

Thank you all for the most amazing and warm welcome Helen and I have had. The service of institution, induction and installation was a very meaningful occasion, with a significant element of rejoicing that went with it. We would like to thank you also for the many greetings and good wishes that came by post or hand through the rectory letterbox. It has all been really reaffirming.

C S Lewis wrote that, for the majority of us, the more heady feelings about love are actually signs of the desire to obtain it. Once love has been obtained there is, after the "honeymoon period," a discernible anti-climax. That's when the hard work of exercising love starts for real.

If we are honest with ourselves, it's the same with Christmas: the excitement (and the following New Year) is more expressed in the preparation and the expectancy. Then suddenly the day arrives. Hopefully we use the event to think beyond ourselves and be taken into that wonderful concept that there is more to it all than just what is waiting under the Christmas tree - or under the mistletoe!

However, by the time most of us are back to work or school, let's say by the time of the Feast of the Epiphany (6 January), we will already have passed through the holy days of the Feast of the first martyr, St Stephen (Boxing Day), then the commemoration of the slaughter of the Holy Innocents (28 December), and the lesser-observed feast, the Circumcision of Christ - ouch! Well, if this birth in Bethlehem is the sudden attainment of The Love among us, then it's not much of a honeymoon period that follows in the Church's calendar... Just like real life, for that is where the heart of this season lays.

The real deal with this gift of God is in what we do with it throughout 2010; the trust, patience, loyalty, give and take of being in relationship with others; the acceptance of the other. It is from this that I hope we are able to formulate our new year resolutions.

Of course, I expect you will have seen parallels between having had another Christmas, seeing in another new year and getting another rector. After all the preparation and high expectation, there is bound to be a mis-match once in a while between what you had hoped for and what you actually get; just see it as a chance to grow in love. Be it with me, with one another, or with God, this is the stuff of real relationships.