

Thought for the Week

Feast of the Holy Family (B)

31st December 2023

We would like to say a BIG THANK YOU to Fr Michael for making and donating the cakes for last week's raffle. Also thank you to all those who provided additional prizes and to those who helped to sell the raffle tickets and of course to all of you who bought the tickets and donated money. We raised a wonderful **£427** in total, including the cash and Dona machine donations.

The winners have now all been notified and have even started tucking into the Christmas cakes (they were just too tempting to have to wait until Christmas).

The proceeds from the raffle will be used to help homeless people looked after at CIRDIC.
(CHURCHES IN READING DROP IN CENTRE)

The produce sale held over the parish weekend and the Christmas card exchange also raised over £600 and this was used to pay for the Christmas meal and gift parcels for homeless people (each parcel contains underwear, a hat, socks and sweets). All packaging used, was recyclable. The Thoughtful Living Group helped coordinate the buying and wrapping of the parcels which will be given out at the Christmas meal this Friday. In addition, parishioners helped make the Christmas puddings and mince pies for the Christmas meal too.

Your donations also paid for additional sugar, coffee, sweets, crisps, biscuits, toiletries and Christmas crackers (fully recyclable and filled by us with chocolate mints).

A big thank you for all your donations in kind - the parcels from the giving tree, clothes, underwear, toiletries and towels.

By the time you read this Christmas Day has come and gone - amidst the anxiety and confusion as to who can be seen and included, and who can't. For many, especially without the usual New Year festivities to look forward to, a feeling of anti-climax might set in.

But the liturgical year is just getting going. The church invites us to look at things differently.

Life isn't a collection of one offs. It's a journey, full of surprises, of highs and lows, good days and bad, a sort of unfolding. A moment after the extraordinary epiphany of the baby's arrival, the story of a life begins to unfold. And with it the ravelling of relationships – from mum and dad to cattle, shepherds, kings, camels, aunts and uncles – which over time will become a whole and unique tapestry.

During Advent we waited, expectant. At Christmas we celebrated, giving and receiving gifts, enjoying the moment.

Now we must move on. The new arrival brings new challenges. No sooner has the baby been safely delivered, than the family has hard choices to make. Return home, or move south, to a place of safety, away from the rumours of an angry king, bent on infanticide.

In hard times, like the ones we are living, we become impatient with fake news. We'd rather hear it like it is. And life, including family life, can be hard; we don't always get it right. We don't always feel holy. But neither did Joseph, as he pondered how to protect his wife and child, or Mary as she struggled to care for a newborn, away from her home and family.

What made the family holy was their fidelity, to each other as well as to God; their fortitude in times of trial; their forbearance of each other's failings, and their own. Today we celebrate the messiness of life, and what it teaches us about holiness.



We ask you please, to pray for the following people who continue to ask for your prayers;

Please pray for Carl Stitt the Uncle of Krissie who has to have an operation on his heart for a safe and successful outcome.

Thank you for your continued prayers for Robert Brooks who is back home whilst he awaits two more operations for Bile Duct Cancer.

Rosemary has asked for prayers as she prepares to undergo major surgery in the RBH later this month, for a safe and successful outcome.

Please pray for Kim, Paul and Joe Bunton (Joe has severe learning difficulties). Please pray that they get the help they need.

Please pray for Father Paul Rowan whose further recovery from cancer surgery is proving difficult.

Please pray for Peter Halter's sister Jean who has macular degeneration and for her great grandson Rogan who continues to need our prayers following his bone marrow transplant,

Please Pray for Jim Hardiman.

Please Pray for Maria McNamara's niece who is undergoing chemotherapy. Her name is Alison Flynn née McNamara.

Please pray for Reuben Muston aged 17 (Theresa and Mike Muston's grandson) who had Aplastic Anaemia. He still needs our prayers that he will continue to improve.

Please pray for Beth Selwood.

Please pray for Savanna Clark (aged 2 with eye trouble).

Please pray for Shirley Trollop.

Please pray for Isobel Messenger (Vera Bird's great granddaughter) she has now had her operation to improve her hearing.

Please pray for Simon Keen who is recovering from an operation.

Please pray for Mary Hagger.

Please pray for Vivien Kear (Krissie's friend) who has cancer.

Vera Bird has asked for our prayers for her Great, Great Grandson Harry.

Prayers please for Antonita's nephew Peppin who has long covid.

Please pray for the residents and staff at St Lukes and Abbeycrest nursing homes



Please remember in your prayers those whose anniversaries occur at this time including;

Louise Coulehan, Mary Williams, Yvonne Fernandes, Terence Vincent Anthony Fernandes, Matt Kearney, Jenny (Winifred) Thompson, Peter Raynard, Maryann and Charles Smith, James Rideout Belletty, Grace Rehor, Kitty Cottrell, Roberto Roman Arrieta, Richmond Buike, Richard Cannings, Will van Bree.