



*In the care of the
Franciscan Friars*

Newsletter for the Parishes of St Clare and St Francis Xavier

The Nativity of Our Lord December 25, 2008—Year B

To those who did accept him he gave power to become the children of God

One of the things that I don't often do is thank people. Occasionally after our celebrations or at some events I might say a few words or write in the newsletter to thank people who were involved. I believe the parish belongs to the people and we have many generous people, who out of their love for God continuously minister throughout the year. I see all parishioners as team players, each with their own particular gift enriching our parish. I fear I might miss someone in my list of thanks by singling out a few or a group, setting precedence over others. The life of any parish depends on all people who make our Church the body of Christ. I hope parishioners know and are aware how much, the friars, parishioners and visitors appreciate the wonderful service they render to the community and world.

You make God visible by living Christ centred lives. I am continuously amazed at your generosity, not just to the parish but for the common good of society. Your wonderful hospitality, honesty, integrity and faithful life that you live make God present in our world. Your passion for justice and even in grievance situation how you celebrate forgiveness is a source of inspiration to me. Your devotion and life of pray is not static; you are open to the Holy Spirit and continue to respond to God's call and to the challenges of this post modern world, making faith relevant in 21st Century.

Our two parishes have been busy as usual but especially this year with Days in Diocese and Cross and Icon events. I pay a great tribute to all of you for the way you showed support and participated; thank you to our youth and host families for making it a special time for everyone. Let us continue to strive in welcoming our youth and new parishioners and help them to be involved and participate in parish life.

We are a busy parish which says a lot for the many great activities that take place in the parish. Our energy is spent in constructive ways and even when there are issues and difference of opinions your tolerance and the way your resolve conflict is to be commended. The staff work hard and continue to respond to call beyond duty and we do show them respect and appreciation for their contribution. Thank you for 2008 and for making our parishes God's dwelling place, where the Good News is proclaimed and lived.

St Francis calls Christmas, 'Feast of all feasts'. Celebrate well - by sharing Jesus' birth we also share in his glory. As God's children let us continue to live the life and mission of the Divine Son of God and be good news to our world. St Francis was full of joy, because he knew God's love for him. He showed his gratitude by responding to the God of love. If we live in gratitude and learn to see everything in life as God's gift, we too will experience great joy. The greatest gift is Jesus.

*A saviour has been born for you who
is Christ and Lord.*

Anthoni Selvaraj ofm



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**Share good news
with someone this
week. Be conscious
of who brings good
news to you.**



The friars would like to thank all those who have assisted with organising the recent Seniors' Lunch, the Advent & Christmas liturgies and the associated social celebrations. Thank you also for all the cards, gifts and offers of hospitality from so many parishioners.

Please note that Parish Office Staff are on leave until Wednesday January 14 & the office will be closed until that time.

Any urgent messages can be left on the answering machine & one of the friars will respond as soon as is possible.

Friars of the Parishes

Fr Anthoni Selvaraj ofm
Parish Priest
Fr Benignus Clowes ofm
Assistant Priest
Fr Bob Matthews ofm
Assistant Priest

In the event of needing a priest urgently, please telephone 9890 2231 at any time of the day.

Liturgy Times

St Clare's

Sunday 9.00 am

Weekdays:

Wed, Fri, Sat 9.00 am

Confessions: Sat 9.30—10 am

St Francis Xavier's

Saturday Vigil 6.00 pm

Sunday 8.00 am

10.00 am

(Italian) 11.30 am

5.00 pm

Weekdays

12 noon Mon—Fri

Confessions:

**Saturday 4.00—5.00 pm
other times by appointment in either Parish**

Marriages and Baptisms

Bookings can be made with the SFX Parish Office for each Parish, and celebrated in the church requested. This is to avoid double bookings. Anyone wishing to have a child baptised should give four to six weeks notice, so that the family can be visited & parents can attend a preparation course.

Baptisms

St Francis Xavier's—1st and 3rd Sundays of month only, 12.30 pm
St Clare's—2nd Sunday, 11.30 am

5pm Collectors—2009

Dec 28—A Cutts

Jan 4—L Soulsby

Jan 11—I Mahlstedt

Jan 18—P Aldag

Christmas is at the heart of the mystery of a God who loves us so much that he came to live among us at the first Christmas, and remained forever.

The Good News brought to the world at Christmas came quietly in the person of the baby Jesus, and shed its light through the life, mission, and ministry of Jesus, our Saviour.

Pope Benedict XVI, during his recent visit to Australia for WYD, quoted what Christ wants for us: "I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly." (Jn 10:10) The Pope added: The most basic instinct of all living things is to stay alive, to grow, to flourish, and to pass on the gift of life to others.

First and foremost, Christmas is about God, and God's great love for us. Once that is grasped, other things fall into place: greetings, gift-giving, affirmation of others and welcoming, as well as forgiving.

Sometimes, almost inadvertently, we are caught up in the spirit of Christmas, but miss seeing the kind of power that surrounds the manger – not the power of arms, not the power of money, not the power of possessions, but a power greater than all those – the power of life and love.

A very happy Christmas to all parishioners and visitors at St Francis Xavier's and St Clare's.

Fr Ben Clowes ofm



Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

Can you imagine Bethlehem on a night like this? Packed to the rafters—like Sydney on New Year's Eve. Everyone had come back to their home town for the census—some excited to meet up with family, others not sure of their welcome, but all looking for somewhere to sleep and eat and share their stories. Some of us will have spent the last few weeks like this—full of rush and fuss and stress and fears and uncertainties. Leave all this behind you, and look into the stable—messy and smelly and disorganized as it may be—and take time on this blessed day to acknowledge and reverence this baby who has been born. Revel in the wonder and the beauty and the joy and the mystery. Praise and thank God. And remember that each of us is pregnant with the presence of God, and our task—like Mary's—is to bring to birth the light which dissolves darkness and brings comfort and warmth and joy. As you contemplate all that this can mean, I wish you every blessing, peace, joy and hope. May your days be filled with alleluias.

**Liz Clark
Pastoral Associate**

Viewing Christmas anew – from a different perspective – may help us appreciate this season more deeply and with the real joy Christmas should bring us.

Why do so many people dread Christmas? Why are so many sad and apprehensive? Why do you hear some people say it is a false and flimsy time of year? Christians surely have a better view of it - or do they? We all live in an atmosphere of commercialism, consumerism and the idea that plenty makes perfect. Traders would have us unload lots of lovely dollars, telling us not to deny family and friends the best things in life – commodities!

However, there are moves afoot to change this attitude. Cards can be sent to greet others for Christmas bearing the message that in the name of the recipient(s) the sender has given a gift for the poor. A good initiative.

How did gift-giving come to be Christmas orientated? It seems to be widespread apart from some cultures, like the Lebanese who give gifts at Epiphany (thinking of the Magi bringing gifts to the Lord of gold, frankincense and myrrh). St Nicholas, whose feast is on December 6th, has a lot to do with it. As bishop of Myra in Turkey in the 4th century he was particularly mindful of children's needs and of the poor in general. He is patron saint of Russia, Greece, and Sicily, and of all pawnbrokers.

The reason for the latter goes like this: deeply aware that three young women may have to resort to prostitution because the dowry price was beyond their resources, he threw three bags of gold through the window for them. The story is the origin of the three golden balls which hang outside pawnbrokers' - and these were adapted from the coat of arms of the Medici family.

St Nicholas was, as his title would suggest, holy - devout, learned (he contributed well to the Council of Nicaea of 325 which defended the full divinity of Christ against Arianism, and he was pastorally alert to loving care of his people. He is sometimes called Nicholas of Bari (in southern Italy) because his relics were secretly taken from Constantinople to Bari for safe keeping away from the Muslim take-over of Turkey.

Knowing all this, will your Christmas take on a new view? Perhaps. Love your Lord for coming to be with us, honour His cross, His crib, His Eucharistic presence in the Mass; give Him your loving devotion, time and attention. And for those around you give a thoughtful sign of your loving affection without needing to break the bank and stock exchange as well!

Fr Bob Matthews ofm

