

Early in November I received a Christmas card!

Very early – it wasn't even Advent!

But as I read the card and its greeting I thought about what it takes to get ready for the 'big event'. Enjoying the 'big event' is all in the preparation; or so we are told.

The media bombards us with what we must have to make this Christmas the best we have ever had! Extravagance and excess seems to be the answer to us having a happy time! Festive food; gifts; wrapping paper; gift tags (have we enough); sellotape (yes even that) – and the cake needs icing! Oh the busyness of it all, it seems to start as early as the January sales! Busy, busy, busy! Hope there isn't something or somebody that has been forgotten. In the busy-ness we can be tempted to put aside what is most important, so perhaps receiving my Christmas card was a reminder in the busy-ness to focus on what is important.

Over this last year life at St Catharine's has been busy. Church leaders and family members have left to go to pastures new. Sad and joyful events have passed. We are now focussed and ready to look to a future with renewed excitement of what God has in mind for His children who serve the Church of St. Catharine and the Community.

As we enter Advent it is a time of Preparation as we wait again for Jesus' coming. We will not know the time or the day, "Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all". Luke 17:26-27. The whole world has yet to be reached with the Gospel, so as we wait let's keep busy with the task God has set us.

It was a busy night long ago in the small town of Bethlehem, it was packed to capacity. All available rooms were taken with people arriving before the census. No vacant place left in the town – everyone very busy; much too busy to notice a young girl, heavily pregnant and ready to give birth. The only place left was a dirty, smelly, animal infested place into which the Son of God arrived.

Every one so busy that no one noticed that God had come. In the quietness of the Shepherds 'busy-ness', the Angel voice announced the miracle of the Messiah arriving that night. The birth of Jesus did not come with the razzamatazz and glitzy celebration of coloured baubles, twinkly lights and a heavily laden table – neither did the birth arrive with fuzzy renditions of Christmas songs, but with a heavenly host of Angel's voices Praising God. Luke 2:13-14.

We all love Christmas and that's how it should be. We all love preparing and receiving gifts, sharing meals with family - and yes, Bing Crosby singing 'White Christmas'. But in the busyness we need to find the quietness to hear the Angel voices once again. The Angel song reverberates around the crib for all who listen to hear it. The birth of Christ in all the noise, busyness and messiness connects us, (just like the shepherds) to God.

As we look upon the Christmas message and the hope of a New Year, perhaps in the busy-ness we may reflect once more on why God came. For some it will be a Christmas where the voices of the Angels will not be heard. Will you have time in the busyness to share that God has come? Will you have a moment in the busyness to remember the neighbour without the means to celebrate? The neighbour who is mourning? The neighbour who is sick? The neighbour who is ignored?

Love is why Jesus came and keeps coming into the hearts of waiting and broken people. As we, the family of St Catharine's go into a New and Exciting Year – let all that we are, and all that we do, speak volumes for the Peace of Christ as we serve Jesus today.

Will you find time in the busy-ness to unwrap the Gift God has sent with His Love? Will you find time to use the Gifts God has given you to use throughout the year?

May God Bless you richly with His presence this Holy Season, to enjoy the riches of His Grace, and may the Glory of God and the Angel Voices stand out and continue to shine throughout our lives in the coming year(s).

*Your friend Marilyn x*

Reader