

No Room At The Inn

For this particular Advent we decided to celebrate the Mexican tradition of Posada or the Travelling Nativity. During November the children made two huge, almost life-sized figures out of wire covered in mud-rock and fabric. We then took Mary and Joseph with us to visit various places in the community and beyond, such as the resident's Christmas event, a school assembly and various churches (including Hawshead Hill in Cumbria when Mary and Joseph has to have their own seats and seatbelts in the car – but that is another story).

At each place, Mary and Joseph knocked on the door and each time they were told there was no room for them until the third time when they were allowed in and in the Mexican Tradition would share a meal as a sign of hospitality.

It led us to reflect upon the experience of asylum seekers, refugees and migrant workers who arrive in our communities seeking welcome and hospitality and all too often find the door shut in their faces.

I'm tired!
Do we have to face another journey
It was different when I went to see Elizabeth
I was only three months!
Joseph, we can't go now
I'm 8 month's pregnant
I'm huge and my back hurts
I can't walk all that way!
A donkey?
Are you mad
I'd flatten it
all that bumping and lurching
the thought makes me feel sick
OK, if we've no choice
I'll go and pack some bags
and food, we'll need food
and baby things, just in case
What if the baby arrives before we get home?
What if we can't find a midwife?
What if we can't find a place to stay?
Ok, Ok. I'm ready
but I really don't see
that a census can be that important!

We're tired
Do we have to face another advent
another Christmas season?
It's been a difficult year
and I'm nowhere near ready
and I really can't face it.
Can't we just postpone it a few months
until the spring
when life's not so dull
and the weather's not so dreary?

A candle?
Isn't that like putting up decorations
admitting Christmas is round the corner?
Ok we'll light the candle
and I guess we'll think about sending Christmas cards
and putting up decorations
and there's the cake to make
and the pudding
Oh and people to invite
and shopping to do.
I tell you Christmas is going to bankrupt us
we'll be paying for it all next year.
Oh no! Who's that at the door?
Go and tell them I haven't time
and I can't be bothered?
Refugees? Travellers?
Tell them to go and find somewhere else to stay!

Forgive us God when we are so focused our preparations
that we lose sight of what Advent really means
For give us God when we are so intent on making everything perfect
that we forget what is really important
Forgive us God when we get so caught up in the hype of Christmas
that we fail to see you standing in need on our doorsteps.
Help us to journey through this advent
with the characters of the story
Help us to journey through this advent
with the people we meet in our own communities
Help us to journey through this advent
ready to be surprised by Christ in the stranger's guise.

© Clare McBeath and Tim Presswood, 2007