

ADVENT REFLECTION 2010

Week 3: Joyful expectation

Be patient; do not lose heart, because the Lord's coming will be soon.

James 5:8

*Let the wilderness and the dry lands exult,
let the wasteland rejoice and bloom,
let it bring forth flowers like the jonquil,
let it rejoice and sing for joy.*

Isaiah 35:1



Our modern world is so immediate that we seem to have lost the joy of waiting patiently for an eagerly anticipated event.

The build-up to Christmas can be so frenetic that we can lose sight of its true meaning. Frenzied preparations can cause us to become stressed and irritable.

It's great to buy gifts for our loved ones, but do we need to spend so extravagantly? Have we lost some of the true meaning of Christmas?

- *How can I prepare well for the Christmas celebration?*
- *Can I slow down a little and set aside quality time for prayer and reflection?*
- *Can I give the gift of my time to someone who is lonely or sick?*

Lord, there is so much bad news in our world: famine; war; natural disasters; cruelty; prejudice; self-interest.

And yet there is also much good: love; concern; solidarity; small, unseen, unselfish acts of kindness.

*For the times I have focused only on the bad and failed to see the good,
I ask your forgiveness.*

*For the times I have looked the other way because I was embarrassed and didn't know what to do,
I ask your forgiveness.*

*For the times I have meant to do something, got distracted and forgot my good intentions,
I ask your forgiveness.*

Open my mouth, Lord, to speak out boldly against injustice.

May I be an advocate for those who live in despair and bring them words of comfort and hope.

Action Ideas

- Spend less on presents and make a donation to Housing Justice (www.housingjustice.org.uk)
- Choose from the World Gifts catalogue (available from CAFOD www.cafod.org.uk) to help fund a community project or provide an animal
- Visit an elderly neighbour who lives alone
- Befriend someone who is new to your area
- Look for a 'good news' story in your local newspaper and share it with others

Activity

- Everyone is invited to take 2 paper leaves: one a green holly leaf on which to write a word or phrase that expresses personal regret or concern for an issue in the wider world, the second a pink poinsettia leaf (to echo the priestly vestments this week for Gaudete [Rejoice] Sunday) for their hopes and dreams
- Florist's wire is attached to the leaves and they are displayed in a vase for everyone to see