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Image of the day - Advent at Hillsborough

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People and places



Eglinton Parish Church's thrift shop supports five local charities

Five local charities have benefitted from sales at St Canice's Parish Church's thrift shop, New Beginnings. The groups – which were chosen on a cross-community basis – were Foyle Search and Rescue, Londonderry Orphans Society, St Vincent de Paul, North West Community First Responders and Foyle Women's Aid.

The current New Beginnings premises opened last June in the Benbow Industrial Estate, on the outskirts of Eglinton village. Its proceeds are reinvested in the local community
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through the St Canice's Hall Restoration Appeal – which aims to replace the parish hall destroyed in the August 2017 flood – and by supporting local charities.

This weeks cheque presentations were made by the Rector of St Canice's, Rev Canon Paul Hoey, who was joined by New Beginnings' coordinator Roberta Sinclair and churchwarden Elaine Way. Representatives of three of the chosen organisations turned up in person at the shop in Eglinton this morning to collect donations. They were Noel McLaughlin of North West Community First Responders; Rita Hull of St Vincent de Paul; and Ian Connor from Foyle Search and rescue.

New Beginnings is described by Canon Hoey as “a place of caring and sharing for the whole community”. It has many items for sale – including giftware, jewellery, clothing,

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handbags, crafts, books and lots and lots of decorations – all donated by local people.

Methodist Church stance on vaccine misrepresented

It has been incorrectly reported on social media and some newspapers that leaders of the Methodist Church are part of a delegation accompanying Jim Wells when he visits the Deputy Chief Medical Advisor to discuss 'ethical alternative to the vaccine'. No representative of the Methodist Church in Ireland is part of this delegation, a fact which has been confirmed by Mr. Wells.

The Methodist Church in Ireland solidly supports the vaccine programme (the President's statement is here: <https://irishmethodist.org/news/roll-up-your-sleeves>) and all other mitigations to halt the spread of this virus. Being vaccinated and carefully adhering to all other mitigations are ways in which we can be good neighbours to one another.

Drumbeg rector's sitout for mental health charity

The Rev Willie Nixon of St Patrick's Church of Ireland, Drumbeg placed himself at the base of the property's picturesque winding driveway and covered gate from 8pm on Sunday to 8pm last evening.

After braving the elements overnight and all day Rev Nixon had generated £5,000 for Made for More, a Christian charity

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who deliver mental health and well-being workshops in Northern Ireland.

James Gregg of Made for More says: “We are so grateful to the Rev Willie Nixon, his daughter Anna and to St Patrick’s Church of Ireland Drumbeg for the sit out.

“The support that they have given us will go directly towards our ongoing work which will see us reach over 20,000 young people in the 2021/22 school year, with many of these young people currently experiencing mental ill-health due to the many challenges posed by the current pandemic.”

Dean of Kildare appointed to new post

The Dean of Kildare, Very Rev Tim Wright, has been appointed to the role of Ministry Director in the Soldiers and Airmen’s Scripture Readers Association (known as SASRA),

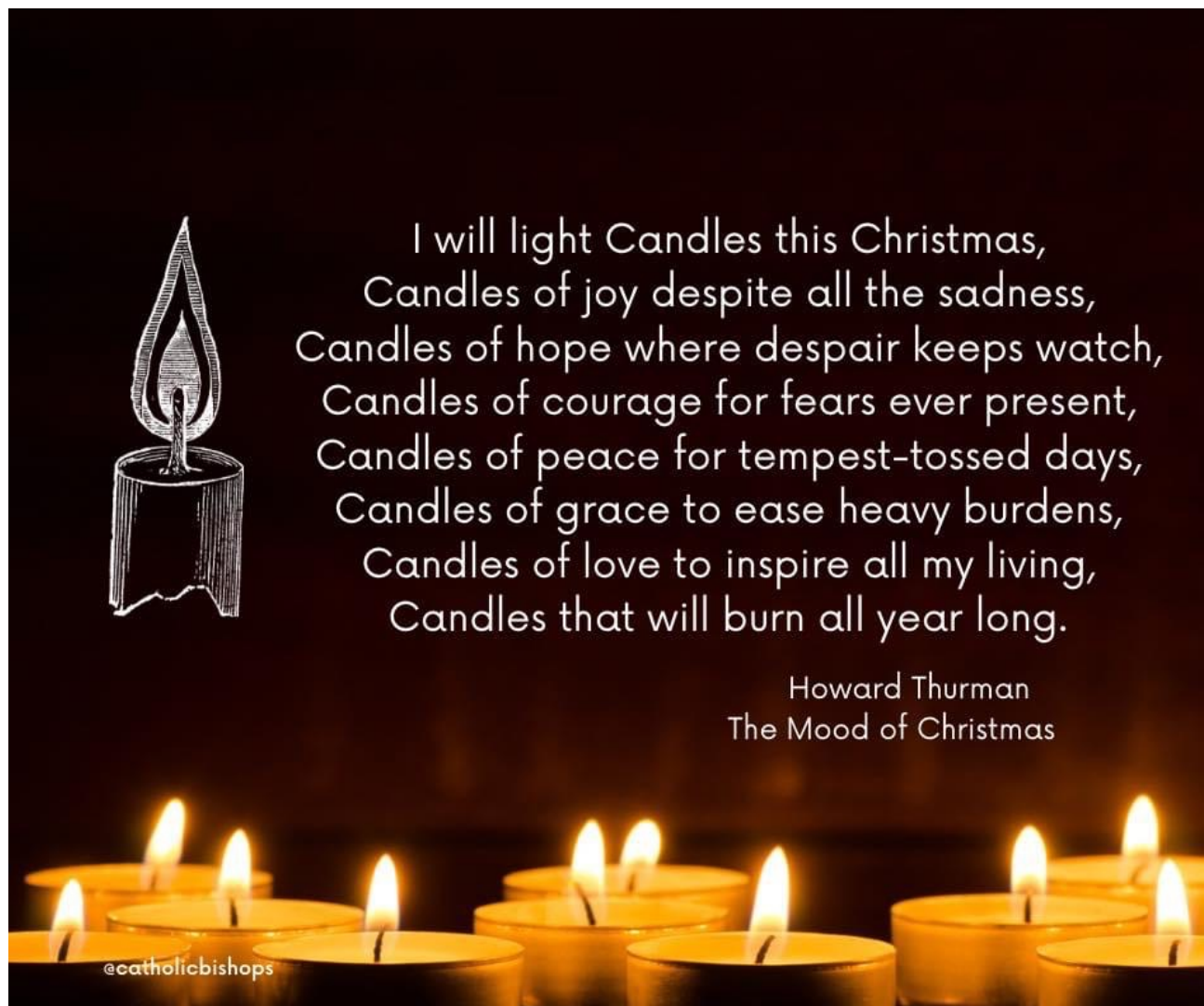


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which is a long established Christian charity supporting the British Armed Forces.

The Ministry Director is responsible for facilitating the ministry and pastoral care of the 17 Full time Scripture Readers and several part time Readers.

Seemingly there is a SASRA Scripture Reader buried in the Curragh War Grave Cemetery who served on the camp in the 1880s. Tim hopes to take up his new position on 1st March, 2022.



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Christingle Service in the Village Square, Gracehill

A Christingle Service will be held in the Village Square in Gracehill on Sunday 19th December 2021 at 4pm. Worship will be led by Bishop Sarah Groves and the Ballyduff Silver Band.

The Christingle service is a tradition of the Moravian Church that is held in the run up to Christmas. It is a joyful celebration that brings together families, friends and communities to share the light of Jesus and spread a message of hope. Everyone is welcome to share in this special time – parking is available in the car park at Gracehill Primary School.

Roscrea's Nativity Crib blessed by local Clergy

The Blessing of the Community Nativity Crib in Roscrea is a very special event in the annual build up to Christmas and members of the local Clergy came together this week for the event.

Steven Foster from the Methodist Church, Fr. Tom Corbett from St. Cronan's Roman Catholic Church, Canon Jane Galbraith from Roscrea's Church of Ireland and Pam Troy from the Oasis Christian Fellowship located on Gaol Road performed the blessing which was attended by a group of local people who braved the inclement weather.

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This year the Crib is located in the heart of the town on Market Square and faces the busy junction on Market Cross and everyone is encouraged to visit the beautiful display with their loved ones and remember the true meaning of Christmas

First Antrim's Quirky pew hospitality

The Quirky Pew at First Antrim Presbyterian Church does Christmas! If you're passing by stop for a chat and if you can manage it, a coffee and mince pie!





Church unity at Emergency Services Carol Service in Londonderry

Leaders of the four main Christian Churches in Londonderry came together on Monday evening for St Columb's Cathedral's traditional Emergency Services Carol Service and a Service of Thanksgiving and Praise for the Emergency Services. The service was led by the Dean of Derry, Very Rev Raymond Stewart, who was assisted by the Cathedral's Pastoral Assistant, Rev Canon John Merrick.

Dean Stewart said it was a particular pleasure to welcome members of the Emergency Services in the city. Uniformed members of the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service, the Fire and Rescue Service, the Police Service of Northern

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Ireland, Foyle Search and Rescue, St John Ambulance and British Red Cross were in attendance.

“All of us have, in one way or another, seen at first hand the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic,” Dean Stewart said. “It has impacted on the way that we have been able or unable to live our lives. Members of the Emergency Services, who have been for so long on the front line, have earned our admiration and respect. We can all remember those evenings that we clapped to express our thanks. And, tonight, we again express our thanks to you and your colleagues for having kept us safe and for continuing to keep us safe in these uncertain times.”

During the service, readings were delivered by the Minister of Carlisle Road Methodist Church, Rev John Montgomery; the Moderator of Derry and Donegal Presbytery, Rev Keith Hibbert; the Bishop of Derry, Dr Donal McKeown; the Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, Rt Rev Andrew Forster; and by Canon Merrick.

Among those in church for the service were Her Majesty’s Lord Lieutenant for the City of Londonderry, Dr Angela Garvey; the Queen’s Lord Lieutenant for the County of Londonderry, Alison Millar; Paula McIntyre MBE, High Sheriff of the County of Londonderry; Linda Heaney, High Sheriff of Derry City and Strabane District Council; and the Mayor of Derry City and Strabane, Alderman Graham Warke.

There was strict social distancing in place during the service, with those present required to wear face coverings and sit in alternating pews.



Live Animal Crib opens at Dublin's Mansion House

Archbishop Michael Jackson was at the Mansion House in Dublin on Monday morning December 13 for the official opening and blessing of the Irish Farmers' Association Live Animal Crib. He joined the Lord Mayor of Dublin Alison Gilliland and the president of the IFA Tim Cullinan as well as Imam Jameel Mutoola, a fellow member of the Dublin City Interfaith Forum.

The festive farmyard crib has become a favourite Christmas tradition since it first appeared outside the Mansion House in 1995. Usually the Vicar of the nearby St Ann's Church blesses the crib at its official opening every year. As the

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parish is currently vacant, the Archbishop stepped in along with the Revd Terry Lilburn who is taking care of the parish.

“I was delighted to attend the blessing and opening of the Live Crib this morning,” Archbishop Jackson commented.

“This has become a much loved tradition in Dublin’s city centre and over the coming days it will be a popular attraction for Dubliners and visitors alike who come to see the live farm animals and who will also be reminded of the Nativity. Through this very special Nativity scene we are encouraged by the Lord Mayor to contribute generously towards alleviating the needs of people across the city.”

The Lord Mayor pointed out that the Live Crib has become a must-see for many Dubliners, particularly for children who get to have a closer look at farm animals. She added that this year a new Nativity scene has been added.

“[The scene] combines the traditional figures of Mary, Joseph and, come Christmas Eve, the baby Jesus, along with a modern day representation of our city. This representation not only includes some of our key city skyline features but also the wonderful diversity of the people of Dublin. I know that Christmas can be a difficult time for some and I hope that everyone looking at this representation will see themselves in this diversity and know that they are not forgotten in our city at this festive time,” she said thanking artists Nicholas Dolan and Matthew Kelly for working with her on the concept.

IFA President, Tim Cullinan, said the IFA is delighted to work with the Lord Mayor of Dublin once again to bring the Live Animal Crib to the capital. “There’s an enduring appeal

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about the Live Animal Crib that draws families to visit in the run-up to Christmas. After a tumultuous year, it's important to reassure people that some elements of pre-Christmas in Dublin remain the same. And it's all in a safe, outdoors environment. Be sure to take some time during your visit to the city centre to drop by," he commented.

The opening hours for the crib will be as follows: Monday 13th December – Thursday 23rd December from 11am to 5pm and on Christmas Eve from 11am to 1pm.

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts and books



Invitation

You're invited to our virtual Carol Concert

On Wednesday 15th December 2021 at 7.00pm

Join us for a selection of carols and choral pieces along with bible lessons and readings. This promises to be a truly special way to join together as one year ends and a new one begins.

The service will be broadcast both on:

www.facebook.com/MothersUnion

www.youtube.com/user/MothersUnion

We look forward to seeing you!

You're invited to the Mothers' Union virtual Carol Concert!
Wednesday 15th December 7.00pm

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On the MU Facebook Page and YouTube Channel:

[youtube.com/watch?v=wRa8JY...](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wRa8JY...)

Archbishops on air at Christmas

The annual Christmas broadcast with the Archbishops of Armagh will be carried by RTE one radio 1 - to be broadcast on Christmas Day.

Explainer on Evensong

Classic FM

[<https://www.classicfm.com/discover-music/what-is-evensong-how-long-service/>]

News Reports

The Proof is in the Pudding: Pudding protesters put pressure on planet pledges

Climate activists dressed as Christmas puddings will today [Wednesday 15th December 2021] march on Westminster to urge the Prime Minister to fulfil the pledges made at COP26 and demand 2022 is “the year of climate justice.”

The Christmas pudding action, organised by Tearfund, Christian Aid, The One Campaign, and The Climate Coalition, is backed by over 50,000 supporters who have signed a giant 3-metre Christmas card for Boris Johnson.

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They are calling on the Prime Minister to:

Ensure countries deliver stronger national plans to keep 1.5°C alive

Secure more ambitious climate finance commitments

Press for finance for climate-related loss and damage

Lead on drawing the fossil fuel era to a close and a just transition to renewables

With the UK holding the role of COP President through to COP27 in 2022, the coalition of charities have warned the legacy of COP26 in Glasgow rests on the Prime Minister ensuring countries around the world act on their promises and strengthen their climate plans.

Patrick Watt, Policy and Campaigns Director at Christian Aid, said:

“COP26 generated a lot of pledges. But those living on the frontline of the climate crisis now need to see pledges turned into real action.

“50,000 people from churches across the UK and from all walks of life agree. Today they are letting the Prime Minister know that when it comes to promises made in Glasgow, the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

“Christmas is a time of hope. We call on the Prime Minister to heed these messages from the British public, and by meeting the government’s promises give hope to those hit hardest by climate change.”

Dr Ruth Valerio, Director of Advocacy and Influencing at Tearfund, said:

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“The pledges made at COP26 gave some hope for a future below 2C but right now these are just words. If the Prime Minister wants a lasting legacy from the Glasgow Summit then the UK Government needs to keep pushing countries around the world to deliver on their promises and strengthen their climate plans.

“The UK has a responsibility to make sure that words are turned into action and, along with 50,000 people from around the country, we’ll continue to hold the Prime Minister to account. Because when it comes to real climate action, the proof is in the pudding.”

Tim Cole, Europe Executive Directory for ONE, said:

“The climate crisis is already having a devastating impact on people and communities in low-income countries, particularly many in Africa. We in the UK are not yet doing enough to support them so we have come to Westminster to make our voices heard and let MPs know just how important it is to tackle these issues. 2022 has to be the year of climate justice.”

Over 10,000 calls to Samaritans in Northern Ireland last December

The Samaritans have revealed that increased isolation and loneliness led to more than 10,000 calls to them in Northern Ireland last December.

Some 30% of people who contacted the charity mentioned this concern over the festive season, compared with 25% in

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December 2019. Across the UK and Ireland in 2020, Samaritans volunteers spent over one million hours responding to calls for help.

Alan Heron, regional director for Samaritans in Northern Ireland, said: “Last year Samaritan volunteers in Northern Ireland answered over 10,000 calls over the Christmas period alone and we want to remind everyone that volunteers across all eight branches will be available 24/7 over the festive holidays.”

He also revealed that Stormont, Belfast Castle and other landmark buildings will be lit up green later this month to support the Samaritans.

Alan added: “Supporting Samaritans this Christmas will help bring light to someone on their darkest day and that is why we are asking landmarks and buildings across the country to support us by lighting up in green on Tuesday, December 21, for Samaritans' Longest Night. We are so delighted that Parliament Buildings Stormont, Belfast Castle and a number of landmarks throughout the province are already on board.” Explaining what it means to volunteer on Christmas Day, Samaritan volunteer Margaret Campbell said it is a privilege to speak to their callers.

She said: “It's no hardship to give up a few hours to listen to callers for whom Christmas brings no joy, no relief from loneliness or anxiety, grief or brokenness, no respite from the struggle just to keep going.

“When I'm listening to someone telling me their deepest feelings, talking about things they can't share with anyone,

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time doesn't matter. It's a privilege to spend however long it takes for a caller to feel that they are cared for, that they have been — and will be — supported, and that they are not alone. As the conversation draws to a close, when the caller says, 'I feel much better now. Thank you for listening,' there's no better Christmas present."

÷ People can support 'Be A Samaritans Christmas Star' this December by making a donation at samaritans.org/donate-christmas

Vatican approves rite for institution of catechists

On Monday, the Vatican issued a rite and guidelines for the institution of lay catechists.

In May this year, Pope Francis created the lay ministry of catechist with the release of the motu proprio *Antiquum ministerium* which emphasized the importance of the role of catechists in transmitting the Catholic faith in church communities.

In a letter to Bishops Conferences, Archbishop Arthur Roche, Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, explains that a catechist has a lay ministry distinct from the ordained priesthood, but that catechists, "by virtue of their Baptism, are called to be co-responsible in the local Church for the proclamation and transmission of the faith, carrying out this role in collaboration with the ordained ministers and under their guidance."

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"The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ: only He can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity," Roche said, quoting from St Pope John Paul II's 1979 apostolic exhortation *Catechesi tradendae*.

Archbishop Roche said the way this role will be carried out may be different in each diocese, depending on the particular needs of the community. He said the tasks of a catechist in a mission territory will differ from those in an area where the Catholic faith has long been established.

Baptized adult Catholics who have received the Sacraments of Confirmation and First Holy Communion and would like to be instituted in the ministry of catechist can present a written request to their diocesan bishop, who decides who may be admitted as a candidate. The new ministry can be conferred by the bishop or by a priest delegated by him. The ceremony should take place during a Mass or celebration of the Liturgy of the Word.

Archbishop Roche stresses the "vocational aspect" of the ministry, and says diocesan bishops must carefully discern who should be admitted to this lay ministry.

The Liturgy Office also offered guidelines for who, should not be instituted as catechists. This list includes men who are preparing to receive Holy Orders as priests or deacons, men and women religious, catechists for ecclesial movements, and Catholic religion school teachers.

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In *Antiquum ministerium*, Pope Francis said: "catechists are called first to be expert in the pastoral service of transmitting the faith as it develops through its different stages from the initial proclamation of the kerygma (Gospel proclamation) to the instruction that presents our new life in Christ and prepares for the sacraments of Christian initiation, and then to the ongoing formation that can allow each person to give an accounting of the hope within them."

"It is fitting that those called to the instituted ministry of Catechist be men and women of deep faith and human maturity, active participants in the life of the Christian community, capable of welcoming others, being generous and living a life of fraternal communion."

Catechists "should also receive suitable biblical, theological, pastoral and pedagogical formation to be competent communicators of the truth of the faith he said. "It is essential that they be faithful co-workers with priests and deacons, prepared to exercise their ministry wherever it may prove necessary, and motivated by true apostolic enthusiasm."

LINKS

Read Archbishop Roche's full letter to Bishops Conferences here:

[<https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2021/12/13/0845/01773.html#en>]

Rite of Institution of Catechists:

[<https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2021/12/13/0845/01772.html>]

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Pope Francis' prayer video this month focusses on the ministry, mission and vocation of catechists, thanking them for their enthusiasm for transmitting the faith, and encouraging them to proclaim the Gospel with new languages and in new ways. See:

[] www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJpxgGQywX8

Poem for today

Advent 1955 by John Betjeman

The Advent wind begins to stir
With sea-like sounds in our Scotch fir,
It's dark at breakfast, dark at tea,
And in between we only see
Clouds hurrying across the sky
And rain-wet roads the wind blows dry
And branches bending to the gale
Against great skies all silver pale
The world seems travelling into space,
And travelling at a faster pace
Than in the leisured summer weather
When we and it sit out together,
For now we feel the world spin round
On some momentous journey bound -
Journey to what? to whom? to where?
The Advent bells call out 'Prepare,
Your world is journeying to the birth
Of God made Man for us on earth.'

And how, in fact, do we prepare
The great day that waits us there -

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For the twenty-fifth day of December,
The birth of Christ? For some it means
An interchange of hunting scenes
On coloured cards, And I remember
Last year I sent out twenty yards,
Laid end to end, of Christmas cards
To people that I scarcely know -
They'd sent a card to me, and so
I had to send one back. Oh dear!
Is this a form of Christmas cheer?
Or is it, which is less surprising,
My pride gone in for advertising?
The only cards that really count
Are that extremely small amount
From real friends who keep in touch
And are not rich but love us much
Some ways indeed are very odd
By which we hail the birth of God.

We raise the price of things in shops,
We give plain boxes fancy tops
And lines which traders cannot sell
Thus parcell'd go extremely well
We dole out bribes we call a present
To those to whom we must be pleasant
For business reasons. Our defence is
These bribes are charged against expenses
And bring relief in Income Tax
Enough of these unworthy cracks!
'The time draws near the birth of Christ'.
A present that cannot be priced
Given two thousand years ago
Yet if God had not given so

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He still would be a distant stranger
And not the Baby in the manger.

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