



*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, 2009—Year C



*She wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them at the inn. (Lk 2:12)*

The infancy narrative from Luke is so familiar to us, and we enjoy listening to it at this time of the year. This gospel reading is filled with all the imagery which gives us the hope and warmth of Christmas. It feeds our good feelings like the nearness of family and friends, security, a sense of belonging and celebration, and something that tells us that everything is right in our world. The crib and the nativity play too add to the atmosphere, children dressed as angels and shepherds simply bring joy and happiness to us.

Out of the four gospels only Luke and Matthew have the infancy narrative. Why were infancy narratives composed? Most probably curiosity played a role; Christians wanted to know more about their master: his family, his ancestors, his birthplace. The great aspects of Jesus' public life were read back into his origins as an apologetic in response to Judaism's scepticism about a Messiah who came from Galilee. In addition to that the virginal conception offered an explanation that allowed for an irregularity in the birth. In Mark's Gospel, only after the death of Jesus is the mystery finally unravelled by a human witness: "Truly this was God's Son" (Mk 15:39). Mark insists Jesus was already the Son of God and Messiah during his lifetime, although not known publicly, which explains why Christians might speak of Jesus becoming the Messiah and Son of God through his death and resurrection.

The birth stories are differing accounts but agree on the central meaning about the identity of Jesus: he is son of David and Son of God. The infancy narratives focus on the meaning not the details; theology rather than historical facts. They contain basic revelation of the full identity of Jesus, and complete the gospels, to include the poor, the non-Jew, acceptance and rejection, and hatred

For Luke, Jesus is born among outcasts and dies among outcasts, crucified between two thieves. In a manger, in a town far away, among shepherds (outcasts), and in the dark of night, Jesus was born. Salvation was born into messiness, poverty and weakness of ordinary human life. But we live in hope not because we are perfect or our world is perfect, but because Jesus was born into a human family, light shines in the dark. We are raised to share in God's life.

The Word made flesh! God's glory is proclaimed by reaching out to others and in the presence of this firstborn Son. God's word comes deeply embedded in human words and flesh - justice and peace, forgiveness for family members, light in darkness, simple joy of children and warmth of good friends. Luke as an evangelist teaches us to make room for God and for others. As baptised Christians we are called to be God's family on earth.

I extend my gratitude to staff and to parishioners who make room and are the presence of God through worship and service to the community. Have a Happy and a Holy Christmas!

*Fr. Anthoni 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. 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 20 & the office will be closed until that time.

*Urgent messages only may 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—2010

Dec 27—A Cutts

Jan 3—L Soulsby

Jan 11—P Aldag

Jan 17—A Cutts

Celebration at Christmas has become a lovely practice world-wide. It has a very long history. Like nothing else, it brings out many beautiful qualities of human nature on a grand scale.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary explains the meaning of Christmas in this way: "festival of Christ's birth, 25<sup>th</sup> Dec., devoted especially to family reunion and merry-making. (Father Christmas is the personification of family festival)." That definition pretty well hits the nail on the head. People don't need to know much more than that to have a rough idea of what Christians are celebrating at Christmas. What that definition doesn't do however, is SHOCK us into a fresh realisation that Christmas – the birth of Christ – is the unique unimaginable climax of God's intervention in human history, an unexpected divine event that creates and shapes the whole of our destiny, our redemption, and our salvation, here and hereafter. Very important stuff - if we give it prayerful thought. Jesus called it Good News, and thought that it should have the effect of revolutionising our attitudes and behaviour, our whole lives.

That effect can happen because the coming of Christ amazingly provides for us first-hand personal contact with the Divine Son of God, who is also human, and first-hand personal experience of how to relate to God and others as friends.

Jesus Christ comes at Christmas, carrying divine power for us, advertising childlikeness in his birth, and total obedience at all times to the Father in his growth to manhood and short ministry. We know from the Scriptures that Jesus' love of the Father consists essentially in the union of his human will with his divine will, entirely and at all times. That is how we know that love is always union of wills, a lasting heartfelt decision or commitment to another, made by choice, by the will and the mind.

Christmas is a wonderful, joyful reality and reminder to us to maintain consistently through thick and then our love for God, a reverence and affection that is not a slave of fleeting moods, impatience or of our natural liking for excitement and variety. We are always held safe and secure in God's powerful hands, but he is a slow, quiet operator. Pierre de Chardin SJ used say: Trust in the slow work of God.

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

- Fr Ben



*A Blessed Christmas*

Let no-one say I have dirty habits!

In fact, I washed my Franciscan habit only last Wednesday (in the heat). It is now clean, fresh and feels new. A happy relief.

In recent Advent readings the prophet Isaiah and John Baptist have both been telling us to CLEAN UP any shady, inappropriate even shameful ways we have. Even just one better approach to goodness is an improvement. Let's try even one good effort. Think of the three Wise Magi setting out to meet Jesus as your motivation; such a huge effort and journey to find the Messiah. Their aim and ambition to find and worship Him was driven by an extraordinary faith that was generous, convinced and committed. How happy they were at finding Him.

What good thing can I do? Some suggestions?

+ Prune your life! Don't over-stretch yourself, or over-crowd your schedule. Your first priority is to keep yourself happy and healthy. You can't see everyone you have in mind for Christmas. Just be loving to all whom you DO see. Family members deserve first place in your agenda.

+ Pray the Christmas liturgy thoughtfully.

Christmas prayer at home too.

+ Know that God is working behind the scenes in your life. He is really with you.

+ Cultivate an attitude of peace, compassion, forgiveness.

+ Maybe read an inspirational, spiritual book for Christmas-New Year.

Finally, author Oren Arnold may give you a guide as to being generous at this Christmas:

"To your enemy, forgiveness. To an opponent, tolerance. To a friend, your heart. To a customer, service. To all, charity. To every child, a good example. To yourself, respect."

And so, may your Christmas holiday be rich with joy and meaning and God's blessed presence..

- Fr Bob

After a year that seems to have had more than its fair share of darkness—bushfires, financial doom and gloom, scandals and political dramas, climate concerns—I feel that we are all seeking the light of Christ with a greater intensity than usual. We need that light to shine on our worries and concerns, fears and anxieties. We need illumination for our doubts and uncertainties. We need the radiance of God to warm our troubled hearts and minds. We need the constant light of God's presence with us to give us courage and hope. So...may the gift of God's very presence in our midst, the gentle company of Mary, the strength and courage of Joseph radiate throughout your lives in this precious season. May you celebrate with love and peace in your hearts. May the joy of the angels, the wonder of the shepherds, the generosity of the wise men fill your spirits. May your days become radiant and your hearts be untroubled. I will light a candle on Christmas day, praying for love, peace and joy for the friars and all parishioners. I wish you God's richest blessings this Christmas.

*Liz Clark, Pastoral Associate*