

COME ON DOWN

While so many are dying to get out of the rat race, there is One who died to get in. Disguised as one of us, this One still comes creeping over enemy lines while many in cyber space lament the message, 'Your phone is out of range.'

But then there comes the sound of a different heartbeat, a breath.
Someone is brooding over us.
And then four words, 'You are not alone.'
...There is a light in the east flashing, 'Follow me.'

There are other words streaming to us today – remember, wait, come. The Psalmist says, 'O that thou wouldst rend the heavens and come on down.' And in Mark is the command, 'Stay awake and watch, you never know when the Lord will come.'

The new church year comes today in the promise of the ages fulfilled in a vulnerable babe in a manger. We don't celebrate the birth of this church year with drunken and numbing merrymaking, but with joyful anticipation. Something big is going to happen which will make everything different. If we let it, this Advent has the capacity to turn us more deeply towards God's love.

Despite the emerging nativity scenes in churches and homes, Advent is not a pretty season. It is a powerful statement of challenge and resistance for Christians during the frenzy of consumption. Jesus' harrowing picture of darkened skies and falling stars in today's Gospel jars our senses. We tend to resist Christ's insistence that wars and rumours of war will precede his appearance. We want the peaceable kingdom to come quickly, but even as we are bombarded by global tragedies, we wonder how long it will be before Jesus comes.

In the northern hemisphere it is a time of long nights and cold days. In Australia our daylight saving troubles those in the west of Oz as the heat of the day burns into the night. Jesus is coming into the so-called 'lucky country' and into a drug pervaded society with its scripted opiates and its 'off the street' transactions. Where will Jesus be born this Christmas? Can I suggest that we'll find the holy family at an out of town backpackers hostel? All the town accommodation has been taken for a special Lincoln weekend that will feature an opportunity to see our famous mare, Makybe Diva, in the flesh.

There's little privacy for the birthing – the double bunk accommodation is full of wet clothes, men's socks and jocks, and the stench of stale beer. Some one yells, 'Get her to the hospital.' But it's too late – the baby's coming right now. Someone puts on the jug, and looks for a reasonably clean towel. Another grabs a parka to wrap around the mother's shoulders. The husband's not sure whether to go or stay. If he stays he'll be in the way. If he goes, there'll be trouble later. There's a lot of hard pushing with exhausted groans, then the child emerges. 'It's a boy!' they all say as the Ambos arrive.

Someone turns on their iPod and the music of Leonard Cohen's 'Hallelujah' is heard,

'I did my best it wasn't much
I couldn't feel, so I tried to touch
I've told the truth I didn't come to fool you
And even though it all went wrong
I'll stand before the Lord of song
with nothing on my tongue but Hallelujah.'

A couple of dogs stretch out after all this and eventually the place goes quiet.
'Wonder what's on tomorrow?'

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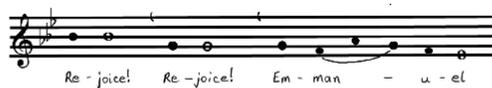
It's Advent and it's our grace time – a time to prepare and a time to ponder.

May we take time for God's sake.

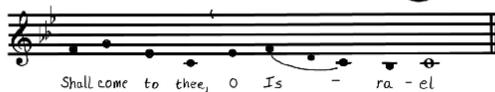
'Lord, please come on down.'

AMEN

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O Come
O Come
Emmanuel



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