

Advent is a time of waiting: we are waiting in stillness and silence for the eternal birth of Christ in our hearts – where the true manger is. The online Christmas catalogues have been waiting since early October for the orders to come flooding in, because, as one of them reminds us, Christmas is all about ‘feasting and indulgence.’

So we must carry the birth of Christ for the world.

Advent is a time of hope: we are looking forward eagerly for the coming of the light into the darkness around us and within us. The world rejects this as foolish and deceitful – it struggles to deal with war, famine and the slow ruination of the earth without the light of hope. Unsuccessfully, of course.

So we must carry hope for the world.

Advent is a time of the ordinary: at the centre of the stable, the crib, the cattle and shepherds, in the midst of cobwebs and animals’ breath, is the divine birth. The truly extraordinary is only ever to be found in the everyday and the ordinary. This is how God always wills it. Our society despises the ordinary and is drunk on the ‘special’: the cult of celebrity, social influencers, people famous for being famous, twitters and blogs. A person’s worth is measured by how many followers and ‘likes’ they have.

So we must carry the extraordinary in the ordinary for the world.

Advent is a time of quietness: tradition says that the angel Gabriel whispered in Mary’s ear. The ear, a passive organ, is the part the body least capable of sin. There were no trumpets, no fanfares. Our contemporary world is full of noise. Advertisements

shout, music blares, newspaper headlines scream. Silence is to be avoided at all costs, because that is where self-awareness is.

So we must carry quietness for the world.

Advent and all that flows from it tells us that the beginning of the birth of love in the human person – in each one of us – is for the sake of the world.