



**St Mark's Church, Reigate**

December 2018

**Letter from the Vicar, Father Martin Colton**

Dear Friends

At the time of writing, the Christmas adverts have started to appear on the television. In Aldi's offering we have been able to catch up with the adventures of Kevin the Carrot. This Christmas we have found him attempting to protect his family from the nefarious activities of his arch enemy, Pascal the wicked Parsnip. In contrast Sainsbury's advert concentrates on a primary school play, focusing on a very nervous looking child on stage who is just about to sing a solo. As she starts singing the song 'You Get What You Give' her face is awash with fright, her voice faltering. As she spots her mother in the audience, courage and confidence sweep through her body until she is singing without a care in the world. Boots have also followed the theme of family as their advert focuses on the influence that a parent has on a child. As we watch the interactions of a mother and daughter we see how precious and life affirming the bond between a parent and offspring is.

A few days ago I was asked by a child 'Why is Christmas special?'. As I started to think through my answer I found my mind filled with voices from people who, over the years I had heard lamenting the lost specialness of Christmas. Just what I wondered could I say? As I started to formulate an answer it was the Christmas adverts I realised which help encapsulate the specialness of Christmas.

Ironically the news recently has been filled with reports concerning how Iceland's Christmas advert has been banned from the television. The advert addresses the impact of deforestation on tropical rainforests as woodland is cleared to make way for the planting of Palm Oil. Although the advert focuses specifically on the declining population of Orangutans it makes a powerful wider point about the survival of the planet more generally. Tellingly it acts as a reminder that our behaviour (most significantly displayed by what we buy) can protect and shield the environment or contribute to its decay.

There are adverts celebrating the importance of the bonds that can exist within families; adverts stripping evil of its strength, facilitating freedom and liberty instead; adverts dispelling fear and worry, filling their place with confidence and belief; adverts calling us to new patterns of behaviour, ones that protect and nurture the beauty of God's creation.

Right before our eyes, in the adverts on our televisions, there is something of the specialness of Christmas, of why the Messiah was born. If we allow him to enter the stable of our hearts, then we will not only find a new life devoid of fear, filled instead with freedom and liberty but we will be gathered into his family, held within the bond he has with his Father. This is the bond which helps us cast sin from our lives transforming us to help usher in the new reality of God's Kingdom. No gift is as priceless, no gift so special as the bestowal of a richer, deeper and freer life.

May the Christmas adverts this year help connect you back into the special meaning of Christmas.

With my best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Manton', written in a cursive style.