

The peace of the manger

Notes on the Bible readings

● The story opens with tremendous disruption and movement. But from this mass movement of people, we zoom in to observe a particular couple, Joseph and Mary. And Mary is pregnant and due to give birth. Then, after the noise and the messiness of birth (skipped over!), the manger is the 'still point' in the narrative. The peace of this manger is briefly interrupted by noisy shepherds who were amazed at what they had seen and heard. But the narrative slows down again when they leave, and we can focus on Mary. We are given a brief and rare glimpse of her inner life as she treasures the memories and ponders the implications.

● The story, as it is told by Luke, is a reminder that there are events in the world that grab all the headlines and make all the noise, but we are encouraged to look beneath the surface for the still small things where God is moving. It also reminds us that we can encounter the wonder of God in the ordinary humdrum of everyday working lives.

Be still

Find a moment of stillness in the Christmas mayhem! Today is probably one of the busiest days of the year, but find a moment to gather everyone around the Advent/Christmas candles (or a suitable Christmas card or scene) and, in the middle of this busyness, invite everyone who is sharing the day with you to be still and silent for just a minute or two.

A question for reflection

- ▶ How would you respond knowing that God's call will change your life for ever?



A prayer of adoration

*We sing a song today, a song for all,
of the wonder of your goodness.
Authority resting on the small shoulders of a child
who calls us all to everlasting peace.
Amen. Amen. Amen.
Praise be to you, O God, born among us.*

A prayer for others

*Today, in all the demands, we pray for those who are facing a
Christmas without someone they love.
Today, in all the delights, we pray for those who are facing a
Christmas alone.
Today, in all the celebration, we pray for those who are facing
conflicts.
Today, in all the time at tables, we pray for those who are hungry.
God of goodness hear us and be with us. Amen.*

A personal prayer

*Bringing all that I bring to you today, my thoughts, my feelings,
my hopes, the things that have worked out, and the things that
haven't, the joys and sadnesses: I offer them to you, knowing that
you will accept everything I bring, because I bring it and offer it to
you. Amen.*

Live your faith

When the Christmas lunch/dinner is being served, think about how you will carve out time from your busy schedule to celebrate the coming of Jesus.