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Christmas Eve Communion – Rediscovering the magic of Christmas **Alison Boulton**

Preceded by clip from M&S TV advert:

http://www.tellyads.com/show_movie.php?filename=TA5690

This is not just Christmas this is a Miraculous and Spirit Filled Christmas

Christmas is for the children, the wonder at wondering whether that light far off in the sky, or that distant sound may be Santa really flying through the sky to magically deliver the gifts to the whole world, the bubbling tummy of almost uncontrollable excitement of surprises around the tree or stocking bulging with little treats as we reach out in the darkness of pre-dawn on Christmas morning, of finding the half eaten carrot and the crumbs of the mince pie that proves beyond doubt that Santa came.

But what about.. what about we are no longer children?

Cannot catch the magic from children, when Christmas is not like the adverts, when there is either too much, or too little to do, when we lack the time, the money a family around us so we can not re-create..., when the magic seems to be reduced to catching the Christmas Spirit from Christmas specials

Where then is the magic of Christmas?

If we like Scrooge could be taken by the hand to Christmas past, Christmas long past, Christmas of angels Shepherds, what might we learn about ourselves and about God?

Perhaps like Scrooge we are scared, not of physical flight but of letting our minds fly away from everything there is yet to do tonight, tomorrow and beyond, because we feel responsible, we have to create for others – as well as perhaps ourselves – the magic of Christmas.

Maybe the words to Scrooge by the ghost of Christmas past are God's words to us, 'I can uphold you in much more than this'.

So let us be taken by the Holy Spirit to the house of a young woman engaged to be married. As we fly by we hear the words of the prophets 'A virgin will conceive' 'His name will be Immanuel'. The young woman, Mary, is busy with her day to day business. Suddenly we see an angel appearing and announcing that by the power of the Holy Spirit she is going to miraculously conceive a baby – not just any baby - but a baby who is to be the saviour of the world. How can this be? we hear the young woman ask. And then we hear the angel's words. 'Nothing will be impossible for God.' Nothing. And there is the Christmas magic – right there.

Because for Mary this was not just the first Christmas this was a Miraculous and Spirit-Filled Christmas.

And then the Holy Spirit leads us to the house of a young man- Joseph. He is sleeping but as he sleeps an Angel speaks to him. He is not to be afraid, not to doubt, but to take Mary as his wife. The baby is conceived by the Spirit. And Joseph awakes, he trusts the Angel, he will stand by Mary, God has spoken. And again there is the Christmas magic.

Because for Joseph this was not just the first Christmas this was a Miraculous and Spirit-Filled Christmas.

But we can not stop. The Holy Spirit leads us to a hillside. It is night. There are sheep and shepherds. Simple, poor, uneducated shepherd working the night shift. It's dark. Then a light starts to shine. An Angel with outrageous news. A baby has been born – in Bethlehem – and is lying in a manger – a manger? And this is the same baby – sent by God to save the world – it is Christ.

And suddenly the whole sky is lit up. 'Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will to all.' The worship and glory of heaven has come to earth just for a moment.

And there's the magic right there.

Because for Shepherds this was not just the first Christmas this was a Miraculous and Spirit-Filled Christmas.

And then we are whisked away again. The people change, they are no longer simple, poor and uneducated. We are with the elite. Sumptuous, rich and knowledgeable. It's hard to understand what they are saying; it's something about a star. They have been travelling, following a miraculous star. It's been leading them to Bethlehem and now it has stopped. It's the same place, the same child, the same Christ. And somehow they knew to bring gifts – gifts that will foretell his kingship, his priesthood and his death. It's the Christmas magic, leading, inspiring, foretelling.

Because for the Magi this was not just the first Christmas this was a Miraculous and Spirit-Filled Christmas.

Suddenly from the brightness we are taken into the dark. We hear a baby crying. As our eyes begin to adjust we see figures, an exhausted mother, a protective father a tiny baby crying with shock as it adjusts to life in the world. And this is the same baby, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a

servant, being born in the likeness of men. This is the word becoming flesh and dwelling amongst us.

And there is the ultimate magic and miracle of Christmas.

Because for us this is not just Christmas this is a Miraculous and Spirit-Filled Christmas.

As we are brought back to Christmas present and whatever that brings for each us we need not lose the wonder and magic of Christmas. We worship the true father of Christmas who visits the whole world bringing the perfect , life changing gift for us all.

Amen.