

CAN I HAVE A WORD? [By Sheila Douglas 01730 267815]

There is a daily deluge of words. Of late the world's media have published lengthy reports on events from Glasgow regarding global warming. Presidents and politicians have promised that their governments will take steps to reduce pollution, safeguard the rain forests, and clean up the seas of the world. Fine words and promises, and beamed worldwide – but will they keep their word?

Words, spoken or written in whatever language, are surely humanity's most efficient means of communication. Technology has changed the speed of communication for ever, and words can fly to the other side of the earth in seconds. Words are powerful and words can work miracles. But beware! Words are dangerous too, for they can be as sharp and vastly more dangerous than a two-edged sword. Sadly, we live in a violent world, in which knife crime is rampant and where a walk in the park is no longer safe for women. Violence online is just as disturbing, for social media disseminates insults, abuse, and alarming falsehoods. Rage, frustration and insecurity can give rise to anger, and ultimately violence. Words can kill.

Christmas is coming. Soon coloured lights will brighten the streets, and the big tree will be erected in The Square. There are presents to buy, and friends and family to visit or entertain. It is so hectic that time to prepare in Advent for the coming of Christ risks getting pushed off the priority list. The occasional angels on cards are heavily outnumbered by red-faced Santas astride their sleighs. Maybe Rudolph's glowing red nose is a warning light to us - a reminder that Christ is often left out of Christmas altogether. Among the presents we have carefully wrapped, is there a gift for Christ? Let our gift to Him be to foster love, peace, and goodwill. Let us use words with greater care. Let us really mean the words we write in our Christmas cards. Generosity of spirit and words of forgiving kindness can heal hurt feelings, reconcile old friends, and bridge family rifts. Words never lose their power. They can still work wonders! So if we use them well, and love and respect our fellow human beings, whatever their colour or creed, words can still make this a wonderful world. Why wait till Christmas? Let us start now.

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