It is with great joy that I speak to you tonight as we gather together to give thanks and praise to God for the gift of his Son. We have heard through listening to our carols the glorious Christmas story and now in the quiet of this night it is time to reflect on the glory gathering around us. In the reading from Hebrews we heard some very special and unique words, verse 3 reminds us that Jesus is the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being and that he sustains all things by his powerful word.

Three descriptions of what truly lies ahead for us this holy night, firstly Jesus as the reflection of God’s Glory, when I think of this particular image I am reminded of St. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians, at present we see only puzzling reflections in a mirror, but one day we shall see face to face. This is a reference of the glory which is to be revealed to us all at the fulfilment of God’s kingdom. Here all who have loved the Lord Jesus shall see his glory not as a mere reflection but face to face. The epistle reminds us of the promise of eternity and the great advent hope of the second coming of Jesus in a personal way enabling the recreation of what our Christmas Story really began.

With Christ being presented before us we are given a glimpse into the reality of God, a God who loves us, sustains us and is always there for us. It seems that it is not God who presents himself as a mirror image but rather that we in all our own insecurities are the ones who see ourselves as we are rather than as the people God created us to be.

For it is only when we can gaze upon ourselves and see Jesus that the mirror image fades and face to face engagement takes place. It is in the realisation that we are not created for self but for God that our very existence grasps hold of our eternal reality.

This is why Hebrews goes on to say that Jesus is the exact imprint of God’s very being. In Jesus we can not only see God but we are brought into his personal presence. One of the ways I find most helpful in exploring this mysterious heavenly connection is through the art of iconography. For generations holy scholars and historic devoted monks have dedicated their lives in creating icons which in themselves act as windows to heaven. Every icon tells a story and within each icon there is a central character to which everything else points. Follow the icon with the eye of faith and it will open up a divine window through which we as human beings can reach out and touch that which is divine.

This is what is meant by Christ being the exact imprint of God’s very being, what we see in Jesus is God interacting with his people in a unique and holy way. The Christmas birth celebrates this reality in a very human way, it reveals God’s glory through and in the glory of all that he has created, and this although deeply profound is so beautifully simple to understand.

Whenever we gaze into the eyes of a new born child what do we say? Oh look he has his mother’s eyes, or look see no mistaking that nose he is certainly his Fathers son! Beautiful gestures which remind us of intimacy, of relationship and of continuity, looking through the eyes of Jesus we look directly into the holy and divine eyes of God, not just a mirror image not just an imprint of God’s very being, but into the very most inner sanctum of Gods eternal presence. To gaze on the Christ child is to gaze upon God, We are then called to open ourselves up to that glorious reality, and we are challenged to see within ourselves the reality of God Emmanuel, God with us.

God with us eternally by his presence and his grace revealed most intimately by the word of God made incarnate into human form.

For this new born holy child is the glory of God revealed in and through his Holy creative word. For in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.

Those holy words of St John so beautifully remind us that all that matters in this life is the holy word of God, without it we are nothing, without it in our lives we see nothing but ourselves in the mirror and we never manage to open a window into the divine life which created us and sustains us. Without the word darkness swallows us, and we never see the light of a new day, but with the word, darkness is cast away wherever it may appear, for with the word of God written in our hearts our lives are transformed and we rest secure within the loving embrace of the Christ child. May the beauty and the wonder of this night be truly magical for us to behold, and as the story of life unfolds let us be enabled to see our own lives given purpose and fulfilment in and through the beauty of gazing upon God face to face,

Look to Jesus and he will open your eyes, there will no longer be any confusion or uncertainty, look to Jesus and you will discover yourselves and in so doing find that you are already filled with the Glory of God, look to Jesus and be as one with him, look at his nose and see your own inhaling the divine breathe of God, look at his ears and listen to your own responding to the word of God, look into his eyes, and weep with sheer delight as you gaze upon God and find yourselves wrapped for ever in his eternal love.

May the glory of the Christ child fill you with peace and joy and hope, in his holy and glorious name; Amen.