

Christmas Eve

Pitt Street Uniting Church, 24 December 2017

A Contemporary Reflection by Rev Dr Margaret Mayman

Christmas Eve B

Isaiah 9: 2-7; Virgin Birth, Joy Cowley; Luke 2: 1-20 (the Magnificat)

This reflection can be viewed on You Tube at <http://www.pittstreetuniting.org.au/> under "Sunday Reflections" tab

It's a funny kind of Christmas Eve. Just this morning it was still Advent, the fourth Sunday in Advent. This only happens when Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday.

This morning we gathered, waiting with hope...

Suddenly, the waiting is over as we celebrate the birth, not as an event so long ago, but as if it is happening in our life time, in our world.

In gathering on Christmas Eve, we name a yearning that is often below the level of our consciousness, a yearning for deeper meaning and for the healing of the world.

We gather in the hope that we might yet become, while still on this earth, who we truly are meant to be.

We gather in the hope that we, and the entire world, will know healing and peace – personal, political, and planetary peace.

Long, long ago, the medieval mystic Meister Eckhardt wrote:

"We are all called to be mothers of God, for God is always needing to be born."

Reminded of this calling, we have heard again the ancient stories as we journey with Mary and Joseph, accompanied by angels and shepherds, to behold a baby lying in a manger.

We remember this night when the dream in the heart of God, took flesh and was born like us, with pain, and water, and blood, and crying, and struggle.

Divinity and humanity intermingling as they do in every birth.

In the nativity stories, facts matter less than timeless truth and hope.

Through these stories we open ourselves to God's voice speaking still; coming to us in the outcast and the dispossessed and in the still small voice that heals our hearts and opens them to love.

And yet as we tell the birth stories again, we must acknowledge with sadness that the image of Jesus has been perverted and twisted by institutions and people claiming to represent him. Some bitter, hateful idols have been made of the one who came to earth to be our brother and our friend.

But even beyond these distortions, beyond the myth-making and dogma, Jesus' story, not just his birth but the fullness of his life, remains.

On Christmas Eve we gather making the choice that this holy One will be born anew, in our hearts and our lives on this holy night.

The celebration of the birth of Jesus beckons us to consider what is seeking to come to birth in our own lives.

As people of different ages, genders, sexualities, and identities, we share with Mary and Joseph in giving birth to the holy.

Bringing forth the sacred depends not solely on the physical ability to give birth - although that is one way to share in creating with God. We give birth too when we create with our hands, when we offer hospitality, when we work for justice, when we teach a child.

We share in giving birth whenever we freely offer ourselves for healing, for delight, for transformation, for peace.

"We become mothers of God, for God is always needing to be born."

We are invited this night to do Christmas like God, to do Christmas by becoming fully human.

According to the mystical tradition, Christ the Word of God, and Sophia the Wisdom of God, is born into the world through each of us.

As we open our hearts for love, Christ/Sophia is born into the world.

As we choose to forgive, Christ/Sophia is born into the world.

As we struggle for justice, Christ/Sophia is born into the world.

As we heal the broken-hearted, Christ/Sophia is born into the world.

We are called to practice in our lives God's truth:

That all are equal and beloved' men and women, transgender and intersex, young and old, gay and straight, migrant, asylum seeker and Australian born, people of every race.

We are called to live out God's truth that the Divine Presence can be found everywhere:

In rich and poor, first world and third world, Palestinian and Israeli, Muslim, Christian, Jew; the marginalised, the privileged, our friends and our enemies, the earth and the waters.

In God there is no division.

It is here that we are called to birthing again and again, until, as in God, all is one.

To live in this way, though, can be risky and difficult. The child, the hope, the dream that we carry may not come to term.

This is why it is so important to have midwives, the people who will attend to us in labour and beyond. We need companions who will breathe with us, groan with us, hold us in the struggle.

Who will weep with us when we are grieving that we may be strengthened and encouraged.

Who will laugh with us in joy, and hold us in love.

In so doing, we not only give birth, but are ourselves born anew.

For me, this is what it means to be the church; a church of midwives, a church of justice-seeking, love-making, heart-healing friends.

Remember this child's birth - and remember the Human One who this child became.

Tell the stories and live through them a life of love, and peace, and justice.

Happy, holy Christmas!