

ADVENT REFLECTION 2020

Week 3: Bringing Joy and Good News

There stands among you, unknown to you, the one who is coming after me. John 1:26-27

I exult for joy in the Lord, my soul rejoices in my God. Isaiah 61:10

WHO IS AN EVANGELIST?

John the Baptist was an evangelist. Many thought that he was the promised Messiah but his mission was only to announce the Good News, preparing the way for Jesus' coming.

Our daughter Annie, a teacher, scripture scholar and evangelist, who died of natural causes in June 2020 inspires this year's Advent reflections. In an article dated October 2019 she wrote: "I wonder how we might answer the question 'who is an evangelist?' – in a way that word tells us a little more..."

Let's start with some Greek! We get the English word *evangelist* from the Greek noun *euangelistes*, which means 'bringer of good tidings,' or 'announcer of good news.'

You might spot the word *angel* lurking in the middle of both the English and the Greek words, and (in terms of the etymology of the word) you'd be right to make this connection. An angel is a messenger, or an envoy, and when the message they bring is from God, it is good; (*eu* is the Greek word for 'good').

So, the evangelist is one who, like the angels, brings a message of good news from God. And I think we can understand something of the evangelist's message by looking at the message of the angels in the New Testament.

What is their message? Nothing less than the infinite God of love come down, God-with-us, peace on earth, joy to all, reconciliation, new life...

There is a broad sense, then, in which all Christians are called to be evangelists. We are all called to speak, live and act in ways that bring this good news of God-with-us to those we meet. We are all messengers of glad tidings."

The mood for the third week of Advent changes to one of joyful expectation. Known as *Gaudete* Sunday (Latin for *Rejoice*), its jubilant theme is echoed in the pink priestly vestments. Here is an opportunity to focus on all that is good in our lives and to give heartfelt thanks.

BRINGING JOY AND GOOD NEWS

In October 2012 Annie wrote: "We are called as Catholics to live out our baptismal anointing: to be a light in the world, to bring joy to others' lives and to enrich them through the message we proclaim."

Whilst teaching in a VI Form College in Nottingham, Annie volunteered in Kenya in the long summer holidays. She wrote: "In order to respond more fully to the call to evangelise and engage in mission, during the summers of 2012 and 2013, I worked as a volunteer at a home for vulnerable children and orphans in Kenya.

I wanted to dedicate my money, time and attention more fully to the needs of others and to stewardship, discipleship and mission.

Of course, what I discovered was that I received far more than I gave – in faith, love, energy, vision and personal growth."

In 2016 Annie wrote: "I believe that true evangelisation is born of love and desire: a love for all people and a desire that they come to know the love of Christ and the blessings of living in his kingdom."

This was her mission, her purpose in life – sharing the good news by loving service to others. She did this with joy, wit, compassion and humility. She would have been amazed to discover the tremendous outpouring of love from the many people she knew and the extent to which she has touched their lives.

Gifted with faith, we can rejoice in a life well lived even though we feel the pain of loss. Now, even in death – or perhaps through death – Annie continues to evangelise.

You guide those who act with integrity and keep your ways in mind. Isaiah 64:5