



**CathCom**  
**Reach**



# Where was God?

The appalling tragedy that hit the Philippines last month has shocked the World. Millions of people around the globe have stopped to watch, listen and respond to the news of the disaster. It has prompted us to think

of how we can help, how fragile our lives are and the age old question: "How could God let this happen?"

In this issue we look at this question and offer our thoughts on page 10.

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### What to do with this paper

Teachers: See how you can use the children's section in the classroom and for homework. Look at the classroom resources that are available online.

Ask the children to take the children section of the paper for themselves and take the rest home for their parents.

Parents: Make sure the children get the children's section - if it hasn't been taken out in the classroom already.

Put the paper somewhere where you can pick it up when you have the opportunity. Try and get a bit of space to sit back, relax and read!

Once you've finished with it - why not pass it on?



Something for everyone in this issue - why not start talking about it at ...



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# Take Time ...

## ... This Christmas



**Take time this Christmas to think;  
it is the source of power.**

**Take time this Christmas to read;  
it is the foundation of wisdom.**

**Take time this Christmas to play;  
it is the secret of staying young.**

**Take time this Christmas to be quiet;  
it is the moment to seek God.**

**Take time this Christmas to be aware;  
it is the opportunity to help others.**

**Take time this Christmas to love and be  
loved;  
it is God's greatest gift.**

**Take time this Christmas to laugh;  
it is the music of the soul.**

**Take time this Christmas to be friendly;  
it is the road to happiness.**

**Take time this Christmas to dream;  
it is what the future is made of.**

**Take time this Christmas to pray;  
it is the greatest power on earth.**

# Come and take me with you

I am writing this in the chill of a winter's morning. The sun has just appeared over the horizon and is casting its milky light on the frost laden fields. The forecast for the weekend is heavy snow. Winter is most definitely upon us. In the northern hemisphere the liturgy of the church has a particular beauty at this time. We have just entered the season of Advent and in these short days and long nights' scripture breaths a new sense of awareness into our lives. The liturgies we celebrate in these days are full of words like hope, light, rejoice, watch, be ready and prepare. These themes seem appropriate in our winter time when the hours of darkness are long and we yearn for warmth and light.

Our watchfulness is necessary for us to be aware of how Jesus wants to be close to us. In the season of Advent we remember the three ways in which Jesus Christ comes to us.

The Nativity of Jesus - Jesus has come. We prepare to celebrate the feast of Christmas. We remember with all our family traditions that God did the most amazing thing. God shunned power to become an infant child, urgently needing the love and care of others. He was born into a world that wasn't ready to hear God speak to them in such a profoundly simple and direct way. The birth of a child fills us with wonder as we hold fragility in our hands and find ourselves overwhelmed with love. This is how God has chosen to be close to us, by becoming one of us.

My life now - Jesus comes to me. One of my favourite hymns is the Advent Carol - O come, O come, Emmanuel. Whenever we ask the Lord to come to us he does. Those words on our lips express the desire

that God comes close. Maybe part of our preparing for Christmas and the New Year is to ponder how God is close to me now. How is my life graced with God's presence? Am I trying to be aware of how God is close to me and how God wants to be closer to me? Advent is a special time to experience our longing for the presence of Jesus with us now - in all the places we need him most.

Our Future: Jesus comes again, in glory. Advent is above all the season of hope. The more grateful we become for how God saved us in Jesus, the more deeply we enter into the mystery of how Jesus is with us now. Then the more we are stirred with a longing for God. It teaches us something about our humanity. We can be at home in the world for God has chosen to make the world his home. But God also promises us a future with him. The words of our prayer is changed from "Come, Lord Jesus", to "Come and take me with you."

In the week before Advent Pope Francis wrote a letter to the Church to encourage us to capture and hold a new enthusiasm for the Gospel. The letter is called Evangelii Gaudium or The Joy of the Gospel. Reading it might be a good Christmas gift to you. This is a very personal reflection on what is most important and Francis invites you to conversion! One of my favourite lines is -

*"The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk; whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realize that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms. Now is the time to say to Jesus: "Lord, I have let myself be deceived; in a thousand ways I have shunned your love, yet here I am once more, to renew my covenant with you. I need you. Save me once again, Lord, take me once more into your redeeming embrace". How good it feels to come back to him whenever we are lost!"*

God risked so much in coming close to us; do we dare to come closer to him who loves us beyond our imaginings?

In his letter Pope Francis is inviting us to experience joy and who doesn't want that! The Gospel is supposed to be something that changes us and gives us joy, even when things are tough.

*"The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew."*

May your homes be full of the joy of the Lord in this holy season and throughout the New Year.



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# Dear Reader

I hope at this point you are not too stressed with everything that has to be done for the big day. There are some great articles in this issue about Christmas. This edition is a bit "heavier" than normal but I hope you enjoy it.

There are some articles that we were due to include in this issue but we felt it was important to look at some of the questions that the typhoon in the Philippines raises. If you want to know how you can support the aid efforts out there get in touch and we'll let you know how. Also, why not send us your thoughts at [www.facebook.com/CathComReach](http://www.facebook.com/CathComReach) or @CathComReach.

Finally, we're sure you will have a hectic, stressful, manic Christmas – but hopefully that will only be a small part of making it a wonderful Christmas!!

Have a great one from all the CathCom Team!

**Nick**

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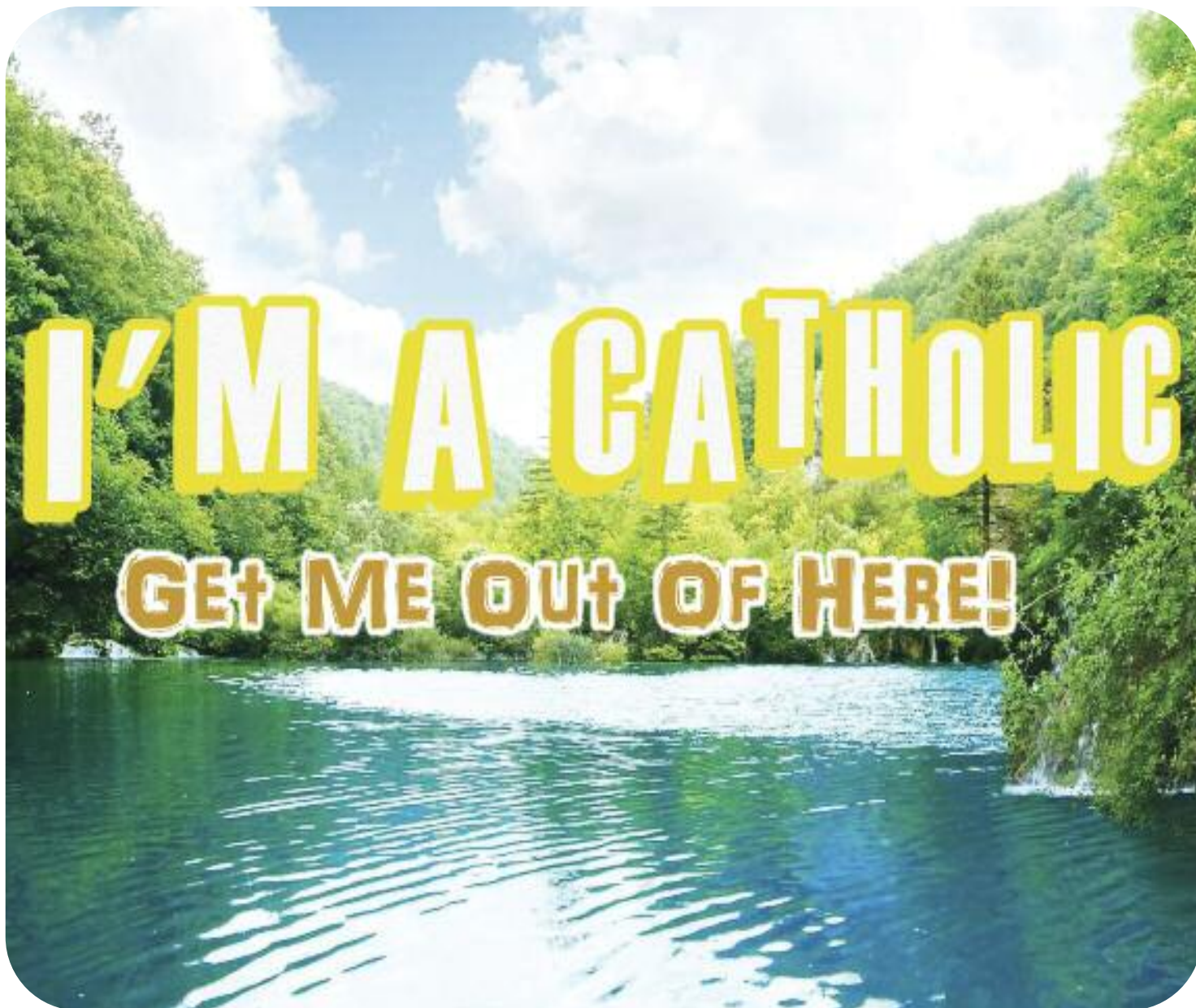
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Please send articles for publication by email supplying photos separate to the text (i.e. in jpeg format).



The beginning of December saw a new Year of Evangelisation begin. Pope Francis has challenged us to talk about our Faith. But when someone asks us a question, or when there is a discussion that has a connection to our beliefs do we say what we feel or do we think: "I'm a Catholic – get me out of here!!!"

There are trials, there are times when we don't know what we should do or say, and there will be times when we are embarrassed or made to look a fool – but we are challenged to let others know what we think and believe. God's not asking us to do anything he wouldn't do Himself.

How we evangelise will be unique to each of us and to each relationship we have. However, I find there are some basic rules:

- Don't shout at people and don't hassle people – it doesn't matter how good something is, if you hassle them they won't want to know.
- In the same way, don't bore people. Let people know a little and then see if they want to know more.
- If you are going to Church just mention it in passing – but try not to go on about it.
- Don't dodge an opportunity, but don't force one either. Often, someone will ask me a question because they know I'm a Catholic. Sometimes it is in response to a difficult question or situation, other times it will be in the pub and you get the inevitable words, "So this God stuff...".

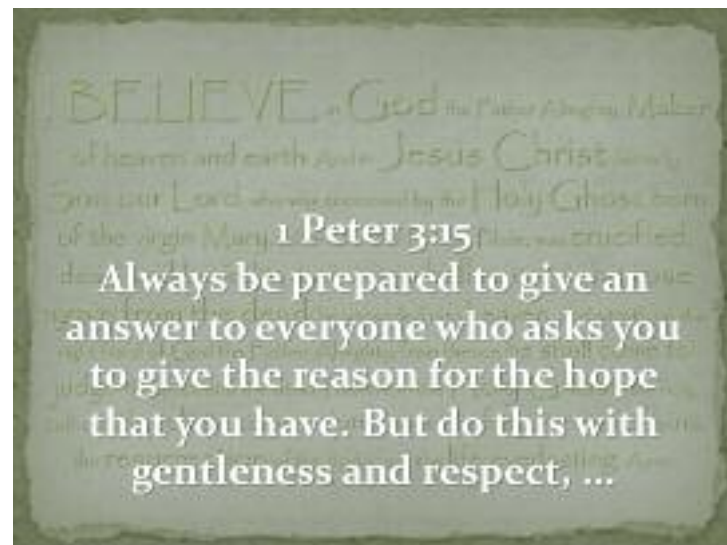
Open the door slightly and when people want to know what is behind they will open it.

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# Don't be shy! Give it a try!





# Pope Francis on Family

**Last month Pope Francis hosted a World Day for Families at the Vatican. Speaking to the thousands that attended he said, "The family is a community of life with its own consistency. It is not the sum of the persons by whom it is constituted, but rather a 'community of persons'", quoting Blessed John Paul II**

The family, continued the Pontiff, is "the place where we learn to love, the natural centre of human life". ... Each one of us builds his or her own personality within the family. ... It is there that we learn the art of dialogue and interpersonal communication". For this reason "the community-family ... asks to be recognised as such, even more nowadays, when the protection of individual rights prevails".

"The family is based on marriage. Through an act of free and faithful love, Christian couples give witness that marriage, as a sacrament, is the foundation upon which they base their family and strengthens the conjugal union and mutual self-giving. ... Conjugal and familiar love also clearly demonstrate the vocation of the person to love in a unique and everlasting way, and show that the trials, sacrifices and crises in the lives of couples, as in the family as a whole, represent stages of growth in goodness, truth and beauty. ... It is an experience of faith in God and of reciprocal trust, profound freedom, and holiness,

because holiness presupposes self-giving with trust and sacrifice every day throughout life!"

The Holy Father continued by placing special emphasis on two phases of family life, childhood and old age, commenting that, "Children and the elderly represent the two poles of life and are also the most vulnerable and often the most forgotten group. A society that abandons its children or marginalises its elderly members not only carries out an act of injustice but also sanctions the failure of that society. Taking care of the young and the elderly is the choice of civilisation".

"The 'Good News' of the family", he concluded, "is a very important part of evangelisation, that Christians can communicate to everyone through the witness of their lives; and they already do so – this is evident in secularised societies. ... We therefore propose to all, with respect and courage, the beauty of marriage and the family, illuminated by the Gospel! And for this reason we draw close, with attention and affection, to families in difficulty, to those who are compelled to leave their homeland, who are divided, who do not have homes or work, or who suffer for many reasons; to couples in crisis or those who have separated. We wish to be close to all of them".

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# Christmas Recipes

## Activities, a treat, a decoration or a present all in one!

### Orange and Ginger Stained Glass Biscuits



#### Ingredients

- sunflower oil, for greasing
- 175g plain flour, plus extra
- 1 tsp ground ginger
- zest 1 orange
- 100g butter, cold, cut into chunks
- 50g golden caster sugar
- 1 tbsp milk
- 12 fruit-flavoured boiled sweets
- icing sugar, to dust
- about 120cm thin ribbon, to decorate

#### Method

1. Heat oven to 180C/fan 160C/gas 4. Grease 2 large non-stick baking sheets with oil. Whizz the flour, ginger, zest and butter with 1/2 tsp salt to fine crumbs in a food processor. Pulse in the sugar and milk, then turn out and knead briefly on a floured surface until smooth. Wrap in cling film, then chill for about 30 mins.

2. Flour the work surface again, then roll out the dough to the thickness of a £1 coin. Use 7cm cutters to cut out shapes, then use 4cm cutters to cut out the middles. Re-roll leftover pieces. Make a hole in the top of each biscuit, then carefully lift onto the baking sheets.
3. Crush the sweets in their wrappers with a rolling pin, then put the pieces into the middles of the biscuits – the sweets should be level with the top of the dough. Bake for 15-20 mins or until the biscuits are golden brown and the middles have melted.
4. Leave to harden, then transfer to a rack to cool. Thread with ribbon, then dust with icing sugar. Will keep for a month, but best eaten within 3 days.

Warning – do not touch the melted sweets until they are cool!

### Festive Fudge

A nice traditional type fudge.

#### Ingredients

- 3 Cups (18 oz.) semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 1 can Creamy Chocolate or Original Sweetened Condensed Milk
- Pinch of Salt
- 1/2 to 1 cup chopped nuts, optional
- 1 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract

#### Instructions

1. In heavy saucepan, over low heat, melt chips with condensed milk and salt. Remove from heat, stir in nuts and vanilla. Spread evenly into wax paper lined 8 or 9 inch square pan.
2. Chill 2 hours or until firm. Turn fudge onto cutting board, peel off paper and cut into squares. Store covered in refrigerator.



#### The Children's Crackers Christmas Quiz

Don't let the kids get bored at the dinner table this Christmas; fuel their knowledge of all things festive with our Christmas Quiz! From favourite Christmas films to classic carols, get the competition going with over 100 questions for children aged four to ten.

£2.50 plus p&p

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£4.00 plus p&p

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# Little Peace



## The best day of the Year

For me Christmas is the BEST day of the year. On my birthday it's all about me – but on Christmas Day it's all about everyone and about Jesus. Because it's about everyone – it sooooo much better! Often GIVING presents is as good as receiving them – sometimes it's even better! Often HELPING someone is as good as being helped – sometimes it's even better! Our Families do so much to make Christmas great – perhaps STOP and THINK about how you can GIVE something to your family and see how you can HELP make it a great time for everyone.

Also, God gives us so much every day. He gives us:

- Family
- Friends
- Food
- Home

Perhaps at Christmas we can STOP and THINK about GIVING something to God. WHAT CAN WE GIVE? We can give God some time and pray. Most of all we could GIVE GOD OURSELVES!  
HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

Work out which of the 12 Days of Christmas on the left links to the meanings on the right.

### Resource

Go to [www.CathComReach.com/teachers](http://www.CathComReach.com/teachers)

#### CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

##### 12 Days of Christmas

- The Performance  
A classroom activity and something for the Christmas performance. It's very funny, it always descends into chaos and every time I do it parents say it is the best thing they have seen done.

12 Days of Christmas – the Teaching  
Use the guidelines and the children's section to learn some of the religious education that is linked to the song.

## Activity Zone

#### Make a Christmas Wreath

- Get a wire coat hanger
- Bend it into a circle – so it looks like a circle with a hook at the top
- Go out and find some Christmas greenery – perhaps some ivy, holly, berries etc
- Bend the small branches around the coat hanger and tie them on
- Continue doing this until the hanger is covered

# Children's word search



j	m	t	y	o	w	t	e	t	o	f	t	e	u	o
s	e	r	d	t	e	q	b	h	t	d	s	r	l	h
a	a	s	h	v	e	t	o	e	p	f	l	c	e	g
m	e	g	u	s	p	t	n	y	l	e	f	o	i	h
t	i	a	i	s	n	i	a	i	o	r	s	u	g	o
s	n	t	c	c	n	a	n	m	a	r	h	o	l	r
i	n	a	s	n	s	v	y	n	w	n	h	b	j	h
r	f	a	i	t	t	g	k	l	i	r	t	e	n	s
h	t	h	t	y	t	i	e	i	s	y	p	n	e	r
c	f	e	n	i	n	s	d	r	e	h	p	e	h	s
p	y	t	u	c	v	a	r	o	m	s	h	b	h	o
a	t	q	e	o	a	i	r	g	e	s	o	b	t	m
e	i	n	i	e	h	t	t	a	n	h	r	r	y	m
t	s	t	h	a	s	i	g	y	h	x	i	f	y	t
e	s	s	m	n	n	o	t	a	b	e	b	y	y	l

Try to find the clues to our Christmas word search.

Christmas  
Frankincense  
Gold  
Jesus  
Joseph

Mary  
Myrrh  
Nativity  
Shepherds  
Wise Men







# Spot the Difference



See if you can find 10 difference between the two pictures



# Pope Francis' Five-Finger Prayer for Kids



## POPE FRANCIS' FIVE FINGER PRAYER

2.) THE NEXT FINGER IS THE INDEX. PRAY FOR THOSE WHO TEACH YOU, INSTRUCT YOU AND HEAL YOU. THEY NEED THE SUPPORT AND WISDOM TO SHOW DIRECTION TO OTHERS. ALWAYS KEEP THEM IN YOUR PRAYERS.

3.) THE FOLLOWING FINGER IS THE MIDDLE. IT REMINDS US OF OUR LEADERS, THE GOVERNORS AND THOSE WHO HAVE AUTHORITY. THEY NEED GOD'S GUIDANCE.

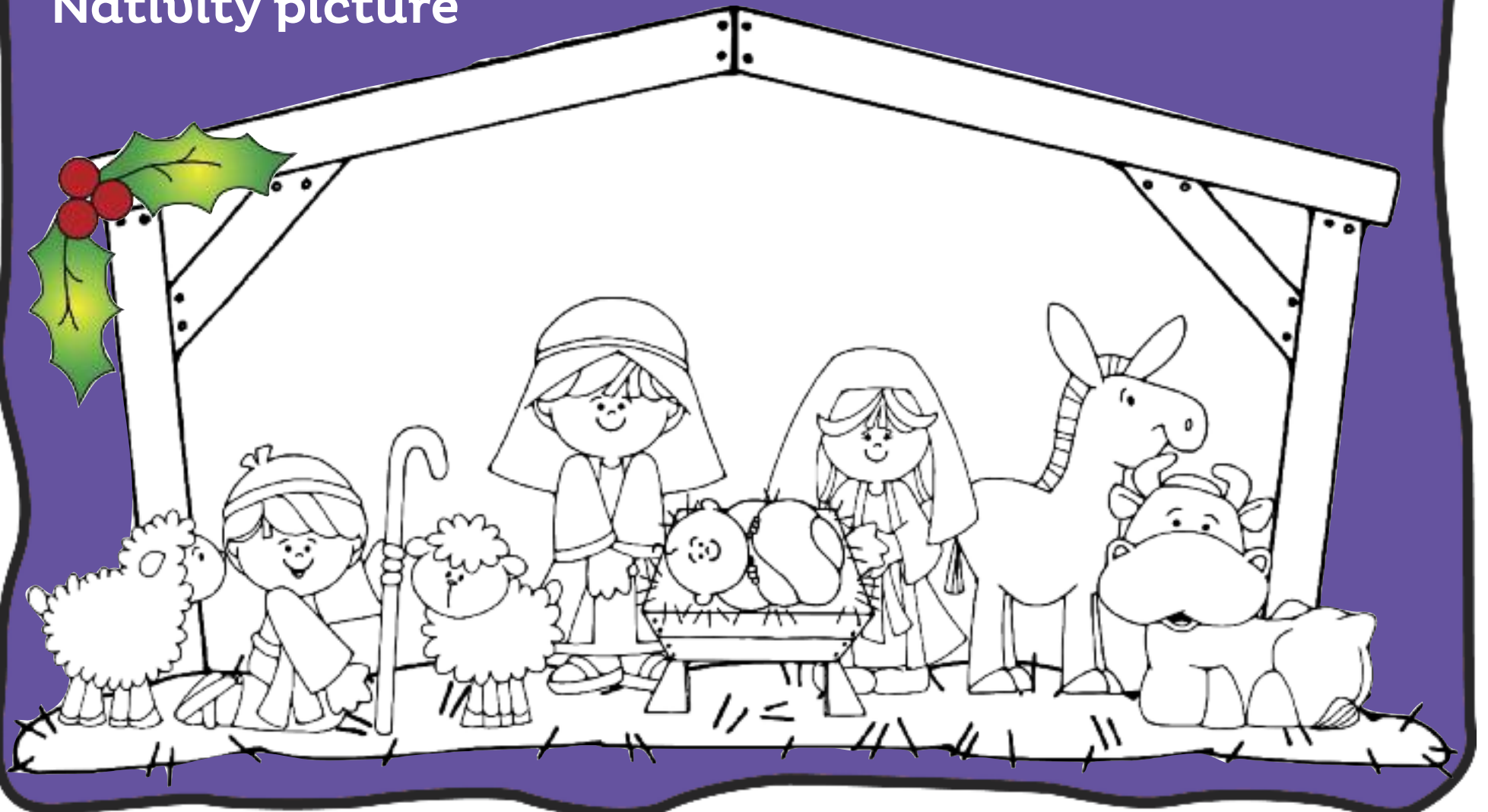
1.) THE THUMB IS THE CLOSEST FINGER TO YOU. SO START PRAYING FOR THOSE WHO ARE CLOSEST TO YOU. THEY ARE THE PERSONS EASIEST TO REMEMBER. TO PRAY FOR OUR DEAR ONES IS A "SWEET OBLIGATION."

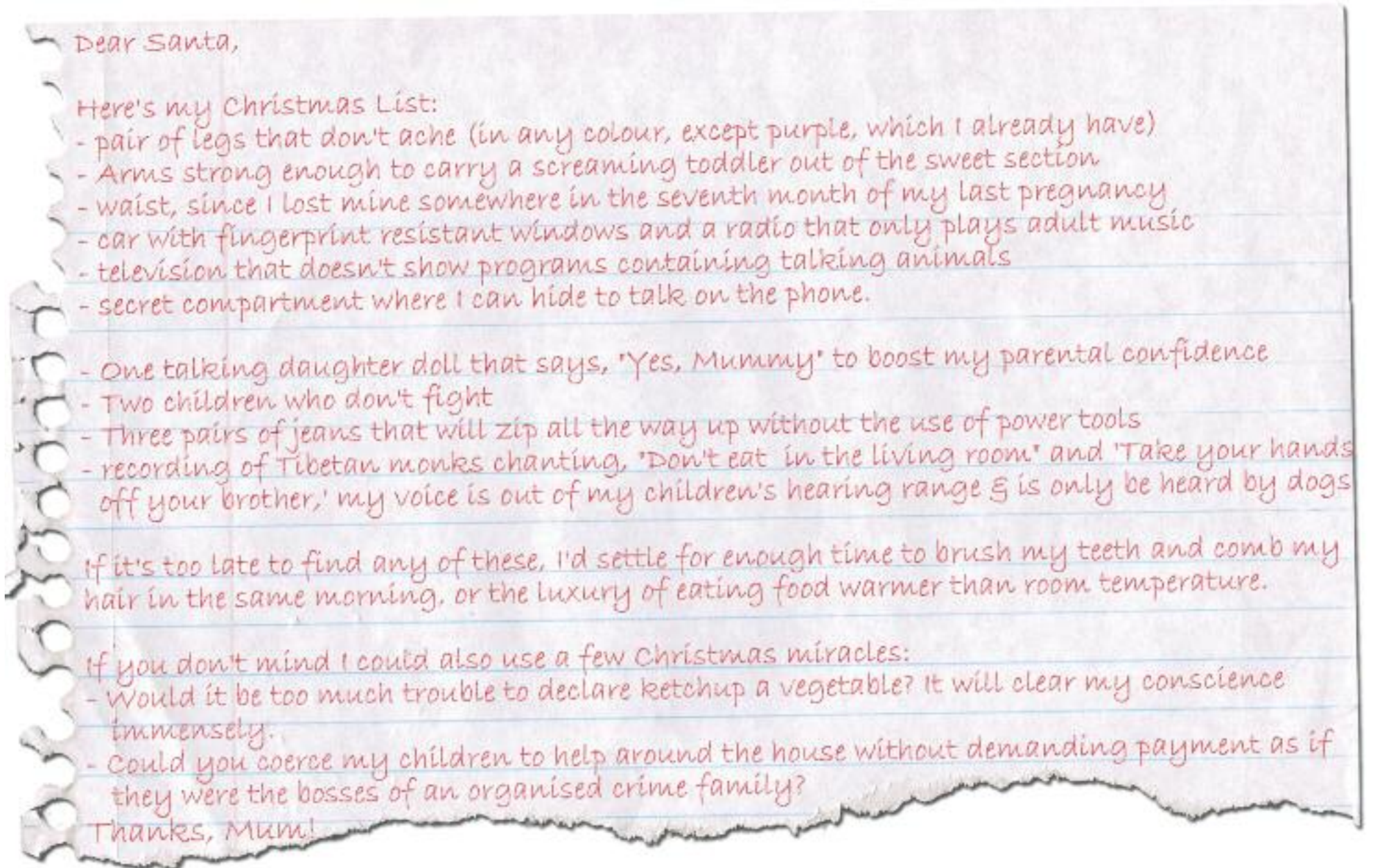
4.) THE FOURTH FINGER IS THE RING FINGER. EVEN THAT IT MAY SURPRISE YOU, IT IS OUR WEAKEST FINGER. IT SHOULD REMIND US TO PRAY FOR THE WEAKEST, THE SICK OR THOSE PLAGUED BY PROBLEMS. THEY NEED YOUR PRAYERS.



5.) AND FINALLY WE HAVE OUR SMALLEST FINGER, THE SMALLEST OF ALL. YOUR FINGER SHOULD REMIND YOU TO PRAY FOR YOURSELF. WHEN YOU ARE DONE PRAYING FOR THE OTHER FOUR GROUPS, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO SEE YOUR OWN NEEDS BUT IN THE PROPER PERSPECTIVE. AND ALSO YOU WILL BE ABLE TO PRAY FOR YOUR OWN NEEDS IN A BETTER WAY.

Enjoy colouring in our Nativity picture





## The Simplicity of Silence

We recently had the joy of visiting St Albert the Great Catholic Primary School in Hemel Hempstead and meditating with all the children in their separate classes. For many of them it was the first time that they had been introduced to this beautiful prayer of the heart and some of the teachers were naturally apprehensive that the more lively pupils might not take kindly to the idea of spending even a few minutes in total silence.

However, to the teacher's surprise, and in some cases to the surprise of the children themselves, the children very quickly discovered that this way of listening prayer was not only incredibly simple and enjoyable, but also a way of building community with each other and with God.

All the children enjoyed setting out the Christian Meditation table with a

colourful cloth, a candle, a cross, some flowers and other reminders of God's creation in the animal world and nature; such as a Teddy Bear or some stones or shells from the beach.

The simple routine of sitting still, sitting upright and repeating their prayer word – "Maranatha" – resonated with all the children and they were enthusiastic about building this quiet time into their daily timetable. They quickly appreciated that it was a good way to calm down after rushing around during break time and they also realised that it was helping them to pay attention to the next lesson.

Perhaps we, as adults, can learn from the children and also take time out from our own busy lives to spend more time in such simple silent Christian Meditation.



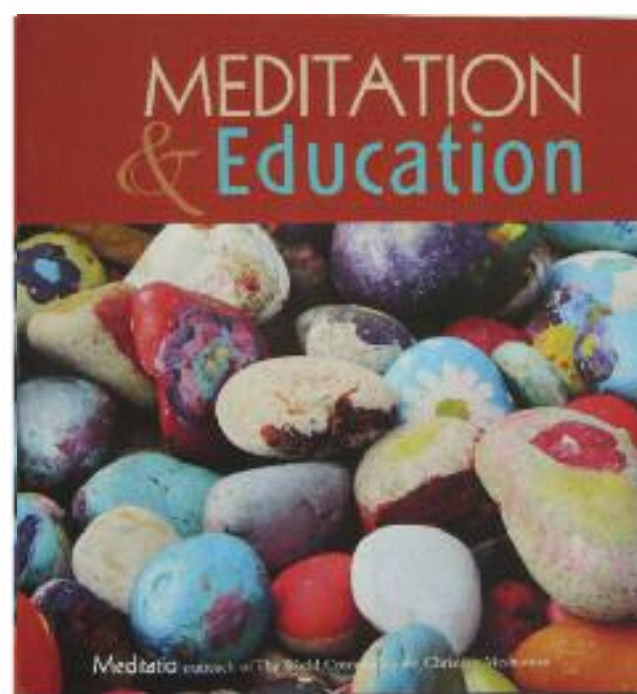
## CHILDREN LOVE

## TO BE SILENT AND STILL



Over 150 schools in the UK have successfully introduced Christian Meditation into their classrooms.

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# Partridge in a

There are 12 days of Christmas – these are the days from Christmas day to the Epiphany – the day the wise men arrived with gift for Jesus. But, what a strange collection of gifts in the song! However, one explanation is that this song was written by Catholics in England as a song to teach their children the catechism when Catholicism was illegal. Although there is debate whether this is true or a modern myth – it does fit well...

On the first day of Christmas my True Love gave to me:

"True Love" refers to God.

"Me" refers to every Christian.

The other symbols mean the following:



### 1 Partridge in a Pear Tree

= The Partridge is Jesus and the Pear Tree is the Cross



### 2 Turtle Doves

= The Old & New Testaments

### 3 French Hens

= Faith, Hope and Charity or the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit Trinity



### 4 Calling Birds

= The Four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John



### 5 Golden Rings

= First Five Books of the Old Testament. These are called the Torah by the Jews and make up the main Jewish teaching and laws – they are the most important of the Old Testament Books

### 6 Geese-A-Laying

= The Six Days of Creation – although the Church may not claim the 6 days of Creation to be literally true (that the Earth was created in 6 days) this does not make the Creation story any less "real". There are many truths that we can take from the story, God as Creator, People being made in the image of God etc. and for me it creates a picture for something that we cannot fully comprehend and put into words.



### 7 Swans-A-Swimming

= The Seven Sacraments:  
 Sacraments of Initiation  
 - Baptism  
 - Confirmation  
 - Eucharist (Holy Communion)  
 Sacraments of Healing  
 - Reconciliation (Confession)  
 - Anointing of the Sick  
 Service and Calling  
 - Matrimony (marriage)  
 - Holy Orders (becoming a priest or a nun)

Also, the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:8-10):

- wisdom: it is the capacity to love spiritual things more than material ones;
- understanding: in understanding, we comprehend how we need to live as followers of Christ.

- counsel (right judgment): with the gift of counsel/right judgment, we know the difference between right and wrong, and we choose to do what is right
- fortitude (courage): with the gift of fortitude/courage, we overcome our fear and are willing to take risks as a follower of Jesus Christ.
- knowledge: with the gift of knowledge, we understand the meaning of God.
- piety (reverence): with the gift of reverence, sometimes called piety, we have a deep sense of respect for God and the Church.
- fear of the Lord (wonder and awe): with the gift of fear of the Lord we are aware of the glory and majesty of God.

St. Thomas Aquinas says that four of these gifts (wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and counsel) direct the intellect, while the other three gifts (fortitude, piety, and fear of the Lord) direct the will toward God.



# Pear Tree

## 8 Maids-A-Milking

= The Eight Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-10):  
Blessed are..

- ...the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- ...those who mourn: for they will be comforted.
- ...the meek: for they will inherit the earth.
- ...those who hunger and thirst for righteousness: for they will be satisfied.
- ...the merciful: for they will be shown mercy.
- ...the pure in heart: for they will see God.
- ...the peacemakers: for they will be called children of God.
- ...those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.



## 9 Ladies Dancing

= The Nine Fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23):

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Patience
- Kindness
- Goodness
- Faithfulness
- Gentleness
- Self-control



## 10 Lords-A-Leaping

= The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20)

- I am the Lord your God: you shall not have strange gods before Me
- You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain
- Remember to keep holy the Lord's day
- Honour your father and your mother
- You shall not kill

- You shall not commit adultery
- You shall not steal
- You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour
- You shall not covet your neighbour's wife
- You shall not covet your neighbour's goods.

the Commandments are considered essential for spiritual good health and growth, and serve as the basis for social justice



## 11 Pipers Piping

= Eleven Faithful Apostles (not Judas)

- Simon (who Jesus named Peter – meaning "Rock")
- Andrew – his brother
- James
- John
- Philip

- Bartholomew
- Thomas
- Matthew
- James the son of Alphaeus
- Judas the son of James
- Simon the Zealot
- Judas Iscariot is not counted as one of the faithful disciples after betraying Jesus.



## 12 Drummers Drumming

= The Twelve Points of Doctrine in the Apostle's Creed

1. I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
2. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
3. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.
4. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

5. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again.
6. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.
7. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
8. I believe in the Holy Spirit,
9. the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints,
10. the forgiveness of sins,
11. the resurrection of the body,
12. and the life everlasting.



# How could God let this happen?

I'll be up front and say the straight answer is: we don't know. We can't claim to know how God thinks and how God works, and we have to accept in humility that some things are beyond our understanding. However, to leave it at that is a cop-out.

## The Problem

If God can't stop a Typhoon then He is not all powerful.

If God chose to do nothing does this mean he is not good?

If God can do anything and God is good – why didn't He do something?

## Why doesn't God step in?

How do we know He doesn't? Could there be times when He does stop a disaster and we just don't know about it? Is it possible that a disaster should have been worse than it was? Usually, out of any large tragedy comes stories of survival against all the odds. Perhaps God is somehow involved in the middle of the chaos.

## The way the World works

We are able to understand the world around us because certain principles exist. If I hold a brick above my head and let go, I know what will happen next and that it will hurt! In the same way the weather, although more complicated, has principles it must follow. If God were to overrule these principles it would leave us unable to understand the world we live in. There is no doubt that the rules that govern the weather and caused this typhoon are the same rules that give us the day to day weather that feeds our planet with a balance of rain and sun, hot and cold, wind and calm – and this keeps us alive. But so often we don't pause to consider God's hand in this.



## Disaster?

It is clear, seeing what has happened in the Philippines, that this is a disaster. However, the storm in itself is not necessarily the disaster. The effect it had on the local people is the disaster. In many parts of the world storms, earthquakes, fires and even floods can be part of the cycle of life and people rely on them for water, nutrients or to bring new life.

## Our Impact

There is speculation whether climate change, and our negative impact on the world, has played some part in recent natural disasters. When it comes to our actions it is always linked with the freedom that God gives us. For us to be able to love one another we have to have the freedom to choose to love. If a robot is programmed to do good thing – it cannot be loving because it has no choice. If God gives us the freedom to do good He has to give us the freedom to do bad. Therefore, if we haven't cared for the environment then climate change is the result of our choices.

## Compassion

In the days and weeks following the tragedy people have given money, support, time, thoughts and prayers to those suffering. In a perfect world, would we need compassion and love if we all have everything we need? In fact is it possible to have compassion and love in a world that doesn't need it or give us the space to use it.

## Turning to God

In times of disaster, people tend to turn to God. Not only asking for help, but also asking the questions that we are asking here. Does a disaster like this remind us to stop and think about what we have, our lives and what is important to us?

## Eternal Life

To forget God's promise that we will have eternal life when we die, distorts the way we see such a disaster, and the conclusions we draw from it. It has been clear from the news that people in the Philippines have such a strong faith and devotion to God. A close friend of mine, who was a huge amount of fun and a devout Catholic, died in a motorbike accident in his early 30s. His younger brother said at his funeral that he had reached where he had always wanted to go – just sooner than the rest of us would have liked.

**It is clear there is no simple answer to this question, however, there are many angles from which you can look at this problem. This article raises more questions than answers, so why not let us know your thoughts, whatever they are, on our facebook page – [www.facebook.org/CathComReach](http://www.facebook.org/CathComReach)**



# Walking with Mary

**Mary wasn't to have Her Baby in Her home town, in the house that Joseph had prepared for Her - surrounded by the people She loved and who loved Her. They had to journey to Bethlehem to comply with an edict from Caesar Augustus which stated that everyone had to register in His own town as the Census, incidentally the first, instructed.**

Poor Mary, She couldn't even have Her Baby in comfort. Again, imagine the trust She shows in following Joseph to Bethlehem. This was quite a long way to travel - no motorways in those days - only rough roads, rough terrain. And being very advanced in Her pregnancy the discomfort must have been pretty awful.

I wonder how she felt - what does strike me is that there is an acceptance and a lovingness.

On arrival, there isn't a single room to be had. Whatever was this young Mother-to-be thinking?

Joseph manages to find a spot in what some say is a stable, others a cave.

Those of us who have experienced labour and birth know how extraordinarily painful this is. And Mary didn't have the sterile surroundings to help Her. I have heard some people say that Mary didn't feel any pain because She was sinless - the way I look at it is, if Jesus, Who is God, suffered agonies, why

would Mary not do so? I believe She had to go through the pain, through the agonies before Her Son was born - and in surroundings that were hardly conducive to comfort! But She did this in love, in trust, in hope - not understanding, but full of faith.

And when the shepherds came to visit, She welcomed them - She didn't turn them away - She accepted their company for Her Son's sake, even though She must have been completely washed out.

## PRAYER

Mary, the Mother of God,  
 Mary, so focused on the birth of Jesus,  
 You gave everything to God and kept nothing for Yourself,  
 Help us to know your Son and to give ourselves to God.  
 Amen



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# Night before Christmas

Twas the night before Christmas, and all through the place  
Mum n Dad were still working, they had so much to face.  
The children had only just stayed in their beds,  
With so much excitement going round in their heads.

Then out on the roof there was the sound of hooves stopping  
Which disturbed Mum n Dad from the peeling and chopping.  
With a bump and a crash and a very loud clatter  
They went to the sitting room, "Now what's the matter?"

With vegetable peelers still tight in their hands,  
Mum saw lots of soot falling off an old man.  
He was covered with ashes that fell with a shrug.  
"Just Perfect!" she muttered, "I've just cleaned that rug!"

"Ho Ho Ho!" cried out Santa, "I'm glad you're awake."  
"your gift was especially difficult to make."  
"Thanks, but we just want some time on our own"  
"Exactly!" he chuckled, "So, I've made you a clone."

"A clone?" they both muttered, "Now what good is that?"  
"Run along, Santa please, I've no time to chat."  
Then out walked the clones – their identical twins,  
The same hair, same eyes and the same double chins.

"They'll cook, they'll dust, they'll mop every mess.  
You relax, take it easy, sit back, have a rest."  
"Fantastic!" they cheered. "Our dreams have come true!"

"We'll rest, we'll read, we'll sleep a night through!"

Then a call from the bedroom, the youngest did fret.  
"Mummy?! Come quickly, I'm scared & I'm wet."

The clone replied quickly, "I'm coming, sweetheart."  
"Hey," the mum smiled, "She sure knows her part."

The clones changed the small one & hummed her a tune,  
as they bundled the child in a blanket cocoon.  
"You're the best parents ever. I really love you."  
The clones smiled & sighed, "And we love you, too!"

The real parents said, "Sorry, Santa! No deal."  
That is our child's LOVE that they are trying to steal!"  
Santa smiled wisely, "To me it is clear,  
Only one set of parents are needed right here."

The parents kissed the children now asleep in their beds.  
"Thank You, Santa, for clearing our heads.  
We sometimes forget that it won't be too long,  
before they're too old for a cuddle and a song!"

The clock on the mantelpiece start to chime.  
And Santa whispered, "It works every time."  
With the clones by his side, he wished them, "Goodnight.  
Merry Christmas, dear parents! You will be all right!"

Need to find a Church this Christmas?

[www.catholicdirectory.org](http://www.catholicdirectory.org)

**STONYHURST**

*"Dear young people, do not bury your talents, the gifts that God has given you! Do not be afraid to dream of great things!"*  
Pope Francis

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