



From the Rector

Many churches including St Mary's, keep their decorations – or at least their nativity scene and our Large Christmas Tree – in place until Candlemas at the beginning of February, but most of us take our domestic ones down around Epiphany, on 6th January, when we recall the arrival of the Three Kings.

But how do we manage them for the rest of the year, after we have taken them down?

Our Christmas 'baubles' and other tree decorations come in all colours, in matt and shiny, in all shapes and sizes, they may have a particular significance for us, reminding us of places we've visited or friendships we've made. They can remind us of people, who also come in all shapes and sizes, colours and tones, from various places and who have come into our lives in different and sometimes unexpected ways. Baubles can also be very fragile, just like we are sometimes.

This year as you take down your decorations, have a good look at them and think about the care that you take to store them safely, so that they will not break.

How much more care do you take in looking after the people who make up your life? Your family, friends, neighbours, church, colleagues, local shop keepers, and so on?

It's quick and easy to pick up the decorations and just drop them in a box, but without some gentle care, will they be okay for next year? Once we've put them in the box in the loft or attic, do we give them another thought until we get them down next December?

It's also too easy to pass folk by, and get on with what we are doing for ourselves, our own plans and goals; but aren't people worth more than that?

Who do we know that would greatly benefit if we gave them just a bit more time, a bit more consideration?

As this New Year begins, maybe one of your resolutions could be to seek out the lost and the lonely, to make time to make that phone call, to write that letter, to go and visit, to be a good neighbour.

2025 is a year of Jubilee in the Roman Catholic Church, a year that takes place every 25 years. It's a special year of forgiveness and reconciliation, in which people are invited to come back into right relationship with God, with one another, and with all of creation. This year consider - How can we grow our love for our family and friends? How can we spend more time talking and listening to God through reading the Bible and prayer? How can we live out the Greatest Commandment to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all you soul, with all your mind and with all your strength and to love your neighbour as yourself"

To add to Abraham Lincoln's words: "*In the end, it's not the years in your life that count, it's the life (and the love) in your years.*" (words in the brackets added by me.) Happy New Year!

With many blessings

Fr David