

St Mary's Parish Magazine



November - December 2019

50p

Christmas Quotes

Some thoughts from the great and the good as we approach the season of Christ's birth:

Christmas gift suggestions: To your enemy, forgiveness. To an opponent, tolerance. To a friend, your heart. To a customer, service. To all, charity. To every child, a good example. To yourself, respect.

Oren Arnold

Christmas! The very word brings joy to our hearts. No matter how we may dread the rush, the long Christmas lists for gifts and cards to be bought and given.

When Christmas Day comes there is still the same warm feeling we had as children, the same warmth that enfolds our hearts and our homes.

Joan Winmill Brown

"At this festive season of the year, Mr Scrooge," said the gentleman, taking up a pen, "it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time. ... We choose this time, because it is a time, of all others, when Want is keenly felt, and Abundance rejoices."

Charles Dickens

May joy be with you and yours.

Tony King

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Footnote:

Copies of the magazine can be posted to your home or friends and relations. Subscription rates are £6.50 for a year (6 editions), including postage. Please contact the Parish Office.

REFLECTIONS FROM THE RECTORY

WHICH

Which word is the most important? For those involved in British politics at the moment it might be 'Brexit' or 'Election' or perhaps 'power'. For those who move in the world of hospitals it might be 'Research' or 'Medicine' or 'Healing'. And for those involved in teaching it might be 'Knowledge' or 'Inspiration' or 'Trust'. (As I was thinking about these options, it occurred to me that important words such as 'Funding' or 'Holidays' might apply to all, but that's another story ...)

WITH

However, what about the Church – what's the most important word here? 'Love' or 'Grace' or 'Resurrection'? In a recent series of books Sam Wells, Vicar of St Martin in the Fields, London and contributor to BBC Radio 4's *Thought for the Day* has argued that the most important word we have is 'With'. In a very short summary: he challenges the Church and disciples of Christ to attend to all that's going on around us, so we should be 'with' our world and our communities in the same way that God is *with* us.

HOW

One way of looking at November is that we are starting to journey through the season of 'With' or, more precisely, of God being with us. There is a sense of this in our All Saints and All Souls celebrations, which becomes even more pronounced in Advent and reaches a highpoint when we celebrate the incarnation of God's love in the Christ-child at Christmas. So as we journey through the season of being with God and of God being with us, let me urge you to take time to dwell in God's presence and grace in the busy-ness that lies ahead.

God be *with* you

Vaughan

The Revd Vaughan Roberts

THOMAS BEAUCHAMP



This year marks the 650th anniversary of the death of Thomas Beauchamp, 11th Earl of Warwick, who was chiefly responsible for the re-building of St Mary's Church in the 14th century. Unfortunately, half of that church was destroyed in the Great Fire of Warwick in 1694, and all that remains today from that time is the Chancel, with its magnificent flying ribbed ceiling, the Chapter House, and both inner and outer Vestries. He was also responsible for building the castle gatehouse, curtain wall, Caesar's Tower and Guy's Tower. The extensive construction works took many years to complete and much of it was finalised by his son and heir. It is not surprising that he chose his final resting place to be the most prestigious position in the church as his tomb sits in the centre of the Chancel, in front of the altar, a solid statement of his status and importance.

Thomas was born in 1313 in Warwick Castle, son of Guy, Earl of Warwick, (who was famously nicknamed "The Black Dog of Arden" by his enemy Piers Gaveston, the favourite of King Edward II). He was only 2 years old when his father died and Thomas then became a ward of Roger Mortimer, 1st Earl of March. Knighted Earl of Warwick at the young age of 16, Thomas rose to become one of the most prominent figures of his generation. He was valued by King Edward III, who entrusted him with the guardianship of his 16 year old son, later to become known as The Black Prince. Thomas was undoubtedly a brave warrior in battle and proved to be a strong military leader. Serving in Scotland as Captain of the army against the Scots in 1337 at the age of 24. He also fought in the Hundred Years Wars with France, commanding the English victory at the Battle of Crecy in 1346.

The 14th century Anonimalle Chronicle states that when news arrived of "the devil Warwick" landing at Calais, the Duke of Burgundy, whose forces were camped nearby, made a hasty retreat under cover of darkness to avoid an encounter. Such was Thomas's formidable reputation. It is said that he was able to fund the building of St Mary's Church, and parts of the castle, with the proceeds raised from the ransoms of captured political prisoners, and in particular, a notable French Archbishop. Edward III bestowed upon him the great honour of being the third knight to be invested in the Order of the Garter, when he established it in 1348. This esteemed Order has endured through the

centuries and it is the oldest surviving order of chivalry in the world today. Thomas held many lordships, as well as the respected titles of Lord Marshal of England, and High Sheriff of Warwickshire, Worcestershire & Leicestershire.

The alabaster tomb of Thomas and his wife, Katherine Mortimer, (daughter of the afore-mentioned Roger Mortimer), which sits proudly in the Chancel, shows the couple lying alongside each other and, unusually, they are holding hands. Only a few other medieval tombs have been recorded displaying this feature. The pose is said to demonstrate not only the joining of two great families but also, we have reason to believe, it is a display of genuine love, which was not often the case in medieval arranged marriages. The couple had about 15 children, their eldest son Guy pre-deceased his father and so the earldom fell to their second son, also called Thomas. Considering its great age, being well over 600 years old, the tomb is in remarkable condition, although sadly it has suffered some damage over the centuries. Visible at Thomas's feet is the loyal Warwick bear and a sheep lies at Katherine's feet, but unfortunately, over time both creatures have lost their ears. In similar style to the tomb of their grandson, Richard Beauchamp in the Beauchamp Chapel, around the lower section can be seen the family mourners, or "weepers", simplistically shown in typical dress of the time.

Thomas's effigy is dressed formerly for battle, wearing armour including a bascinet (light steel helmet); a jupon (tabard) displaying the Beauchamp cross crosslets; and camail (neck & shoulder covering). His upper arms are protected by brassarts and his legs by greaves. Pointed sollerets of riveted plates protect his feet. Katherine is wearing simple robes and a frilled headdress of a honeycomb pattern. In the Crypt immediately below the monument, it's evident where the Norman vaulting had to be lowered to accommodate the 2 coffins, which lie under the tomb.

Thomas lived during the particularly turbulent times of the 1300's, through extremely violent conflicts, and the catastrophic outbreaks of plague, known today as the Black Death, which decimated the population. In 1369, three months after the death of his wife, Thomas succumbed to the plague, dying at the age of 56 whilst serving in Calais. He was the first earl who chose to be buried in Warwick, in the newly built grand church of St Mary's that he was instrumental in building. A remarkable man who has left a unique and priceless legacy.

Caroline Rodway-Jones

THE NATIVITY



For Christians the world over, the Christmas period celebrates the story of Jesus being born in a stable in Bethlehem. Unfortunately the scriptures give neither time of year or date of the nativity – and are based on accounts written down long after the events they describe. Our calendar calculates years supposedly from the birth of Christ, but in

fact this was drawn up in the 6th century by a ‘miscalculating’ Italian monk, Dionysius, to correspond with a Roman festival. It has been deduced that Jesus must have been born by 4 BC for this was the year that Herod died. But the gospels also say that Joseph and Mary went to Nazareth for the census – which was not held until 11 years later.

In fact, the early church did not celebrate Christ’s birth, but his baptism – believed to be on the 6th January, coinciding with the visit of the Wise Men. The Feast of the Epiphany on that day is still a major festival in Europe today.

It was not until the 4th century that the Nativity was thought of as a key festival at all. Before then it was celebrated on various dates ranging from early January through to late September. Pope Julius I in 336 AD established the date finally as 25th December. This choice appears both a logical and shrewd decision – and not entirely Christian.

As Christianity moved North and West into Europe, it found well-established pagan places of worship and celebrations. For example, when Saint Augustine came to England in 597 AD and set about converting the Angles and Saxons to Christian belief, he found them celebrating the festivals of their ancestors, like Yule, in pagan temples. The great Pope Gregory I advised Augustine to approach the pagan holy places and practices by taking them over:

Tell Augustine that he should by no means destroy the temples of the gods but rather the idols within those temples. Let him, after he has purified them with holy water, place altars and relics of the saints in them. Thus, seeing that their places of worship are not destroyed, the people will banish error from their hearts and come to places familiar and dear to them in acknowledgement and worship of the true God. Further,

since it has been their custom to slaughter oxen in sacrifice, they should receive some solemnity in exchange. Let them therefore, on the day of the dedication of their churches, or on the feast of the martyrs whose relics are preserved in them, build themselves huts around their one-time temples and celebrate the occasion with religious feasting. They will sacrifice and eat the animals not any more as an offering to the devil, but for the glory of God to whom, as the giver of all things, they will give thanks for having been satiated. Thus, if they are not deprived of all exterior joys, they will more easily taste the interior ones. For surely it is impossible to efface all at once everything from their strong minds, just as, when one wishes to reach the top of a mountain, he must climb by stages and step by step, not by leaps and bounds

As with the buildings, so with the festivals. The church simply adopted popular dates for its own special rituals and hallowed services. In other words it was easier to establish a festival celebrating the birth of Christ if it conveniently coincided with an existing popular feast day. In this way, people could continue with their usual celebrations at this time of year, but the reason for the merrymaking could be attributed to Christ's birth rather than to any ancient pagan rituals. As paganism eventually died out and Christianity became widespread, Christmas became increasingly more associated with its religious foundations than any others.

In Britain, December 25th had been 'Mothers Night', when a vigil was held in honour of the rebirth of the new sun. It was not until 816 that a Church Council at Chelsea formally changed it to honour the birth of the Son of God. In the next century, during the reign of the Saxon King Ethelred (991 – 1016), a law was made that the season of the Nativity should be a time of peace and goodwill, when all strife must end. At this time, the festival was always referred to as 'In Festis Nativitatis' or 'Natalis', the Feast of the Nativity. The anglicised 'Christes-Masse' – the Mass or Feast of Christ – did not appear until after the Norman invasion.

To complicate matters even more, it is interesting to note that 25th March – a sacred date since pre-Christian times celebrating Spring and the return to life of the soil – was adopted by the Church to commemorate the annunciation of the Virgin their own date of fertility. Was the date of Christmas therefore simply arrived at by the addition of nine months The perfect gestation period?

Biblical sources for the Nativity story are from the gospels of Matthew and Luke but the traditional nativity scene is an amalgam of different traditions and stories. St Luke provides us with the stable, the manger,

the shepherds and the angels; St Matthew's gospel provides the star and wise men from the East, as well as Herod's massacre of the Innocents and the flight into Egypt. Non-scriptural imagination provided the ox, the ass, Joseph as an *old* man, and the wise men became *three* kings. There is no denying that for centuries the Nativity story has been the most attractive inspiration for art, poetry, music; not to mention annual performances at many a school!

THE NATIVITY

We all have heard the story, it's been told and then retold,
about the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem of old.
Yet every Christmastide the tale bears telling once again,
as we reflect on that sweet babe, born to redeem all men.

A decree went out from Caesar, and so it came to pass,
that Joseph and sweet Mary went to David to be taxed.
Though Mary journeyed wearily, for she was great with child,
when Joseph wept to see her pain, she looked at him and smiled:
"Fear not for me, dear Husband, among women I am blessed,
but now my time draws near, and we must find a place to rest."

In desperate need of shelter, they pushed on to Bethlehem,
only to find the inns were full, no room was offered them.
Still Joseph knocked on every door till one innkeeper said,
"Seek refuge in my stable—Here's some straw to make a bed."
And Mary gratefully sank down into that new-mown hay,
and gave birth to the Saviour that first, sacred Christmas Day.

A shining star rose in the sky above that holy place,
as Mary gazed upon her child and touched His radiant face.
The shepherds and the wise men came, led by that glorious star,
and angels sang out praises as they journeyed from afar.
They somehow knew the child was sent to bring the world His light
and their hearts were filled with wonder as they looked on Him that night.

So was our Lord and Saviour born, in humble majesty,
to save us from our earthly sins and seal our destiny.
On this and every Christmas Day, we thank the Lord above,
for sending our Redeemer to bless us with His love.

Susan Noyes Anderson

SANTA CLAUS



The jovial, plump, white bearded figure, dressed in a red suit with white trim and black boots, is a creation of the 19th century. The origins of Santa Claus, however, would appear to go a little deeper and, like most other customs and ideas of the season, are probably a mixture of pagan and Christian beliefs with gift giving at the heart of them.

The Saxons welcomed King Frost, or Father Time, or King Winter. He would be represented by someone, given a fine hat or crown to wear, and brought to their firesides. They believed that by welcoming the winter as a personage, or elemental deity, that

element would be less harsh to them, not QUITE so cold, not Quite so wet – just enough to feed the earth.

Santa seems to stem from the Norse god, Odin. The Vikings brought these traditions to England. Odin was the father of the gods, and he had twelve characters. The character for December was sometimes known as Yalka or Jul and his month was known as Jultid. From this we get Yuletide. During December the Vikings believed that Odin would come to earth on his eight legged horse, Sleipnir, to give gifts to the good and punishments to the wicked, on the days of the midwinter festivals. He was disguised in a long blue hooded cloak, and he carried a satchel of bread and a staff. His companion was often a Raven or a Crow. Odin was supposed to join groups around their fire, sitting in the background and listening to hear if they were content or not. He would occasionally leave a gift of bread at a poor homestead. Here you can see already customs we associate with Father Christmas: the hooded figure, the secret visits, the leaving of a gift.

On the Christian side we have St Nicholas, the patron saint of children. Nicholas was bishop of Myra in Asia Minor during the fourth century. Although known to lose his temper on occasion, he was revered as a kind-hearted and compassionate man who devoted his life to helping the poor. He preferred to do his good deeds secretly and tales of his generosity abound.

One tells of a man and his three daughters who were desperately in need of money and how Nicholas visited their house in the middle of the night – to avoid being seen – and threw bags of gold down the chimney where it fell into some stockings drying by the fire. Sound familiar?

When Christianity swept through Europe, instead of attempting to abolish the pagan practice of gift giving or replacing it with something else, the Church sought to convince people that their reason for doing it was really in celebration of the benevolent St Nicholas. It just so happens that his saint's day, 6th December, falls bear enough to Christmas Day to allow the two to merge as they both involve giving presents to children. Epiphany, which celebrates the gift bearing Magi, further sanctified the practice.

While St Nicholas was enjoying cult status throughout Europe, with customs developing from as early as the 9th century, he did not arrive in Britain until much later. The earliest mention of Father Christmas in Britain is in the Christmas folk or mummers play where he has existed as a character and Master of Ceremonies for several centuries. This character bore no resemblance to our Santa Claus and was probably dressed in cloth strips. We have no records in Britain to tell us whether he, as St Nicholas, was named as the gift-giver for children. Nor do we know whether religious establishments gave gifts to children in his name on the Feastday of St Nicholas, as was the practice in places such as Germany and Belgium. He was never given the task of filling stockings or suchlike.

Banned by the Puritans in the mid-17th century, he went underground along with minced pies, Christmas games and the like. Occasionally secret publishers would print broadsheets with a verse about 'Old Christmas'. He became the personification of everything the British people held dear about Christmas. After the Restoration St Nicholas and The Father Christmas of the mumming play probably merged. In the 18th century he began to appear in the Christmas plays of itinerant players. In the middle of the play, he would appear, heavily disguised, shouting his challenge: *"In comes I, Old Father Christmas. Be I welcome or be I not – I hope that old Christmas will ne'er be forgot!"*

As with many customs associated with the British Christmas, the tradition of Father Christmas remained, when saintly or religious elements were lost. He became a benevolent, jolly character, synonymous with the Goodwill of Christmas, but his saintly attributes were gone. He was the modernised version of the Saxon and Viking

deities, he controlled the winter elements, and he kept people happy at a dismal time of year. Victorian illustrators showed him as either a pagan figure with icicles or ivy round his head; or, with the influence of the new religious movement, as a stern and forbidding saint, as likely to punish as to reward children.

As more influence came to Britain from America, he began to be presented as a jolly character, who filled stockings, and occasionally gave guest appearances at civic and public places. By the 20th century, he was a common figure in most department stores. He was often austere looking still, and he would ask children questions about their prayers, their reading, writing and arithmetic. If they had been naughty, he would tell them they must improve or he would not visit them at Christmas!

After World War II, increasing American influence with advertisements such as those by Coca-Cola in the British press, changed the image of Father Christmas permanently. Now he is always fat, always jolly, never admonishes children about whether they are good to their parents, or questions them on their catechisms and schoolwork. He is just a 'jolly elf', who goes by the name of Santa Claus, which as everybody knows, is the popular nickname of Saint Nicholas – Santa for Saint; Claus the diminutive for Nicholas.

WINTER WEATHER

One day in early September the chief of a Native American tribe was asked by his tribal elders if the forthcoming winter was going to be cold or mild. The chief asked his medicine man, but he too had lost touch with the reading signs from the natural world around the Great Lakes. In truth, neither of them had any idea about how to predict the coming winter. However, the chief decided to take a modern approach, and the chief rang the local office of the National Weather Service. 'Yes, it is going to be a cold winter,' the meteorological officer told the chief. Consequently, he went back to his tribe and told the men to collect plenty of firewood. A fortnight later the chief called the Weather Service and asked for an update. 'Are you still forecasting a cold winter?' he asked. 'Yes, very cold', the weather officer told him. As a result of this brief conversation the chief went back to the tribe and told his people to collect every bit of wood they could find. A month later the chief called the National Weather Service once more and asked about the coming winter. 'Yes,' he was told, 'it is going to be one of the coldest winters ever.' 'How can you be so sure?' the chief asked. The weatherman replied: 'Because the Native Americans of the Great Lakes are collecting wood like crazy.'

NEVER A CROSSWORD!

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							14					
15			16			17			18			
19					20		21				22	
23					24							

ACROSS

- 7. Colin has been mistaken for a saint. (8)
- 8. Churchwarden found in the organ case! (4)
- 9. Favourite sandwich of Jacob's son? (6)
- 10. The pressure of being very French on board ship. (6)
- 11. Consecrated, though not so much when asleep. (7)
- 13. Pinched a priest's vestment. (5)
- 15. Has this monk had his chips, say? (5)
- 17. He is in a race to become a non-believer. (7)
- 19. Footnote – add donations for sacred songs. (6)
- 21. Hunter found in dorm. (6)
- 23. Quick – it's Lent! (4)
- 24. Fancy it's designed to make holy. (8)

DOWN

- 1. Strength, say, of widow's money? (4)
- 2. Ancient city visited by the bishop and two cardinals. (6)
- 3. Bellringer's mistake. (7)
- 4. Is twice a goddess? (4)
- 5. Possibly a rum soul! (6)
- 6. Eli steps out to deliver some letters. (8)
- 12. Sadly, Rod came round on the Sabbath. (5,3)
- 14. Making amends, not with a gin cocktail. (7)
- 16. Sailor takes instrument for a wash! (6)
- 18. Cardinal Tim back in New York but showing hostility. (6)
- 20. Ancient biblical city, but in South America? (4)
- 22. Pensioners get loud, not soft. Louts! (4)

THOUGHT FOR FOOD

Autumn Pork Chops

A quick and easy pork dish for those nights when you want dinner on the table fast

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 4 bone-in pork chops, 1/2-inch thick (about 1 1/2 pounds)
- 1 can (10.75 ounces) Campbell's Condensed Cream of Celery Soup (Regular or 98% Fat Free)
- 1/2 cup cup apple juice or water
- 2 tablespoons spicy-brown mustard
- 1 tablespoon honey
- Generous dash ground black pepper
- 1/2 of a 12-ounce package medium egg noodles (about 4 cups), cooked and drained



Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 20 minutes

Serves 4

Heat the oil in a 10-inch skillet over medium-high heat. Add the pork and cook until browned on both sides.

Stir the soup, apple juice, mustard, honey and black pepper in the skillet and heat to a boil. Reduce the heat to low. Cover and cook for 5 minutes or until the pork is cooked through.

Serve the pork and soup mixture with the noodles and seasonal vegetables. Dry white wine or even dry cider is a good liquid accompaniment!

CHRISTMAS IS FOR LOVE

Christmas is for love. It is for joy, for giving and sharing, for laughter, for reuniting with family and friends, for tinsel and brightly covered packages. But mostly Christmas is for love. I had not believed this until a small elfin like pupil with wide innocent eyes and soft rosy cheeks gave me a wondrous gift one Christmas. Matthew was a ten year old orphan who lived with his aunt, a bitter, middle aged woman greatly annoyed with the burden of caring for her dead sister's son. She never failed to remind young Matthew, if it hadn't been for her generosity, he would be a vagrant, homeless waif. Still, with all the scolding and chilliness at home, he was a sweet and gentle child. I had not noticed Matthew particularly until he began staying after class each day (at the risk of arousing his aunt's anger so I learned later) to help me straighten up the room. We did this quietly and comfortably, not speaking much, but enjoying the solitude of that hour of the day. When we did talk, Matthew spoke mostly of his mother. Though he was quite young when she died, he remembered a kind, gentle, loving woman who always spent time with him. As Christmas drew near however, Matthew failed to stay after school each day. I looked forward to his coming, and when the days passed and he continued to scamper hurriedly from the room after class, I stopped him one afternoon and asked him why he no longer helped me in the room. I told him how I had missed him, and his large brown eyes lit up eagerly as he replied, 'Did you really miss me?' I explained how he had been my best helper, 'I was making you a surprise,' he whispered confidentially. 'It's for Christmas.' With that, he became embarrassed and dashed from the room. He didn't stay after school any more after that. Finally came the last school day before Christmas. Matthew crept slowly into the room late that afternoon with his hands concealing something behind his back. 'I have your present,' he said timidly when I looked up. 'I hope you like it.' He held out his hands, and there lying in his small palms was a tiny wooden box. 'It's beautiful, Matthew. Is there something in it?' I asked opening the top to look inside. 'Oh you can't see what's in it,' he replied, 'and you can't touch it, or taste it or feel it, but mother always said it makes you feel good all the time, warm on cold nights and safe when you're all alone.' I gazed into the empty box. 'What is it, Matthew' I asked gently, 'that will make me feel so good?' 'It's love,' he whispered softly, 'and mother always said it's best when you give it away.' He turned and quietly left the room. So now I keep a small box crudely made of scraps of wood on the piano in my living room and only smile when inquiring friends raise quizzical eyebrows when I explain to them there is love in it. Yes, Christmas is for gaiety, mirth, song, and for good and wondrous gifts. But mostly, Christmas is for love.

Autumn 2019 Lunchtime Recitals

Fridays at 1:15pm
Collegiate Church of St Mary, Warwick

8 November	John Wyatt (Organ - St James, Bushey)
22 November	Ed Jones (Organ - Bradford Cathedral)
6 December	Jacob Lee (Double bass – Warwick School)
20 December	Mark Swinton (Organ - St Mary's, Warwick)

Admission free, retiring collection

AND FINALLY

CROSSWORD SOLUTION

ACROSS 7 Nicholas 8 Pipe 9 Reuben 10 Stress 11 Blessed 13 Stole
15 Friar 17 Atheist 19 Psalms 21 Nimrod 23 Fast 24 Sanctify

DOWN 1 Mite 2 Thebes 3 Clanger 4 Isis 5 Spirit 6 Epistles 12 Lords Day
14 Atoning 16 Ablute 18 Enmity 20 Susa 22 Oafs

Who's Where in The Warwick Team

Contacts in our partner churches in the Warwick Team include:

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