

Carol Service

It's oh so nearly Christmas. You might be entirely ready, food prepped, presents wrapped, spare beds made, house tidied, guest laundry done. Or. You might be like me. Hoping there's a shop or two open tomorrow which sells something you can pretend is the result of weeks of deliberation, the towels and bedding you put in the washing machine before coming out this evening will dry before tomorrow lunchtime, and that friends and family appreciate the shabby chic wrapping style you're planning on mastering very quickly tomorrow afternoon...

Whether you're always one of those people who's planned, prepped and ready to go or always one of those people who's not quite ready and hoping that winging it will work again, or somewhere in between... our celebration of Christmas is an invitation to remember there's always something more, there's always something more than the humdrum and the everyday and the way we've always been.

We were reminded of this in the lesson which we're Debby just read so beautifully. The magi are summoned by Herod, meet the newborn Jesus, 'and leave for their own country by another road'.

The Magi's encounter with Herod leaves them suspicious and they don't return to him with news of God's birth as one of us. Their encounter with Jesus, even the newborn, Jesus, transforms them and their route to home, their route back to the everyday.

Our decorations this year, dozens of angels, remind us that there is always something more than the everyday. If only we had eyes to see.

The something whose birth as one of us we celebrate each Christmas.

The something we celebrate each and every Sunday in this place in the bread and wine of our eucharist.

The something we celebrate each and every day in our round of prayer and worship and community service.

The something which brings so many of us back to this place, and sends so many of us out again, back into our everyday, only to find our everyday transformed, our humdrum upturned, new roads open to us again and again.

This Christmas as we are surrounded by angels in this place may be given the ears to hear their song in their every day, may we be given the eyes to see that there is so much more to life than first meets the eye, may we be given the grace to encounter the love of God in ourselves, in those we meet in this place, and be sent out to transform the every days of all those we meet, so that they too might encounter the love which has created, and calls, and loves us, each and every day.

The love which we symbolise now in the lighting of our candles as we are sent out from this place to be lights in the world as a sign of the love God has for each each and every one of us, the love that God has for you, yes *you*, the love that came into the world that first Christmas, the love that we receive each and every one of us, each and every day. Amen.