

Parish Magazine article – Rev Andy Thewlis – 17<sup>th</sup> November 2017

December has arrived and for children, and those who remain young at heart, the daily pleasure of opening the doors on your own Advent Calendar. Personally, I remain a fan of the traditional ones where behind each small numbered door is a small piece of chocolate. Mine this year has two little tastes of luxury every day which I'll enjoy each day with my morning coffee as the countdown to Christmas continues.

Nowadays you can purchase all kinds of advent calendars, where the windows may be filled with beauty products, cheese, alcoholic tipples or cheese and other things, rather than just chocolate. This year the bakery chain Greggs hit the news when it launched its first ever Advent Calendar, where pastry fans can count down the days until what they are calling GREGGMAS. Fans of this particular brand of snack may initially be disappointed, for behind the doors are not hidden favourite treats, but tear off tokens which down the local store can be exchanged for a different treat every day. So if rather than chocolate with you morning coffee you fancy a Festive Bake, a Christmas latte, a mince pie, or the bakery chain's signature sausage roll this may be the advent Calendar for you.

Sadly, the Gregg's first ever Advent Calendar, may also be their last, for controversial it became, when somebody in breaking all the Advent Calendar conventions, sneaked a peek behind door number 24 and was shocked to see a rather unexpected modification to the traditional nativity scene, where there in the manger, with three wise men standing by with their gifts lay not the baby Jesus, but their signature sausage roll!

The media and online frenzy that followed led to a public apology from Gregg's for any offence they may have caused. What next some asked, fearing the rewording of some of our favourite carols? Oh crumb all ye faithful being one suggestion.

Gregg's the bakers made a huge error of judgement in replacing the saviour of the world with a savoury snack. They were, as so many are, foolish to take Christ out of Christmas.

In the midst of the busyness of December, please slow down enough to enjoy the season, but do so remembering that as one of the baubles that will adorn our Christmas tree at the vicarage in Burbage declares - JESUS IS THE REASON FOR THE SEASON.