

**Meditation provided by CAFOD – read at the Our Lady and St  
Dominic’s Carol Service 13 December 2009**

We are aware that during Advent, what we are waiting for and preparing for is something quite amazing, something almost too great to comprehend - God becoming human.

God became human, not only by being born in a humble stable but by continuing, as an adult, to identify himself with the poor and marginalized.

And he identified with them not just by walking alongside them, but also by becoming one of them - becoming someone who was despised, misunderstood, dependent on others for food and for friendship, and paradoxically someone who was so threatening that he had to be killed.

Often, Christmas carols don't encompass this reality.

We hear about Jesus the baby 'asleep on the hay', but this baby becomes, in his adulthood, someone who is very much awake to the pain and brokenness of this world.

One carol does seem to embody this truth:

'What have they done with you child of the manger, child of my childhood and seal of my soul?'

'They have carved me in stone, O child of my passion and drowned me in dogma and trammled my will. They have wrapped me in tinsel, and sold me on counters, tuning my song to the ring of the till.'

'How can I find you, O child of the manger, child of my childhood and seal of my soul?'

'You will find me as ever, with the blind and the beggar, the hungry and hopeless, the broken in heart. At home with the homeless, I dine with the outcast, and if you receive me, then there I shall be.'

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So Advent is, not only a time to prepare for Christ's birth, but also to celebrate the person he became, the example which he set, the truth which he embodied that we are also called to follow.

At a time when society is pleading with us to have more, buy more, consume more, we are asked to empty ourselves and this is perhaps for two reasons.

The first is that we need to create room inside us to receive the word of God.

The second is that we are asked to enter into solidarity with others, particularly, perhaps, those who live in poverty.

Advent is a time to look afresh at what Christmas is about, what we are celebrating and how we celebrate.

Friendship, community and hospitality are what is important, not the latest gadget, DVD or TV.

Through scripture we are reminded that Jesus came to be a light for the world and we are called to do the same. We are called, especially at this time of new birth, of incarnation, to embody the spirit of the Beatitudes as Jesus did:

"We are called to be 'good news to the poor' in a society where millions lack the bare necessities of life;

To bring 'liberty to captives' when so many are enslaved by poverty, addiction, ignorance, discrimination, violence, or disabling conditions;

To bring 'new sight to the blind' in a culture where the excessive pursuit of power or pleasure can spiritually blind us to the dignity and rights of others;

To 'set the downtrodden free' in communities where crime, racism, family disintegration and economic and moral forces leave people without real hope." \*\*\*

This Advent, let us celebrate the birth of Christ with joy, knowing that God loved us so much that he gave us that which was most precious to him.

But let us also keep in our hearts and minds the example that Jesus gave us, in particular in his love for others, so that we may be people who, in the words of Jeremiah, "do what is right and just in the land."

\*\* 'Sing High with the Holly and Low with the Berry': words by  
A.J.Lewis  
and music by Michael Lehr

\*\*\* Quote from a document published by the US Bishops in 1993