

My dear friends, during this Christmas season, many of us will spend time with our families, friends and those we love. There is nothing more precious than having your family with you at this time of year. Children make Christmas such a magical time. Christmas is for Children, and they make it such a wonderful time for us all. It was of course because of a Child that we can celebrate Christmas, and his birth brought so much joy into the world. Even though this time of year can be so full of joy and happiness it's worth remembering so many people who are suffering, not just at Christmas, but throughout the year. Those who have lost loved ones, for whom Christmas is a terrible time. Those who have loved ones who have just been diagnosed with an illness, for whom they are worried. We remember too those who are homeless, and those who are affected by war and terror. This year we remember especially our elderly, farmers and political prisoners of this country who have been so let down by our country. Those whose hopes of a new beginning, have been so shattered.

My thoughts this year turn specifically to families who are perhaps sharing their last Christmas with a beloved child, their son or daughter. It's heartbreaking to be given the news that your child has only a few months to live. Therefore, this year, I'd like our crib offerings to go to the MAKE A WISH FOUNDATION UK, where children are given the chance to make a wish, to go to somewhere they've always wanted to go to or do something they've always wanted to do; for the most part, it's to see Father Christmas. I think it fitting that the crib offerings go to a child's charity. As I always say, it's difficult to choose which charity to support. You may have a favourite charity you wish to give to, and I encourage you to do that, but if you could, please support our crib offerings this year.

Finally, I'd like to thank all our wonderful Parishioners for all you do for the Church, which is self-evident with the new ramp being built, the sacristy being completed, and the new notice boards. You all work so hard and are so selfless in your giving. I'm so lucky, and so happy to be your Parish Priest. I look forward to the New Year with great enthusiasm and hope. The new year will provide us with new challenges as we begin a new mission together with Tipton and Dudley, and as we prepare to welcome Bishop Timothy in April.

I wish you all a very happy Christmas and a happy, peaceful and prosperous New Year, and may God bless you all now and always.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fr Michael', with a horizontal line underneath.

Fr Michael.