



Reach

A Refugee Christmas

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Whilst Christmas draws closer and we get together with family and friends, spare a thought for those separated from their loved ones, with insufficient food and shelter. Christmas will be very different for them.



Welcome to our
 new Irish Readers!



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**If you like
 this paper...**



SPEAK UP

**...let your school
 know - or you
 may lose it!**

Dear Reader

A HUGE welcome to our new Irish readers – we are delighted you've joined us!

We are now in the Year of Mercy, called for by Pope Francis, to help us focus on God's mercy for us. We are also called to look at how we should be merciful to those around us and those that need our help throughout the world.

This Christmas, more so than ever, we are called to think about those people who really need our help over Christmas and throughout the Winter. Please read the articles about the refugee camps and if you have any ideas or if you want to start something please share it with other Reach readers by tweeting them or putting a message on the Facebook page.

From all of us at CathCom, we hope you have a wonderful, meaningful and hopefully relaxing Christmas!!

Nick

Member of the Editorial Team

Contact us

CathCom Reach is published in September, December, March, and June.

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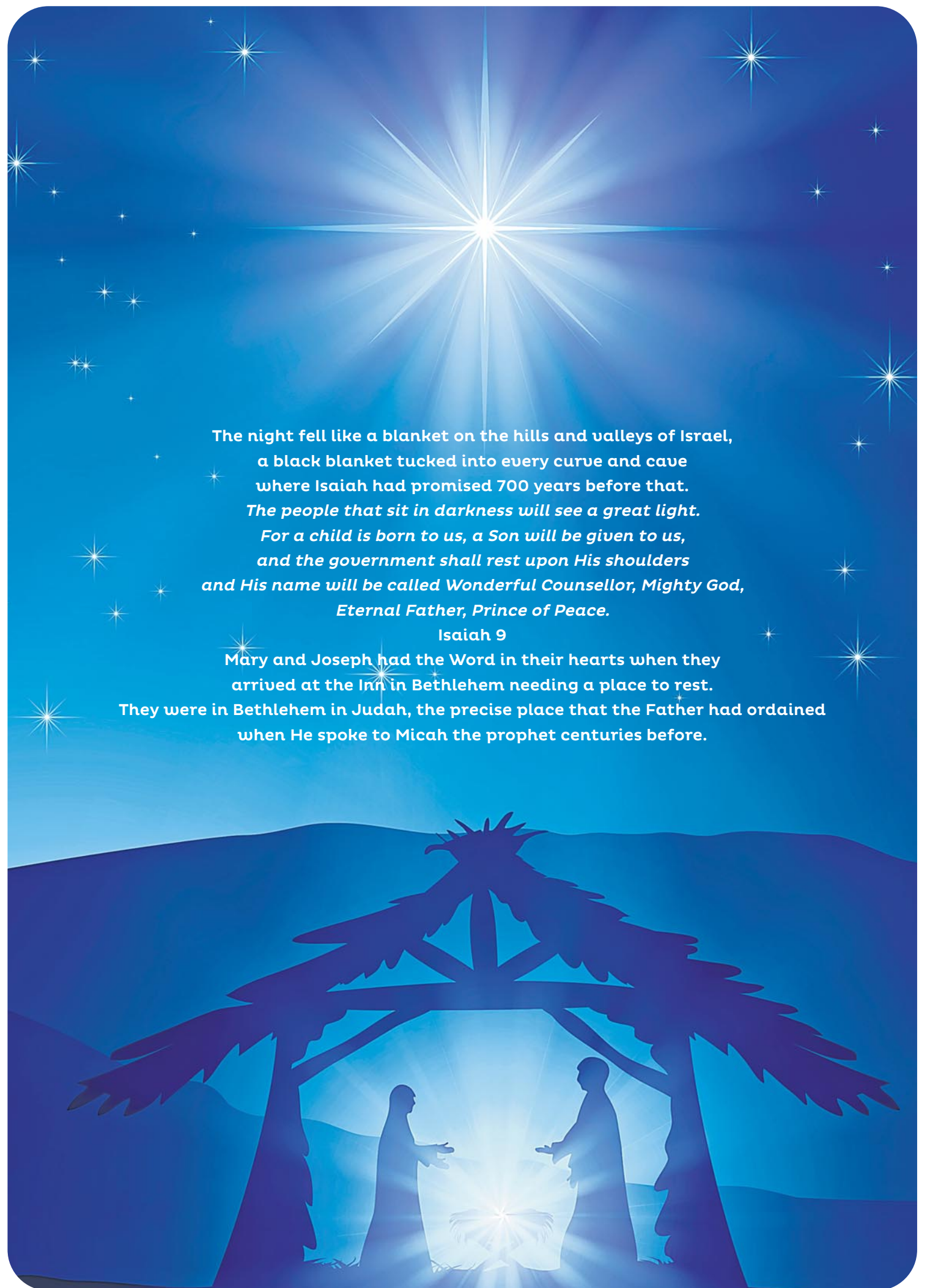
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Please send articles for publication by email supplying photos separate to the text (i.e. in jpeg format).



**The night fell like a blanket on the hills and valleys of Israel,
a black blanket tucked into every curve and cave
where Isaiah had promised 700 years before that.
*The people that sit in darkness will see a great light.
For a child is born to us, a Son will be given to us,
and the government shall rest upon His shoulders
and His name will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.***

Isaiah 9

**Mary and Joseph had the Word in their hearts when they
arrived at the Inn in Bethlehem needing a place to rest.
They were in Bethlehem in Judah, the precise place that the Father had ordained
when He spoke to Micah the prophet centuries before.**

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What's in a gift?

A number of years ago I was working in an inner city parish in a poor under resourced part of our capital. It was a place where I experienced a type of generosity that is so typical amongst those who have little. What they had, they shared. A tradition of the parish was the gift of a full Christmas Dinner hamper to families that would struggle to find the means to have a festal meal together on Christmas Day. By and large we knew the families who needed our help and over the course of a year, through raffles and social events, the money needed would be raised.

The week before Christmas, Paul, one of the other friars in the community, and myself went to do the shop for 30 Christmas hampers. We went at 5 in the morning to get what we needed and get it to the parish hall for our volunteers to put the hampers together. Turkey Dinner, some sweet treats, Christmas pudding, Cake and a gift for each of the children. It was a huge task. Delivering Christmas to those who had very little. On the 23rd December I breathed a sigh of relief in the knowledge that the task was behind me. Money exhausted and Christmas delivered!

After Mass on the morning of Christmas Eve, one of the parishioners approached me very upset. She had met a young refugee widow with two small children in the local shop where they had been shopping for their Christmas meal. Mary described the meagre contents of their basket. Damian, she said, they have nothing. We had to do something. Within a few hours we found as much available money as we could and went round the local

shops begging for help. Late in the afternoon, with a car laden down with the generosity of our local community I was able to deliver a small miracle of hope to that young family. Entering their flat I became aware of just how little they had. The parish community had once again made room for those who needed hope, shelter, love and community. That Christmas is one of the most memorable for me where the true message of Christmas was lived out in the living tableaux of the parish.

It is so easy to get caught up in the culture of distraction that consumes our society. Christmas seems to have become a secular time of over indulgence and 'one-upmanship' in gift giving. What seems thoughtful, has actually become thoughtless. What we celebrate at Christmas is awesome. It is about generous love. God's love for us is so abundant and overwhelming that somehow its impact has been missed. What did God do? God became a new born child, totally dependent on others to live. God became small so that we might know his greatness. Our gift giving and coming together with loved ones is meant to be a reflection of this. Something thoughtful and joyfully ponderous. It doesn't take much to make a meal joyful or a gift thoughtful. Often it is the simplest of things that touch the human heart. So maybe this Christmas could be a thoughtful reflection of this love of God. How? Maybe the following -

- Mend a quarrel
- Seek out a forgotten friend
- Write a love letter
- Share some treasure
- Give a soft answer
- Encourage youth
- Keep a promise

- Find the time
- Forgive an enemy
- Listen
- Apologize if you were wrong
- Think first of someone else
- Be kind and gentle
- Laugh a little
- Laugh a little more
- Express your gratitude
- Gladden the heart of a child
- Remember the poor

- Take pleasure in the beauty and wonder of the earth
- Speak it again
- Speak it still once again. Speak your love

Even if you don't feel like it, do it anyway

Have a happy and blessed Christmas

Fr Damien



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It's Christmas!

Is it just me or at this time of year is it alarmingly easy to lose your mind and overspend to epic proportions? From cards to turkeys, trees to decorations there is literally no end to the retail outlets into which you can pour your hard earned cash. And if you don't have the cash to hand you start the new year – that time of such optimism and new beginnings, with a socking great debt.

Clearly this isn't a universal problem. We at Reach have trawled the internet for tips and suggestions on how to avoid being driven to financial ruin over the festive season. There are many, many great ideas online – here are a few of our favourites:

Be brave!

It is very easy over the years to fall into the trap of buying extended family and friends presents when the need to do so has long passed. There is a campaign promoted by MoneySavingExpert's Martin Lewis called NUPP – No Unnecessary Presents Please where people agree not to buy each other gifts. They point out that its worth remembering that the person you're buying for might not be able to afford to buy for you. Agreeing to NUPP is doing you both a favour. Search online for NUPP to get a suggestion of how you can broach the subject with your friends...

I Owe You.

Generally, everything is more expensive before Christmas. If you're planning a big purchase, put an IOU under the tree to say that you are going to buy your gift together in the sales. Just have something else up your sleeve to do on Christmas day so that they don't spend hours gazing forlornly at the Argos catalogue.

Write everything down.

Most of us do our shopping in bits and pieces over the weeks leading up to Christmas. It is extraordinarily' easy to forget what you've already bought and then, obsessed by the idea that one of your family will have fewer presents to open on Christmas day, you buy something else for them. You then go through the bags you've stashed away, discover that they are now the ones with more than everyone else and you feel compelled to bring the others up to the same level. Bring on the bailiffs...

Non-cash gifts.

It's tempting to believe the marketing hype and conclude that the only gifts that matter are the ones with a big price tag. However there is something in that old maxim 'it's the thought that counts'. Why not give gifts that money can't buy – an offer to babysit (especially for people with very young children) can be quite literally priceless. Offers to do jobs that other people don't like (ironing/car cleaning/room tidying) are also welcome as is an opportunity to spend time together when you don't normally. If you have more than one child, organising yourselves so that you can plan to spend a whole day with just one of them is pretty special. They love it and it allows you to focus exclusively on them.

Save on postage.

Send cards and presents early and use more basic postage services (2nd class as opposed to 1st) and shop around online if you are sending parcels. Often, online couriers are cheaper than Royal Mail and you can drop your parcel off at one of their drop off points which often have longer opening hours.

Make your own.

It's the extras that can often add up to catch you out at Christmas. Advent calendars for example, can be seriously expensive. We've come across several creative ideas for home-made advent calendars, from a blackboard in the shape of a Christmas tree on which children can write the number of days left until the 25th to a board with photos of friends and family where at the start of the month they are reversed so the pictures are hidden and then each day, as the children turn them round, a new familiar face is revealed. We thought this was a great idea for remembering people you might not otherwise see at Christmas.

If you have tips and advice on how to save money whilst still getting very much in the spirit of Christmas, let us know at www.facebook.com/CathComReach

Anyone for spending?



The Family Synod

A three week meeting of bishops in the Vatican has recently concluded with some agreement and some disagreement on the way Church teaching should apply to issues relating to family matters.

In characteristically frank style, Pope Francis highlighted the difficulties and differences of opinion, which had arisen during their discussions. He said the synod had “laid bare the closed hearts which frequently hide even behind the Church’s teachings or good intentions, in order to sit in the chair of Moses and judge, sometimes with superiority and superficiality, difficult cases and wounded families.”

Speaking on Radio 4’s Today Programme, Cardinal Vincent Nichols, the head of the Catholic Church in England and Wales said that the meeting marks a definite choice, a pathway for the church which corresponds to Pope Francis’ mind and it is a pathway that says we must respond carefully, attentively, humbly to all the situations in which the family finds itself in the world today.

Whilst the discussions were very wide ranging and covered a multitude of issues, the one that has received the most publicity is whether or not the church will allow divorced and remarried Catholics to take Holy Communion. Opinions range from those who feel the indissoluble status of marriage

would be called into question if remarried divorcees were allowed to take Communion to those, like Cardinal Nichols who believe that Holy Communion has begun to be seen as a badge of acceptance, which isn’t right.

For his part, Pope Francis has said that the Church can’t just go on proclaiming doctrine and wagging a doctrinal finger. It has to get its hands dirty and good theology is produced when teaching comes face to face with the messy circumstances which most of us experience in our lives.

The meeting has also made visible the difficulties the Church has in applying its teaching internationally. The Synod was attended by bishops from over 250 different countries and in his closing speech, Pope Francis said “we have also seen that what seems normal for a bishop on one continent, is considered strange and almost scandalous – almost! – for a bishop from another; what is considered a violation of a right in one society is an evident and inviolable rule in another; what for some is freedom of conscience is for others simply confusion”

The wording agreed at the end of the meeting is only a guideline for Pope Francis, he now has the unenviable task of deciding whether to alter it or publish it as agreed.

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Get Crafty!

Slightly Cheaty Treats

There is often quite a lot of cooking at Christmas – lots of children love baking but often love the decorating even more! Short cut the baking bit by converting chocolate biscuits or Tunnock's Tea Cakes into mini Christmas puddings. Just take about 100g of icing sugar and mix in a teaspoon full of cold water. You might need more but start with a teaspoon and see how you go. If it does become too runny you can always add more icing sugar. Dollop small amounts of icing on the biscuits and move them around so that the icing runs in the direction you want it to. It will soon harden up and then you can use colourful sweets to make the 'holly' and 'berries'. We used M&Ms and Tic Tacs but other sweets are available...



Q: What do you get when you cross a snowman with a vampire?
A: Frostbite.

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Potty about Paper Chains

Decorations can cost a fortune at Christmas but really don't need to. If, like us, you have young children – over excited in the weeks leading up to the 25th and in need of something to do, get out the scissors, sellotape and any colourful paper (magazines/newspapers/wrapping paper) and have a go at making these paper chain trees.



Little Peace



INSIDE The Advent wreath ☆
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Advent Wreath
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The Advent wreath is a special symbol. The evergreen leaves mean everlasting life, the circle of the wreath (with no

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 CARE OF OUR COMMON HOME
Pope Francis' Letter
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+Pope Francis

INSIDE Colouring Competition
 Page 4

Christmas Quiz

Q: What did Adam say on the day before Christmas?
A: It's Christmas, Eve!

1. What's the name of the period leading up to Christmas?
2. How many Wise Men brought gifts to Jesus?
3. How does Good King Wenceslas like his pizzas?
4. What was the name of John the Baptist's Mother?
5. Who brings presents to children in Holland on the 5th/6th December?
6. How many letters are in the angelic alphabet?
7. In what town was Jesus born?
8. How many presents were given in total in the 12 Days of Christmas?
9. In what decade was the first Christmas Card sent?
10. What country did the family escape to?
11. How many of Rudolph's eight companions names start with 'D'?
12. What country did Christmas Trees originate from?
13. Who was the 'King of the Jews' who ordered the babies to be killed?
14. What's the second line of "I'm dreaming of a white christmas"?
15. What was Joseph's job?
16. Who started the custom of Wassailing?
17. Who were first people to visit the baby Jesus?
18. What's lucky to find in your Christmas Pudding?
19. What Angel visited Mary?
20. Where did the baby Jesus sleep?

Spot the Difference



See if you can spot 8 things that are different between the two pictures - don't worry it's not the number of dots!!!!

1. Advent 2. More than one, the Bible doesn't say how many! 3. Deep pan, crisp and even! 4. Elizabeth 5. St. Nicholas 6. Carpenter 16. The Anglo Saxons - it means 'good health' 17. Shepherds 18. A six pence 19. Gabriel 20. In a manger
 Germany - it was Latvia but it was part of German then! 13. King Herod 14. Just like the ones I used to know 15.
 25; 'no eliii 7. Bethlehem 8. 364 9. 1840s - 1843 by Sir Henry Cole 10. Egypt 11. Three - Dasher, Dancer and Donner 12.

Answers:

Advent is a special time when we get ready for the coming of Jesus.

Throughout Advent, let's find out about the earth that we share with our sisters and brothers around the world, and how we can play our part to protect it.

Use CAFOD's Advent calendar each day for daily stories, activities, reflections and prayer.

cafod.org.uk/primary



Pope Francis' message: Let's care for our common home

Pope Francis has written a letter addressed to every person on this planet, asking us all to protect our common home, the earth.

In his letter, *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis speaks openly about the devastating effects of climate change on people and the planet.

He says that climate change is real, urgent and it must be tackled, asking us to remember that the climate is "a common good, belonging to all and meant for all".

The Advent wreath ☆



Monday
30 November

The Advent wreath is a special symbol. The evergreen leaves mean everlasting life, the circle of the wreath (with no beginning and no end) reminds us of the eternity of God and the four candles are the four weeks of Advent.

Draw or make an Advent wreath:

1. Cut a hole in the middle of a paper plate
2. Draw around your hands on green recycled paper and ask others to do the same
3. Stick the cut-out hands around the outside of the paper plate to make the leaves
4. Make four candles by rolling paper into tubes (3 purple and 1 pink)
5. Attach a paper flame to one candle on each Sunday of Advent

What will you do this Advent to get ready for when Jesus comes?

CAFOD Just one world

29 Nov 30 Nov 1 Dec 2 Dec

25 Dec 24 Dec 23 Dec 22 Dec 21 Dec 20 Dec 19 Dec 18 Dec 17 Dec 16 Dec

Children of the Prep

Let's put love for the world and our neighbours into action

In Laudato Si', Pope Francis asks us to put **love for the world** and for our neighbours into action.

He asks us to work for the **common good** and commit to caring for our sisters and brothers living in poverty.

One way to show support for our neighbours in developing countries is through *World Gifts*.



Through *World Gifts* like water or learning to read, we can support families and communities around the world to transform their lives.



Thursday
3 December

Last year, schools raised enough money to teach 3,529 children to read. Fantastic work!

This year, we are aiming to teach **5,000 children to read.**

[Click here](#) to find out more how you can get involved with *World Gifts* this Advent.

Remember to check our online totaliser each week in Advent.



We had grandma for Christmas dinner?

Really, we had turkey!

3 Dec

4 Dec

5 Dec

6 Dec

7 Dec

8 Dec

9 Dec

10 Dec

11 Dec

12 Dec

15 Dec

14 Dec

13 Dec

world unite,
paring for the special night,
waiting for the joyful birth,
of the child who is
God's light on Earth.



Taking eco-actions to care for the earth

Friday
11 December

In his letter, Pope Francis challenges us to play our part to look after our common home.

We are invited to take simple eco-actions like turning off lights, reducing water waste and recycling.

Think about different eco-actions you can take at home and at school to help care for the earth this Advent.

[Click here](#) for ideas to make your Christmas greener.



With two weeks to Christmas, use recycled materials to make a Christmas decoration or star.

You may want to sell them to raise money for *World Gifts*.



The earth is God's gift

Saturday
12 December

In his letter, Pope Francis reminds us that the earth is God's gifts to us, filled with beauty and wonder. It belongs to everyone. But we have mistreated it and taken more than our fair share. So we must act now to protect the earth, God's gift to us.

We are asked to open our eyes and see the earth as a gift. This enables us to treat it with care, just like Jesus would.

List the things or places in the world where you see beauty or wonder.

Say a prayer of thanks for all of the things you love about the world.



What Christmas can teach about being a good citizen

Christmas is very special. It is the time of year when we celebrate the birth of Jesus and receive presents from our friends and family.

But there is more to Christmas than presents. It is a time when we think about those who are less fortunate than us and do our best to help them.

Nearly 30 years ago, St Pope John Paul II wrote about the importance of looking after everyone because we are all created by God. This is called solidarity.

Because Jesus was born for the sake of us all, we must care for everyone as well. This

includes people of all faiths and nationalities.

We must also look after the whole of creation as well. This means being kind to the planet too.

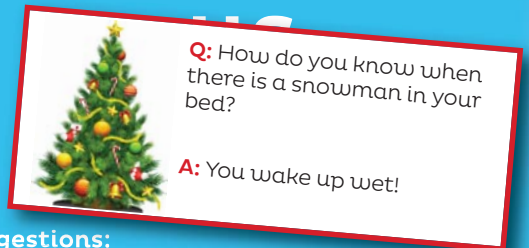
The other important thing which both St Pope John Paul II and our current Pope Francis say is that we must not just feel sorry with those less fortunate than us, we must do something to help them.

So, in this season of Advent and Christmas, what can you do to be an active citizen to help other people?

Some suggestions:

- Raise money for a charity
- Give food to your local food bank
- Volunteer at a homeless shelter
- Collect gifts for poor children to get at Christmas
- Recycle old cards and ribbons
- Send a shoebox of presents to a refugee

by James Spencer of the Catholic Bishops Conference for England & Wales' Catholic Education Department.



Q: How do you know when there is a snowman in your bed?

A: You wake up wet!

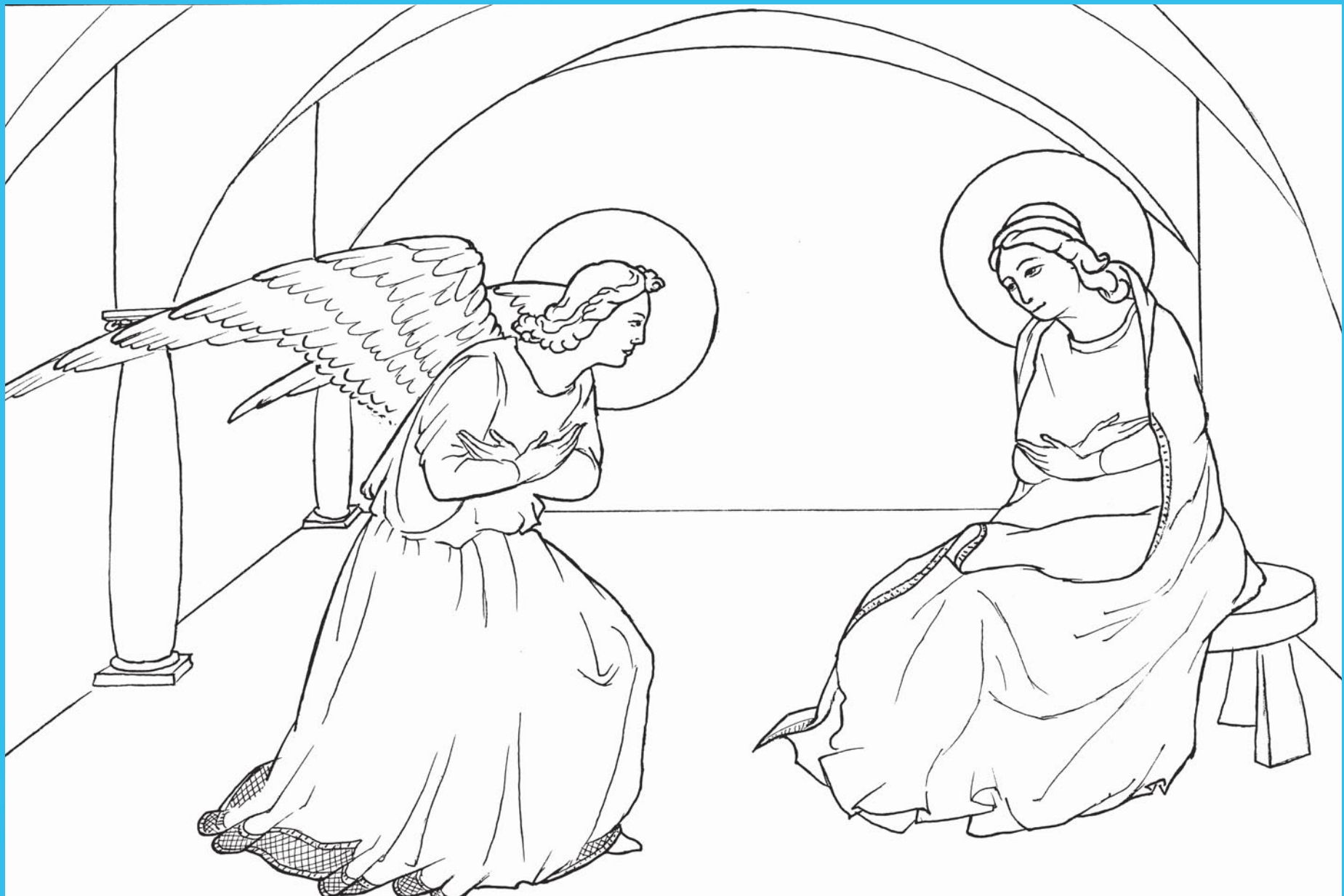
Colouring In Competition

Are you a careful colourer-in?

Sensational at shading?

Brilliant at staying between the lines?

Are you a careful colourer-in? Sensational at shading? Brilliant at staying between the lines? Try your hand at colouring in the picture below and send it to us – the best 5 entries will win a copy of *The Mass* – the book reviewed on page 7.



You can either take a photo of your entry and email it to schools@cathcomreach.com or you can cut it out and post it to us at N2 Blois Meadow Business Park, Steeple Bumpstead, CB9 7BN. Don't forget to include your contact details so that we can let you know if you've won! The closing date is 1 February 2016 and we'll announce the winner in the next edition of *Reach* which will be out at Easter.

Book Reviews

The Mass Illustrated for Children

by Susan Bateman

As a child I remember sitting in Mass trying to follow what was happening using my Mum's missal. Frankly it was all a bit bemusing – knowing when to respond, what to say, when to kneel and when to be quiet!

The Mass is a paper backed book which children can use to help them follow the order of a Mass. It has helpful symbols to show children when to stand, sit, kneel or pray and different typeface is used to indicate when they should just listen and when to join in.

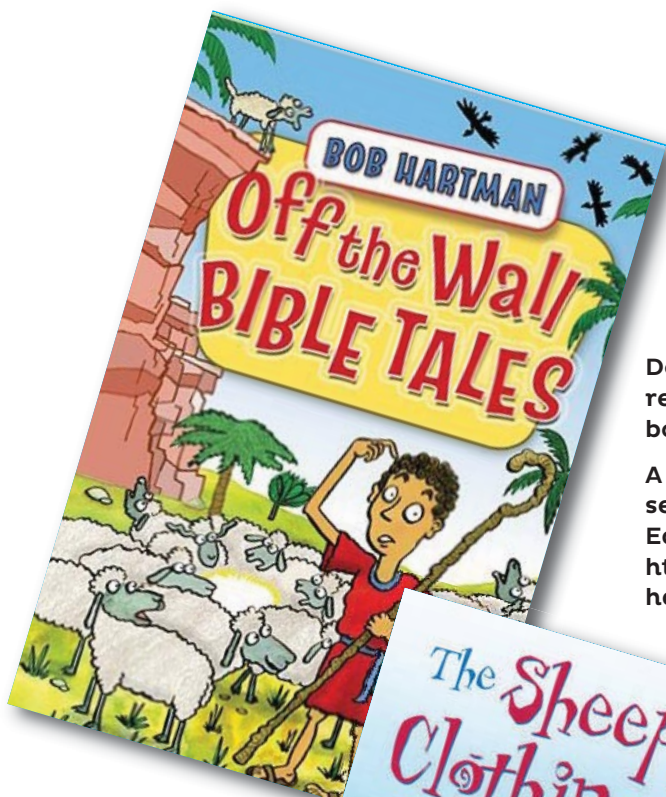
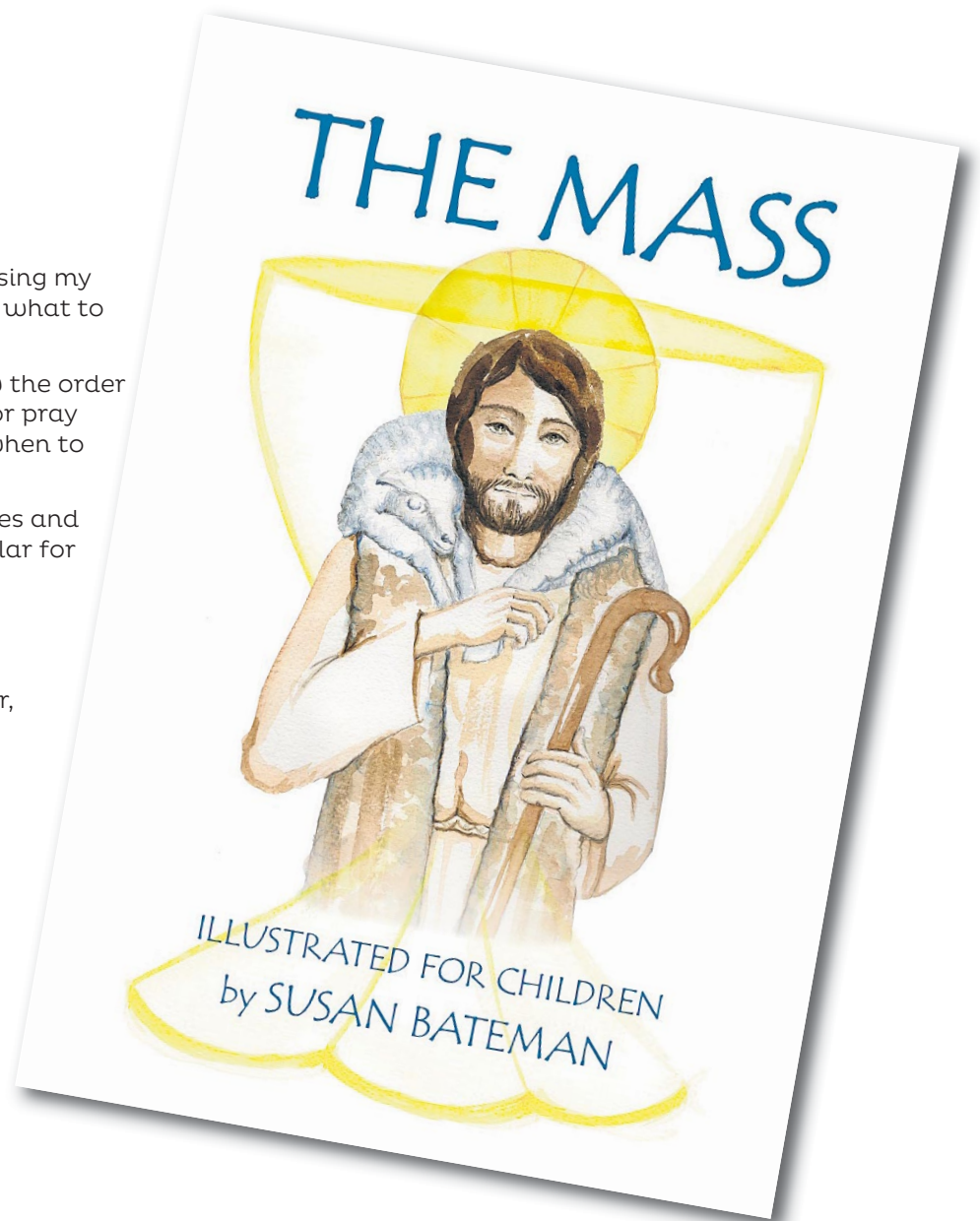
The book is printed in black and white allowing children to colour in the pages and to personalise their own copy. It would be useful for any child but in particular for those making their First Holy Communion.

See the competition in the children's section for details of how to win your own copy.

Orders can now be placed by: Post: Prompt Reply, 54 Timber Mill, Southwater, Horsham, RH13 9SR. Phone/Text: 07836 520597

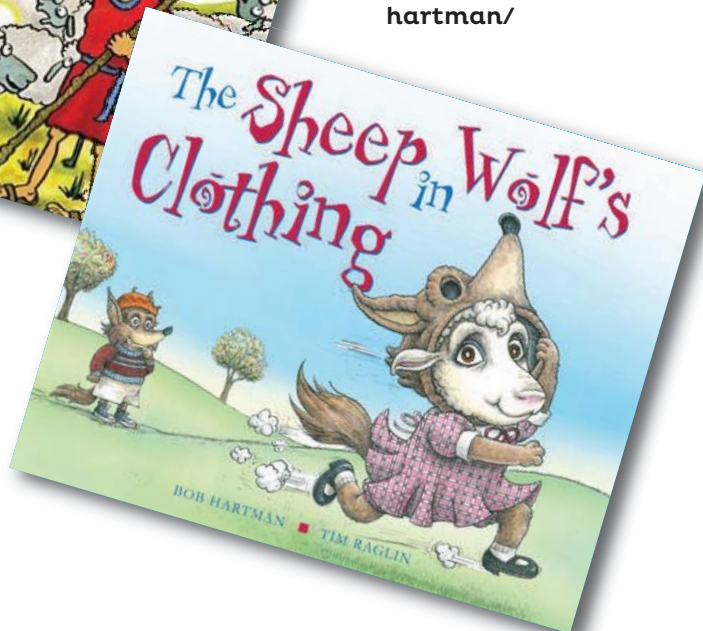
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The family and celebrating Christmas – what’s it really all about?

Family life is hectic and stressful at the best of times... and then comes Christmas, bringing so many more demands, over and above the normal business of being a parent. The bar is set high when it comes to expectations, not only about presents but also the whole way in which we ‘traditionally’ celebrate in our different families. There can be tensions from children, in-laws, and the whole advertising culture. It’s all about the presents.

The Christmas Season itself, which begins on Christmas Eve, though preceded by four weeks of waiting time in Advent, has a very different feel about it. The Gospel of Luke tells the story from Mary and Joseph’s point of view. The strange business of the angel announcing her pregnancy, and that Jesus would be Son of God, come to be amongst us on earth, as a baby! Circumstances meant that the birth didn’t take place at home but in a foreign town, where there was no room, in a stable. Shortly afterwards there were threats made and the family had

to flee, becoming refugees, in Egypt. We know the story so well.

Perhaps this year we could begin ‘waiting’ for Christmas at home. Here are some ways to help you and your children to prepare. These ideas respect your own space at home, and also recognise that children love to discover the truth for themselves by thinking deeply about it.

Simple To do’s

- **Tell the stories together at home, from Chapter 1 of St Luke’s Gospel** – Mary and the angel, the journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, no room at the Inn and the birth in the stable, the shepherds and angels... and later, the Kings. The children might remember these without too much prompting. You might have time to find them yourself, on-line or in a bible. www.bible.oremus.org
- **Encourage questions, and don’t always try to answer them** – open up the discussion. Say ‘Why do you ask that? What do you think? This helps everyone –

adults and children – to go a bit deeper and reflect, avoiding neat answers that close up the questions. Let the children share with each other. Often they have wonderful thoughts that help us as adults to think differently too.

- I wonder what it’s like to wait for a baby?
- I wonder what it’s like to see the baby’s face and kiss it for the first time?
- What is it like to hold the baby, and wonder about him or her?
- I wonder what Mary felt when she held Jesus for the first time?

Make your own ‘Christmas Crib Scene’ at home. e.g.

- Draw and cut out a ‘stable’ – simple rectangle shape – and stick on card. (cereal packet works well!)
- Draw some of the key characters in the stories, cut them out and stick on card
- Mary, Joseph, donkey. Shepherd. Angels. Kings. Inn Keeper. Baby

Jesus, a little ‘manger’

- Encourage the child/children to tell the story with you using the figures.

Then you may like to place the figures round the house – in different places – moving them a bit each day, making that journey, like the Holy Family, towards the ‘stable’, ready for Christmas Eve.

Keep the ‘baby Jesus’ figure hidden away until Christmas Eve, when he can be placed by a child in the stable next to Mary.

Look out:

- Get involved in the parish and school celebrations– there will usually be a blessing of the Crib, or a carol service
- There will also be ways to give gifts to children in homes or families where there is no money for any sort of presents.

by Caroline Dollard of the Catholic Bishops Conference of England & Wales’ Marriage & Family Life Department

Find a Church Christmas

www.CatholicDirec

Are you feeling SAD?

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is a form of depression that people experience during the changing of seasons. For most individuals, symptoms of SAD will usually start around Autumn time and continue through the winter period. However, there are people who experience symptoms of SAD in the reverse with depressive symptoms occurring during the summer.

We experience large changes in light levels between the summer and winter. For many this means leaving home in the dark and returning in the dark with little exposure to natural sunlight. However, with the advent of electricity and the great British attitude to socialising, high numbers of us are staying out with friends long after daylight has fallen. Whilst this socialisation plays an important role in maintaining our mental health, it has a profound effect on our body clocks and importantly our circadian rhythm. This rhythm helps to regulate important bodily functions such as digestion, energy levels, quality of sleep and mood. All of these are integral to our overall health and wellbeing.

According to MIND, like other forms of depression, SAD can be triggered by physical illness, traumatic life event, major loss or bereavement or a change to diet or medication.

Symptoms of SAD include:

- Low mood
- Low self esteem
- Less sociable

- Feeling irritable
- Increased appetite with many craving carbohydrates and gaining weight
- Loss of libido
- Lethargy and sleep problems, Panic attacks
- Alcohol or drug abuse

Here are some simple strategies that could help you to improve the symptoms of SAD:

Try to get as much natural sunlight as possible. You can do this by sitting close to a window both at home and in the work place.

Take plenty of regular exercise, particularly outdoors. Physical activity can be really effective in helping to lift your mood. It will also help to increase your energy (Helpful when you have lots of Christmas shopping, wrapping and entertaining to do!)

Try to avoid stressful situations. This can be easier said than done but remember that people are more likely to suffer from stress in the winter. Take opportunities to relax and unwind.

Accept help from others and say yes to the cup of tea offered to you.

Eat a well balanced and varied diet. Try to avoid craving carbohydrates and eat plenty of fruit and vegetables.

Some people feel that it helps to take Vitamin B12 supplements at this time of year.

Try to ensure your home and work environment is as light and airy as possible. This will increase your exposure to natural sunlight. Light boxes can also be helpful.

If you are affected or think you may be affected by SAD, remember that your GP is able to offer you advice on the different treatments available. Or for more information, advice and support, you can also visit.....



- SAD.org.uk
- www.irishhealth.com/article.html?con=303 -
- Mind.org.uk
- BUPA Factsheet.

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ctory.org



Winter in 'The Jungle'

In the last edition of Reach we brought you news of the people trapped in Calais refugee camps. At that time there were around 3,500 residents of 'The Jungle' as it is known and conditions were pretty bad. Since then, around 300 people per week have been arriving in these camps taking the current total to 6,000. The flow of people continues unabated and current predictions are that by January there could be up to 10,000. As winter sets in and the University of Birmingham publishes a report highlighting that all the conditions for a cholera epidemic are now present, referring to the 'diabolical conditions' in which the refugees are living, we thought you might like more information on what is going on just 22 miles from our borders.



The Jungle is a sprawling area on the northern French coast



People line up to receive parcels of aid from volunteers



More people are arriving every week and the scant resources are severely under strain

The Jungle is a collection of camps - a sprawling area in the sand dunes around the port of Calais. We have been speaking to Fr Dominic Howarth who has recently returned to his parish in Basildon having distributed a thousand packets of essentials to the people in the camps. Soap, toothbrush, toothpaste, underpants, socks and a message of hope from a school child in his parish - each packet identical to the others to make distribution as straightforward as possible.

'I cannot find words to describe how humbling and saddening it is to hand another human being a little packet of such basic essentials and to be met with such evident need, and such gratitude' says Fr Dominic. He and a group of volunteers in his parish have been collecting donations and then taking them to Calais. When asked how things had changed since his last visit a month ago, Fr Dominic said that they had both improved and worsened. The improvement has come because the various charities are working together with much more co-ordination but the ever increasing numbers with no additional facilities or resources are making the situation worse with every passing day.

In terms of the volunteers themselves, they are a varied bunch says Fr Dominic - people of all faiths and none but overwhelmingly people of good heart and good will. There are British carpenters giving their time to construct wooden shelters from timber bought with donated money and Medecins Sans Frontiers are amongst the volunteer groups holding the fragile infrastructure together in the absence of government help.

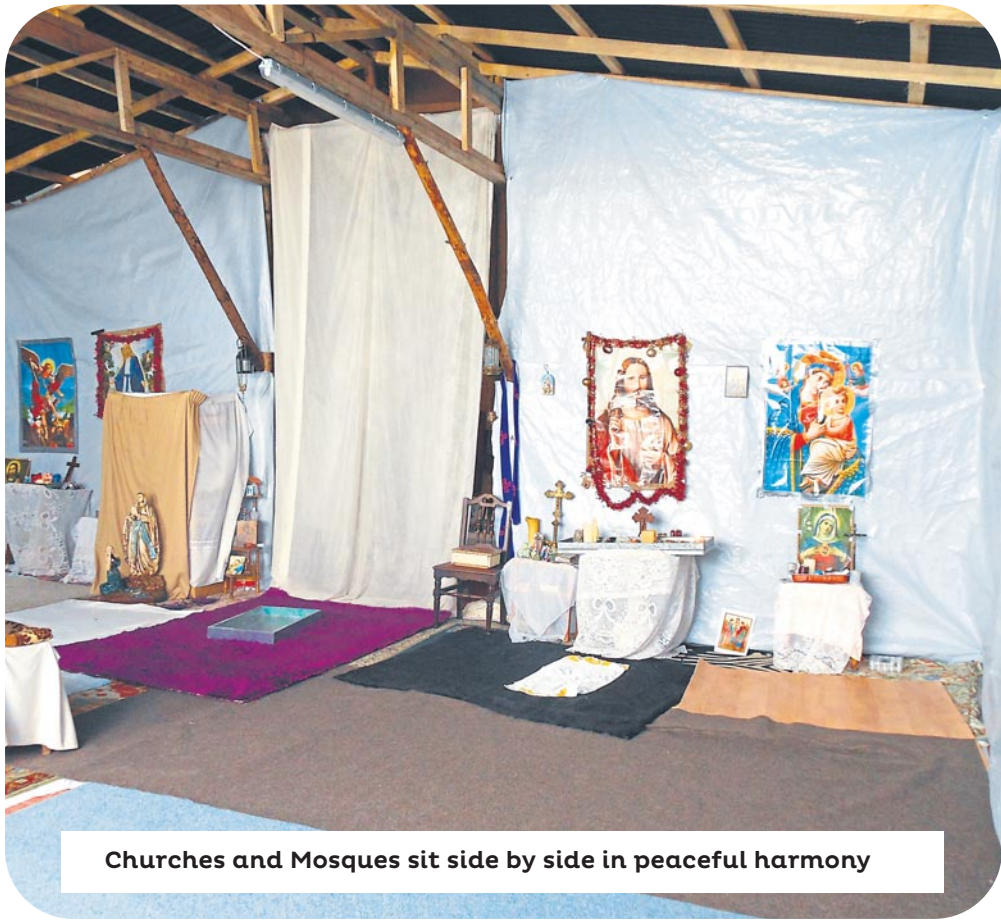
The vast majority of people in the camps are men. Of the 6,000 inhabitants, only around 400-500 are women and children but even so a rudimentary school has been constructed to provide education to the small number of children who are there. There is an artists' area and a church and mosques 'peacefully co-existing'. A sign in French translates as "We must learn to live together like brothers if we are not going to die together like idiots".

So - what can we do?

As the temperature drops and we all turn our heating on, the people in the camps need warm clothing to help them survive the cold months. Fr Dominic is waiting to be told by the volunteer groups in Calais just what people need and once he knows, he will be contacting wholesalers to make the very most of the donations he has received.

If you want to help, money is the best contribution you can make so that Fr Dominic and the volunteers can produce more identical packages. Please





Churches and Mosques sit side by side in peaceful harmony

send a cheque made payable to "Our Lady and All Saints" with a note that the money is for Calais, and it will only be used for that purpose. The ferry and minibus costs are covered from elsewhere, so every penny is spent directly on items for the refugees. Post cheques to: Fr Dominic Howarth, Calais Appeal, Holy Trinity Church, 71 Wickhay, Basildon, Essex SS15 5AD.

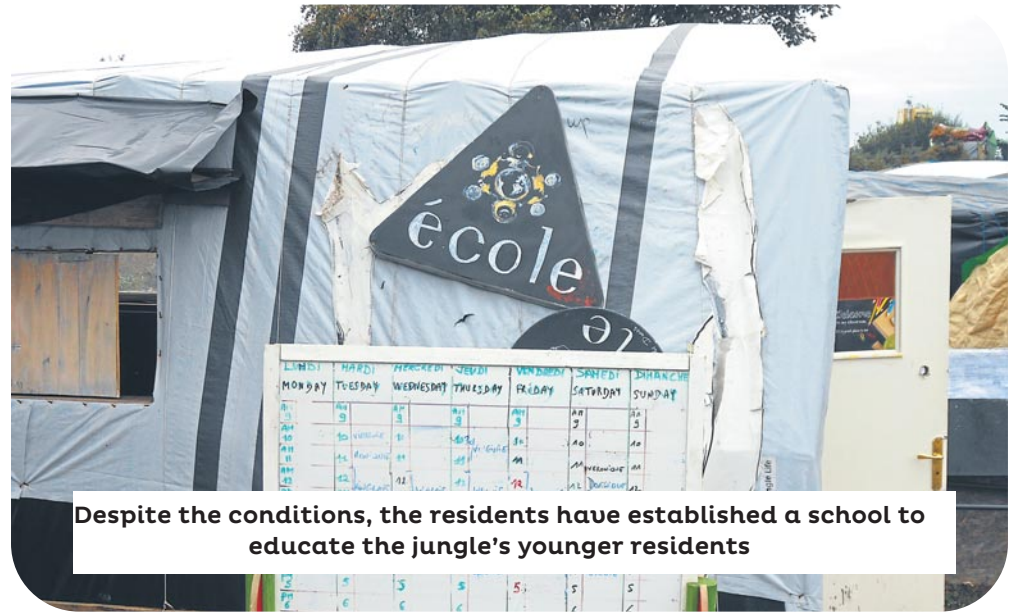
If you are a school and would like to help, you could ask your pupils to write messages that can be put inside each of the packages. Fr Dominic says:

"Within our packets, the messages from the children stirred hearts and gave hope. The refugees translated for each other, and then came back to thank us again – because the children had written that they were praying for the refugees, that they had not forgotten the refugees, that they hoped they would soon find homes. Simple message, of such encouragement, and it was clear that they mattered. The very presence of volunteers, and aid, is about the only thing that gives the refugees any hope."

If you would like to help or would like more information so that your children can send messages, please either contact us at info@cathcom.org or Fr Dominic at www.basildoncatholics.org



Carpenters are giving their time to help construct buildings before the Winter really sets in



Despite the conditions, the residents have established a school to educate the jungle's younger residents



Reading and art have a place here too



Are you looking for a bit of inspiration for your upcoming Christmas party at school? Then why not turn it into an ActionAid Christmas party and fundraise to help the poorest women and children around the world? And with our free fundraising pack, you'll receive all the festive games, props, balloons and stickers you need to really get the party started.

Thank you for your support. ActionAid has been working with Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon since 2013. So far, we have reached 90,000 people with clothing and other essential supplies, and supported children to continue their education.





After being away on business for a week before Christmas, Tom thought it would be nice to bring his wife a little gift.

"I'd like some perfume?" he asked the person in the perfume shop.

She showed him a bottle with a large price tag.

"That's a bit much," said Tom, so she returned with something a bit cheaper.

"That's still quite a bit," Tom moaned.

Growing disgusted, she brought out a tiny bottle.

Getting annoyed, Tom said, "What I mean," he said, "is I'd like to see something really cheap."

So she handed him a mirror.

Laudato Si'
CARE OF OUR COMMON HOME

A letter from
+Pope Francis

Pope Francis' message: Let's care for our common home

Pope Francis has written a letter addressed to every person on this planet, asking us all to protect our common home, the earth.

In his letter, *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis speaks openly about the devastating effects of climate change on people and the planet.

He says that climate change is real, urgent and it must be tackled, asking us to remember that the climate is "a common good, belonging to all and meant for all".



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