

## **Christmas Reflection: The opposite of happiness**

(by Silvia Purdie)

What is the opposite of happiness?

It is not sadness, for joy often intermingles with sadness.

Love is not crushed in the letting go  
of a person we loved, or a place we loved.

Sorrow and joy walk often hand in hand.

No, the opposite of happiness is anxiety.

Anxiety is fear that hardens in your bones

locks your mind in cages of worry

churns your gut with stress

and clamps your shoulders with tension.

Anxiety hammers at your sleep

and is there waiting for you when you wake.

It strips you of your joy and banishes peace.

Christ was born into an anxious world.

God's in-breaking into the world was met with fear.

Each time God spoke with angel voice

the first words were "Be not afraid".

To Joseph: "Don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife."

To Mary: "Don't be afraid, for you have found favour with God."

To the shepherds: "Don't be afraid! I have good news of great joy!"

How do we hear God's "Be not afraid" for ourselves?

Don't be afraid, for you have found favour with God!

Don't be afraid, for there really is good news of great joy!

Come, lay your worries here at the manger

for here God enters our world of stress and strain

not with guns blazing but with heart wide open.

Here at the manger we are gently invited

into a strange security that is vulnerable,

mighty power wrapped in weakness and small-ness.

Here we can learn again to trust

in a God who knows our every need

and who holds us more tenderly even

than Mary holds her newborn child.

So what is the opposite of anxiety?

It is peace, deep peace, fragile wonderful peace.

"Be not afraid, for I am with you" says the Lord.