



It felt like a Christmas moment when the Dean discovered the Churchmice—the Cathedral hushed but expectant, evergreen lingering in the air, light caught in wood and shadow. They were sitting very still.

This was not, the mice would later insist, their natural state.

They were in the middle of having their portraits painted. Whiskers were aligned with care. Tails tucked with intention. Bishopmouse was summoning dignity; Lecternmouse was resisting a grin. Portraits, the mice believe, are important historical documents, and historical documents require patience. Patience, they say, is excellent practice for noticing.

And the Churchmice notice everything.

They told me about one of their own—a tiny grey fellow who wandered in one Thursday at lunchtime. It was the kind of cold outside that makes warmth feel like mercy. He came down the wooden stairs near the altar and found himself surrounded by feet. So many feet. And shoes—astonishingly large ones.

The little mouse was frightened. But the people noticed.

No one rushed. Someone asked if he was afraid. Then a very large man—tree-trunk-sized, in mouse measurements—picked him up gently and carried him to safety. Gentleness, Pulpitmouse later observed, matters more than grandeur. And it is always impressive, Lecternmouse added, when a giant knows how to whisper.

As they sat for their portraits, the mice began to see that same kindness everywhere.

They watched staff move through the building with purpose and good humour, fixing things before they became problems. They noticed scaffolding rising toward the ceiling—an unexpected Advent installation—as lights were coaxed back into service. Sometimes everything shines, Bishopmouse reflected. Sometimes we help one another see, Deanmouse added quietly.

They paused to breathe in deeply. Evergreen, everywhere. Wreaths upon wreaths. The mice approved.

They listened and smiled. Choirs. Children's voices—sometimes perfectly in tune, sometimes gloriously enthusiastic. They spoke with awe of the music directors, who somehow keep track of everything.

They noticed the clergy too, moving very fast, trying to be everywhere at once. The mice admired the dedication. They admired the shoes even more.

After a pause, Bishopmouse cleared her throat. There was something else they had noticed—an absence. They missed Bishop Shane—now Archbishop Shane—very much. They were also wondering who the next bishop might be. Curious. Hopeful. Practicing patience, which felt entirely Christmas-appropriate.

What they knew for certain, Deanmouse said, was that this Cathedral knows how to wait—and how to carry on faithfully while it does.

As our time drew to a close, the mice resettled themselves, tails tucked, whiskers smoothed.

At Christmas, Deanmouse reflected, much of the world is shaped by waiting. And hope, Pulpitmouse added, often arrives quietly—wrapped in smallness, and warmth. Gratitude helps us wait well, Bishopmouse concluded. And waiting teaches us to notice hope when it comes. Which it always does, Lecternmouse said cheerfully. Sometimes in a manger. Sometimes under a pew.

They returned to their portraits. Still not finished. Just like Christmas—always arriving.

I left them there—sitting very still—with warm whiskers, the scent of evergreen, and deep gratitude for a Cathedral that knows how to give thanks, how to wait, and how to welcome hope, again and again.

P.S. We Churchmice have noticed something else—gratitude makes waiting warmer. If there is scurrying during the carols, please assume joy has become difficult to contain.

