

Daniel's reflection for week-beginning 3rd December - The Blessing Called Waiting

Last weekend at our Masses, tiny Caitlin and Matilda lit our Advent candles. The flames flickered in our darkened church. We lit those candles for every faltering heart in the grip of despair. We lit them for every beaten community unable to believe that the dawn will ever come. We lit them for our faithful mother Earth, forever fearful of another war.

Two small children; two small stars of light. We reflected that these prayerful moments of grace were more powerful beacons of peace for a waiting world than all the armies that ever marched. It is hope, not guns, that will one day save the world and heal our hearts. Powerful and unjust governments around the world have feared the evening candles burning in the windows of homes across the land. As well as being political statements of solidarity, these symbols of the exploited are saying "We are prepared to wait. We believe that love, one day, will change everything." Who knows more about watching, waiting and hoping than those about to give birth to new life? What secret longings must sweep through the hearts of mothers as they await the birth of their baby! What inexpressible emotions flood their bodies and souls as they, knowingly or not, are cocreating with God a new beauty to bless and grace the precarious and threatened world we live in.

There are several pregnant mothers in our community just now. They are all heavily involved in waiting. I asked them what the experience was like. They tried to tell me, even though I knew what they were thinking by the way they looked at me: they knew I would never understand! They used words like 'longing', 'sacred', 'amazing' and 'overwhelming anticipation'. They spoke about the excitement of feeling the babies kicking inside them, and a feeling of trepidation at the miracle of it all. One mother expressed relief that, unlike Mary, she would not have to ride a donkey in her condition.

In the Christian calendar, this current Advent season is about waiting. Before the first Christmas, there was a gathering of expectation in the world, longing for a sign of hope. . . It all became focused in Mary's womb. The small baby of Bethlehem was the fruit of God's original love implanted in the first mud that became the first Adam. In a sense, it was a 14 billion years wait. But it happened. And because God became a baby once, we now know that every time a baby is born it is a sign that God has not given up on the world, a lovely reminder that God is not finished with us yet. Every birth, after the long waiting, is another fragile but powerful candle of hope. Small saviours for a troubled world.

(Prism of love pages 137, 138)