She was leaning against the bedroom doorway, arms folded, the soft light from the hallway behind casting a protective shadow over the sleeping child. There was a mellowness to the smile on her face, in part from the two glasses of wine but mostly from the joy of watching her sleeping son. Muted voices and laughter came from the visitors downstairs - not enough to disturb the sleeping child who had, until half an hour ago, been bouncing off the walls with excitement. It was way past his normal bed time but it was a special occasion. The glass of milk and biscuit had been carefully placed on the bedside table, the wish list for Santa clearly on view under the biscuit. A pillow slip lay across the end of his bed with the expectation that it would be filled by morning. She reflected on the Christmases of her own youth - the sheer joy and excitement of this time of year. Times had been somewhat different all those years ago - many of the toys and clothes had been handmade but loved nevertheless. This year she had spent much more than she had really budgeted for but it gave her great pleasure - as it did helping to decorate the Christmas tree, making paper chains to hang festively around the room, tinsel draped over everything possible. Just like it was when *she* was a child, caught up in the magic of Christmas.

She sighed softly, a warm feeling of great love for the child before her.

*Love* - wasn’t that what Christmas was all about?

She was sitting at her roll-top bureau as she did most Saturday evenings, a modest glass of sweet sherry within reach, an empty sheet of paper and a pen before her. It wasn’t Saturday night but it *was* the evening before she needed to deliver her Christmas sermon. Inspiration sometimes came slowly, as was the case this night. There was something a little bit special about the Christmas sermon and she needed to get it right. The Church would be swelled to brimming tomorrow - not just with the regular parishioners (they would be dutifully in attendance of course) but also with the once-or-twice-a-year parishioners that, at times, made her despair for her religion and her ability to hold on to a devout congregation. She wanted this sermon to have more impact than the usual Sunday fare. Tomorrow was all about the birth of *her* Saviour - the One in which, despite all the temptations thrown at her, she had such complete and uncompromising faith. She started to put pen to paper.

*Faith* - wasn’t that what Christmas was all about?

She hadn’t really slept well - it didn’t come easily when your bed was a rough paillasse in a small tent in a refugee camp. The first light of dawn was sending fingers of light down the narrow, noisome, rubbish-strewn alleys that separated rows and rows of hastily erected tents, each housing souls with equally desperate stories to tell. She had fled her homeland in the face of persecution for her religion, escaping with her baby, the clothes on her back, a small suitcase of hastily selected possessions, and the small crucifix that she kept on her person at all times. Her husband had disappeared when her village had been raided but she had survived, as she must now survive for the sake of her daughter. She quietly rose to her knees and crawled the few feet to the tent flaps, cautiously peering out into the dawning day. She needed water from the communal tap and hopefully, a food parcel to sustain them both through the day that, in previous years, had been one of great celebration in her community - Christmas Day. Go now and leave her sleeping daughter alone in the tent, or wait until later when there would be clamouring queues for food and water with the possibility of missing out? She kissed the crucifix that hung around her neck, closed her eyes and whispered a prayer, hoping…

*Hope* - wasn’t that what Christmas was all about

*Love, Faith and Hope* - isn’t that what *every* day should be about?