



Newsletter for the Parishes of St Clare and St Francis Xavier

*In the care of the
Franciscan Friars*

The Nativity of Our Lord December 25, 2010—Year A

FROM FR ANTHONI

Christmas celebrations are a big thing for families unlike any other family celebrations. People travel long distances to join their families, make time to visit their close friends and relatives. Everyone tries to catch up for Christmas. Gifts are exchanged and the family food tradition is adhered to and many preparations are made for this Feast of feasts. It is a stressful time and we are never quite prepared and complain that Christmas has come too soon and we vow to be more organized in the coming year; this is only half of the story. To be together as a family is demanding, past hurts and unresolved issues can be like a time bomb waiting to explode. Then are people who are not at the table and we mourn their loss or miss their presence. During the Christmas season we make space for people who are special to us.

The birth of the saviour ushers in a new way of relating, through the mystery of Incarnation humankind shares in the divinity of Jesus Christ. In Jesus, God and man are made one; God became part of the human family. We are invited to respond to this God of love through our human love. Christian life is about walking in the footsteps of Jesus. Baptism reminds us of who we are, God's children sharing in the life of the Trinity. Wherever we are there is the demand, commitment and the expectations of every family member to take part. Our faithfulness to uphold the teachings of Christ and live as a witness is paramount in our relationship to God. At home, in the work place, among friends, we continue to live the Christmas story.



Those who live under a cloud of darkness, the web of poverty, the lonely, the sick, the alienated, the marginalised are not to be forgotten. The St Vincent de Paul Society has been organising to collect gifts for the poor in the parishes, giving us an opportunity to share with those who have very little. Inviting our elderly and lonely neighbours and recently arrived migrants to join us for BBQ's or for drinks are all part of sharing the good news. St Francis reminds us that all creatures have a reason to celebrate.

Usually everyone makes an attempt to participate at Christmas Mass with their families, an important gesture reminding us of the gift of Eucharist, the body of Christ and also as a sacrament of unity, the one bread and the one cup. St Francis created the first crib in Greccio, a new Bethlehem and over the manger the solemnities of the Mass were celebrated, showing us the depth of his understanding of the Eucharist; God feeds his people.

Thank you to all our wonderful parishioners and staff for your support, contribution and help to me as your pastor for the past nine years. We have created an environment where people encounter God through Worship, the celebration of the Sacraments, Pastoral Care, community, faith development and care of the poor. I know that you will support your new parish team and the refurbishment work in the Church in the New Year. It has been a privilege, blessing and joy to serve you. Have a Happy and Holy Christmas.

Fr Anthoni ofm

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**Give nourishment to
others this week—
not just food but a
sense of their value
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 19 & 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

FROM FR BEN

A mystery is like a paradox because it can be seemingly absurd though perhaps really well-founded.

What we know of God from Scripture & Tradition tends to be full of paradox, seeming contradictions, but "a religion without mystery must be a religion without God" (Jeremy Taylor 1613-1667).

It is a great paradox that on the one hand, we know virtually nothing about God but on the other hand, we know everything about him.

Down the ages, writers have often expressed their recognition of the unfathomable mystery of God. All that we can ever have of God is a sort of learned ignorance. St Augustine (354-430) uses those words "learned ignorance" when he says in one of his letters:-

".....there is in us a kind of learned ignorance, so to speak, taught by the Spirit of God who helps our weakness".

Such is the incomprehensibility of God that no one can ever have a remotely accurate idea/concept/view of God. It must always be limited and incomplete, and consequently inaccurate – to a large extent, wrong.

Meister Eckhart, the 14th Century Dominican mystic who wrote "Everything we say of God is wrong." St Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) said "The highest thought we can ever have of God is that he is above every thought that we can have of him." St Ephrem (306-373) wrote "God reveals himself in images that cancel each other out, lest we begin to think that we know the divine essence. "The Cloud of Unknowing", written in the second half of the 14th century has it, in old-fashioned English "By love alone can he (God) be gotten & holden, but by thought never." Isaac Newton acknowledged not only his ignorance of God, but even his ignorance of the mystery of God's created universe. He wrote: I don't know what I may appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore, diverting myself now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell, while the great ocean of truth lay undiscovered before me.

So, on the one hand the mystery of the nature that is so glibly called "God" is largely beyond us but, paradoxically, we know everything about God because of CHRISTMAS – the GREATEST MYSTERY AND PARADOX EVER. God, the Eternal Father, has given us his Word Christ, divine and human, beautifully recorded in the Letter of St Paul to the Ephesians:

Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with all the spiritual blessings of heaven in Christ.....Such is the richness of the grace which he has showered on us in all wisdom and insight. He has let us know the mystery of his purpose, the hidden plan he so kindly made in Christ from the beginning." (Eph Chap. 1)

For the sublime nature and promises of God, and for the repeated expressions of God's love and generosity. Christmas is especially a time of sheer wonder and gratitude.

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

- Fr Ben

FROM FR BOB

Recently Ron Rolheiser (an American spiritual writer) commented on Christmas, saying that the fact that Jesus was born unknown and unannounced to almost the entire world has an implication for all of us. We believe and feel quite acutely that we are much lesser people than Jesus and most other "notables" of the present society. But are we? Really? Well, much less than Jesus who is God. But just as important to God and our world as the Prime Minister, a President, yes a POPE ! We are God's handiwork, loved into life by Him with great care and attention to each detail of mental, physical and spiritual make-up. Yes, you/I are special people !!

Fred Hollows insists that giving sight to a penniless destitute is as important as doing the same for anyone in the world.

You've heard in many contexts the saying that the world needs you. Today it desperately needs you with goodness, Christ-like example and sincere love for all God's people. Life today is rather synthetic, phoney, empty for so many people; they need simply to be loved, encouraged, supported. One good friend can save a life - more than just save eye-sight.

One person who understood the need of others was the original Santa Claus - St Nicholas. He knew of young girls who couldn't be married without a dowry and that was too much for them to acquire. Nicholas, as the local bishop, gathered the necessary dowry money and got it to many of those girls, thus giving them a married existence to enjoy. Nicholas (Santa) is an image of our loving and giving God; He provides us with love, and every good without a query, or demand on our re-payment; He is the totally loving and generous One.

Most families make a serious effort to assemble together for Christmas; a good idea. When you gather this year, share not just a present exchange but a really loving, non-judgemental and forgiving openness with family members and with everyone within range of your contacting. Make plenty of room for others in your "Inn" !

- Fr Bob

