

## Tony Thinking Aloud lxxxiv

My Advent Calendar has just arrived in the post – no Paddington Bear Advent calendar... No Dr Who Advent calendar. One just like the one I used to have as a child. A beautiful traditional picture of the nativity – Mary, Joseph, the Baby Jesus, the animals and the stable. Doors which open every day with a Nativity picture of a lamb, a star or angel... (Regret no chocolate!).

My view of Christmas is informed by my faith, and whilst I appreciate it means different things to different people, here is my take.

Advent means Coming – it is truly a time of preparation- to think about the love, joy and peace which is the Christmas message. Each day reflect on this in a few moments of quiet before focussing on the preparation - choosing presents, Christmas Trees, decorations, and the Christmas meal.

Truly we are leading up to the celebration of the Birth of Jesus. This is about the love of God, in the coming of Jesus among us. This helps us to understand that we should live our lives in the constant appreciation of God's guiding love and care.

After Christmas we enjoy the celebration of the Twelve Days of Christmas. It was the great holiday time of the year, which I guess we do not always realise now. The twelfth day - the Feast of the Epiphany – the Coming of the Wise Men, to see Jesus. The following Sunday was Plough Sunday, the Plough was brought into church to be blessed and work began again on Plough Monday.

So, the three parts to the season = Advent – the preparation; Christmas - time to appreciate the Birth of Jesus; and finally, the ongoing celebration of the knowledge that the Love of God is always here to support us in our lives.

So, whatever you believe, during Advent, as many of you prepare for Christmas, spare a moment to reflect on how we felt on 2020 not knowing if Christmas was going to happen or not. Then think about those in 2021 who may be without a loved one for the first time or, as the news has recently reminded us, those who crave the life we have and may even try to cross the Channel on Christmas Day. Just take a brief moment to think about the world around you.