

ADVENT REFLECTION 2010

Week 4: Preparing for the birth of Jesus

*The Lord himself will give you a sign.
It is this:
the maiden is with child
and will soon give birth to a son
whom she will call Emmanuel,
a name which means
'God-is-with-us.'*

Isaiah 7:14

*The Lord's is the earth
and all its fullness,
the world
and all its peoples.*

Psalms 24: 1



As our Advent preparation draws to a close let us take to heart the words of the prophet Isaiah: the longed-for Christ child is truly 'God with us.'

For the past three weeks we have tried to make space for quiet reflection amidst the hurly burly of the Christmas season with all its pulls on our time and on our purse-strings.

In this final week of Advent we can remind ourselves of what Christmas really means for us as believers: the birth of the promised Saviour.

Lord, help me to show your love to those who are hard to care for; to those who reject your love; to those with whom I struggle to feel a sense of solidarity.

For the times I have only loved family and friends and taken no notice of others, I ask your forgiveness.

For the times I missed the opportunity to show your love through fear of looking foolish, I ask your forgiveness.

For the times I have lacked the confidence to approach a newcomer and have been wary of stepping out of my comfort zone, I ask your forgiveness.

Open my heart, Lord, to reach out to everyone in need.

This Advent I pray that I can be your eyes and ears, your mouth, your hands and feet and your heart.

We must not seek the child Jesus in the pretty figures of our Christmas crib.

We must seek him among the undernourished children who have gone to bed tonight without eating, among the poor who will sleep covered with newspapers in the doorway.

Archbishop Oscar Romero, Christmas 1979

Action Ideas

- Set an extra place at the table to remind you of those who go without food and companionship
- Buy gifts and cards from Toybox (www.toyboxcharity.org.uk), a Christian charity that offers hope and the opportunity for a better life to street children in Latin America
- Bake Christmas cookies for friends and family
- Make time to attend a local Carol Service

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 red poinsettia leaf for their hopes and dreams
- Florist's wire is attached to the leaves and they are displayed in a vase for everyone to see