

NEWS OF THE WORLD

ESTABLISHED 1843

In such a bleak midwinter, let's hold on to hope

BETWEEN the frantic ringing of the bells and last-minute festive preparations we urge you to read the searing words of Melanie Jones.

The mother of murdered schoolboy Rhys has a stark message for every family in the land.

In this season of Peace on Earth and Goodwill to all Men, Mrs Jones knows too well the terrible cost when these two sentiments are absent.

More than anyone, the woman who cradled her dying son in her arms understands that, deep in the black heart of Britain's feral sink estates, goodwill is in pitifully short supply.

Though her pain, she declares: "We can't keep making excuses that people are born into poverty. Lots of people are poor but they don't end up as criminals.

"Parents must take responsibility for their children and what they do."

A simple truth. But no less powerful.

Values

There is, however, a chink of light in our darkness. As Archbishop of York John Sentamu points out on this page today, a majority of schoolchildren believe parents are the true heroes in our society.

In a world of household conflict and divorce, there is still a touching faith in family values that we must build on if we are to remain civilised.

"The common thread at the heart of being a hero is selflessness," says the Archbishop.

And if there is any lesson to be taken from the golden nuggets of good, honesty and endeavour amid the glut of commercialism, venal greed, despair and villainy that be-sets us, it is surely this.

Memory

Christmas is a time for putting others first. First in our thoughts, and first in time of need.

Now, more than ever, let us send prayers and thanks to our Forces fighting terror in faraway lands.

Let those of us with money to spend remember those without jobs.

Let every mother and father think of Rhys Jones' parents – and resolve, in that little boy's memory, to do just one thing today to make their own children better people.

Let us keep in our thoughts the plight of missing Madeleine McCann and the ordeal of her family.

And, above all, let us cling to hope. Be safe, be happy. Cherish your family and friends.

And together we'll get through 2009



JOHN

SENTAMU

Archbishop of York writes for the

NEWS OF THE WORLD

A Britney world needs its saints

THE latest edition of the Oxford Junior Dictionary has produced quite a stir.

In an attempt to update the dictionary for its modern audience, words such as 'carol', 'cracker', 'holly' and 'ivy' have been removed. In their place has come such words as 'committee', 'creep', 'Euro', and 'vandalism'.

Perhaps one of the more worrying aspects of the update is that 'saint' has also been removed whilst 'celebrity' has been inserted.

One of the things that reality television has taught us is that celebrities come and go.

Whilst fame is fickle the holiness of the saints remains an inspiration for generations. Britney Spears may be a fascination for some, but Mother Theresa remains an inspiration for all.

One of the things I love about saints is they can be heroes for the rest of us.

Take the story of Saint Nicholas, upon whom Santa Claus is based. He was born during the third century in the village of Patara. His wealthy parents, who raised him to be a devout Christian, died in an epidemic while Nicholas was still young.

Obedying Jesus' words to "sell what you own and give the money to the poor", Nicholas used his whole inheritance to assist the needy, the sick, and the suffering.

He was made Bishop of Myra while still a young man.

Bishop Nicholas became known throughout the land for his generosity to those in need, for his protection of children, and for his concern for those who worked at sea.

These days it seems at times that our saints and heroes are thin on the ground. But according to our children there may be more of them around than you might think.

Last month a national poll of children run by the Church of England and The Children's Society asked schoolchildren to nominate the UK's most heroic jobs.

In third place were soldiers with 12% of the vote, second came fire-fighters with 13% of the vote whilst in first place were parents with 25% of the vote. The common

will know that it's Christmas time. Not because of the turkey dinners or gift packages that they will receive, but because of that keen sense of being apart from their loved ones.

Each deserves our thanks and support for doing their duty and putting themselves in harm's way so that a better life may come to the countries in which they serve.

But even more than soldiers, it's parents who children think are the real heroes. We have heard a lot in the news this year about

bad parents who have treated their children shabbily or abusively.

We hear much less about those everyday heroes who put their own needs aside in order to put their children's hopes first.

These loving parents, who stay in relationships despite the difficulties, who hang together through tough times and deny the temptation of a fantasy-based fling, these are the everyday heroes our children celebrate.

The family is at the heart of Christmas. As we celebrate the birth of the Christ child, who gave up heavenly glory to be born into poverty and whose life, death and resurrection became the inspiration for countless saints and heroes, so we are reminded that all of us, created in God's image and likeness, are invited to become God's children, loved and accepted by Him.

May each of us have the grace to live out that love and acceptance in our celebrations this year.



TODAY OR FOREVER: Spears and Mother Theresa

MERCY FOR ZIMBABWE

CHRISTMAS celebrations will be difficult for the people of Zimbabwe. The country that was once the bread basket of Africa is now a basket case – ravaged by bad government.

The latest outbreak of cholera has added untold misery to a people already suffering under the brutal regime of a racist dictator.

Whilst President Mugabe declares that the cholera outbreak "is over", Unicef and the World Health Organisation say the daily death toll is mounting.

Christian Aid have launched an emergency appeal. As we all give thanks for our blessings this Christmas, spare a thought for Zimbabwe and give all you can.

TIME TO BUY BRITISH



LAST week I cooked a Christmas lunch for 76 people – staff members and church workers in York. The food I served all came from Britain. The UK is the largest sheep producer in Europe and the third largest beef producer.

What reason is there to be buying these meats from abroad?

At a local level, grazing livestock are a key component in the rural economy, supporting feed businesses, veterinary practices, machinery dealers and repairers, and agricultural merchants.

A survey for the National Farmers Union reported that 72% of shoppers want to be able to buy British beef and lamb. Animal welfare standards in the UK are second to none. Additionally the Red Tractor assurance scheme gives consumers added confidence in the entire process from farm to supermarket shelf.

Buying British, buying locally and buying directly from farmers can all help as simple measures.

FRASER NELSON IS BACK NEXT WEEK



PRICELESS: Family love

TRUE JOY BEYOND ALL COST

ONE of the many impacts of our economic troubles is that increasing numbers of people are beginning to explore life's big questions.

Research suggests 57% of people say the materialism of Christmas will come second to its religious significance this year.

Of course it's a blithe platitude to say "the best things in life are free" but I agree with the writer who said: "The best things in life are not things."

Your child's first words; a breathtaking sunset; receiving a wonderful act of kindness; falling in love. Still need convincing? Life's free gifts make



COHEN: Hallelujah our hearts soar and uplift our spirits.

In my heart I know I won't be loved any less by my children or my wife if their Christmas stocking is less than bursting. I know the best I can do them is to give them of myself. Ultimately this is the message of Christmas in the Christ child that comes to us.

God gives up heavenly riches and glory to come to earth in poverty and to be born and laid in a cattle trough, thereby signifying to us that he is the one who satisfies our hunger and quenches our thirst for love and meaning.

He does so to give of himself to each of us, so we might give ourselves in service to Him and one another.

In the original words of Leonard Cohen's song Hallelujah chosen for this year's X factor: "I stand before the Lord of Song with nothing on my tongue but Hallelujah".

May God Bless you all with a peaceful and joy filled Christmas.