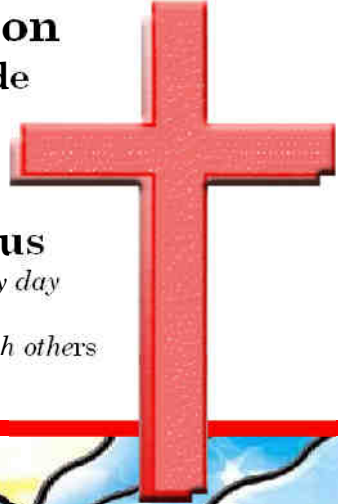


PLOUGHSHARE

December 2004 / January 2005

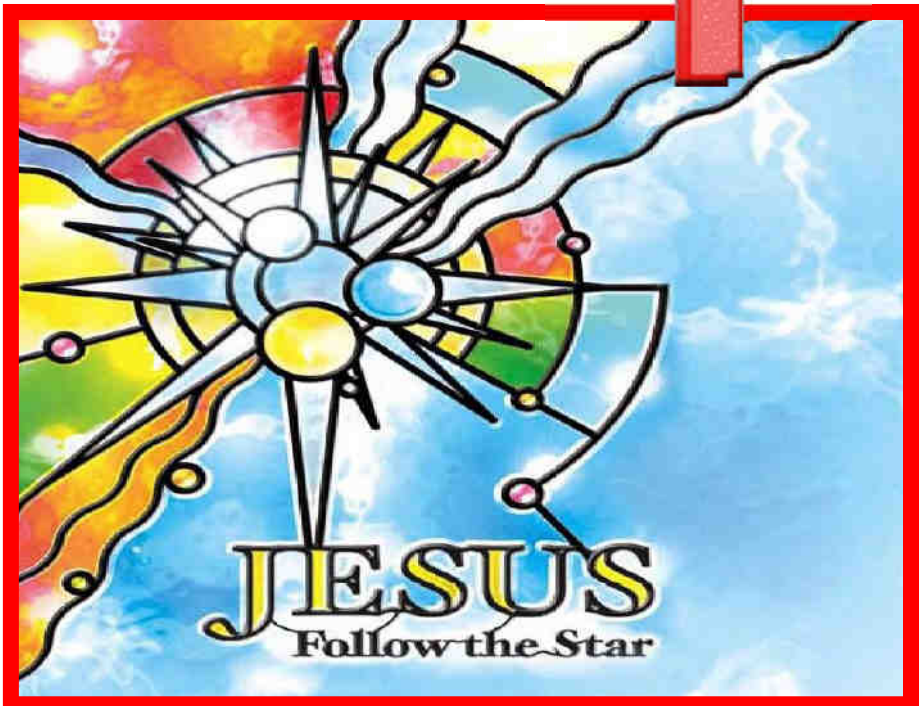
Volume 13, No 1

St Thomas' Brampton
St Peter's, Holymoorside



Share the love of Jesus

*We aim to become more like Jesus every day
as we respond to His love for us
and as we share the good news of Him with others*



From the Rector

2 Corinthians 8 verse 9

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich."



In his best selling book, *The Jesus I Never Knew*, Philip Yancey contrasts the humility that characterised Jesus' royal visit to planet earth with the prestigious image associated with world rulers today:

"Queen Elizabeth visited the United States, and reporters delighted in spelling out the logistics involved: her four thousand pounds of luggage, including two outfits for every occasion, mourning outfit in case someone died, 40 pints of plasma, and white kid-leather toilet covers. She brought along her own hairdresser, two valets, and a host of other attendants. A brief visit of royalty to a foreign country can easily cost 20 million dollars."

In meek contrast, God's visit to earth took place in an animal shelter with no attendants present and nowhere to lay the newborn king but a feed trough. Truly, he became poor, even by worldly standards. But by heaven's standards? As the popular Christmas carol states:

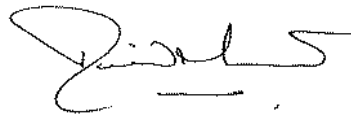
Thou who wast rich beyond all splendour,
All for love's sake becamest poor;
Thrones for a manger didst surrender,
Sapphire-paved courts for stable floor.
Thou who wast rich beyond all splendour,
All for love's sake becamest poor;

But why? Why did God leave those sapphire-paved courts? Why did he leave the splendour of heaven, the praise of the angelic host, why? The verse at the beginning of this

page tells us. It was simply to make us rich. As the carol continues :

Thou who art God beyond all praising,
All for love's sake becamest man;
Stooping so low, but sinners raising
Heavenwards by Thine eternal plan.
Thou who art God beyond all praising,
All for love's sake becamest man.

God became poor so that you can become rich. Rich now in the knowledge of God, of his peace and his joy, his forgiveness and his love. Rich in the eternal sapphire-paved courts of heaven. Have you become rich through his poverty?

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gerald", with a horizontal line underneath.

Glory in our Harvest Festival 2004

Dear Diary,

Dates to remember during December 2004/January 2005:

CHRISTMAS SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

Please see centre pages

FAMILY ADVENT ACTIVITY – “Ready, Steady, Christmas” - Sunday 5th December - 3.30 to 5.30pm - Advent activities followed by refreshments & a short Advent Christingle service

NOVIMOST SUNDAY – 12TH DECEMBER

The Director of NOVIMOST, Gill Rowell will be preaching at all three services on Sunday 12th December and we look forward to your attendance at what I know will be a most informative and uplifting day. There will be a BRING & SHARE LUNCH after the 11.00 am service during which Gill will share with us more on the work of NOVIMOST.

CONCERTS AT ST THOMAS' DURING DECEMBER

Saturday 4th 7.30 pm N.E.Derbyshire Music Centre Christmas Concert

Friday 17th 7.30 pm Holymoorside Choral Christmas Concert

Saturday 18th 7.30pm Co-operative Choir Christmas Concert

Tuesday 21st 7.30pm Concert for Music Work Vocal Ensemble

Wednesday 29th 7.30 pm Robert Spencer Trio "The Magic of Christmas"



*From the staff at St Thomas' office,
may we wish you all our good tidings for
Christmas and a peaceful New Year*

Heather/Anne/Geoff/Sue/Camille

People and Jesus: Robert Batten

I started to work in Community Transport 10 years ago, having spent 30 years in accountancy. Long hours and stress at meeting deadlines often led me to think of a life away from profit and loss accounts and balance sheets. The recession of the early 90's brought matters to a head and, following a redundancy; I drew closer to God and prayed about the future. Some years earlier I had taken the PSV (Bus driving test) for fun and now, after training as a volunteer for Chesterfield Community Transport, I was offered a job with Bakewell & Eyam C.T., part-time at first but eventually full-time.



The job is very people-centred. From babes in arms to centenarians we collect clients from their homes and take them shopping, to day centres, special schools, hospitals, surgeries, or on outings. The main criterion is that passengers do not have access to or are unable to use other forms of transport; so the majority of our work is with disabled or elderly people, church groups, scouts, guides and small organizations meeting a beneficial or social need. We employ 6 drivers and draw on about 100 volunteer drivers, some of whom drive for their own organizations. All volunteers undergo training and assessment.

I find my Christian faith plays a relevant part in my job. It is often a two-way process. Some passengers have used our services for many years and close relationships are formed both among themselves and with the drivers and escorts, Joys and sorrows are shared. Loneliness and isolation that some face can be lifted by the contact that we provide.

Sometimes I can talk about my faith with people with a particular burden and, just as important, I can listen to them. Time is not so pressing. One lady told me that a few weeks after she married at the beginning of the war her husband was taken prisoner and they were not reunited for nearly five years. She is now 92 and still active in her church. Occasionally there is an emergency, such as the 90 year old widow who had a water leak in her loft that was quite simple to fix.

Most of my regular passengers know of my connection with Hope for Eastern Europe and ask what life is like in Romania. Some of them knit garments, others do shoe boxes. I have taken round petitions on the subject of persecution of Christians and got dozens of signatures.

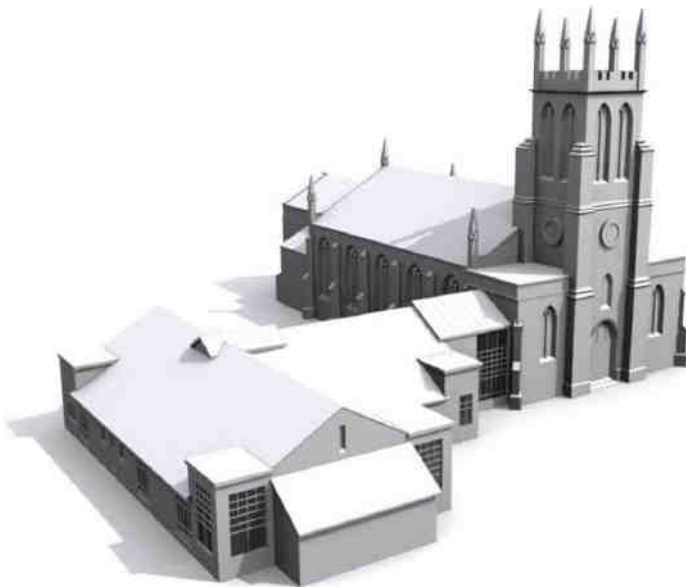
We carry clients with learning difficulties. They can be particularly challenging. Being generally uninhibited in expressing their feelings they can please and frustrate in equal measure. Remaining calm is always the best course if not the easiest. Escorts do a wonderful job in these circumstances and clients can develop deep attachments with them and their regular driver. Speaking about Jesus is something that can happen out of the blue and some have a simple but very real understanding of who He is. Keeping the third commandment is fairly strictly enforced and any lapse will bring the bus to a halt, and the offender will be gently instructed on the matter. This invariably leaves an impression on the others.

The buses are 25 feet long and 8 feet wide. They have to go everywhere to reach clients. Reversing up a narrow potholed winding track on a foggy night is not easy, and minor scrapes do happen. I pray every morning for all the drivers and passengers that they will have safe journeys. Thanks be to our Lord, there has not been a serious incident since our work started.

Robert Batten

PARISH CENTRE: OUR SUBMISSION

Earlier this month our church architect, David Werrell of VWB Architects, formally submitted a planning application to Chesterfield Borough Council for St. Thomas' proposed 'Parish Centre' building development project. This relatively simple act represents the culmination of months of work to plan, test and refine proposals for a new extension designed to enable the continued growth of church and community activities at St Thomas'. It also represents the start of the next phase of our project.



The formal submission of our plans to the Local Authority has started a process of consultation which will likely run up to the end of the calendar year, at which point we should receive feedback on our proposed scheme. This could be fully supportive, or may recommend that certain changes be made prior to a resubmission of a suitably

revised scheme. The Local Authority's feedback will have implications beyond the Council planning application as the Diocesan Advisory Committee, the Church of England's planning authority, is awaiting a view from the Council before arriving at its own decision with regard to its Faculty approval we must further secure. Not to put too fine a point on it, we have reached a key stage in our project.

The development project team have from the outset sought God's will for the Parish Centre project, rather than to impose our own preferences upon it. Inevitably with a project of the scale and complexity of our Parish Centre scheme we have received a range of views from members of the congregation, parishioners, and amenity societies as to how our proposals might be defined and/or improved. Equally inevitably some of these suggestions have been mutually exclusive. The thought that 'you can't please all of the people all of the time comes to mind', but happily I know that we need not try to do so. That is, as Christians we should submit ourselves to service that will honour our Lord and realise His vision for St Thomas' and not our own.

I would like to thank everybody for their support and prayers which have helped us to progress our project to its current stage. Your continued prayer support would be greatly appreciated as we approach a 'defining moment' for our project towards the end of the year. The development team will accept and respond to the feedback from the Local Authority, whatever it may have to say about the proposed scheme. All we ask is that His will be done. Please join us in praying this same prayer over the coming weeks.

Graham Brown

Community

You may have seen this advertised in the newsheet and wondered what it was about.

Originally we were inspired by the description in Acts 2: 42-47 of the Early Christian Church. We felt God wanted us to get to know each other better and become a family who supported and cared for each other, across the age groups, so everyone felt valued. To do this needed time, so we set aside Friday from 7pm-10pm, to meet in each others homes. We use this time to chat and the children play. Sometimes people bring food and drink.

About 30-40 people would count themselves as part of this community. We range from 10 months to 80+ including church attendees and non church attendees. Sometimes the house is full and sometimes there are only a few of us. I think that each person would have a different reason to give as to why they feel Community is important to them. I really feel these people are my family. They have added so much to my life both practically and emotionally. These are the people I turn to when I need help and support, or when I have something to celebrate.

We want you to be part of this too.

Alison Shemwell

Amanda



Joe



Ange



Joez



STEVEN



MARK



Maureen



Peter



CAROLINE

Sarah



Alan



Margie



Phil



Clarice



Ann



Dave



Elaine



Rosie



JEANIE



Hayley



Rick

B



JOSHUA



LIZZIE

KATHRYN



Alison

Emily



MARK



JENNY

EMERGING PRAYER 4

C H R I S T M A S P R A Y E R

Someone, somewhere, is not in a festive mood

The turkey is going cold. The Queen has made her speech. The balloons are starting to go a bit flabby. Christmas may be over till next year - but is it over for the past year?

Christmas is a marvelous time for Emerging Prayer. Try saying over and over again in the run-up to Christmas Day and during the twelve days that follow: "WHAT IS CHRISTMAS LIKE FOR _____? And that is a wonderful prayer to offer up.

Try remembering what's happened since October 1st. If there's been terrible domestic flooding, pray for families facing Christmas mopping up. If there's a recent report on rough sleepers: "What is Christmas like for people confined to a cardboard box?" If hyperactivity and the wonder-drug to control it have been in the news: "What is this Christmas like for the parent(s?) of a child who cannot settle?" "There might have been an earthquake. How do you celebrate Christmas in the aftermath of an earthquake?"

Pray for ANY victim, for anyone who has their Christmas spoiled by something that has happened since that person last took down the decorations. Pray for Christmas in prison, Christmas in a slum, Christmas in debt, Christmas divorced, Christmas worried about work.

How focused Christmas can be in a meandering prayer-life.

Godfrey H. Holmes





SERVICES AT ST THOMAS', BRAMPTON

Sunday 19th December

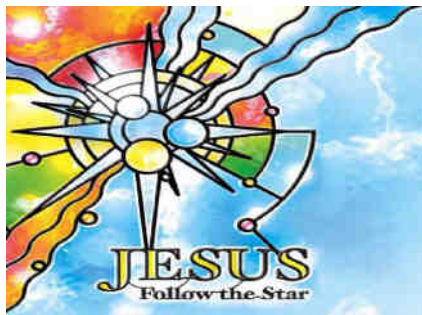
6.30 pm Carol Service
Sing Christmas carols
and enjoy coffee and mince
pies afterwards

Friday 24th December **Christmas Eve**

5.00 pm Carol Service for all ages
7.00 pm Carol Service for all ages
11.30 pm Midnight Service of Holy Communion

Saturday 25th December **Christmas Day – Joint Service**

10.30 am Christmas Day Communion Service
for all the family





SERVICES IN HOLYMOORSIDE

Sunday 19th December

10.00 am Children's Carol Service at St Peters
3.45 pm Blessing of crib and URC nativity service
6.00 pm St Peters Carol service

Friday 24th December

Christmas Eve

7.00 pm Village Carols – recreation ground
11.30 pm Midnight Service of Holy
Communion at St Peters

Saturday 25th December

Christmas Day

9.30 am Joint Christmas Day Service
at the UNITED REFORM CHURCH

Sunday 26th December

9.30 am Joint Communion service at St Peters



Ploughshare Update

After twenty-four years of overseeing the distribution of Ploughshare, David and Pam Oldale are handing over their responsibilities. I am sure all readers will join with me in saying a very big thank you to David and Pam for all their loyal service. Their warmth and friendliness have been appreciated by so many, since they took overall responsibility for the delivery of Ploughshare in September 1981!

Now a very big welcome to Bernard Blanksby who is taking over the task David and Pam have seen many changes in Ploughshare over the years. As they hand over, another change is taking place.

Colour has been introduced to the front cover!

Many readers will be renewing their annual subscription at the beginning of 2005. Another change is on the way! Before 1996 Ploughshare cost just 30p. In 1996 the price was increased to 45p. It has stayed at 45p. for the last eight years. As from the February/March issue Ploughshare will cost 60p. and the annual subscription will be £3.00.

Do make sure you renew your subscription. If you would like to start taking Ploughshare, either having it delivered to your home or having your copy left at the back of church, please see Bernard Blanksby. (Tel; 237552)

Finally a very big thank you to Sue Ward for editing Ploughshare, to David Holden for preparing it for the printers and to all the distributors who so faithfully push your copies through your door and collect your money!

Barbara Goodacre

Readers Bible Thought

When I read the scriptures I often find that certain words or phrases leap out of the text and take on a very relevant meaning to me. This is especially so in reading the gospel narratives and the accounts of our Lord's life carry a ring of truth that resonates down the centuries, and through the various translations, speaking directly to our own day. One phrase I have currently in mind comes in John chapter 4 verse 36. This particular discourse with His disciples follows the amazing story of the encounter with the Samaritan woman. This meeting was undoubtedly a 'divine appointment' with the Son of God. However, it is rather amusing to see that she really did not have the least idea of who He was, and the dramatic change that was about to happen in her life!

But after the event Jesus is rejoined by the twelve, as the woman hurries back to the town to tell anyone who will listen, what has happened to her. "Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" Verse 30 records, "They came out of the town and made their way towards Him". As He is talking with the disciples Jesus says this "*Even now* the reaper draws his wages, *even now* he harvests the crop for eternal life" referring to the stream of people making their way to find him.

Of course the event in John was over 2000 years ago, but the phrase "even now" brings the reality of His work directly into this present time. This assures me that just as He was at work *then*, so He is at work *now*, to this very day. I have tried to put this thought into a few lines of poetry, in an attempt to illustrate the immediacy and relevance of faith in Christ in our own day.

"Even Now"

Even now, this very moment!
Even now, this very hour!
Even now, our God is active,
By His Spirit's love and power.

Even now, the harvest is ready,
Even now, the Reaper comes,
Gathering sheaves into His storehouse
Calling hearts to grace and love.

Even now, His Spirit's speaking,
In words so soft, to those I love,
Convicting, calling, healing, restoring
Even now, - the Lord has come!

Eileen Balch

'The Listening Church'

The Derby Diocesan Lay Gathering 18th September 2004

We didn't realise that usually every two years the 'Lay Gathering' of Derby organise a one day seminar. Note, this is the ordinary people organising a day, based on things that interest them, not something directed by the hierarchy of the Church.

This year the subject was 'The Listening Church'. What caught our attention was the opportunity to hear Bishop Jonathan and Elaine Storkey speak on the same day and we weren't disappointed. Bishop Jonathan in his usual easy style reminded us of the importance of listening to God. The key points were:

'In this church we speak to God before the service and each other afterwards.' David Mouncer has tried to suggest this way, but are we listening?

- Before worship we should be listening and tuning into God
- 'Find out what God is doing and join in'

- We have two ears and one mouth – 'he who has ears listen'
- When we don't hear God – 'Is God ex-directory?'
Are we out of practise?

Sometimes we don't want to hear eg the rich young man - Mark 10 v 17 -23
Is there a need for repentance and change?

Elaine Storkey, Sociologist & director of Tearfund dazzled us with 'Listening to the world'. She talked of modern society and the way it is changing so fast; she quoted modern secular prophets who point to doom and gloom, but most importantly spoke of the hope we have as Christians have.

- Christ's redemptive power
- Our hope for now & eternal
- We have meaning & truth

Michael Mitton of Acorn Christian Foundation spoke on 'Listening to each other'. We need to listen to share and provide space for the other person to move forward. Not all listening is to give advice. Listening is vital, not optional. Christians should be brilliant listeners – 'Listen with the ears of God in order to preach the word of God'

Listening is a healing ministry – 'listen to what each and every person has to say before making a decision' - Nelson Mandela. Listening is all about relationships. Listening is vital in a time of change.

There were also fourteen workshops to choose from, where we were able to interact with members of other churches throughout the diocese.

As you can see it was a busy but well organised day, which gave us a lot to think about. We recommend you to join us at the next such seminar, which will be held in two years time.

Valerie Durkin and Yvetta Jacques

A PILGRIMAGE TOUR TO THE BIBLICAL AND CHRISTIAN SITES IN EGYPT AND THE SINAI

Peter and June Grayson

We were part of a small group from Derbyshire and St Albans, and flew from Heathrow, via Frankfurt to Alexandria. The following morning, we were driven through the city to St Mark's Anglican Church, part of the Diocese of Egypt and North Africa, for a traditional service of Holy Communion. Afterwards we looked round the church, saw their window depicting St Mark, and enjoyed coffee and biscuits with the small congregation. The new Christian faith is said to have been preached at Alexandria by Saint Mark, perhaps between AD 45 and 48. He is said to have died in the city on Easter Day in AD 62 or 68, lynched by worshippers of Serapis, a pagan god. Some of St Mark's remains are in the Roman Catholic Church in Cairo.



On the second day, we visited the Museum and the Commonwealth War Graves at El Alamein and the new Library of Alexandria. On the third day, we took the desert road across the Wadi Natrum towards Cairo. Halfway along this road a sudden right turn took us to the Monastery of St. Bishoi, the official residence of the Coptic Patriarch, Pope Shenouda III. This ancient monastery was just one of a several such places belonging to the Coptic (Egyptian) Orthodox Church, whose number has now grown to approximately 15 million, in an otherwise Muslim country. The Copts trace their roots back to the earliest disciples, and the monks made us very welcome.

Later we paid a short visit to the Pyramids before arriving at our hotel in Cairo.

Next morning we visited Coptic Cairo including the 9th cent Church of the Virgin Mary, which contained their greatest treasures, and the nearby Church of Abu Serga where tradition says that the Holy Family took shelter after fleeing from King Herod. We visited the nearby Anglican run Bible Lands project for deaf children, where we saw all the stages of their rewarding work. In the afternoon, we visited the Egyptian Museum with all its wonderful treasures, including the famous death mask of Tutankhamen and mummy of King Rameses II, believed to be the King of Egypt in the time of Moses. This was of particular interest, as the next stage of our journey would be to follow the route taken by the Israelites as they escaped from Egypt on their way to the Promised Land. We would travel as far as Mount Sinai in the south.

Although someone mentioned the site where Moses was thought to have been hidden in the bull rushes, the course of the Nile had changed somewhat since that time and we did not visit this site. Instead we crossed the desert as far as the Suez Canal, where to our surprise we entered a relatively new tunnel built by the Japanese under the canal, before emerging on the other side in Asia. We then turned south and drove along the coast road which followed the Gulf of Suez, stopping at a site known as Ein Musa (Moses Spring), a series of wells, where the Tribes of Israel had been provided with water, and where Miriam may have danced with her tambourine.

About eighty miles further down the coast we came to a road junction and turned left heading straight for the Desert of Sin (named after an ancient moon god) and the Mountains of the Sinai Peninsula. After a while we stopped at Wadi Firan, formerly the site of a 4th cent Christian stronghold, and one of our leaders read the appropriate passage from the book of Exodus, i.e. 15, 27. The mountain peaks then began to get higher and higher until we reached the plain of Rephidim, set in the valley below Mount Sinai, where Moses received the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20). We saw the chapel built over the site where the Israelites made the Golden Calf. Further up the valley we could just see the Monastery of St Catherine, where we were to spend the next two nights in their guesthouse. The whole place seemed to have been especially designed to accommodate the events which had taken place there in Old Testament times. This was the living Bible at its very best.

On the first evening in this Greek Orthodox monastery, Fr Justin showed us some of the great treasures of their Library. Next day, most of our party climbed the mountain, whilst the others attended afternoon vespers in the church, originally built by the Emperor Justinian in the



The group under the Burning Bush

527. We also read the passages from the book of Exodus about the history of the site, and it was possible to picture the tribes of Israel camped at the bottom of the valley whilst Moses, Aaron and the elders went up the mountain to meet the Lord seated on his sapphire throne (see Exodus 24.9.) Next day we were taken on the guided tour of the monastery, including a brief stop in the shade of the Burning Bush, where we had our group photograph taken. We saw the well where Moses had originally met his wife Zipporah, The church, contains the shrine of St Catherine, whose relics had been miraculously carried by angels from the scene of her martyrdom on a wheel in Alexandria to the top of a nearby mountain where they had been found six centuries later. We then stood in the chapel of the Burning Bush, where the Lord had told Moses to take off his sandals as he was standing on Holy Ground, (see Exodus 3,1-6.), before visiting the Museum, the treasures of which were almost indescribable. There were several encaustic icons dating back to the 5th century, deeds of protection of the monastery signed by Mohammed and Napoleon Bonaparte, some very beautiful 17th century embroideries from Crete and many more items. Never deserted, never attacked, St Catherine's is indeed a safe haven in which to store the treasures of Christianity.

Unfortunately, it was then time to make our way back home!



Christmas Eve

I feel a radiance
In the darkness
Of this night -
A glorious night
Unseen by eyes
Illumining my spirit
Welling up from
The depths of Being
Then flowing outwards
To embrace all peoples
Of all colours beliefs or unbelief
It penetrates
All darkness
Infinitely -
It is
The radiant light
Of God's glory
The "I Am For You"
Of Yahweh's grace
Shining among us
Lovingly
Eternally

By: Elizabeth Peters





NOEL

The staff of St Thomas' and St Peters with the producers of Ploughshare pray for God's richest Christmas Blessings upon all our readers and for a Peaceful New Year.