



CHRISTMAS
TIME

Catholic Parish of Woy Woy Peninsula

The Voice

8th January 2012

Epiphany of the Lord

Psalter Week 1

Not just another Christmas

OF YOUR CHARITY PRAY FOR THE SOULS OF

• **Anniversaries:**

Michael Hill, Fr. Kevin McGovern, Auguste Meyer, Claude & Flo Wilson, Marie Therese Stanislas, Beverley McMahon, Pat Sheagold, Johan Jeong.

• **Remembrances:**

Bruno & Sergei de Souza, Kevin Garnett, members of the Carr family, Maggie Moreau.

• **And for the sick:**

Brian Woodward, Fr. Geoff Bugden, Rita Flower, Alisha Harwood, Mary Gourlay, David Wood, Catherine McMahon, Sue Morritt, Wanda Grima, Anne Liddle, Hilda Hedevang.

Christmas ends tomorrow, the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. When Christmas falls on a Sunday, the Feasts of the Holy Family and the Baptism of the Lord are not celebrated on Sundays, but the former on 30th December, and the latter on the Monday after Epiphany. So the season ends earlier than usual and lasts only a fortnight.

Christmas is about the generosity of God. St Paul, in the second reading of the Dawn Mass of Christmas, writes to Titus of 'the kindness and love of God our saviour for mankind.' It is also about our response to that generosity. The story of the wise men from the East, told in today's gospel, puts that in symbolic form: the gold, frankincense and myrrh they bring to the Child are given on behalf of all those who are conscious of and grateful for the gift of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom 6:23).

God has given so much to us, and we express our gratitude in giving to others, especially to the less fortunate. God's generosity to us is the measure of our generosity to them. This Christmas, parishioners, volunteers and visitors have excelled themselves.

◇ First of all, there were the Christmas hampers. At the last count, more than 170 were distributed. This made happier the Christmas of so many people - especially children.

◇ On the Monday before Christmas, twenty of our friends at the monthly "coffee and chat" afternoons were treated to a special Christmas celebration.

◇ 182 "companions" of Mary Mac's Place were given a special Christmas lunch on the Wednesday before Christmas.

◇ Our volunteers were able to entertain thirty people to lunch on Christmas Day. \$1,054 was contributed to the leaving collection on Fourth Sunday of Advent, to provide the food for this event.

◇ Our leaving collection on Christmas Day raised \$2,794.85. This will be distributed to Mary Mac's Place, to feed the local hungry and homeless, and to the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, to support the Christians far away in the Holy Land.

We should remember that the first to hear the "glad tidings" of Christmas were the poor and the marginalised - the shepherds - and that Mary and Joseph were soon to become refugees. When we extend Christmas cheer to their modern successors, we are acting in the spirit of the gospel.

FR JOHN HILL, P.P.

Psalm Response

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Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia! We have seen his star in the East; and have come to adore the Lord. *Alleluia!*

Around the Parish

Mass Times: If you were at Mass on Christmas morning, what did you think of the experimental starting times? 7.30 and 9.30 were tried because of the crowds at Christmas - to see if these times would help to empty the parking area after the first Mass and allow easier parking to those coming to the second. It has been suggested that it would be good to use those times every Sunday. What do you think? If you have an opinion, phone it in to the parish office.

'El Shaddai' Prayer Group meeting January 14th. Enquiries: Grace Lloyd 4343 1504.

Coffee/Cake and Chat afternoon held every 3rd Monday of each month for those who are housebound. Next meeting Monday 16th January. Are you available to be a guest or a helper? All welcome! Phone Parish office 4341 1073 for transport or to be a volunteer.

Children's Liturgy Rosters in Leo Mahon room for collection.

Church Cleaners Rosters avail-

able in cleaning cupboard.

Prayers for Peace Friday, 13th January, 2pm-3pm, Blessed Sacrament Chapel.

On the Bus: Drivers of the bus for weekend 14/15 January: Vigil 5pm Mass: Bob Williams. 7.45am & 9.15am Masses: Vince Wiegold.

Rosary and Scapular Making Group will be resuming weekly Tuesday meetings on 17th January 9am-12md. Volunteers welcome in making rosaries and scapulars for the Missions.

The Just Word

'Vulture Funds' prey on poor nations By Phil Jones: A New York investment firm came to the NSW Supreme Court last year to pursue a debt claim against the Democratic Republic of Congo, nominated as a "heavily indebted poor country" by the International Monetary Fund.

The company succeeded in acquiring more than \$30 million worth of Congo's assets held in the form of shares in an Australian mining company (likely part of the deal to allow the mine to operate there).

For a country racked by violence and poverty for decades, the court's ruling was another unwelcome blow.

The Jubilee movement in the United Kingdom successfully had legislation passed to prevent these private investment vehicles, otherwise known as "vulture funds" exploiting vulnerable developing nations through the UK courts. The Debt Relief (Developing Countries) Act 2010 was introduced on a trial basis for a year and then made permanent with the support of Britain's three major political parties.

Jubilee Australia has launched a campaign, Stop Debt Vultures, calling for similar legislation to be introduced in Australia. Vul-

ture funds prey on the world's poorest countries. These fund managers circle developing countries on the lookout for debts that the country is struggling to repay.

The vulture funds operate by purchasing a country's debt on the "secondary market" for a very low price. They then sue the country in an overseas court to recover the full value of the debt, plus interest, penalties and legal fees.

At least 54 companies, many based in international tax havens, are known to have taken legal action against 12 of the world's poorest countries in recent years for claims amounting to \$1.5 billion.

National income that is earmarked for poverty reduction and basic social service provision is diverted to settling the legal claims of vulture funds. The law suits are grinding down poor countries in cycles of litigation for up to 10 years and costing the equivalent of 18 per cent of spending on health care and education.

Money release by international debt relief initiatives is going into the pockets of wealthy investors instead of into desperately needed health and education initiatives.

Yet as the UN Independent

Expert on Foreign Debt and Human Rights said on a recent mission to Australia: "It is illogical to grant debt relief to poor countries while at the same time allowing vulture funds to litigate against these countries and thereby dilute the gains from debt relief."

As part of its campaign Jubilee Australia has set up a special website,

www.stopdebtvultures.org.au which includes an electronic letter-writing campaign directed to the Federal Attorney-General, Nicola Roxon urging that legislation to curtail vulture funds to be introduced in Australia.

Campaign postcards are also available, targeting federal parliamentarians in the hope they will support such legislation.

Jubilee Australia hopes for wide community support for its campaign and a greater level of public awareness of the problems associated with national debt and its impact on the poor.

For more information see Jubilee Australia website: www.stopdebtvultures.org.au. Postcards acquired from Jubilee Australia, tel: 8259 0817; or email: carmelan@jubileeaustralia.org

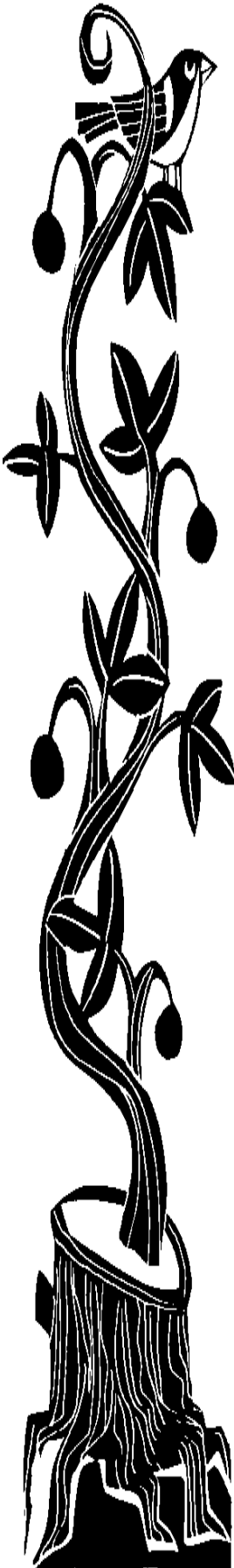
* Phil Jones is a Jubilee Australia volunteer.

From the Diocese and beyond

Holy Spirit Parish, Kincumber: During January and February, Kincumber Parish will be having an extra Sunday Mass for summertime at 8pm. Anyone is

welcome for whom this later Mass might be convenient. Holy Spirit Church is at 55 Kincumber St. Kincumber.

Traditional Latin Mass at St. Cecilia's Church, Byron St. Wyong on Sunday 22nd January, 3pm. Celebrant is Fr. Andrew Benton. All welcome!



How far is it to Bethlehem?

David E. Fedor

Some 40 years ago, soon after Vatican II, attempts to make the liturgy "relevant" were appearing just about everywhere. Some well-intentioned but misguided ministers, ordained and lay, took it upon themselves to refashion the liturgy of the church so that it would be, in their opinion, more pastoral.

One of the adaptations that persists to this day took its cue from the reading of the Passion during the Good Friday liturgy. Traditionally this Gospel was sung by three clerics. When the readings were translated into the vernacular, the Passion appeared in published worship aids in a form that involved three or more readers and the gathered assembly, who read the part of the crowd. From this adaptation, some parishes began to produce a passion play that was performed during the liturgy. It didn't take long for this idea of performing the Gospel to become part of Christmas.

It all began with the introduction of the "Family Mass" often celebrated on Christmas Eve. Replacing the proper vigil Gospel of Matthew with the nativity narrative of Luke, the stage was set for a grand production. Children were chosen to play the part of Mary, Joseph, shepherds, kings, and others who are part of the story. This pageant soon took on a life of its own. In subsequent years the pageant (now a tradition) grew to include a few sheep and angels. The question "Why wasn't my child chosen?" came from more and more parents. New parts were invented as necessary: the Christmas star, more angels, more shepherds, a barnyard of animals, and, in the more daring parishes, a live baby playing the part of Jesus. The complexity of this event began to overshadow everything. In a few places, the baby Jesus was brought to the manger by a person dressed as Santa Claus.

What most certainly began as an attempt to make the familiar Christmas story more engaging turned into a major distraction. The liturgy of the Christmas

vigil became a backdrop for the performance of an elaborate children's play that replaced the proclamation of the Gospel. Everyone was focused on this production, the centerpiece of the evening. Whether the play was a disaster or went well, one thing was certain: the reason for celebrating Christmas Eve liturgy was all but lost, or at least overshadowed.

The liturgies of the Christmas season celebrate the entrance of God into our world – Emmanuel, God among us – in a way that changed history. Rather than simply commemorating the historical birth of Jesus, Christmas celebrates our belief that with the birth of Jesus, God was no longer distant but now fully involved in the life of humankind. A new age has begun and we are part of it. One problem with the nativity play during this liturgical celebration is that it reduces the entire story of the incarnation of the Son of God – and the implications of this great mystery of faith – to the trip to Bethlehem.

Humankind has a long history of acting out major events of salvation history. Presented with music, movement, and costume, these Passion plays, living Stations of the Cross, nativity plays, and other such performances of Scripture were and are valuable teaching tools that involve many people in a catechetical exercise. These performances still have a very important contribution to make in the teaching of the Christian faith. However, such performances were not done during the Mass.

Christmas family liturgies are difficult to celebrate. The anticipation and excitement of Christmas at home with family, gifts, the tree, and lots of fun is at the forefront of the minds of most children before they arrive at church for the liturgy. Preparing and celebrating a Christmas liturgy that is engaging and prayerful can be difficult in light of this secular



The three wise men who came from the East to pay homage to the infant Jesus brought Him rich gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh as part of their worship. What gifts have I brought to this celebration to offer to the newborn Saviour?



(Continued on page 4)

Catholic Parish of Woy Woy Peninsula

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

St John the Baptist Church, corner of Blackwall and Victoria Roads, Woy Woy

Parish Office Ethel Cox Parish Centre
P.O. Box 264 Walter Baker Hall
54 Victoria Road 100 Blackwall Road
WOY WOY N.S.W. 2256

Phone: (02) 4341 1073
Fax: (02) 4341 0214
Email: parish@woywoycatholic.org.au

"He must increase, I must decrease"

Fr John Hill, *Parish Priest*

Fr Stephen Hume, *Assistant Priest*

Office Staff: Helen Cameron, Pamela Burton & Raelene McLenaghan

Parish Office Hours: 9.30 a.m. – 4.00 p.m., Monday to Friday

Deadline for The Voice: 3.30 p.m. Wednesday

SUNDAY MASS TIMES

Vigil Saturday 5pm; Sunday 7.45am, 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, 3.30 p.m.; Saturday 11.30am; & 4.30pm; Sunday 7.15 a.m.

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

1st & 3rd Sundays, 11am; 5th Sunday, during 9.15 a.m. 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 9.30 a.m.

EXPOSITION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

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

PARISH CHOIR – Practice Wednesday nights in the church, 7 p.m.

Enquiries: 4341 3367.

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL, 21a Dulkara Rd South Woy Woy 2256. p 024341 0884 f 0243 445049.

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST YOUTH GROUP For information and events contact Sam French 042 244 9539.

CENTACARE Marriage & Family Counselling, Pregnancy help – 20 Watt St, Gosford. Phone: 4324 6403.

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.

CASH HOUSIE every Saturday night at St Mary's Hall, Ocean View Rd, Ettalong (opposite Palm Beach Ferry Wharf). Games start at 7.30 p.m. and finish approx 10.15 p.m., cash prizes. Ticket sales from 6.00 p.m. Proceeds benefit Parish. Enquiries 43690626.

How far is it to Bethlehem?

(continued)

(Continued from page 3)

context. By the time we get to December 24, going to church on Christmas Eve almost becomes something that must be endured before we get back home for the good stuff.

But we are reminded in the introduction to the Lectionary for Masses with Children that "the Church's liturgy is first and foremost ritual prayer. The liturgy of the word is neither a catechetical session nor an introduction to bible history. The liturgy celebrates the word of God in narrative and song, makes it visible in gesture and symbol and culminates in the celebration of the eucharist" (24). Elsewhere in the same introduction we hear:

The Mass is not an historical re-enactment of the events of salvation his-

tory and care should be taken not to give the impression that the liturgy of the word is a play. ... Care should be taken especially at Christmas and during Holy Week and the Easter Triduum not to stage the various liturgies as plays. The Christmas Mass should not be presented as a birthday party for Jesus, nor should secular notions of Santa Claus be introduced into the Christmas liturgy. (52)

Clearly we are called to involve our children more deeply in the meaning of Christmas in a way that takes them beyond the little town of Bethlehem to a way of life!

ML

David Fedor holds a master's degree in music and liturgical studies from the University of Notre Dame. In 1986 he was appointed director of music and organist for the Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Newark, N.J., and since 1998 has been the parish musician for St. Cassian Church in Upper Montclair, N.J. From *Ministry & Liturgy*, copyright © Resource Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission under licence number 115216.

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Diocese of
Broken Bay