

Glancing Thoughts - *Tempted But Without Sin*

In the Gospel Reading, when Mary finally finds her almost-adolescent son, she says to him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety." It is not hard to recognise her lines to him as a rebuke. She has been looking for him for three days!

But here the story has to bump up against doctrine. Scripture tells us that Jesus was like us in every way, except that he had no sin (Heb. 4:15). Anyone in doubt about the moral seriousness with which Scripture takes honouring one's parents should look again at the First Reading. How is the doctrine that Jesus is without sin compatible with this story in the Gospel about his mother's having to search for him for three days?

The answer lies in the explanation Jesus gives his mother. He says to her, "Why were you looking for me? Didn't you know that I must be in my Father's house?"

So, Jesus thought that his mother understood his relation to God and his need to be in God's temple learning at this time. He was wrong, on this score, of course. But it's a kind of wrongness that shows something sweet in him, isn't it? He is attributing to his mother more knowledge, more understanding, than she has.

He is therefore not dishonouring her when he takes off for three days without a word to her. On the contrary, he is in fact honouring her by thinking of her as if she had Christ's own knowledge of his relation to his father.

It is true that I am showing a way in which Jesus in this story is guilty of no sin—but only by virtue of pointing out that he is guilty of a mistake. But the Scriptural line says that Jesus is like us in every respect except sin, and to err is human. Thinking more highly of your mother than is warranted is a sinless mistake if anything is.

Jesus is human enough to learn from his mistake, though. The story goes on to say that Jesus went home with his parents and was obedient to them. And so, the story finishes, Jesus advanced in wisdom as well as age.

And that is a good way to age, isn't it?

Eleonore Stump

Eleonore Stump is Professor of Philosophy, Saint Louis University



HAPPY RETIREMENT

This week, Chris Joy retires from St Thomas Aquinas after 10 years of service to our Parish and community. We are incredibly grateful to Chris for her commitment, dedication, patience and hard work with particular thanks for her efforts towards the Sacramental Program. We won't be able to cover all that Chris has accomplished but we are beyond grateful for everything Chris has selflessly done for us.

*Thank you Chris for your care, compassion, empathy and desire to help others in our Parish. We wish you well in retirement. **Enjoy the special times, and adventures ahead with your family.***

St Thomas Aquinas Parish Bulletin



168 Hawkesbury Road, Springwood, NSW, 2777
PO Box 4410, Winmalee, NSW 2777
Parish Office: 02 4754 1052

Parish Office Hours: Tuesday to Friday 8.30 am - 3.30 pm
Parish Email: springwood@parracatholic.org
Parish Website: www.stachurchspringwood.org.au
Parish Facebook Page: St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Community Springwood
Parish Priest: Fr Paul Slyney - 4754 1052 *Emergency ONLY:* 0418 461 316
Assistant Priest: Fr Shinto Francis - 4754 1052 *Emergency ONLY:* 0415 077 969

Weekend Masses: Saturday Vigil Mass 5.00 pm, Sunday 8.00 am and 9.30 am
Weekday Mass: Tuesday - Saturday 9.30 am

Rosary Devotion: Tuesday - Saturday 9.00 am
Adoration, Rosary & Chaplet: 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of every month, 7.30 - 8.30 pm
Intercession & Adoration: None until further notice

Baptisms: 2nd and 4th Sundays of every month - 10.30am and by appointment
Reconciliation: By request
Weddings: By appointment
Funerals: By appointment

MASKS are to be worn in Church

THE GOSPEL

Luke 2:41-52

"Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety."

Mary and Joseph searched everywhere with their whole hearts, and with harrowing anxiety, for you, Jesus.

And they found you.

Let us all find you wherever we search: in your Father's House, or in the faces of the poor, — in songs we sing together, in searching for answers to end all racial injustice, to find climate solutions; to look into the deep thoughts of others; and in poetry.

Let it all be prayer. Come to us, Lord Jesus.

J. Janda

Anne Osdieck

The NATIVITY of the LORD (Christmas): Vigil: Is 62:1-5; Acts 13:16-17, 22-25; Mt 1:18-25;

Day: Is 52:7-10; Heb 1:1-6; Jn 1:1-18

Entrance Antiphon VIGIL: Today you will know that the Lord will come, and he will save us, and in the morning you will see his glory.

Entrance Antiphon DAY: A child is born for us, and a son is given to us; his sceptre of power rests upon his shoulder, and his name will be called Messenger of great counsel.

Today's Readings: 1 Sam 1:20-22, 24-28; 1 Jn 3:1-2, 21-24; Lk 2:41-52

Entrance Antiphon: The shepherds went in haste, and found Mary and Joseph and the Infant lying in a Manger.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 83:2-3, 5-6, 9-10

R. How happy they dwell in your house, O Lord.

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! Open our hearts, O Lord, to listen to the words of your Son. Alleluia!

Communion Antiphon: Our God has appeared on the earth, and lived among us.



Sick: Molly Hurley, Gerry Thistleton, Roshan Rupesinghe, Evelyn Robinson, Susie Ziino, James Wallace, Mischa Damaguc and family, Margaret Day, Adam McCully, Christopher Coombs, Kate Moore, Luca Hurley and all Private Intentions.

Due to the strict privacy laws, names of the deceased and sick can only be included in the Bulletin with the express permission of the immediate family. Thank you.

Parish and Local Community News

DISPENSATION: On the 20th March 2020 Catholics from the Diocese of Parramatta were dispensed from their Sunday Mass obligation until further notice (Canon 1248 and Catechism 2181) by virtue of a Decree issued by Bishop Vincent Long. From the 15th December 2021 this Decree is now revoked and the Sunday obligation is imposed once again.

DIVINE RETREAT CENTRE NEW YEAR'S EVE CELEBRATION: The Divine Retreat Centre in Somersby, NSW is holding a New Year's Eve celebration from 9pm to 12am on Friday, 31st December. The event will include Confession, Thanksgiving Adoration and a New Year's Mass. Bookings are required and limited numbers are available. Please call 02 4372 1598 or email drctreatreg@gmail.com to confirm attendance. Visit www.divineretreatcentre.org.au for more information.

BLUE MOUNTAINS EPIPHANY PILGRIMAGE AND FIESTA: 2 – 3 January 2022; Celebrate the Christmas season with a two-day pilgrimage and fiesta! Choose from a classic pilgrimage experience or family adventure pilgrimage on Sunday, 2 January then join the family-friendly festivities at St Finbar's Parish, Glenbrook including Mass, a festive meal and children's movie night. Stay overnight at St Finbar's, then continue the celebrations on Monday 3 January with a morning pilgrimage and Mass in the bush. For more information and to register visit www.epiphanypilgrimage.org

IMMACULATA MISSION SCHOOL 2022: You are invited to discover what it means to *Be A Saint!* Program includes talks on the faith, praise & worship, daily Mass, Adoration & the Rosary, recreation, community & friendship. Families welcome and children's ministry available! Come and join us for an amazing time to grow in faith and love for God, and make new friends! 1-9th January, 2022 (Family program 4th-9th); NEGS (New England Girls' School) 13-83 Uralla Road, Armidale, NSW; **Cost:** Individuals 15+ years: \$410 (before 8th December) \$450 (after 8th December). Includes accommodation, food, speakers, and activities. For additional information and TO REGISTER see: <http://www.sistersoftheimmaculata.org.au/ims>

SYNOD OF BISHOPS – HAVE YOUR SAY: What would you say to Pope Francis if you had 10 minutes? Catholics across the world are invited to participate in a period of local consultation for the next international Synod of Bishops. Find out how to send your message at parracatholic.org/synod-of-bishops

May the true spirit of Christmas shine in your heart and light your path and may God fill your life with joy, love, and peace this festive season!

Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year from Fr Paul, Fr Shinto, Deb, Chris and Veronica

The Parish office will be closed from Friday, 24th December until Tuesday, 11th January 2022.

The Christmas tree is a symbol of rebirth, God's gift by which He is united forever to humanity. He gives us His life. The lights on the fir tree recall the light of Jesus, the light of love that continues to shine in the world's nights.

Pope Francis

St Thomas Aquinas Parish Christmas Giving Tree - THANK YOU

On Monday, 20th December, a packed car of wonderful Christmas gifts was delivered to Wimlah Women's Refuge Outreach in Katoomba.

They were so wonderfully received by Wimlah's volunteers who will be giving all of the gifts to women and children in less fortunate circumstances. They couldn't hide their sheer delight at the amount of gifts that were donated. **An amazing effort!** Thank you to everyone who contributed.



Scripture Teacher News

Congratulations to Kim Ellis, who received her well deserved Papal Blessing for 20 years of teaching scriptures to children in our public schools. *A beautiful gift to our local school children, thank you Kim.* Kim was unable to receive her Papal Blessing from the Bishop so last Sunday received it from Fr Shinto at Mass.

At the annual CCD Mass held in Marayong on the 20th November, Wilhelmina de Raadt was recognised with her Papal Blessing for 20 years of teaching scripture, and Trisha Duffy for 15 years of service (Trisha was unfortunately, unable to attend). *A heartfelt thank you for your gifts of teaching these children in our public schools.*

Two students, who were helpers to Anne Ellis in her Year 3/4 class at Ellison Public, *Lucy Hall and Luke Doorey*, received their certificates from Anne before school finished for the year.

CAN YOU HELP? The scripture group would very much welcome more SRE's (Special Religious Educators) or helpers. Training is provided. Please contact the SRE co-ordinator, Wilhelmina de Raadt at 4751 3319. **The children are worth all the effort!**

A Christmas 2021 Message from Bishop Vincent Long OFM Conv, Bishop of Parramatta

Dear brothers and sisters,

Peace and joy to you all, as we celebrate the birth of our Saviour, Jesus of Nazareth.

After nearly two years of the pandemic and months of hard lockdown, we rejoice as the country slowly recovers and we regain our freedoms thanks to the great work of getting people vaccinated.

During this special season of thanking God for becoming one of us, let's reflect on how the God of love makes himself known to us in our daily lives.

Christmas is God coming to us in human form and showing us that we are loved inherently, abundantly and eternally. As a Franciscan, I believe that the incarnation was not an accident of history. It was not plan B because we messed up plan A.

Jesus is the fullness of God's revelation of love for us and for all of creation. This means that no matter who we are: male or female, black or white, straight or gay, rich or poor, high or low, citizen or refugee, God's love embraces us and reverences us all.

Jesus came down to live in a typical Middle Eastern village called Nazareth, that was home to a couple of hundred 'country' people. He did not decide to brandish his power, but to spend most of his time with the powerless and disenfranchised.

As God breaks ranks and becomes vulnerable for us, so must we have the courage to leave our comfort zones and discover the presence, the beauty, the love of God in unfamiliar places, in the margins and the shadows of life. We cannot worship the Christ child in truth without honouring him in the needy, the poor and the marginalised.

The incarnation also means that God has embraced the world and the cosmos. Jesus is not only God's yes to humans but God's yes to all forms of life.

We need a radical new way of relating and living that brings harmony and sustainability to all of life. We humans are part of the interconnected cosmic web of creation and we need to live a new paradigm of communion with all that is.

Long ago, Francis of Assisi grasped this fundamental reality. He intuitively understood the importance of living not as a self-centred individual but as part of the larger whole. He championed the art of living in deep harmony and communion.

Inspired by his namesake, Pope Francis says the awareness of God incarnate in the world that can "motivate us to a more passionate concern for the protection of our world" and an "ecological conversion". We must learn that 'less is more'. We must learn to envision a new economy that shifts away from consumption and exploitation to one that celebrates radical interdependence and reciprocity within diverse webs of life. Only by taking less from the earth can we move to an alternative model of living in radical harmony and deep connection with the planet.

The pandemic has highlighted how vulnerable and interconnected everyone is. If we do not take care of one another, starting with the least, with those who are most impacted, including creation, we cannot heal the world. Let us follow the footsteps of Jesus as we listen and respond to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.

I wish you my blessings and prayers for a Christmas season filled with peace, joy and hope.

**Bishop Vincent Long OFM Conv
Bishop of Parramatta**