



The Voice

4th December 2016 Second Sunday of Advent, Year A Psalter Week I

ADVENT

OF YOUR CHARITY PRAY FOR THE SOULS OF

- **Anniversaries:**
Patrick Houghton, Joyce Ragan, Patricia Hogan, Eugene Ozment, Eileen Meyer, John Langdon, Eli & Nora Houghton.
- **Remembrances:**
Parents of Kevin Houghton, Mary and George Hilliard, Hilliard Brothers, Kevin Mills, Mills Family, Bernie Hanna, Leslie Denning, Valerie Price.
- **And the sick:**
Maryanne Diorio, Alan Harland, John Allen, Audrey Barsendich, Keith Oakes, Margaret Thoms, Margaret Jackson, Lorna Russom, Nicola (Nick) Bubici, Jason Wellin, Maureen Cows, Sr. Margaret Wall, R.S.J. Tracie Passlow, Beryl Allen, Olive O'Brien and grandchild Sharon, Maureen Carlon, Keith Carlon, Kevin and Sheila Houghton, Elizabeth Anne Kenney, Irudaya Mary, Les Spiteri, Ian Wilks, Steve Paino, Ralph Weate, Celeste Boonaerts,

Even in Church circles these days it is quite common to engage a management consultancy company to help find people for a particular diocesan job. This is a good idea and often these companies find excellent people for the task.

I recently saw a consultancy profile, however, for a diocese seeking a lay chancellor. We all know these people must be upright citizens, but I am convinced that Jesus himself may have been challenged to fill this job description! Apart from having degrees in civil and canon law, the desired applicant had to have 'outstanding Catholic faith, an exemplary moral character and have nothing in his or her background that could cause the Church embarrassment or scandal in the future.'

A couple of days later I came across a tongue-in-cheek summary of a management consultant's report on those who had applied to lead the earliest Christian Church:

'John: Says he is a Baptist, but definitely doesn't dress like one. Has slept in the outdoors for months on end, has a weird diet, and picks fights in public with religious leaders.

'Peter: Has a bad temper, even has been known to curse. Had a big run-in with Paul in Antioch. Aggressive. A loose cannon.

'Paul: Powerful, CEO type of leader and fascinating preacher. However, short on tact, unforgiving with young ministers, harsh and has been known to preach all night.

'Jesus: Has been popular at times, but once when his following grew to 5000 he managed to offend them all and it dwindled down to some faithful women and his best friend. Seldom stays in one place very long.

'Judas: His references are solid. Conservative. Good connections. Knows how to handle money. Great possibilities here.'

In today's Gospel we hear what a fierce character John the Baptist was. He lets the Pharisees and Sadducees have it with both barrels. These groups were the publicly devout churchgoers of their day. They were often hypocrites, professing one thing and doing another. We know they regularly demanded observances of ordinary Jews that they did not live out themselves. No wonder John disliked them so much.

Their religious observance was a charade, focused on their needs, their souls, their salvation. They were going to get to heaven, and everyone else be damned! They even come out to the wilderness to get baptised. This was like going to salvation mega-store. They buy a little of everything, just to be sure. John attacks them violently and in doing so condemns their privatised religion and lack of social responsibility.

In Christianity there is an important distinction between personal and private faith. Personal faith knows that God is close and intimate, which is what we celebrate at Christmas. For Christians, however, there is no such thing as private faith. We should always be careful of hymns that only ever speak about 'me and Jesus against the world'. Inheriting the promises made to Israel and seeing them as intended for all God's children, we believe we are saved AS A PEOPLE. For us, it is 'we and Jesus for the world.'

If we have no interest in justice, development and peace for our world. If we don't care to know our fellow parishioners. If all we want is to be left alone, to come to Mass, say our prayers and save our souls, then we need to hear the story of Christmas all over again.

May this Advent, then, see John the Baptist do what he does best: 'comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.'

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Psalm Response

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Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia! Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths: all people shall see the salvation of God. *Alleluia!*

Around the Parish

Live, Pray, Love Project St. John the Baptist Parish and School Picnic Sunday 4th December, 11am-4.30pm. St. John the Baptist Primary School, 21a Dulkara Rd. Woy Woy South. BYO food and drinks. NO ALCOHOL. Enquiries: Phone Gladys 0421 312 362.

Vincent de Paul Christmas Cash Appeal is this weekend 3rd/4th December. Envelopes are in the church. Your generosity would be appreciated. The need is great and support is sought in giving what we are able to give. All monies are used to support local families on the Peninsula.

2nd Rite of Reconciliation will be administered on Thursday, 15th December, 7.30pm.

Christmas Hampers: All hampers need to be returned by next weekend. Single items to be left in gathering area. No cigarettes, alcohol or perishables please. If you know of anyone in need of a hamper please notify Susie Casey on 0403 417 639.

Feast of the Immaculate Conception: Personal prayer, Hour of Grace. Thursday, 8th December, 12 noon-1pm, Woy Woy Church.

Christmas Masses:
Christmas Eve: 5pm, 7.30pm, 10pm (with carols before 2 Masses 7.00pm and 9.30pm. (No midnight Mass).

Christmas Day 7.30 am, 9.15 am (No 6pm Mass)

Faith, Hope, Love and Mercy Prayer Cards available in gathering area. Please consider who might be in need of prayers leading up to Christmas, an easy means of communicating our love and concern to family, friends, neighbours and work colleagues.

Children's Liturgy Roster 11/12/16: Frances Giunta, Anne Marie Tonkin, Gerri O'Keefe.

Volunteer Church Cleaning Roster 9/12/16: Anisha Burns, Elena Egan, Brian Jordan, Veronica Jordan.

Children's Liturgy of the Word Helpers (Sunday 9.15am Mass) and **Church cleaners** required for 2017. Please contact Christine French 4342 4548.

Bus Fund Annual Christmas Raffle: Tickets on sale at all weekend Masses 10th & 11th and 17th and 18th December. 1st Prize: Giant Christmas Hamper, plus other prizes which will be on show.

Central Coast Philharmonia Choir: Come and enjoy wonderful music and support for Mary Mac's Place in the Walter Baker Hall, Saturday 10th December, 7pm. Tickets may be reserved by phoning Louise 0401 551 864 and collected on the night. Tickets on sale at the door from 6.30pm. Adults \$15. Pensioners \$10. Children \$5.

Cancer Support Group meeting the first Tuesday of each month has been cancelled for December.

Morning Tea Roster 11/12/16: Spanish speaking Prayer Group.

Rosary Group: Come and join us in making rosaries and scapulars for our Missions. We meet every Tuesday 9am-12md in the Walter Baker Hall. All welcome!

Social Justice

International Day for the Prevention of Violence against Women.

The UN website for the International Day for the Prevention of Violence Against Women lists the following reasons for observing this day:

- Violence against women is a human rights violation.
- Violence against women is a consequence of discrimination against women, in law and also in practice, and of persisting inequalities between men and women.
- Violence against women impacts on, and impedes, progress in many areas,

including poverty eradication, combating HIV/AIDS and peace and security.

- Violence against women and girls is not inevitable. Prevention is possible and essential.
- Violence against women continues to be a global pandemic. Up to 70 per cent of women experience violence in their lifetime.

Violence against women takes many forms—[physical, sexual, psychological and economic]. These forms of violence are interrelated and affect women before birth to old age. Some types of violence, such as trafficking, cross national

boundaries. Women who experience violence suffer a range of health problems and their ability to participate in public life is diminished. Violence against women harms families and communities across generations and reinforces other violence prevalent in society. Violence against women also impoverishes women, their families, communities and nations. This violence is not confined to a specific culture, region or country, or to particular groups of women within a society. The roots of violence against women lie in persistent discrimination against women.

From the Diocese and beyond

Seniors Mediation—a supportive, neutral environment for family decision making: Discussing the best way to care for an aging family member can be very emotional for all involved. Disagreements regarding the most appropriate way forward are not uncommon. CatholicCare can provide family members and

their advisers a forum in which issues and concerns can be voiced, possible solutions generated and agreements developed. CatholicCare's Seniors Mediation is impartial and serves all members of the community. Our accredited Mediators are qualified, skilled practitioners who meet all standards of competency

required for National Mediation Accreditation. Contact the Central Coast family centre for more information on 4356 2600.

Rosemarie Freeman Trophy has raised \$1,208 at the annual cricket day. All proceeds to Lifeline.



Sunday Readings

Bruce Janiga

2nd Sunday of Advent, December 4

Is 11:1–10
Ps 71:1–2, 7–8, 12–13, 17 R. cf. v.7
Rom 15:4–9
Mt 3:1–12

The early church viewed Jesus as the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy, "a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse" (v 1). Jesse was the father of King David, one of Israel's greatest kings. By the time of Isaiah, the house of David was reduced to a remnant, frequently led by kings disobedient to God's laws. Isaiah looks to the future, "that day" (v 10) when God will restore and renew his people. Though Israel may be a stump, there is still hope for the future. Harmony will be restored to creation as "the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb" (v 6).

Paul prays that the Romans will "think in harmony" (v 5), being truly concerned for one another. He writes that in the Scriptures we have a source of hope; God's word was written "for our instruction" (v 4). Several verses after our reading, he makes reference to the text from Isaiah: "the root of Jesse" will come to "rule the Gentiles" (v 12). Jesus came, Paul tells us, "to confirm the promises to the patriarchs" (v 8). These promises are about God's blessing, not just for the chosen people but for all people.

In today's Gospel John the Baptist is presented as a prophet. Living in the desert, dressed in "camel's hair" and eating "locusts and wild honey" (v 4), he is reminiscent of ancient Israel's great prophets like Elijah. His message calls us to "prepare the way of the Lord" (v 3). As the forerunner to the Messiah, his words call us to repentance. He challenges us to "produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance" (v 8). The time is at hand, for "the axe lies at the root of the trees" to destroy those that do not "bear good fruit" (v 10). To respond properly to his message, we must acknowledge our sins and open ourselves up to God's gift of mercy.

For reflection: Is there somewhere in my life where harmony needs to be restored? What "good fruit" do I produce?

3rd Sunday of Advent, December 11

Is 35:1–6, 10
Ps 145: 6–10 R. see Is 35:4
Jas 5:7–10
Mt 11:2–11

Today's reading from Isaiah continues the message of renewal and hope we heard last week. "The desert and the parched land will exult" (v 1), he says. Isaiah speaks words of hope and comfort, possibly to those exiled in Babylon. They are weak, but he speaks words of strength and encouragement to them, "Be strong, fear not!" (v 4). Their God comes to deliver them. "Those whom the Lord has ransomed will return / and enter Zion singing" (v 10). These words provide hope for a broken people. Returning to Jerusalem, they will rebuild their city and its temple and once again "see the glory of the Lord" (v 2).

Over the years the early church came to realize that Jesus wasn't coming back as soon as they anticipated. James writes to encourage them to be patient. Things happen in God's time, not ours. While we wait, we are called to persevere in faith, knowing that just as planting seeds leads to a harvest, so too our faith will eventually be rewarded. James reminds the people about the prophets, who suffered patiently and never lost faith in God.

In today's Gospel we hear that John the Baptist, while in prison, sends his disciples to question Jesus about his identity: "Are you the one who is to come?" (v 3). Jesus' response invites them to report back to John "what you hear and see" (v 4). Jesus' ministry to the blind, the lame, lepers, the deaf, and the dead is an indication that he is God's servant spoken of by the prophets. He has also come to announce the good news. John had earlier proclaimed that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (3:2); with the ministry of Jesus, it starts to be realized.

For reflection: Do I draw strength from God's promises? How can my life contribute to continuing Jesus' ministry to others?

Bruce Janiga, a priest of the Archdiocese of Newark, N.J., teaches Scripture studies at Seton Hall Prep in West Orange, N.J. From *Ministry & Liturgy*, copyright © Resource Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission under licence number 115216.

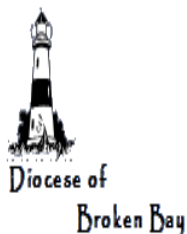


We must be good stewards of God's gifts to us, receiving them gratefully and cultivating them with care, lest we be the ones about whom John the Baptist speaks today, cautioning us, "Every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

See Matthew 3:10



Catholic Parish of Woy Woy Peninsula



Woy Woy, Woy Woy South,
Umina, Umina Beach,
Ettalong, Ettalong Beach,
Koolewong, Blackwall,
Booker Bay, Pearl Beach,
St Hubert's Island,
Empire Bay, Horsfield Bay,
Patonga, Woy Woy Bay, Daley's Point,
Phegan's Bay and Wondabyne.

St John the Baptist Church,

(Corner) Blackwall & Victoria Rds, Woy Woy

Parish Office *Ethel Cox Parish Centre*
PO Box 264 *Walter Baker Hall*
54 Victoria Road *100 Blackwall Rd*
WOY WOY NSW 2256 *Woy Woy*

Phone: (02) 4341 1073 **Fax:** (02) 4341 0214

Email: parish@woywoycatholic.org.au

Website: www.woywoycatholic.org.au

“He must increase, I must decrease”

Administrator: Fr. Timothy Raj. MSFS.

Assistant Priest: Fr. Philip Thottam. MSFS.

Office Staff: Helen Cameron,
Raelene Spithill and Margaret Cooper.

Office Hours:

9.30am—4pm, Monday to Friday.

Deadline for The Voice:

3.30pm Wednesday.

SUNDAY MASS TIMES

Vigil Saturday 5pm; Sunday 7.30am, 9.15am, 6pm.

WEEKDAY MASS TIMES

Monday-Friday 7.45am (Monday & Tuesday with Lauds); Saturday and Public Holidays 9am; First Friday 4pm (with Anointing of the Sick).

SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

Friday after morning Mass; First Friday, 3.30pm;
Saturday 11.30am & 4.30pm; Sunday 7am.

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

1st & 3rd Sundays, 11am; 5th Sunday, during 9.15am Mass.
Godparents are examples of faith to the child. They must be confirmed and practising Catholics, at least sixteen years old. If there is at least one godparent, a non-Catholic may act as a Christian witness.
Parents and godparents must attend a pre-baptismal instruction, held on the 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month at 9.30am.

EXPOSITION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

Every Saturday after 9am Mass until 10am; every Monday until 9am (Public Holidays 10.15am).

HOLY HOUR—EXPOSITION & BENEDICTION

Every Thursday, 7.30pm-8.30pm for the needs of the Parish.

PARISH CHOIR—Practice Wednesday nights in the church, 7pm.

Enquiries: 4341 3367.

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

21a Dulkara Rd South Woy Woy 2256. ph: 4341 0884 fax: 4344 5049.

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST YOUTH GROUP

For information and events contact Parish office 4341 1073.

CATHOLICCARE Marriage & Family Relationships. Phone: 4356 2600

MARY MAC'S PLACE Volunteers provide nutritious, freshly cooked meals and information and referrals to appropriate community services. Open Monday to Friday, 11am-1pm, at the Ethel Cox Parish Centre. For more information, please contact Christine on 4341 0584.

ST VINCENT de PAUL SOCIETY on the Peninsula assist and give a hand up to people in need. We have two Conferences with Volunteers sharing the visiting or office work. We always welcome new Volunteers to our Conference.

Please ring Ken 0400 335 351 or Joan 0422 272 339

CASH HOUSIE every Saturday night at Peninsula Community Centre, Cnr Ocean Beach Rd & McMasters Rd, Woy Woy. Games start at 7.30pm and finish approx 10.20pm. Cash prizes. Ticket sales from 6pm. Proceeds benefit Parish. Enquiries: Rob 0427 990 818.

The Jesse Tree

(a reprint from some years back)

Advent brings the Jesse Tree—along with the Advent Wreath and violet vestments.

Jesse trees come in various shapes and sizes—from the ground up or from the top down, in stone or stained glass. There are stained glass Trees in Wells and Chartres cathedrals and in St-Étienne at Beauvais, and the old abbey church at Dorchester-on-Thames boasts a remarkable Tree in stone that frames the east window.

Their inspiration is Isaiah 11:1-2: 'A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out

of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.'

Jesse was David's father. To refer to the "stump" of Jesse is to say that the house of David is practically extinct, but that nonetheless God will raise up the Messiah from that line.

So a common form of the Tree has Jesse lying down, with the tree growing out of his body, with his descendants (including David) in the trunk and branches and the Blessed

Virgin holding the Child at the top.

Others (such as ours) have the Child as the climax of the whole history of Israel, and bring in persons and symbols of the Law, the prophets, kings and priests, along with Jesus' ancestors.

The children in our parish school some years ago put together some Old Testament symbols, which hang on the branches as a sign of their fulfilment in the birth of Christ. The Tree is dead, yet through the symbols we express our Advent hope in the fulfilment of God's promises.