



The Parish of the Holy Family



Holy Ghost Church, Exmouth EX8 2JH
St Peter, Prince of Apostles, Budleigh Salterton EX9 6RZ

www.holyghostexmouth.org.uk
exmouth@prcdtr.org.uk

Registered Charity 213227

The Parish Office	The Presbytery, 11 Raddenstile Lane, Exmouth EX8 2JH	
The Parish Priest	Fr. Philip Austen	01395 263384
The Parish Office Manager	Jane Cheyne	01395 263384 fax 263594
The Deacon	Rev. Terry Enright	07977 446479
St Joseph's School		01395 264875
Chaplain to Exeter Hospitals	Exeter	01392 272815



FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT YEAR C

Sunday 22 December	10.00 am	Parish
Tuesday 24 January at St. Peter, Prince of Apostles	NO MASS	
Tuesday 24 th December Vigil of The Nativity of the Lord	8.00 pm	Private intention
Wednesday 25 December The Nativity of the Lord	10.00 am	Parish
Thursday 26 th December at St. Peter, Prince of Apostles St Stephen Protomartyr	11.00 am	Eveline Mary Mulholland RIP
Friday 27 January	NO MASS	
Saturday 28 December	5.00 pm	Mgr. Joe Branson RIP

Sunday 29 December The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary & Joseph	10.00 am	Holy Family Sisters
Tuesday 31 December at St. Peter, Prince of Apostles	11.00 am	
Wednesday 1 January	11.00 am	
Friday 3 January	2.00 pm	Fiona Fox RIP
Saturday 4 th January	5.00 pm	James & Ethel Troulan RIP (F)

Sunday 5 th January	10.00 am	Parish
Tuesday 7 th January at St. Peter, Prince of Apostles	11.00 am	Charles Edward McNamee (F)
Wednesday 8 January	11.00 am	
Friday 10 January Funeral mass	2.00 pm	Sidney Stopp RIP
Saturday 11 th January	5.00 pm	

Please pray for parishioners, family & friends, especially those who are sick, those undergoing medical procedures and in hospital and those feeling isolated in these challenging times. Please let me know if you are aware of anyone that would like to receive Holy Communion at home

The Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) is available by making an appointment with me, via the Parish Office.



WELCOME TO OUR PARISH A very warm welcome if you are visiting Exmouth and welcome back if we have not seen you for some time. *Fr. Philip*

'We must forcefully ask God to show us that star that draws us toward something more than our habits, because that star will lead us to contemplate Jesus, that child who is born in Bethlehem and who wants our full happiness.' *Pope Francis* 21 Nov 2023

The Sisters of the Holy Family wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year. Thank you for your Christmas cards, good wishes and prayers. We are most appreciative of your kindness. May God bless you.

Notice to all Ministers Please can you sign the board in St. Anne's Cloister to ensure that we have enough ministers at each mass. This is particularly important over the coming weeks as we plan for Christmas and some of you may be away. Thank you for your help.

Situations Vacant.... Are you a Mary, Joseph, an angel, shepherd, King..... donkey, sheep or even a camel?

Do you know one that would like to come to our family mass on Christmas Day?

I am looking forward to welcoming families to celebrate this special Christmas morning with me and I warmly encourage you to come along with your children. *Fr. Philip*

Christmas in our Parish

Wed. Dec 24th.	The Vigil of the Nativity of the Lord	8.00.p.m.
Thurs. Dec 25th.	 <i>This mass is particularly for families, and I invite you to bring your child dressed as a nativity character to welcome the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ</i>	10.00.a.m.



**SHARE
OUR LOVE -
GIVE THEM
HOPE**

OFFERINGS AT THE CHRISTMAS CRIB ARE FOR THE CATHOLIC CHILDREN'S SOCIETY (PLYMOUTH)

CCSP is a small Diocesan charity working throughout Devon, Cornwall and parts of Dorset. In accordance with the core values of love, justice and forgiveness, the work of the Catholic Children's Society (Plymouth) supports children and their families by providing:

- Individual grants to families who are struggling to buy the basic essentials
- Free Parenting courses offering practical and emotional support
- Good Shepherd programme which allows children to think how they can help other children less fortunate than themselves
- Bereavement and Loss programmes within schools using Rainbows

**Please scan here using your mobile phone
to donate to CCSP via Give a Little**

**For more information on our work and how
we strive to enrich the lives of others, please visit:**

www.ccsplymouth.org.uk

or contact us on:

Tel: 01364 645420

Email: ccs@prcdtr.org.uk



Putting Children First



DIOCESE OF PLYMOUTH

Charity Registration No 282803 Limited by guarantee Registered in England No 1546053



WAYS TO DONATE TO THE CATHOLIC CHILDREN'S SOCIETY (PLYMOUTH) THIS CHRISTMAS

If you would like to donate to the CCSP this Christmas, there are several alternative ways you can do this via

- Their Crowdfunding page <http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/step-forward-reach-out-and-help>

- CCSP receive 100% of every donation, as Crowdfunder have waived all their fees to help charities
- Post your donation by sending a cheque made payable to 'Catholic Children's Society (Plymouth)' to St Boniface House, Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7JL
- BACS direct into their account – Catholic Children's Society (Plymouth) sort code – 52-41-60 account number – 06024335
- Text – to donate £5 text 5CCSP to 70085, to donate £10 text 10CCSP to 70085 or to donate £20 text 20CCSP to 70085

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY



Stay Awake, 5th April, 2025 - a day conference for all the family (Mass, Children's streams, Praise and Worship, Speakers, Workshops and pizza!). Venue: All Saints School in Weymouth. More details later! ALL WELCOME! Please save the date!

Gather 2025 Jubilate A weekend of faith, formation and friendship, Friday 28th - Sunday 30th March, Livermead Cliff Hotel, Torquay. Booking forms available - please email plymouthgather@yahoo.com for more information.

Day of Reflection – Saturday 1 February at University of Exeter Catholic Chaplaincy Have you ever asked the question 'Is God calling me to Priesthood or to the Religious life ?'. This 'Day of Reflection' for men will be held on Saturday 1 February from 10:00 to 16:00 at Exeter University Chaplaincy, Boniface House, Glenthorne Road, Exeter EX4 4QU.

The day will include Mass, a time of Adoration, a short conference, an opportunity for Confession and 'One to One talks' with serving Priests from our Diocese; and sharing food together (this will be provided – please let us know of special dietary requirements). Under 18s are welcome to attend with parents' permission. For more information and to register your interest please contact Fr Jacek Kostuch on jacek.kostuch@prcdtr.org.uk or vocation@prcdtr.org.uk



And the donkey came too.....

Well, what amazingly joyful, chaotic and superb Advent & Nativity Service. We welcomed the whole school and their families to the dress rehearsal and two performances, and it was absolutely a privilege to be able to watch it. We are already looking forward to next year!

The whole school team worked so hard and it was clear to see that the children loved it too. The well-behaved donkey, Isacca, completed the Nativity scene and may just have stolen the limelight

Thank you to the headteacher Jon, all the staff, governors & helpers who made this happen – well done to you all. ‘The School community raised over £450 for Cafod World Gifts and this will enable us to sponsor a class to learn to read (£300) and children will decide if they would like to use what is left to buy a cow, 2 toilets or goats and chickens for a school less fortunate than ourselves!’

We invite all children to our mass on Christmas Day at 10.00 am to come dressed as a nativity character.....





“The Wise Men were overjoyed on seeing the star again.

They went into the house and when they saw the Child with Mary his mother, they knelt and worshipped Him.”
Matt. 2: 10



On Sunday 5th January we will celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany where traditionally in many parts of the world gifts are exchanged. Just as the Three Kings brought gifts to Jesus, so gifts are exchanged amongst family and friends.

An ancient Christian custom associated with the Epiphany is the blessing of homes with chalk. We adopted this tradition in our parish many years ago and it is a wonderful way to quietly evangelise. Normally we provide the blessing and chalk for you but obvious restrictions prevent us from doing that this year.

I invite you to adopt this custom in your family. It is an invitation for Jesus to be a daily guest in our homes, our comings and goings, our conversations, our work and play, our joys and sorrows. I pray that your ‘holy doorway’ will become a source of blessing for you, your whole family and all who visit your house. Happy New Year! Fr. Philip



Blessing the Home Using chalk, mark the lintel of your front door (front porch, step or wall as follows:
20 + C + M + B + 25

while saying: The three Wise Men, Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar followed the star of God’s Son who became human two thousand and seventeen years ago. May Christ bless our home and remain with us throughout the New Year. Amen



Then all the family say together the following prayer:

Visit, O Lord, our home with the joy of your presence. Bless all who live here, and all who visit us, with the gift of your love. May we show your love to each other and to all whose lives we touch. May we grow in grace and in love of you. Guide, comfort and strengthen us in your peace. Amen.

Do join us afterwards in the hall for coffee or a glass of something sparkling!

Exmouth Food Bank Christmas 2024 Collection

This Christmas we would really appreciate donations of staple foods that will enable us to keep supporting those in need during the festive period and beyond.

In particular we would welcome:

- Tins of soup
- Tins of tomatoes
- Tins of baked beans and spaghetti
- Meat meals (e.g. tinned stews, curry, meatballs)
- Tinned cold meats (e.g. corned beef, ham)
- Tins of tuna
- Packets of spaghetti and rice
- Tinned fruits
- Tins of custard and rice pudding



Thank you for your support

Please come and help the church cleaning team. after the morning mass. They aim to come on the 1st Wednesday of every month, after the morning mass for about an hour - everyone welcome, everyone needed...do come and stay for coffee afterwards. Thank you for supporting them.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR MONTHLY OFFERINGS and for your continued generosity to the parish. Many of you know that we are currently not encouraged to count and bank cash donations so the most efficient way for you to give is by standing order. Most of you have now started using this method and we are incredibly grateful. It saves us time and eliminates the need to count

cash and make journeys to the bank in these difficult times and it's a coronavirus free transaction!! Mandate forms are available by emailing the parish office.

Thank you!

MASS INTENTIONS If you would like a Mass said for a particular intention; for someone who is ill or a loved one who has died; in thanksgiving for an answer to prayer or perhaps a private intention, contact Jane in the parish office who will help you find a date and time which suits you. It is traditional to make an offering at the same time. This is simply what you can afford and would like to give. Please note that to comply with GDPR rules we need the permission of the person named if it is to be made public unless they are deceased.

13-17 RESIDENTIAL

/rezi'dentl/

A gathering of young people aged 13-17 from across the Diocese so they can get to know others and explore their faith.

'In his hand is the life of every living thing' Job 12:10



24th - 26th January 2025, East Shallowford Farm, Dartmoor

During the weekend we will explore the scripture Job 12: 7-10, through workshops in, Art, Drama, music, filming and photography. Young people will have a chance to help care for the animals and cook food.



For further information and to book, contact:
Saskia: youth@prcdtr.org.uk



The Parish Finance Committee would like to remind you that Easter & Christmas offerings are for your parish priest as he doesn't receive a salary. If you would like to give this year, please put your donation into an envelope marked 'Christmas Offering' and post it through the front door of the presbytery. **May God bless you for supporting our priest**



"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor." Luke 4:18

CAFOD Introducing Jubilee – online session – 18th January 2025, 10:30am-midday

Praying with the Jubilee Icon: We have also been working with the Bishops' Conference to produce a Jubilee Icon for the Church in England and Wales. Created by an Ethiopian artist, the Icon is based on Luke 4:18-19. More information can be found on our [Jubilee page](#). The icon will be visiting dioceses during the year, arranged by the Bishops' Conference and the Diocesan Jubilee Coordinators. Do let me know if you'd like to know more.

Resources for parishioners: [Our Jubilee 2025: Pilgrims of hope reflection guide](#) is a great resource for groups and individuals looking to deepen their faith and renew their hope in the Jubilee Year. There are four reflection sessions to help us to explore and respond to the Jubilee which could be run at any point of the year or even as a single one-off session. Guides can be ordered for free from the above webpage or the [CAFOD shop](#) where you can also find an accompanying Leaders' Guide. These may also be helpful for people who visit those who are housebound, in hospital or prisons etc. Please pass this on to your catechists or to anyone you think may be interested in leading this in the parish.

The Knit & Natter group wish you all a Happy Christmas and invite you to join them on Monday 6th January at 2.00 pm in the parish hall. Further diary dates are 3rd February & 3rd March

Thank you to our wonderful Cleaning Team – if you would like to help them once a month the next date is Wednesday 5th February after morning mass.

The Parish Office will be closed between 20 December and 2nd January 2025 but we will monitor the phones and emails and return your messages ASAP. We know that many parishioners do not have access to email or to the website so please share the information in this bulletin with them if you can. Thank you



*I look forward to seeing many of you over the coming days and
wish you a Happy & Holy Christmas.*

Fr. Philip





APOSTOLIC LETTER ADMIRABILE SIGNUM OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS ON THE MEANING AND IMPORTANCE OF THE NATIVITY SCENE

of sacred Scripture. As we contemplate the Christmas story, we are invited to set out on a spiritual journey, drawn by the humility of the God who became man in order to encounter every man and woman. We come to realize that so great is his love for us that he became one of us, so that we in turn might become one with him. With this Letter, I wish to encourage the beautiful family tradition of preparing the nativity scene in the days before Christmas, but also the custom of setting it up in the workplace, in schools, hospitals, prisons and town squares. Great imagination and creativity is always shown in employing the most diverse materials to create small masterpieces of beauty. As children, we learn from our parents and grandparents to carry on this joyful tradition, which encapsulates a wealth of popular piety. It is my hope that this custom will never be lost and that, wherever it has fallen into disuse, it can be rediscovered and revived.

2. The origin of the Christmas crèche is found above all in certain details of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, as related in the Gospels. The evangelist Luke says simply that Mary "gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn" (2:7). Because Jesus was laid in a manger, the nativity scene is known in Italian as a *presepe*, from the Latin word *praesepium*, meaning "manger". Coming into this world, the Son of God was laid in the place where animals feed. Hay became the first bed of the One who would reveal himself as "the bread come down from heaven" (Jn 6:41). Saint Augustine, with other Church Fathers, was impressed by this symbolism: "Laid in a manger, he became our food" (Sermon 189, 4). Indeed, the nativity scene evokes a number of the mysteries of Jesus' life and brings them close to our own daily lives. But let us go back to the origins of the Christmas crèche so familiar to us. We need to imagine ourselves in the little Italian town of Greccio, near Rieti. Saint Francis stopped there, most likely on his way back from Rome where on 29 November 1223 he had received the confirmation of his Rule from Pope Honorius III. Francis had earlier visited the Holy Land, and the caves in Greccio reminded him of the countryside of Bethlehem. It may also be that the "Poor Man of Assisi" had been struck by the mosaics in the Roman Basilica of Saint Mary Major depicting the birth of Jesus, close to the place where, according to an ancient tradition, the wooden panels of the manger are preserved.

The *Franciscan Sources* describe in detail what then took place in Greccio. Fifteen days before Christmas, Francis asked a local man named John to help him realize his desire "to bring to life the memory of that babe born in Bethlehem, to see as much as possible with my own bodily eyes the discomfort of his infant needs, how he lay in a manger, and how, with an ox and an ass standing by, he was laid upon a bed of hay" At this, his faithful friend went immediately to prepare all that the Saint had asked. On 25 December, friars came to Greccio from various parts, together with people

from the farmsteads in the area, who brought flowers and torches to light up that holy night. When Francis arrived, he found a manger full of hay, an ox and a donkey. All those present experienced a new and indescribable joy in the presence of the Christmas scene. The priest then solemnly celebrated the Eucharist over the manger, showing the bond between the Incarnation of the Son of God and the Eucharist. At Greccio there were no statues; the nativity scene was enacted and experienced by all who were present. This is how our tradition began: with everyone gathered in joy around the cave, with no distance between the original event and those sharing in its mystery.

Thomas of Celano, the first biographer of Saint Francis, notes that this simple and moving scene was accompanied by the gift of a marvellous vision: one of those present saw the Baby Jesus himself lying in the manger. From the nativity scene of that Christmas in 1223, “everyone went home with joy”.

3. With the simplicity of that sign, Saint Francis carried out a great work of evangelization. His teaching touched the hearts of Christians and continues today to offer a simple yet authentic means of portraying the beauty of our faith. Indeed, the place where this first nativity scene was enacted expresses and evokes these sentiments. Greccio has become a refuge for the soul, a mountain fastness wrapped in silence. Why does the Christmas crèche arouse such wonder and move us so deeply? First, because it shows God’s tender love: the Creator of the universe lowered himself to take up our littleness. The gift of life, in all its mystery, becomes all the more wondrous as we realize that the Son of Mary is the source and sustenance of all life. In Jesus, the Father has given us a brother who comes to seek us out whenever we are confused or lost, a loyal friend ever at our side. He gave us his Son who forgives us and frees us from our sins. Setting up the Christmas crèche in our homes helps us to relive the history of what took place in Bethlehem. Naturally, the Gospels remain our source for understanding and reflecting on that event. At the same time, its portrayal in the crèche helps us to imagine the scene. It touches our hearts and makes us enter into salvation history as contemporaries of an event that is living and real in a broad gamut of historical and cultural contexts. In a particular way, from the time of its Franciscan origins, the nativity scene has invited us to “feel” and “touch” the poverty that God’s Son took upon himself in the Incarnation. Implicitly, it summons us to follow him along the path of humility, poverty and self-denial that leads from the manger of Bethlehem to the cross. It asks us to meet him and serve him by showing mercy to those of our brothers and sisters in greatest need (cf. *Mt 25:31-46*).

4. I would like now to reflect on the various elements of the nativity scene in order to appreciate their deeper meaning. First, there is the background of a starry sky wrapped in the darkness and silence of night. We represent this not only out of fidelity to the Gospel accounts, but also for its symbolic value. We can think of all those times in our lives when we have experienced the darkness of night. Yet even then, God does not abandon us, but is there to answer our crucial questions about the meaning of life. Who am I? Where do I come from? Why was I born at this time in history? Why do I love? Why do I suffer? Why will I die? It was to answer these questions that God became man. His closeness brings light where there is darkness and shows the way to those dwelling in the shadow of suffering (cf. *Lk 1:79*). The landscapes that are part of the nativity scene also deserve some mention. Frequently they include the ruins of ancient houses or buildings, which in some instances replace the cave of Bethlehem and become a home for the Holy Family. These ruins appear to be inspired by the thirteenth-century *Golden Legend* of the Dominican Jacobus de Varagine, which relates a pagan belief that the Temple of Peace in Rome would collapse when a Virgin gave birth. More than anything, the ruins are the visible sign of fallen humanity, of everything that inevitably falls into ruin, decays and disappoints. This scenic setting tells us that Jesus is newness in the midst of an aging world, that he has come to heal and rebuild, to restore the world and our lives to their original splendour.

5. With what emotion should we arrange the mountains, streams, sheep and shepherds in the nativity scene! As we do so, we are reminded that, as the prophets had foretold, all creation rejoices in the coming of the Messiah. The angels and the guiding star are a sign that we too are called to set out for the cave and to worship the Lord. "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us" (*Lk 2:15*). So the shepherds tell one another after the proclamation of the angels. A beautiful lesson emerges from these simple words. Unlike so many other people, busy about many things, the shepherds become the first to see the most essential thing of all: the gift of salvation. It is the humble and the poor who greet the event of the Incarnation. The shepherds respond to God who comes to meet us in the Infant Jesus by setting out to meet him with love, gratitude and awe. Thanks to Jesus, this encounter between God and his children gives birth to our religion and accounts for its unique beauty, so wonderfully evident in the nativity scene.

6. It is customary to add many symbolic figures to our nativity scenes. First, there are the beggars and the others who know only the wealth of the heart. They too have every right to draw near to the Infant Jesus; no one can evict them or send them away from a crib so makeshift that the poor seem entirely at home. Indeed, the poor are a privileged part of this mystery; often they are the first to recognize God's presence in our midst. The presence of the poor and the lowly in the nativity scene remind us that God became man for the sake of those who feel most in need of his love and who ask him to draw near to them. Jesus, "gentle and humble in heart" (*Mt 11:29*), was born in poverty and led a simple life in order to teach us to recognize what is essential and to act accordingly. The nativity scene clearly teaches that we cannot let ourselves be fooled by wealth and fleeting promises of happiness. We see Herod's palace in the background, closed and deaf to the tidings of joy. By being born in a manger, God himself launches the only true revolution that can give hope and dignity to the disinherited and the outcast: the revolution of love, the revolution of tenderness. From the manger, Jesus proclaims, in a meek yet powerful way, the need for sharing with the poor as the path to a more human and fraternal world in which no one is excluded or marginalized. Children – but adults too! – often love to add to the nativity scene other figures that have no apparent connection with the Gospel accounts. Yet, each in its own way, these fanciful additions show that in the new world inaugurated by Jesus there is room for whatever is truly human and for all God's creatures. From the shepherd to the blacksmith, from the baker to the musicians, from the women carrying jugs of water to the children at play: all this speaks of the everyday holiness, the joy of doing ordinary things in an extraordinary way, born whenever Jesus shares his divine life with us.

7. Gradually, we come to the cave, where we find the figures of Mary and Joseph. Mary is a mother who contemplates her child and shows him to every visitor. The figure of Mary makes us reflect on the great mystery that surrounded this young woman when God knocked on the door of her immaculate heart. Mary responded in complete obedience to the message of the angel who asked her to become the Mother of God. Her words, "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (*Lk 1:38*), show all of us how to abandon ourselves in faith to God's will. By her "fiat", Mary became the mother of God's Son, not losing but, thanks to him, consecrating her virginity. In her, we see the Mother of God who does not keep her Son only to herself, but invites everyone to obey his word and to put it into practice (cf. *Jn 2:5*).

At Mary's side, shown protecting the Child and his Mother, stands Saint Joseph. He is usually depicted with staff in hand, or holding up a lamp. Saint Joseph plays an important role in the life of Jesus and Mary. He is the guardian who tirelessly protects his family. When God warned him of Herod's threat, he did not hesitate to set out and flee to Egypt (cf. *Mt 2:13-15*). And once the danger had passed, he brought the family back to Nazareth, where he was to be the first teacher of Jesus as a boy and then as a young man. Joseph treasured in his heart the great mystery surrounding Jesus and Mary his spouse; as a just man, he entrusted himself always to God's will, and put it into practice.

8. When, at Christmas, we place the statue of the Infant Jesus in the manger, the nativity scene suddenly comes alive. God appears as a child, for us to take into our arms. Beneath weakness and frailty, he conceals his power that creates and transforms all things. It seems impossible, yet it is true: in Jesus, God was a child, and in this way he wished to reveal the greatness of his love: by smiling and opening his arms to all. The birth of a child awakens joy and wonder; it sets before us the great mystery of life. Seeing the bright eyes of a young couple gazing at their newborn child, we can understand the feelings of Mary and Joseph who, as they looked at the Infant Jesus, sensed God's presence in their lives. "Life was made manifest" (1 Jn 1:2). In these words, the Apostle John sums up the mystery of the Incarnation. The crèche allows us to see and touch this unique and unparalleled event that changed the course of history, so that time would thereafter be reckoned either before or after the birth of Christ. God's ways are astonishing, for it seems impossible that he should forsake his glory to become a man like us. To our astonishment, we see God acting exactly as we do: he sleeps, takes milk from his mother, cries and plays like every other child! As always, God baffles us. He is unpredictable, constantly doing what we least expect. The nativity scene shows God as he came into our world, but it also makes us reflect on how our life is part of God's own life. It invites us to become his disciples if we want to attain ultimate meaning in life.

9. As the feast of Epiphany approaches, we place the statues of the Three Kings in the Christmas crèche. Observing the star, those wise men from the East set out for Bethlehem, in order to find Jesus and to offer him their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. These costly gifts have an allegorical meaning: gold honours Jesus' kingship, incense his divinity, myrrh his sacred humanity that was to experience death and burial. As we contemplate this aspect of the nativity scene, we are called to reflect on the responsibility of every Christian to spread the Gospel. Each of us is called to bear glad tidings to all, testifying by our practical works of mercy to the joy of knowing Jesus and his love. The Magi teach us that people can come to Christ by a very long route. Men of wealth, sages from afar, athirst for the infinite, they set out on the long and perilous journey that would lead them to Bethlehem (cf. Mt 2:1-12). Great joy comes over them in the presence of the Infant King. They are not scandalized by the poor surroundings, but immediately fall to their knees to worship him. Kneeling before him, they understand that the God who with sovereign wisdom guides the course of the stars also guides the course of history, casting down the mighty and raising up the lowly. Upon their return home, they would certainly have told others of this amazing encounter with the Messiah, thus initiating the spread of the Gospel among the nations.

10. Standing before the Christmas crèche, we are reminded of the time when we were children, eagerly waiting to set it up. These memories make us all the more conscious of the precious gift received from those who passed on the faith to us. At the same time, they remind us of our duty to share this same experience with our children and our grandchildren. It does not matter how the nativity scene is arranged: it can always be the same or it can change from year to year. What matters is that it speaks to our lives. Wherever it is, and whatever form it takes, the Christmas crèche speaks to us of the love of God, the God who became a child in order to make us know how close he is to every man, woman and child, regardless of their condition.

Dear brothers and sisters, the Christmas crèche is part of the precious yet demanding process of passing on the faith. Beginning in childhood, and at every stage of our lives, it teaches us to contemplate Jesus, to experience God's love for us, to feel and believe that God is with us and that we are with him, his children, brothers and sisters all, thanks to that Child who is the Son of God and the Son of the Virgin Mary. And to realize that in that knowledge we find true happiness. Like Saint Francis, may we open our hearts to this simple grace, so that from our wonderment a humble prayer may arise: a prayer of thanksgiving to God, who wished to share with us his all, and thus never to leave us alone.

FRANCISCUS *Given in Greccio, at the Shrine of the Nativity, on 1 December in the year 2019, the seventh of my Pontificate.*

EXMOUTH CHURCHES
PRESENT

NATIVITY
PLAY



REAL
DONKEY

BRASS
BAND

CHRISTMAS ENCOUNTERS

CHILDREN'S
ACTIVITIES

CAROLS &
CHOIRS

SPACE FOR PRAYER
& REFLECTION

MAKE YOUR OWN CHRISTINGLE
& CELEBRATION



MONDAY 23RD DECEMBER



THE STRAND, EXMOUTH



EVENTS FROM 10AM-8PM

FREE
FAMILY
FUN!

List of Events

NATIVITY PARADE	10:00 am
SALVATION ARMY BRASS BAND	10:45 am
CHRISTMAS FAMILY SING	11:15 am
NATIVITY PLAY GOES WRONG	11:30 am
SOUNDS OF CHRISTMAS WITH THE SALVATION ARMY BRASS BAND	12:30 am
FLASH MOB NATIVITY - COME JOIN IN!	1:30 PM
CHRISTINGLE BINGLE BINGO	2:30 PM
EXMOUTH'S BIGGEST CHRISTINGLE CELEBRATION	3:15 PM
CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PARTY	4:30 PM
GLOW IN THE DARK COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS CAROLS	6:00 PM

EXMOUTH CHURCHES
PRESENT



CHRISTMAS
ENCOUNTERS

