

Advent and Christmas 2018

*“Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place,
which the Lord has made known to us.”*

Upon first glance, this single line from the Gospel of Luke seems almost odd and out of place for a Biblical passage. It seems peculiar to refer to the birth of Jesus as ‘*this thing*.’ Many of us would nearly cringe at the use of the word ‘*thing*’ to describe the most miraculous event of our Christian faith. But if we were in the shoes of the shepherds and had just been visited by an angel, we might react in a similar way. No doubt they were perplexed, perhaps confused or doubtful, and definitely a bit suspicious. Despite being told not to be afraid and to go to the manger, we can assume that they had their fair share of questions and wanted to verify what they were being told. And quite certainly the word ‘*thing*’ was all they could muster up to describe this so called event.

In the context of our contemporary culture, we really do find ourselves in the shepherds’ shoes. More than ever before, we call into question most of the information we receive – what we hear on the news, the possible rumours being spread by our neighbours, stories posted online, and even the credibility of some of our church structures. And to an extent this questioning is good. It is important to be sure we learn the truth, that we give people the benefit of the doubt, that we listen to all sides, and that we determine whether we have a trustworthy source. To be critical thinkers with various inquiries is a positive trait, and a healthy component of both our secular lives and spiritual journeys. However, a very large part of our religious identity and our faith journey as Christians is to travel – just like the shepherds did – towards the manger largely based on what we have been told. We all know that the crux of our faith is to believe without seeing; to simply journey by placing our trust in God.

What is so telling about the shepherds’ experience is that they were called to be true *witnesses* to the child born in the manger: they followed the directions of the angels with faith and curiosity alone but went to see for themselves so they could then share the good news. The path followed by the shepherds is our own path this Advent-Christmas season. Let us follow the will of God in our lives, with our own deep-seated curiosity and share the good news of ‘*this thing*’ that we have been told. As always, we invite our Parish Community – as well as all friends, families, visitors, or anyone who may be curious – to journey *to us* and in faith *with us* at Mass this Christmas.

Advent Greetings & Christmas Blessings!

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