

PILGRIMAGE TO BETHLEHEM

A FLOWERING IN OUR HEARTS

We are in Advent. It is a very beautiful time, a quiet time, a very still time. It's a time when the pousinia of the heart has its full flowering, and the flowering is in your heart.

Advent is a time of little things—quiet, peaceful things like washing dishes, or changing diapers, or filing correspondence—or hectic things like running from one meeting to another, answering telephones, dealing with uncouth or difficult people, facing hopeless situations in schools, places of work, or churches.

All these daily duties can be precious gems for us, gold too heavy for us to bear, grains of incense that would cover the earth, if only our hearts could touch His heart and generously open themselves to being loved by Him and love Him in return.

Something comes from within you. I call it a flowering, but really it is an expectation. Flowers expect to be in full bloom, by and by.

The flowers open! Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus! The Lord comes, and you begin to feel that, really, something fantastic is happening. It all happens inside your heart, though. It's not something anybody tells you, as though you were listening to a lecture or anything. No, it is your heart that is speaking to you. Listen to it!

Yes, these 'little things' are with us during this Holy Season, just as they are during the rest of the year. But at Christmas time, we know enough to become little and childlike in our hearts. (At least I hope we do!) And if we become very small—like a mongoose or a rabbit or even smaller, like a mouse—then we will come to have the heart of a child.

What would happen if a child knew that this Baby in the crib was Jesus Christ Himself? Where would the child go? This 'little one'—this rabbit or mouse or child—would just jump into the crib and say, "Make room for me." Now that is a child! Why don't we do the same? There is plenty of room in the crib you know, provided we are little.

Awake—Hear—Walk

Advent is the time of little things.
Did you walk in the night
And behold the delight
Of rabbits, raccoons, porcupines and
mongoose?

Did you hear them discuss
What each would do
To make the night
Of the Little Child bright?

Did you wake in the dawn of a wintry
day
And hear a thousand birds twitter

And sing of the holiest things?
And rehearse, and rehearse
Their flight, their songs
At Bethlehem?

Did you walk in the day
In the snow-clad fields
Where mouse and tiny field things
Eat and play?
If you did, then you know
That they plan a caravan
To a cave, a manger, a Child.

Are you going with them?

There is another mystery wrapped up in Advent: the call to give of oneself as Our Lady did.



**PILGRIMAGE
TO
BETHLEHEM
A FLOWERING IN OUR
HEARTS**

Pass It On! #14



Please feel free to make copies
and pass them on!

Additional issues of Pass It On
can be found on the Internet at:
www.madonnahouse.org/publications



MADONNA HOUSE PUBLICATIONS
COMBERMERE • ONTARIO • CANADA • KOJ TLO

Penny a copy — 1¢

Pass It On!

#14

Oh, we're willing to give ourselves—for a little while. We don't mind doing good works—for a little while. We don't mind doing this and that, whatever can help the neighbor, not at a very big cost to ourselves—for a little while.

But that doesn't work out; that doesn't work out at all. Not before the Child in the manger! Look at the Child in the manger.

There, you will see the utter poverty of Jesus Christ, the utter gift of Jesus Christ to us, as a Child. Then our giving only a little doesn't work out, not at all. What we really have to do is to surrender.

It is immaterial whether you are a priest, a nun, a mother, a father, a single person, a career woman or whatever. It makes no difference. If you are a baptized Christian, you owe it to that Child who was born to save us all in that total poverty, to embrace 'total' poverty. And this 'total' poverty must be embraced from inside.

Let's face it. If you are the father of a family, you cannot squander the money that should go for the education (or whatever) of your children. There is a certain limit as to what you can do in this situation, because that's your job, that's what God has called you to be: a protector, a provider. But, even if you can't give away your money, you can give yourself. Now, that's very difficult!

What we have here is a strange sort of meeting, the encounter of a mystery with a mystery. There is a little Child, who is God. And there is a human being who wants to give totally to the Other.

These two, who have given themselves so completely, meet. The human being allows the Child to enter his or her heart, and to make a manger there. And in that human heart, this Child would grow, grow to manhood.

Whoever gives of themselves in this way, they too will become the Child. They will grow and mature into Christ. They truly will be an icon of Christ.

Adapted from *Donkey Bells: Advent and Christmas*, with Catherine de Hueck Doherty, pp 41-43, 37-38.

Artwork by Helen Hodson