

WITH A WELCOME FROM ARCHBISHOPS
JUSTIN WELBY AND STEPHEN COTTRELL



Follow The Star

CALM and BRIGHT

Meditations for the
Twelve Days of Christmas

Introduction

December can feel like chaos – full of social events, services, Christmas presents to buy, never-ending to-do lists and the pressure to create the perfect Christmas.

Amid the challenges of a fast-moving and busy culture, it can sometimes be difficult to find moments where we can rest and simply be – especially with the added complexities that Christmas brings.

This year, we invite you to join with us over twelve days reflecting on words from the well-known carol:

*“Silent Night! Holy Night!
All is calm, all is bright...”*

Journey with us as we dwell in the still centre of the Christmas story. We will meet shepherds and angels along the way, finding those moments of calm and contemplation as Mary did that first Christmas, as well as embracing the joy and gentleness of a bright future in the infant Jesus, the Light of the World and Prince of Peace.

For each of the twelve days of Christmas you will find:

- a short **reading** from the Bible to read and meditate on;
- a **reflection** to help us to see the Christmas story afresh;
- a **challenge** inviting us to consider what being calm and bright means within the story of our own lives today;
- finally, a **prayer** as we treasure this story in our hearts and seek to shine as a light in the world around us.

Sammi Tooze Discipleship Adviser, Diocese of York

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Day 9

2 January

Beauty in silence

Read Luke 2.15-20

"But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart."

There is a contradiction in many of our well-known Christmas music: where some speak of silence, and others speak of rejoicing in song.

On one hand, we have "O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!"; on the other we have "Hark! the herald angels sing". I don't however think that one cannot exist in preference to the other.

In today's reading from Luke's Gospel we are given a wonderful example in Mary. At the birth of Jesus, as the shepherds and angels rejoice in creating lots of noise,

Mary chooses instead to contemplate and to rejoice in silence. Mary models for us a calm, contemplative way of approaching Christmas, and the whole of life beyond the season.

The practice of silence can be challenging in our noisy, busy, distracting world. But silence has been a central part to many Christian communities for centuries.

Silence enables us to encounter God, to rejoice in prayer as listening before we speak. Silence allows us to discover something of God in quite a different way to when there is plenty of noise around. We enter into a particular kind of holiness where our souls are open to the transformative peace of God.

Spend some time today in silence, allowing your heart to rejoice calmly in God as Mary's did that first Christmas.

*O God of peace,
on whom our souls wait in silence;
renew in our hearts an inner stillness,
as we seek to treasure
your Word made flesh
in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.*