



Conclusion

As our Advent Retreat ends, it may be helpful to spend some time reflecting on the process as a whole. Has this time of prayerful pondering on God's word moved your heart in any way or led you to think differently about the entry into human life of God-with-us? Is there a scripture passage or word that has become special to you? In what way have you encountered God-with-you in the events of your life or in the world around you? There are many practical as well as spiritual implications to the Christmas story. Did you find yourself struggling at any point, or resisting the words and meaning of the scriptures you read? You may find it helpful to look back at any insights you received or any sense of invitation to respond to God's word. Has anything emerged that needs healing or transformation? Has there been a sense of growth in courage to move something forward or forge a new path? Where might God be leading you home 'by another way'? The Christmas story is one of surprises, and of people allowing God into their lives in unexpected ways. Above all it's a story of obedience, of people listening attentively to God's dream and sharing it in their own way, each according to their capacity. Take some time to explore any sense you have had of grace being offered, to ask for the courage to respond, and to thank God for every gift: those recognised and acted upon, and those yet to be understood and realised. Perhaps you can offer God the Christmas gift of your time and attention in the days to come as you continue on the road to Bethlehem with Jesus Emmanuel, God-with-us.