

Moravian Women's Association

Devotional Paper

December 2013

With a little help from my friends.....

It's that time again, nearly Christmas, a time to think of friends, and family, and of all those who matter to us. It's time to think of people who have come into our lives, sometimes for a short time, but who have been there for us in an hour of need, and have then moved on - special people who have helped us to cope with life.

And it's also time for Mary to think about the traumatic journey she must make to Bethlehem - her baby nearly due, and a donkey ride to endure before she can think about the actual birth of her son. And she does know it is going to be a son, because that's what the angel told her. Mary needs to think of the baby clothes she must pack, just in case, and of soft padding for the donkey, and oh, why does the census have to be now, of all times.

The journey is just as bad as she fears, and Mary is exhausted as she and Joseph find themselves wandering through the darkened Bethlehem streets, looking for some sort of shelter, anywhere, anything, because this baby is on its way, and Mary desperately needs to be somewhere safe and warm.

And finally, a concerned innkeeper, very apologetic, but offering shelter of some sort. A stable, says Joseph in a horrified voice, but it's shelter, says Mary, and just what we need.

The innkeeper, who has children of his own, recognises Mary's condition, and offers to send his wife to tend to Mary. You can't be on your own at this time, he says compassionately, my wife has experience of these things, she will come to help you.

We don't know what actually happened during the time that Mary gave birth. The gospels are all written by men, and the nitty gritty of Mary's labour is never mentioned. But there is absolutely no way that Mary could have gone through the experience of birth on her own, however resourceful Joseph was, there must have been a kindly woman, or women, who were there to help her through.

So whilst the shepherds, and the wise men, all male, were worshipping Jesus the baby, I like to imagine that the wise women of the area were making sure that Mary his mother was doing alright. I like to think that the kindness and understanding of ordinary women ensured that Mary was made to feel secure and safe. I just know that one of them took Mary's hands in hers and said comfortingly, "Mary, you're going to be alright".

I would guess that Mary never met those women again, but I am sure that she carried with her in her heart, for the rest of her life, the memory of the loving care and friendship of those women of whom we have never heard, but who had surely been her true friends in her hour of need.

For discussion:

1. Think about the people you have encountered in your own lives, who have maybe just been around for a short time, but have been able to help you through a difficult time.
2. Do we feel that when help is offered in this way, it is God's way of answering our prayers?
3. Are we ready to be there for others when asked for help of any kind?

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