

## Daniel's reflection for week beginning 4th December God with skin on

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On Tuesday morning I was blessing the Advent wreath at our school assembly. The headmaster had explained the meaning of the four coloured candles, one to be lit each week before Christmas. 'What is most important of all,' he stressed, 'is that our hearts, too, should shine out for each other. We should all be candles of love for those around us.'

Now it happened that I was a little depressed that morning. After many draining demands, the prospect of another long day's parish-work was getting me down. Having said the blessing I was sitting among the gathered parents. I had my head in my hands, my shoulders hunched. For some reason I looked up. Right in front of me, tiny as a tot, her arms stretched as wide as the sky, stood a smiling three-year old. 'Fr Daniel,' she whispered, 'can I give you a hug?' I swear I will carry that memory to my grave. It was a glimpse of pure, spontaneous grace. I had not known Rachel before. Her teacher, Catherine, had not urged her on. On a dark and cold December morning, Rachel, like an Advent candle, brought light and warmth into my worried heart.

I'm reflecting, this evening, on that special moment. I realise that this is the only way God can reach us, touch us, console us. Since the first Christmas, God is forever committed to healing and holding us through each other. That is the real magic of this season – the essential reason for all the celebrating we do. The incarnation of God means that our deep need for being comforted can now only come in a human way. We can scarcely believe how intimately God is present to us – in every word, smile and tear.

There is a story about the fearful child, who, during the night, called out for his mother. She came into his room and spoke to him about the protection of the angels and of God all around him. He refused to be satisfied by her reassurances. 'I want a God with skin on!' he blurted out. And that is what God does in becoming human at Christmas

*(Prism of Love p 79)*