

# The Angel Tree

Over 30 years ago I flew to America to visit my younger sister Catherine. Her husband was a commander in the US Navy; they lived on the naval base in Bremerton on the Olympic Peninsula in the state of Washington. The first impression visitor has is that it is 90% forest with a few towns.

One day Catherine said we needed to go shopping. This was unusual as she doesn't need an excuse to go shopping! When I asked "why?" I was told she had to buy two Angel Tree presents.

She explained that although America was a rich country there were still pockets of poverty throughout and the area where she lived backed onto some of these.

As there was no industry around and farming was restricted to felling trees to clear ground for agriculture. Life for some was very hard.



The parish which Catherine and her family attended had discovered many poor families where Christmas just didn't happen and the children did not receive presents.

The parishioners decided to remedy this by erecting a tree and hanging on labels with the name of a child at risk of not receiving a present at Christmas. They called it "The

*Angel Tree*" as all gifts were anonymous – delivered by "Angels!"



I was really taken aback with the project and on my return to Whickham I had a word with Fr Taggart who agreed with me that our parish was a good place to start with a similar scheme.



Thirty years on and now we have our three parishes

involved: with your generosity we provide in the region of 150 gifts for some of the poorest children in Gateshead and the areas around us.



The names of the recipients are provided by Education Welfare Officers, Social Workers and carers working with these children. The gifts are distributed by them to the families they have nominated.

When money is given it is used to buy food for a Christmas meal for the poorest families.

I can't thank you all enough for your overwhelming generosity, which has resulted in over 3,000 gifts over the years.

"Thank You and God bless you all."

Bridget Jones

