

The Voice

25th December 2016

Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord

Psalter Week 4



CHRISTMASTIME

OF YOUR CHARITY PRAY FOR THE SOULS OF

- **Recently deceased:**
Les Spiteri, Kath Evans.
- **Anniversaries:**
Barry David McKeowen,
Auguste Meyer, Andrew Flanagan,
Iris McNeil, Mary Madden,
Margherita Bugeja, Dot Hodges.
- **Remembrances:**
Arthur, Muriel and John Brown,
Brown Family, Noelle Davidovic,
Bruno and Sergei de Souza.
- **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 Cowsls, Beryl Allen,
Sr. Margaret Wall, R.S.J.
Maureen Carlon, Irudaya Mary,
Kevin and Sheila Houghton,
Elizabeth Anne Kenney,
Ian Wilks, Steve Paino,
Ralph Weate, Celeste Boonaerts,
Kath Hardy, Helen McKeon,
Fr. Jack Robson, Carren Quinn,
Chev Shengi.

A pentecostal friend of mine tells the story of leaving church one Christmas morning as the preacher was standing at the door, greeting everyone and shaking hands. He grabbed my friend by the hand and pulled him aside. The pastor said to him, 'You need to join the Army of the Lord!' To which my friend replied, 'I'm already in the Army of the Lord, pastor.' The pastor looked amazed and said, 'How come I don't see you here at church then, except at Christmas and Easter?' My friend whispered back, 'Because I'm in the secret service.'

If you are like my friend and find yourself in the 'secret service', you're in good company at Christmas time. The first hearers of the Christmas story were not much into church-going either. Shepherds in first century Palestine had to watch their flocks around the clock for fear of thieves and wolves. This didn't leave much time for temple attendance. They prayed where they were, as they were. These shepherds, however, were in the right place at the right time to hear the first Christmas message. Maybe they had the right disposition too.

Sometimes, publicly religious people can sound as though they know the mind of God better than God does! It's a trap we need to avoid and Christmas helps us do it. No one predicted the way God would send us a saviour. No one knew the day or the hour of God's coming. No one foresaw that God would be born a homeless person. No one envisaged that the first witnesses to the birth would be illiterate shepherds from nearby fields. While

some waited for a mercenary to overthrow the Romans, others held their breath for the procession of a heavenly king. The love of God, however, took flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone and came to us as a poor, defenceless baby.

That's our God, not bound by our precepts or expectations, but honouring the promises made to our ancestors, in the most surprising of ways. And Christmas provides us with the most tender images of our God, One who needs to be nurtured, suckled and held tight.

It's not a bad metaphor for our Christian faith either. If Christmas means anything to us then it's not an annual religious outing or something to fill in time on a public holiday. It's a moveable feast which we celebrate every time we do something just, loving or peaceful. That's why we gather here for the Eucharist each week: to be nurtured, fed, suckled and held in God's embrace, if only for a while, so that we find the courage and strength to go out from here, confront the wolves and thieves of our own day and be in the right place at the right time for God to find us.

As a result of that first Christmas, Christ wants to nurture a people who by their lives will change the world for the better, for all people everywhere. So this Christmas cash in your secret service card and, 'Go tell it on the mountain, over the hill and everywhere. Go tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.'

© Richard Leonard SJ

Psalm Response

© Colin D. Smith cfc



Inside this issue:

Notices and News	2
God is here	3
Directory	4

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia! A virgin will give birth to a son; his name will be Emmanuel: God with us. *Alleluia!*

Around the Parish

Appointment: Bishop Peter Comensoli has announced that as from 15th December, Fr. Timothy Raj MSFS is appointed as Administrator of the Parish of Woy Woy Peninsula.

Our gratitude to Father for accepting this appointment, we will keep Fr. Timothy in our prayers.

Fr Timothy will be on leave from 9 January to 11 February 2017.

Welcome! A very warm welcome to anyone visiting our Parish this Christmas.

Wishing all our parishioners and visitors a very happy Christmas.

Public Holiday Monday, 26th December. Morning Mass will be at 9am, followed by Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and Benediction.

The Parish Office will re-open Tuesday, 3rd January, 2017.

Holy Hour of Thanksgiving
Adoration from 7:30pm – 8:30pm on Saturday Dec 31st

Baptisms: We welcome into our faith community and pray for Indi Phillips, Samuel Phillips and Isabel Weger, who were baptised last Sunday.

Catholics Returning Home Program: Please turn to the back page for information. Brochures available on the gathering area table.

Funeral: Kath Evans died at home on Sunday 18 Dec. Her funeral will take place on Wed, 28th December at 1pm at Holy Spirit Church, Kincumber. Kath was the recipient 23 years ago of the 2nd miracle cure obtained through the intercession of Mary MacKillop that enabled her to become Australia's first saint.

You can read more about the story by going to: www.marymackillop.org.au/marys-story/dsp-default.cfm?loadref=194

Bus Fund Christmas Raffle::

1st Prize Kath Easton.

2nd Prize Pat Quinn.

3rd Prize : Vince Ryan.

4th Prize Pauline Regan.

5th Prize : Sharon Czerniec.

6th Prize : Rose Robinson.

7th Prize : Mary Ford.

8th Prize : Helene Kowalczyk.

9th Prize Phoebe Glacken.

Thank you to Mary Scarfe for her continued dedication & effort to raise funds for our Parish bus.

The Catechists wish all parishioners a joyous Christmas. We thank you for your loving prayers, and to all 'our children' in Scripture classes, have a very Merry Christmas and a fabulous summer holiday. See you all in 2017.

Mary Mac's Place: A very big THANK YOU to all Parishioners this Christmas from for your big-hearted support this year. Your generosity with the purchase of raffle tickets and the Peninsular Paradise DVD, as well as your substantial patronage of our annual Garage Sale and more recently the Philharmonia Choir performance has been wonderful. Your kindness has made a huge difference in our ability to assist the homeless and struggling in our local community. A very Happy Christmas to all.

St.VDP Christmas Appeal The total for the 2016 appeal came to \$6035. The Peninsula Conferences are very grateful to the Parishioners for their very generous response. This money goes to the assistance of the poor and needy here on the Peninsula.

Joan Murphy and Ken Hall.

Social Justice

CHRISTMAS DAY

Urbi et Orbi Message of Pope Francis, Christmas Day, 2014:

Jesus, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, is born for us, born in Bethlehem of a Virgin, fulfilling the ancient prophecies. The Virgin's name is Mary, the wife of Joseph. Yes brothers and sisters Jesus is the salvation for every person and for every people!

Today, I ask him, the Saviour of the world, to look upon our brothers and sisters in Iraq and Syria, who for too long now have suffered the effects of ongoing conflict, and who, together with those belonging to other ethnic and religious groups, are suffering a brutal persecution. May Christmas bring them hope, as indeed also to the many displaced persons, exiles and refugees, children, adults and elderly, from this region and from the whole world. May indifference be changed into closeness and rejection into hospitality, so that all who now are suffering may

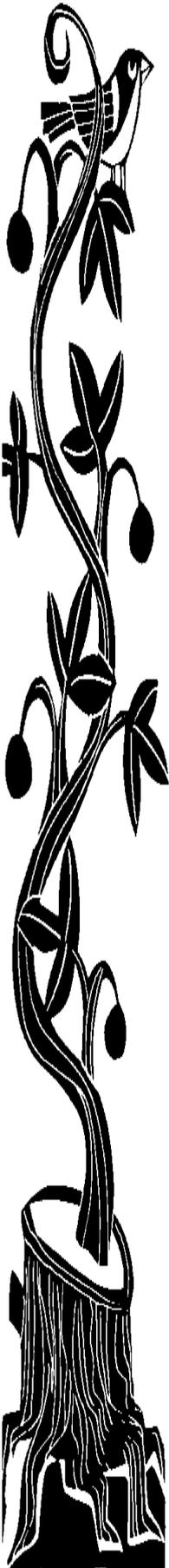
receive the necessary humanitarian help to overcome the rigours of winter, return to their countries and live with dignity. May the Lord open hearts to trust, and may he bestow his peace upon the whole Middle East, beginning with the land blessed by his birth, thereby sustaining the efforts of those committed effectively to dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians.

May Jesus, Saviour of the world, protect all who suffer in Ukraine, and grant that their beloved land may overcome tensions, conquer hatred and violence, and set out on a new journey of fraternity and reconciliation.

May Christ the Saviour give peace to Nigeria, where (even in these hours) more blood is being shed and too many people are unjustly deprived of their possessions, held as hostages or killed. I invoke peace also on the other parts of the African continent, thinking especially of Libya, South

Sudan, the Central African Republic, and various regions of Democratic Republic of Congo. I beseech all who have political responsibility to commit themselves through dialogue to overcoming differences and to building a lasting, fraternal coexistence.

May Jesus save the vast numbers of children who are victims of violence, made objects of trade and trafficking, or forced to become soldiers; children, so many abused children. May he give comfort to the families of the children killed in Pakistan last week. May he be close to all who suffer from illness, especially the victims of the Ebola epidemic, above all in Liberia, in Sierra Leone and in Guinea. As I thank all who are courageously dedicated to assisting the sick and their family members, I once more make an urgent appeal that the necessary assistance and treatment be provided.



God is here.

(New Testament Commentary by Mary Coloe PBVM)

Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord.

*Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht,... all is calm,
all is bright...*

*Adeste fideles, laeti triumphantes...
Noel, Noel, Noel...*

*O come let us adore him.... born is the
king of Israel.*

A cave in Bethlehem echoes with the multi-lingual songs of pilgrims... 'sleep in heavenly peace... Christ the saviour is born.' While scholars debate the veracity of *this* place, *this* cave, the hearts of these pilgrims beat with utter certainty – God is here. This same certainty explodes as 'good news' from the pages of the Christian Scriptures as men and women discovered in the life and death of Jesus, 'God is here'. But can this proclamation still be good news for us as we stand at the dawn of a new millennium? We have not walked the shores of Galilee with Jesus, nor heard his voice of invitation, 'Come and see' (John 1:39). The Bethlehem story is layered with tinselled memories from childhood, and even Calvary's horror pales beside the mass atrocities of our time. Can the Gospel speak to our experience now and still proclaim 'a saviour has been born' for us?

In any birthday celebration, we pause to celebrate the life of the person as it has unfolded so far. It is not so much the baby we remember, but the person now, in whatever stage of life they are and with memories of all the richness of their life – both its joys and sorrows. So it is today. We celebrate a birth, whatever day it may have happened, but more importantly we celebrate a life given for us. We celebrate that God has joined our human story in the person of Jesus and lives on with us in the Spirit.

The reading situates Jesus in the real world of his time – a world ruled by a distant Roman Emperor, and a local Roman Governor. Within this political context a couple travel to Bethlehem to meet the requirements of the law. It would be helpful to point out that the word translated as 'inn' really refers to any sleeping place where one could roll out a sleeping blanket. It would be incorrect to imagine Joseph and Mary travelling round Bethlehem to the various 'motels' looking for a room. More likely, following middle-Eastern customs of hospitality, Joseph would seek lodging with his relatives. What the text says is that there was no room on the floor of the house where the family would roll out sleeping mats after the evening meal. In the middle-east, during the winter months, the small flock of animals, owned by the family, would be sheltered within the house, at the back and probably at a slightly lower level. Such one-room houses were the norm. This provided shelter for the animals and also additional warmth for the family. This is why there would have been a manger, or eating trough within the house. Mary's child is not born in an outside stable, but within a single-room family dwelling. Luke gives us the information that the sheep were outside being minded and so this section of the house would have been

empty and left with straw – a perfect, secluded place for the birth of a child.

A plea! In the popular imagination, the nativity accounts of Luke and Matthew have been conflated and their distinctly different accounts and theology are not heeded. It would be very helpful when displaying a crib to try to depict only what is in the text and refrain from any additional items, as, later, young people can feel they have been misled and so begin to doubt the truth of the Scriptures. There is no donkey or cow mentioned – sheep are present along with shepherds who are outside.

Silent night, Holy night ... sleep in heavenly peace...

The song continues in the hearts of all Christians, for the cave of Bethlehem we now carry within. The holy place of Israel has become the holy place of our own lives. When we enter this sacred place with the longings and hopes of pilgrims we too can find the Christ of God born ever anew. In the silence and stillness of our own Bethlehem, our voices can sing with the voices of pilgrims through the ages, God is here; God is truly here.

BETHLEHEM

There was a baby

there was a manger

there was a time ...

And in our time we see no shining star

and hear no heavenly choir.

Our stumbling footsteps often bypass
Bethlehem.

And even if we stopped to take this turn
what then?

Would we see more light to guide our
path?

Would we hear deeper words of
understanding?

Would we really look at Bethlehem

... or choose instead the tableau of our
own imaginings?

Bethlehem.

That God would really meet us in our
helplessness

... join us in our blindness.

Surely this is blasphemy!

We pray to God to fill the gaps:

...to save, redeem, deliver.

We want a God of power and healing

Not a Gospel God of powerlessness and
pain.

And yet ...

There was a baby

There was a Bethlehem.

God grant us Magi wisdom to perceive.



When he discovered that Mary was with child, Joseph resolved to end their engagement with as little disgrace as possible. But obedient to the voice of God, he changed those plans and became instead the protector of the child Jesus and His mother, Mary. God grant that I may be as open to the leading of the Holy Spirit!



Catholic Parish of Woy Woy Peninsula



Diocese of
Broken Bay

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 Priests: Fr. Philip Thottam. MSFS.

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

Office Hours:
9.30am—4pm, Monday to Friday.

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



Wednesday nights
7.30pm-9pm.

Commencing
February 15, 2017

Catholics Returning Home

Is a five week support programme that aims at helping
Catholics return to the Church.

This programme is designed

- * to recognise the feelings of each participant
- * to help each participant to understand that they're not alone.
- * to give the participant the opportunity to view things in a new light.

For most Catholics who have been inactive, coming home to a
personal relationship with God is challenging.

The Catholics Returning Home Programme will provide a welcoming space
in your own Faith community to help you take that first challenging step.

For more information, there are brochures on the gathering area table.