

Vicar's Pastoral Letter

Date : December 2008
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Subject : The Christmas Gift.

Dear Friends,

Please don't forget to buy the batteries! It seems to me that Father Christmas is very good at bringing all kinds of gadgets and gizmos but that he often forgets to supply the batteries to make them work. How many of us have at some time or another spent part of Christmas Day searching for a garage that's open so that power could be supplied to the wonderful presents that we've been given? The greatest gift that the world has ever been given is Jesus, God's own Son, and you'll be pleased to know that He comes with His own power supply although, even then, you have to be prepared to turn Him on so that His love and power can work for you. How many people will truly receive Jesus into their lives this Christmas or will He, once again, remain the unopened and unused present? How many unopened Jesuses have you at the back of the cupboard or do you treat them rather like an unwanted circular and immediately consign them to the bin without even breaking the seal?

It really is a tragedy if you do because He could help you to make sense of it all and not just Christmas but the rest of your life. In these days of stringency when the value of everything seems to be falling let's remember that God's love for you remains of constant 100% value and never goes into recession. The only person who can de-value God's love for you is you by not accepting it or taking it seriously. I've noticed that this year the theme of Post Office Christmas stamps is famous scenes from familiar Pantomimes and whilst I wholeheartedly approve of Pantomimes yet I do ask myself "where has Jesus and the Holy Family gone?" You can, of course, still get them but you have to ask for them specially and get them from "under the counter" as it were as if they were some kind of illicit material. What a shame when, without Jesus, our lives can so easily degenerate into a Pantomime!

But it really doesn't have to be that way even in a tough and unfair world. Many of us, most of us, will have had a mixed year in that there will have been happy times that we wish could have lasted longer and tough times that seemed to go on for ever. It seems to me that this is in the nature of life as we know it and no one is immune whatever their religion or lack of it. But the thing that makes the difference for me is that Jesus can help me make sense of it and even if that isn't possible (which it often isn't) He can help me to accept it, come to terms with it and give me the strength to go on hoping and living. If you don't open your Christmas present from God and either bin Him, consigned Him unopened to the back of the cupboard or place Him out of sight under the counter then you're denying yourself something that is life-changing and life-affirming.

So, please don't forget your batteries this Christmas! And please remember that Jesus comes with His own power supply. Our task is to switch Him on and allow His love, power, hope, joy and peace to flow into us for the rest of the year and beyond. Will you do that this Christmas and accept the gift that God has so lovingly and freely given?

A very happy and truly blessed Christmas and New Year to you all.

Peter

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A BIG THANKYOU TO RAY, JEAN & JOANNE

On behalf of all of us I would like to take this opportunity of saying a **GREAT BIG THANYOU** to Ray, Jean and Joanne who have run our local Post Office in Kempsey for so many many years and for all the loving service and friendship that they have offered to everyone who has used the Post Office over that time.

It has been a real pleasure to have known them and counted them as friends and neighbours and such an integral part of our village life. For thousands of people over the years it has been far more than just a shop but somewhere where you could be guaranteed to meet someone you knew and share stories and jokes. Ray and Jean have always had time for people and knew us all as individuals and this makes a profound difference in an increasingly impersonal world because you always knew they really cared. The sad thing, of course, is that we're losing our Post Office and a much needed community resource but the good news is that we're not losing Ray, Jean and Joanne who will continue to live in the village.

May God Bless them in their retirement and give them health and happiness in the future as we thank them for **A FIRST CLASS JOB** that has been done for us all and for the great benefit of this village and community.

THIS COMES AS A SPECIAL DELIVERY & WITH MUCH LOVE AND THANKS

Peter

Rev. Peter Holzapfel