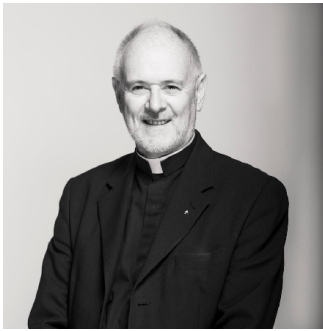


A few words from the Vicarage ...



As we have been in the 'new' Christian Year since Advent Sunday, it seems a somewhat belated gesture to wish you a Happy New Year - yet that is what the secular calendar dictates - so may I take this opportunity to wish everyone a very Happy New Year as the clock ticks over into 2014! Now we may turn our thoughts towards Epiphany and the arrival of the magi, recalling their arduous journey as they sought to deliver their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh - surely the first ever Christmas gifts!

This will be closely followed by the Baptism of Christ, at the end of the Epiphany octave; and we may even look further ahead to next month's Candlemas, which is also known as the Presentation of Christ in the Temple.

Yet it is difficult to simply 'switch off' from Christmas - after all the excitement of the day; a day when we gather together, when we remember, and when we give thanks.

Christmas is not always a joyous time for everyone, however - 'gathering together' isn't always easy, or possible; 'remembering' can bring much sadness and pain; and, for some, they may feel that they have little for which to 'give thanks'. Yet, as Christians we must try to show - and share - our joy throughout whatever difficulties we may face; we must remain strong amidst the sadness and pain; and we must be grateful for the bountiful gifts with which we have been blessed. The gift of life itself is such an amazing thing and we should always be thankful

that we are here, as God's creation - and that we are in a living, breathing communion with our Lord and Saviour.

This time of year is often one for making 'resolutions', when we consider what may be best to change in our lives in order to make our 'new year' better than the one just gone. It is now that we see promises being made - promises to ourselves - yet they can never be quite so insular or quite so self-centred. For God knows our every thought and every intention - as we make these promises (or resolutions) to ourselves, we also make them to God. Indeed, they are more than that for they become a covenant with God. Now, that makes them much more serious, does it not? That takes all such promises we make to an entirely different level; they become less trivial as they take on a much greater significance and relevance in our lives.

So, what will be your New Year's resolution; what will be your New Year's covenant with God?

Whatever you decide, I pray that you will take it seriously - just as seriously as God will surely take it. I pray too that you will reap whatever benefits therefrom that you desire and deserve.

May this year of our Lord, two thousand and fourteen, bring you all the joy and happiness you seek for yourself and for those whom you love, care and pray.

God bless you all,
your Vicar,
Fr D.