

# Advent: 24th Dec - Building the kingdom with activity and reflection

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Mystical nativity, Sandro Botticelli

## The story continues...

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

*'Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.'*

*When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.'*

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen which were just as they had been told. (Luke 2:13-20)

## Reflection

The shepherds were amazed, astonished, astounded. Are there words to describe their feelings? Yet everyone who has a part to play in this drama has to plumb the depths and scale the heights of emotion. In this little part of the story we see two very different responses to the Christ child. The shepherds respond with exuberance and activity. Watch them making their way back to the sheep, singing praises to God and calling to all whom they meet, 'Hey, let me tell you what we just saw...' They are doing their part in building the kingdom. They are spreading the word.

And Mary, who responds with love and reflection. Her joy runs too deep for exuberant exclamations. Her wonderment does not find easy expression but is considered deeply and long in the silence of her heart. She too builds the kingdom, but her role is both more central and less public.

## Exercise

When you think about building the kingdom here on earth, what comes to mind? In what ways do you share in this? Are these the only ways? Do you need to say less and do more? Or do less and say more? Or, like Mary, reflect, ponder and pray.