (poinsettia)?

How can the transformation of the world into a just, healthy, free, safe, flourishing and caring society become a reality instead of just a dream?

PART of the answer is on the wall behind me (‘†’)

The rest of the answer is sitting around you in the pews of this church

Not just today but Sunday by Sunday

Not just here but in thousands of churches around the world who are taking seriously God’s mission to save his creation.



St George's Church  
BARCELONA

As you look at your co-conspirators in this great revolution you may start to doubt that it will happen - these are ordinary people, not miracle workers!

But listen again to the final verse of our reading:

*The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this (Is 9.7)*

God is going to fill everyone who answers his call with his ZEAL, with his LIFE, with his SPIRIT. God is going to train our hearts and minds and show us how to make his dream, his vision happen.

If you think this world is just fine the way it is, then this will be an uncomfortable church to be part of.

But for some of you, I know you can feel God stirring your hearts to come and join us in this amazing mission. Or if you don't live here, find a church near your home which is serious about God's mission.

Come and join us and see how this (baby Jesus figure) becomes this (poinsettia), to the glory of God!