

Tuesday Reflection 21st December 2021

So the waiting is nearly over. The fourth candle has been lit on the Advent wreath, the last posting day has passed, Joseph and Mary are approaching Bethlehem.

The question is, though, the waiting for what? In Bethlehem two thousand years ago, Joseph and Mary were waiting for the birth of their child, something of which hardly anyone else there was aware. The shepherds were definitely not waiting, they had other things on their minds.

What most people here are probably waiting for is an orgy of merrymaking and present-giving. As Christians, we say that we are waiting to celebrate the Incarnation - but the birth of Jesus is an incontrovertible historical fact from two millennia ago.

So if we know that God has already come to us, what are we actually waiting for? The Franciscan contemplative and theologian Ilia Delio has suggested that this is the wrong question, that we are not waiting for anything, that it is us and not the Christ child lying in the manger that is asleep. The one who is doing the waiting is God, who is waiting for us to wake up, to awaken to the Christ who is already in our midst. Jesus was born over two thousand years ago, but the message He brought, His Gospel, is far from being fulfilled. God has launched His mission by sending His Son into the world, but He now needs each of us to wake up and ask, in the words of the carol "What can I bring Him?", what gifts have I already been given that I can use in His service for the benefit of others? What can I do to give a positive answer to the question (with apologies to William Blake) "and is Jerusalem builded here/ beneath those bare Malvernian hills?".

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