

Our Lady of Mt Carmel Parish

Varroville, Raby, St Andrews and Bow Bowing



To know, love and serve Jesus
by sharing our gifts through our baptismal mission.

We acknowledge and respect the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we stand, the elders, past and present and all the Dharawal people. May we too be good stewards of this land.

Come, come, Jesus, I await You .

We have prepared for the coming of Jesus this year, unlike any other year, as we experience disappointment that our families are separated and celebrations limited, may we remember that Jesus faced many trials in his life. As Bishop Brian says in his pastoral message, may the new year, 2021, bring renewed hope to us all.

Wishing you all a joyous Christmas.

RENEWED HOPE Bishop Brian Mascord's complete pastoral message for Christmas 2020 is on the Diocese of Wollongong Website www.dow.org.au. Bishop Brian concludes his message with...

"I wish everyone a Holy and Safe Christmas and my prayer for us is to be a community of hope for 2021. I call all of us to live in the wonder of the gift of Christmas: each of us is loved by God. The power of this gift to transform our world is our hope".

Yours in Christ
Most Rev Brian G Mascord DD
BISHOP OF WOLLONGONG



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Sunday Mass times	Weekday Mass times
Saturday Vigil: 6pm	Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday & Saturday Mass at 9am
Sunday: 9.30 am & 5pm	Thursday - Mass at 7.30pm

Gospel Reflection for Christmas

If you were to give just a cursory glance at a collection of 'religious' Christmas cards, or even the local nativity scene, you would undoubtedly see a varied assortment of shepherds, wise men, livestock and angels gathered around the holy family in a timber structure of some sort. Even the most casual reading of Luke's account of the birth of Christ would reveal that most of the nativity figurines are missing! Our retelling of the birth of Christ tends to be an amalgamation of the Luke and Matthew versions with a bit of creative tradition thrown in for good measure.



The Luke account of the nativity carries a very specific theology that runs throughout the rest of that gospel. It is a theology that places the outcast and downtrodden at the centre of Jesus' mission. In this account, Jesus is born outside the town because there is no room for Joseph and Mary within the safety of the inn. Like those he will minister to later in life, Jesus is born 'on the edge' – even outside the boundaries. Rather than the impressive 'Wise Men' of the Matthew infancy account, the witnesses to Jesus' birth in the Luke account are lowly shepherds. Unlike the somewhat romantic notion we may have of shepherds, in Jesus' time they were regarded as little better than thieves and cut-throats. All they could be trusted to do was tend sheep outside of townships and away from 'civilised' society. They held one of the lowest positions in Jewish society. The gospel writer's choice of these witnesses to the birth of Jesus is a very deliberate one that clearly announces the purpose and direction of Jesus' mission.

Ask a child (or even most adults) to describe the scene at the birth of Jesus and you will hear a confused combination of the two scriptural accounts with several non-scriptural additions. It is a shame that the two versions have merged into one as each is deserving of its own integrity. The Matthew account emphasises Jesus as the fulfilment of prophecy and has Wise Men as the witnesses to his birth in a house. It is from Luke that we have the much humbler birth in a manger witnessed by the lowly shepherds. Each has something different and distinct to say about Jesus and his mission.

The decree of a census for the whole Roman world appears to be an unlikely event. A census of people in local regions was not unusual but a census that required people to return to their place of birth carries no historical validity. The gospel writer correctly places Mary and Joseph in their home town of Nazareth but prophecy indicated the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. The author needed an excuse for Mary and Joseph to travel to Bethlehem. We must remember that the gospels are not to be read as historical accounts but rather as faith accounts of the life of Jesus.

St Francis of Assisi is credited with setting up the first nativity scene and thus establishing a tradition that is carried on today in homes, churches and public spaces in Christian communities everywhere. In 1223, in the town of Greccio he created a life size tableau of the nativity scene to heighten the awareness of the celebration of the birth of Christ. It included statues of the holy family and a live ox and donkey. The inclusion of the livestock has no scriptural support and it is to Francis that we owe the array of sheep, oxen and donkeys that have become standard inclusions in our nativity scenes.

Greg Sunter

Gospel Reflection on the Feast of the Holy Family



When I was sixteen I read the works of Jesuit Fr John Powell. In one of his books he wrote, 'We should never leave this world not having the people that we love know that we love them.' Now, I don't come from a particularly demonstrative family. We do not make regular declarations of our love accompanied by long hugs. So I took John Powell's line as a personal challenge.

At the time my sister was working with Mother Teresa in Calcutta, and my brother was working in another city, so I wrote them both letters and told them I loved them. I never heard a word back.

That left my mother. I stayed in one Saturday night and, with my heart pumping and my tummy churning, I approached my mother after dinner while she was watching the news on the TV. 'Mum, I have something very important to tell you.' My mother, not taking her eyes from the screen, casually said, 'Oh yes what's that?' 'Mum', I responded, 'I've never told you this before and I need to say it tonight.' As she slowly turned off the TV and faced me, I could tell there were now two hearts pumping and two tummies churning in that room!

I plucked up all my courage and came straight out with it. 'Mum, I just want to tell you that I love you.' And such was her relief that my mother replied. 'I hope so!' And quickly turned the TV back on. There were no hugs and kisses, no violins playing or statements about how long Mum had been waiting to hear one of us talk of our love for her. As I walked back to my room I thought I would never take John Powell's advice again!

My brother and sister wrote to my mother asking her what was wrong with me. They all concluded it was a phase I was going through. I hope it is a phase I never get over!

Today's feast of the Holy Family is about faithful love that looks after the most important people in our lives. We all know that fights and bitterness can wreck families for generations. If today's feast means anything it is not about romanticising how difficult family life can be these days. It is about naming that forgiveness, compassion and kindness are the blocks upon which Christian family life is built. Without these virtues family life crumbles.

The best way to honour today's feast is to do something about the faithful love it celebrates. I have often been with people on their deathbed when they speak about things they have left undone and would have liked to have achieved in their life. No one ever says that they wish they had spent more time at work. No one says they wish they had made more money. But many people say that they wish they had told those that they love, that they loved them. We shouldn't assume that our families know about our love for them if we haven't said it. If we show it, we should be able to say it. So write a letter, make a call or go and see them, but let's pluck up our courage and tell our families that we love them. It's too late once we're dead.

And the best news is that when we profess our love to our families we'll see that today's celebration is in fact a moveable feast. *Richard Leonard*

Bulletin Notices



ALPHA: YOU'RE INVITED

Alpha is an opportunity to explore life, faith and God in a friendly open and informal environment. Beginning Tuesday 2 March, 2021 at 7pm.

For further information contact the parish office 9603 7373 and olmcvarroville.org.au. Find out more at alpha.org.au

Summer Nights for 18-35's at Varroville January 2021

Register now for *Summer Nights* at Mount Carmel Retreat Centre with the Missionaries of God's Love (MGL's). An outdoor experience featuring quality talks and teaching, night sessions with praise and worship, drama, preaching, testimonies, and prayer. Mass, adoration and reconciliation will be available each day with COVID safe dinner provided.

There are two options to register, with the retreat running twice during the week:

- Monday 11 January – Wednesday 13 January (3pm to 9pm)
- Thursday 14 January – Saturday 16 January (3pm to 9pm)

To register go to www.summerschool.org.au

Sacramental Preparation in 2021:

A Christian family lives within a wider parish community, which also has a responsibility to share its faith to nurture you and your child. Our parish will offer an opportunity of providing faith education for both adults and children.

Specific dates and information about Sacramental preparation will be available on our website by the end of January 2021 or by calling the parish office.



For the sick & homebound: Fr David Catterill, Jean Claude Furlong, Joe Spinnato, Susan Mella, Ron Allen, Sean Finnerty, Eduvigis Reyes, Rose Levoune, Gabriel Gonzales, Francisco Carmona, Doreen Gribbons, Jenny Bishop, Clayton Diack, Emily Rose Pavicin, Pat & Denise Furner, Claude Fricot, Tracey Bokor, Lily Pereira, Mary & Reg Gardner, Doris Wahhab, John Kajdrys, Gabor Weiner, Erlinda Hermes, Aurelia Vertucio, Ofilia

Mawson, Mary & Frances Raithi, Marie Atkins, Jeana San Diego, Hugo Garzotto, Eileen Butcher, Josephina Duefries, Austin Taylor, Marisa Aguirre, Joan Wilson.

May they experience the saving power of the risen Lord amidst their pain & affliction.

For our recently dearly departed: The Cuong Nguyen, Geraldine Hurren, Edmond Pew, Elizabeth McCleary, Colleen Eggleton, Marian Owens, Regina Ravino, Richard Young, Gary Hunt, Xiang Chen.

Those whose anniversaries occur at this time: Teresa Thompson, Resse Mangulabnan, Anthony Pinto, Pauline Marquinez, Angelo Tomarchio, Joe Cuomo, *Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, may perpetual light shine upon them.*