



RE Newsletter

December 2020

December marks the end of the calendar year – a year which has had more unexpected upheaval and disruption than many of us have experienced before. For many of us, our faith has helped us through this challenging time. Faith will continue to help, support and guide us.

Therefore, it is more important than ever for us to make space in our busy, disrupted lives to put Jesus at the centre this Advent and Christmastide.

Advent provides a reminder for us all to make space in our hearts for Jesus: both the celebration of His birth at Christmas, and the joy with which we can look forward to His return. To be ready for Jesus to come back, we too need to prepare our hearts by saying sorry, loving God and loving others.

The focus of our Gospel assemblies during Advent has been on helping the children prepare themselves for Jesus' return and for Christmastide.

In one of these assemblies John the Baptist told people that they needed to prepare their hearts to meet Jesus. They needed to say sorry for the wrong things they had done. Then they were forgiven, which children learned meant all the wrong things they'd done were forgotten about.

In school we have been thinking about what it means to 'be prepared'.

The children were asked:

"How you can put Jesus at the centre during Advent and Christmastide?"

It was very pleasing to hear the children's responses. Some children challenged themselves to grow personally. They wanted to become more like Jesus: to be more forgiving, to be more inclusive; to be more tolerant; to pray more...

Other children decided to help people in the community who are less fortunate: by sending Christmas cards to the sick and elderly in Greville House, by donating to the foodbank, by helping an elderly person in their road.

Please encourage your children to continue this practice at home during Advent and Christmastide.



Christmas Reflection

Throughout this week we are preparing for Christmas by decorating our homes, buying special food and presents.

The real focus of Christmas is to reflect on the great joy of Jesus birth for each of us personally.

Please read this reflection together as a family.

You are going to be invited to join the scene at the first Christmas

Holy Spirit, we invite you and welcome you here. Help us to know what a great gift Jesus is to everyone.

Imagine that you are on a dusty path in the middle of Bethlehem. It is a bit chilly as it's night-time. Look up into the sky - you can see millions of stars. More than you've ever seen before. Around you, you can hear laughter, singing and noise - the town is full of families and friends meeting for the census. It's crowded everywhere!

You notice one star in particular though - it seems brighter than the others. It looks as though it's hovering just above a small building you can see up ahead. Something about the brightness of the star makes you follow its light to the building.

Up close, you see the building is almost like a cave - a small, dark space. The star is definitely above it. You peer into the darkness and your eyes start to get used to the dark. At the back of the cave, you can see a mother and father and you can hear the cries of a tiny baby. It's so different from the noise and busyness on the Bethlehem streets.

You hear the mother's voice - she's saying, "Come in - you're so welcome. Come and see my new son - he's perfect." You walk quietly to where the mother and baby are sitting - they're on the hay and you can see animals sleeping nearby. You keep very quiet as you can see the baby is asleep. There is an amazing feeling of peace as you kneel down to get a closer look at the baby. He has the sweetest little fingers, and you realise as you look, that you have a huge smile on your face. You can't help yourself at the sight of this baby!

The mother introduces herself - she tells you her name is Mary and that her husband's name is Joseph. She tells you that the baby is called Jesus and that He is God's son. You quietly whisper His name 'Jesus' and just saying the name brings you more feelings of peace and now a sense of joy too. You aren't sure what it means that He is God's son, but you sense that it's one of the most important things you will ever hear.

Mary says that you are welcome to hold the baby and give Him a cuddle. You can hardly believe it because He is so incredibly tiny and has just been born! But Mary has a look of trust on her face. She tells you that she wants to share her baby with you - that she doesn't own Him, that He is a gift. Mary says that Jesus is a gift not just for her, but for everyone.

She gently gathers up the material He is wrapped in. You sit on the hay - it's soft and warm - and you get your arms ready to receive Jesus. Mary puts Him gently into your arms. You may have held a baby before, or it may be the first time but imagine holding Jesus now - He lies very still and doesn't cry. He feels so light in your arms and as you look down at His face, all you can think about is how special YOU feel to be holding Him. You've been trusted with Jesus, God's son! As you hold Him and make sure He's wrapped up and warm and safely held in your arms, you again experience

this incredible feeling of peace and joy. You feel as though you can do anything - there is nothing to be frightened of when you are gazing at Jesus' face.

You realise that the time is passing quickly and you need to go and find where you are staying for the night with your family. Gently, you hand Jesus back to Mary and thank her for the opportunity to be close to Jesus. Joseph is looking on proudly at Mary and Jesus and thanks you for visiting. Joseph and Mary tell you that you're welcome to visit any time. Mary says again that Jesus isn't just hers and Joseph's - that He is for everyone. She says He is a gift for you too and for everyone in the whole world in the whole of history!

This news makes you feel so joyful and as you get up from the hay to find your family, you think about how you can't wait to tell them the amazing news about how you have been close to God's son! You accept Mary and Joseph's invitation to visit any time you want and say thank you again and goodbye.

Holy Spirit, help us to know that Jesus' birth brings us great joy!

Jesus is the greatest gift we have been given.

How we live our life is our gift back to Him

As we end our term, it is with real pride that we look back upon all that the school has been able to achieve in the face of such tremendous challenges. Our school values which underpin everything we do have been the foundations onto which we engaged with each other and with our learning each day.

We all acknowledge that 2020 has been a very difficult year for all of us, and yet we are astounded by the resilience and positivity that our pupils have displayed over the course of the last two terms. Their enthusiasm and humour have buoyed us all. We have continued to see musical and sporting success, charitable endeavours, and a wide range of individual and collective achievements.

Gratitude goes to St. Elizabeth's staff for their unwavering dedication and commitment to providing the very best for our pupils,

This time of year is normally filled with events and occasions, which draw us together to celebrate Jesus' birth at Christmas. Sadly, some of these have been impossible owing to the restrictions we are bound by, however, we have sought out alternatives, and leant on

technology. The Advent Service and Infant Nativity were fantastic and the true meaning of Christmas was shared with the whole school community on the last day of term.

The staff of St Elizabeth's wish you a happy and Holy Christmas.

We look forward to seeing you all in the New Year.

Mrs Diver, RE and Catholic Life lead