

Friends

Those of you who came to the concert on the 2nd of December at Windsor Methodist Church would have heard me read that wonderful series of letters imagined by the hilarious John Julius Norwich and suggesting the reality of being on the receiving end of the gifts of the 12 Days of Christmas. Having been really rather pleased with the five gold rings (“lovelier in a way than birds which do take rather a lot of looking after”) our heroine, Emily, becomes increasingly distressed with cows chomping on the herbaceous borders and leaping Lords chasing dancing ladies all over the lawns, until she is forced to require the help of a firm of solicitors.

We all enjoy a rendition of the 12 Days of Christmas, but the song, and the comic book, reference a more serious point which is that Christmas is a 12 day feast from Christmas Day itself until Epiphany on the 6th of January. Yet so often, once we have done with Christmas Day, we don't quite know what to do with the odd in-between-time that leads up to New Year and never quite feels like proper days – we often forget which date we are on in that week – and then there is New Year and with a sigh of relief we get back to normality. We probably spent too long doing Christmassy things in Advent and are all Christmassed out.

Yet that was not how it once was. Advent was a serious time of waiting and preparation, sombre, thoughtful, Christmas Eve was a day of fasting and then Christmas Day itself was the beginning of 12 days of feasting and of present opening. It never was that all the presents would be opened in one fell swoop, but instead a present a day over the twelve days. It is hard to maintain the “not Christmas yet” feel of Advent when I keep being asked to go to Christmas parties and tell the story of Christmas at schools etc. but somehow this year, with all the political and financial difficulties, and the uptick in international violence, Advent has felt more solemn, more serious, less Christmassy. My prayer is, for all of us, that this will increase our sense of joy when Christmas arrives and that we might even be able to celebrate the season as it was in days of yore when for 12 days we would feast and rejoice that a virgin had

conceived and born a son and that his name was Emmanuel:
God with us.

Wishing you and yours a very Merry Christmas and a Happy
New Year.

God bless

Vicci