

*While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. St Luke 2:6-7*

The account of the birth of Jesus given by St Luke's Gospel is pretty brief, but those two verses are rich in meaning. When he tells us that 'the time came' for Mary to give birth he doesn't just mean that the pregnancy had reached its full term. It's that God's time is right, the preparations and promises made so long ago, some of which we have been following together over the four weeks of Advent, have, reached the point when they can come to their fruition.

*When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman. Galatians 4:4.*

St Luke tells us that the newborn is laid in a manger, a feeding trough, and we might see a sign that Jesus has come as true food, the living bread, who will give us the nourishment of his body and soul that we truly need to thrive. He tells us too that Jesus is wrapped in swaddling cloths, and some writers have seen this as pointing us towards the end of the story that St Luke narrates, and the bandages that will wrap the body after the crucifixion. We are already beginning to see the good news of our redemption emerging: the eternal God is sharing our life and our world is changed for ever. If it is remotely possible amid all the 'busyness', try and find a moment today to let that truth touch you.

God our Father, whose word has come among us in the Holy Child of Bethlehem: may the light of faith illumine our hearts and shine in our words and deeds; through him who is Christ the Lord.