

November 04

It's that time again. It's that strange time when untimely babies are born to the very old and the much too young; when grown men wear tea towels on their heads and bathrobes in public; when stores sell out of gold, frankincense and myrrh. It's that time again when we keep getting ahead of ourselves. In our hurry to the sweet smelling hay, we are again 'straining to hear time's tale ahead of time'. (Frederick Buechner)

Advent becomes the great foot race. Every year we try to outrun the innkeepers and the angels, the shepherds and the magi, hoping to make it to the manger in time for the main event. Maybe this year we will get there in time to be touched by wonder, seized by mystery, overcome with joy. Advent gets in our way of that bit of pink squirming flesh. We don't want to walk the dusty roads from Nazareth to Bethlehem again. We don't want to have to deal with John the Baptist breathing his locust breath on us again. We don't want to hear the long and tired voice of the prophets. We just want to sing our favourite carols, see the star and romance the stable.

But once again, on the Christmas freeway, advent apprehends us like a traffic jam insisting that we stop, look and listen. Advent insists that there is no getting to Christmas without going through advent. Advent is edge time. It is the precipice, the stoop at the top of the steps, the dressing room.

Advent is that time again ... that time that invites us to travel below time, upon time, and beyond time in its own good time. Advent is an edge time that forces us to hear from the margins ... from the prophets everyone gave up on a long time ago, from a peasant woman who heard voices in the night, from a country carpenter who had a change of heart, from shepherds who took shelter in a stable from noisy skies. Advent is the time when the poor have the leading roles; when those on the edges of society are the only ones with speaking parts. The journey is made by the simple and unsophisticated in a fraction of the time it took the learned and wealthy. What the shepherds found in matter of hours, the magi took years to discover.

Advent is our opportunity to listen carefully to the voices from the edge ... to the wisdom of the margins ... to those who are visited by angels. It is the gift of this season to silence the corridors of power and attend to the whispers of the dismissed. May we prepare our hearts to answer the cry of yet another homeless child.

Wishing you a blessed advent journey,

Nancy

