



THE VOICE

19th December, 2010

Fourth Sunday of Advent, Year A

Psalter Week 4

ADVENT

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

- **Anniversaries:**
Archbishop Eric Darcy, Monsignor Tom Wallace, Doctor Walter Baker, Ken Job, Vic Murphy, Ann Culmer, Catherine Corrigan, William Quigg, Doreen Preston, Kathleen Kay, Rex Norman, Joyce Ragan, Marie Brown.
- **Remembrances:**
David Kay.
- **Sick:**
Fr. John Wakeling, Fr. Ted Shepherd, Alan Harland, Anne der Kinderen, Tracie Passlow, Laurence Scully, Iris Quanchie, Ted Luxford, Dorn Schumacher.

Liturgical Environment

I was asked recently to explain the banners. 'I notice that new banners have gone up inside the church and outside—what do they mean?'

We have two sets of banners. They were designed by our stained glass artist—Jan Aspinall. The inside set were made by a devoted group of parishioners; the outside ones, by a local manufacturer.

The colours vary with the liturgical seasons: green, Ordinary Time; blue-purple, Advent; red-purple, Lent; white, Christmas; gold-white, Easter. The outside green banners are no longer put up because they wore out—Ordinary Time lasts for 34 weeks, and external banners seem to be made for short-term use. This is not a big issue, because the absence of banners is another way of indicating "ordinary" time.

Banners are part of *liturgical environment*. A church should feel different from season to season. Most people understand that this should be so at Christmas—they expect to see a crib there—but it is also the case, for example, in Advent: and so we have the Advent wreath and the Jesse Tree.

The music should also vary from season to season. We try to find hymns that suit the time of year—not just Christmas carols at Christmas and in late Advent, but also

Advent and Easter carols and hymns that create the right atmosphere during Lent, Easter, Christmas and Advent. We also sing different settings of the Mass at different times of the year—so that we associate one setting with Advent, another with Christmas, another with Ordinary Time, and so on.

Banners fit into that overall strategy. They also make a point about the liturgical seasons to those who pass by the church without coming in for Mass. The shops and public areas proclaim that it is Christmas already—through Christmas cribs, Santa Claus, reindeer and so on—but our banners assert that it is still Advent; that we are still waiting for Christ; that waiting makes the arrival of the One desired all the more delightful; that endurance is necessary as we wait for God. When Christmas in the shops ends promptly on Christmas Eve (and they get ready for the post-Christmas sales), our Christmas banners let the world know that the Octave of Christmas lasts until New Year's Day, and the Christmas season does not end until the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord (the Sunday after Epiphany).

In a word, the banners proclaim the Good News—and put us in the mood for hearing the Good News more fruitfully.

FR JOHN HILL, P.P.

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Psalm Response

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Gospel Acclamation

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

Around the Parish

THERE WILL BE NO 5 P.M. MASS HERE ON CHRISTMAS DAY.
There will be a 5 p.m. Mass at Kincumber and a 6 p.m. Mass at Gosford.



Wishing all our parishioners and visitors a joyous and peaceful Christmas. Fr Hill, Fr Barry and parish office staff.

A very warm welcome to all our visitors. For your convenience there are offering envelopes available on the table in the gathering area.

Christmas Masses: Christmas Eve: Vigil 5pm, 8.00pm and Midnight. **Christmas Day:** 7.45am and 9.15am.

Holy Family Day – Boxing Day Sunday Masses: 7.45am, 9.15am and 6pm.

Christmas Carols will be performed by our choir at 11.30pm prior to midnight Mass.

Public Holidays Monday 27th and Tuesday 28th: Morning Mass will be celebrated at 9.00am. Parish office will be closed from 4pm 24th December and will re-open Wednesday 29th December at 9.30am.

Housie News Update: Housie will operate over the summer school holiday period, with the exception of Christmas Day which is a Saturday this year. Instead of Christmas Day, we will operate Sunday night 26th December same as a normal Saturday night format. Housie is our own Parish fundraiser that offers a fun night out held at St. Mary's Hall, Ocean View Rd. Ettalong.

Thank You to Father John Hill, Father Barry and our Parish community for your prayers and support during my illness and treatment this year. You have picked me up many times as I carried this cross and Larry and I are most grateful. God bless you. Rita Sheil.

Piety Stall has a number of beautifully presented Gift Bibles for sale at \$15 each. A great idea for a Christmas present!

Mary Macs Place: Volunteers at Mary Mac's Place at Woy Woy are preparing to celebrate Christmas with community members who are homeless or doing it tough. Many individuals and groups in our commu-

nity have made contributions to help Mary Mac's Place celebrate Christmas with those in need in our community. This year Mary Mac's Place will serve a Christmas lunch on Wednesday 22 December and through the generosity of many people we hope to provide a small gift for all those who attend this lunch. For many of those who attend the lunch this will be the only gift they receive at Christmas.

At Mary Mac's Place, the Project Coordinator, Christine Burge, and volunteers are building relationships with people who are socially and financially disadvantaged. Mary Mac's seeks to create an atmosphere of acceptance and to welcome all members of our community in need.

This time of year can put severe strain on people, not only financially but also socially. Many of our community members have no family or are isolated from their family. Generally in our society Christmas is a time when families get together but we have many community members who find Christmas a sad time due to their social isolation.

Christine says that all of our community members need to feel a part of their community. Some of those who visit Mary Mac's are socially isolated and do not fit into mainstream communities for a variety of reasons. Mary Mac's welcomes all people in need regardless of their circumstances. Many of those who come to Mary Mac's have a range of issues affecting their lives such as financial hardship, mental health issues, substance abuse or domestic violence and Mary Mac's provides a welcoming, non-judgemental respite from their daily lives.

Christine says that since she has come to work at Mary Mac's she is in awe of the level

of community support the service receives and of the generosity of spirit shown by individuals and groups within the community. This generosity was demonstrated by a newly married couple who recently donated cash they received for their wedding to Mary Mac's Place. It is so wonderful to think that this couple were able to show such generosity of spirit in their time of celebration.

The Parish has also shown such generosity during the past year and all those at Mary Mac's Place wish parishioners a happy and safe Christmas.

Christmas Hampers: Thank you to all the wonderful parishioners who contributed to the donations of hampers, and single items, and helped with sorting and distributing. With much appreciation from the Family Ministry.

A big Thank You from St. John the Baptist School to all parishioners who put together the Christmas hampers. The hampers were fantastic and very much appreciated. God bless you all.

Parish Christmas Day luncheon: We were overwhelmed by the generosity of Parishioners who contributed over \$1300 towards this special luncheon for those who will be alone on Christmas Day. Our heartfelt thanks.

Transport for Christmas Masses: The Parish bus service will operate for the 5pm Mass on Christmas Eve and for the 9.15am Mass on Christmas Day. The bus service *will not operate for other Christmas Masses*. If you wish to travel on the parish bus to Christmas Mass please phone the office and leave your name, address and telephone number and the Mass you wish to attend *not later than Tuesday 21 December*. Usual bus timetable for Sunday 27th morning Masses.

Christmas: December 25?

Darren M. Henson

December 25 is known the world around as Christmas, the day Christ Jesus was born in a stable to Mary and Joseph. Details of a little infant born in the dark of a cold night and wrapped in bundles of tattered cloth fit so nicely into a story meeting the expectations of those living in the cradle of Christianity. Friedrich Schleiermacher, an influential German Protestant theologian of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, famously based the bulk of his theological thought on the feeling of absolute dependency he experienced while reflecting on the mystery of Christmas at Midnight Mass. It's understandable, given what one feels on a cold, dark, December night. Add to that the theological concept of Christ Jesus as the light of the world that pierces the darkness of sin and death, and suddenly we have the making of a great story that grips the heart and rouses the soul.

Yet one would be hard-pressed to come up with credible evidence pointing to December 25 as the actual day of Jesus' birth. Biblical scholars, historians, anthropologists, and theologians concur that December 25 was not the day. The Scriptures themselves give no exact date. Only two out of four Gospels — Matthew and Luke — have anything at all to say about Jesus' birth.

Matthew's Gospel gives nearly no clues as to the time of the year. Two veiled indicators in Luke's Gospel point toward a season of the year more than a particular date. Luke 2:1-4 recounts how Joseph takes his spouse, Mary, to Bethlehem to register in the Roman census. A few verses later (7-8), shepherds in the fields are watching their flocks at the time of Jesus' birth. Both of these passages suggest a time of year different than late December, when the region around Bethlehem would have been quite cool in the evenings. The Roman census would not be effective in late December, because travellers would be subjected to unfavourable elements as they travelled by foot and animal. Similarly, shepherds would seek shelter for themselves and their sheep, particularly at night in December, a time of year in Judea known for diving temperatures and rain.

So the question is, how and why was December 25 selected as the day Christians celebrate Christ's birth (Christ's Mass, Christmas)? Easter, the other great feast in the Christian tradition, never suffered from this unusual predicament. Celebrating the resurrection, or Easter Sunday, was a practice of the Christian community from the earliest of

times. Christmas, on the contrary, only began to emerge as a general practice in the fourth century. Even then, the various centres of Christianity did not agree on December 25. Some propose that December 25 was the ancient date for the winter solstice. Ancient cultures venerated this as the day of the unconquerable sun. Even though the hours of darkness far outweigh the daylight, the sun's light is not overcome. Thus, some surmise that Christians chose December 25 as the day to celebrate Christ's birth, who is the "unconquerable Son." This rationale for Christmas's date is similar to arguments that Christian leaders picked a date in December to counter a popular pagan feast. Such a tactic would not be unusual.

A more complicated explanation connects December 25 to March 25, the day Jesus was conceived, and *this* date is the one that bears historical significance. Some historians suggested, with reasonable credibility, that Jesus' passion and death occurred on March 25. In ancient cultures, it was a sign of perfection for a person to die on the day she or he was born. As a more complete sign of Jesus' perfection, his birth was noted as the day of his conception, March 25, the same day as his death.

Both theories contain some morsel of rationality, yet neither seems completely satisfying to the 21st-century mind. December 25 likely has some other cosmic or numerical significance and hidden connection to other events and dates that are unknown to us today.

What we know is that regardless of the origins, December 25 is the date we celebrate Jesus' birth, and Christianity has done so for centuries. The celebration itself serves to lure us into the much deeper reality behind this liturgical feast. Christmas is exactly that — a *liturgical* feast. Liturgy's primary aim is not to celebrate literal historical events (although that may be the case in some situations, such as the memorial of a saint on the day she or he died). Rather, liturgy celebrates, ritualizes, and makes present God's gift of salvation. The fact that God became flesh is far more wondrous and interesting than precisely when God did this. Let us rejoice and be glad, for unto us a Saviour is born! Merry Christmas. **ML**

Darren M. Henson is a freelance writer and speaker. With a licentiate in sacred theology from the University of St. Mary of the Lake, he specializes in sacramental and liturgical theology. He makes his home in Kansas City, Kan. From Ministry & Liturgy, copyright © Resource Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission under licence number 6744.



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

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
P.O. Box 264
54 Victoria Road
WOY WOY N.S.W. 2256

Ethel Cox Parish Centre
Walter Baker Hall.
100 Blackwall Rd

Phone: (02) 4341 1073

Fax: (02) 4341 0214

Email: parish@woywoycatholic.org.au

"He must increase, I must decrease"

Dr John Hill, *Parish Priest*

Fr Barry Nobbs, *Assistant Priest*

Office Staff: Libby McManus, Raelene McLenaghan & Pamela Burton

Parish Office Hours: 9.30 a.m.—12.40 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; 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 9.30am.

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 YOUTH GROUP. For information and events contact Parish Office 4341 1073.

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL, 21a Dul-kara Rd, South Woy Woy. 4341 0884.

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.

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.

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

Rose Again

Paul Turner

Both the Nicene Creed and the Apostles' Creed say that Jesus "rose again from the dead." People sometimes wonder about that word "again." We believe in the resurrection, but do we also believe that Jesus rose from the dead more than one time? Why do we say he rose "again"?

The word has a curious history. The word "resurrection" in Greek, the language in which the New Testament was written, is *anastasis*. Paul uses it, for example, in 1 Corinthians 15:13. It's a compound word. The Greek word *stasis* is related to our word "stand." And the prefix *ana* can mean "up" or "again." "Analogy," for example, comes from *ana* and *logos*, and it means an extended application of a word. "Analysis" means to "loosen up" something. When the New Testament was translated from Greek into Latin, the word *anastasis* became *resurrectio*, a word also in two

parts. The Latin word *surgere* is related to our word "surge" and means to "rise" or "stand"; *re* means "again." The Latin word imitates the component parts of the Greek word.

But when the word is translated into English, you sometimes see "rose again" as a way of grabbing both parts of the Latin and Greek words. All the phrase means is that Jesus rose in a more complete way than he did when he got up every morning. He rose into a new life. We say he "rose again" as a way of saying that he rose in a powerful way.

Jesus died only once, and he rose from the dead only once. For that we give thanks and praise.

These bulletin inserts originally appeared in *Ministry & Liturgy*, a pastoral planning resource used by the worship leaders in your parish as an aid for better liturgy. Copyright © 2007 Resource Publications, 160 E. Virginia St. #290, San Jose CA 95112, (408) 286-8505. Paul Turner, pastor of St Munchin parish in Cameron, Mo., holds a doctorate in sacramental theology from Sant'Anselmo University in Rome. Comment online at www.rpinet.com/www/board/forum8/.

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