

# Our Sunday Word

St Michael's Parish, Nowra

nowraparish.org.au

Holy Family Sunday (Year B)

28 December 2008

Jerusalem there was a man named Simeon. He was an upright and devout man; he looked forward to Israel's comforting and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had set eyes on the Christ of the Lord. Prompted by the Spirit he came to the Temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the Law required, he took him into his arms and blessed God; and he said:

'Now, Master, you can let your servant go in peace, just as you promised; because my eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared for all the nations to see, a light to enlighten the pagans and the glory of your people Israel.'

As the child's father and mother stood there wondering at the things that were being said about him, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, 'You see this child: he is destined for the fall and for the rising of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is rejected – and a sword will pierce your own soul too – so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare.'

There was a prophetess also, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was well on in years. Her days of girlhood over, she had been married for seven years before becoming a widow. She was now eighty-four years old and never left the Temple, serving God night and day with fasting and prayer. She came by just at that moment and began to praise God; and she spoke of the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem.

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## St Michael's Parish Contacts

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When they had done everything the Law of the Lord required, they went back to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. Meanwhile the child grew to maturity, and he was filled with wisdom; and God's favour was with him.

## The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection by Dianne Bergant CSA

**T**he readings focus our attention on true family values. God promises an heir to a couple that cannot produce a child, and when the promise is fulfilled and the child is born, God asks for the life of that child. The hopes that were kindled by the promise and that blazed brilliantly with the child's birth now lie like ashes on a heap. Is God renegeing on the promise of a descendant? Is God playing with people's dreams and aspirations? Or might God be preparing them for yet another marvel?

The couple had placed their trust in God's initial promise of new life, and it was fulfilled. Now Abraham, as the representative of the entire family, is asked to hope against hope, to relinquish the child in whom all of the hopes of the future rests. Trust does not really depend upon the promises made, but upon the one making the promises. God is a God of surprises, of the paradoxical, of the preposterous. This is a God who opens closed wombs, rescinds death sentences, takes an obscure child and makes him the light to the nations. Trust in such a God requires that we sacrifice our own presuppositions. Then, expecting nothing from God, we can be open to everything. In the face of such mystery, the human heart can only sing with gratitude. We live in the presence of God, and this sustains us through whatever seems impossible. Thanksgiving opens us to receive God's promise and God's gifts.

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## First Reading

15:1-6; 21:1-3

### A reading from the book of Genesis

The word of the Lord was spoken to Abram in a vision, 'Have no fear, Abram, I am your shield; your reward will be very great.'

'My Lord', Abram replied, 'what do you intend to give me? I go childless...' Then Abram said, 'See, you have given me no descendants; some man of my household will be my heir.' And then this word of the Lord was spoken to him, 'He shall not be your heir; your heir shall be one of your own flesh and blood.' Then taking him outside he said, 'Look up to heaven and count the stars if you can. Such will be your descendants,' he told him. Abram put his faith in the Lord, who counted this as making him justified.

The Lord dealt kindly with Sarah as he had said, and did what he had promised her. So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the time God had promised. Abraham named the son born to him Isaac, the son to whom Sarah had given birth.

## The word of the Lord.

## Responsorial Psalm

104

**R/** The Lord remembers his covenant for ever.

1. Give thanks to the Lord, tell his name, make known his deeds among the peoples. O sing to him, sing his praise; tell all his wonderful works! (R.)
2. Be proud of his holy name, let the hearts that seek the Lord rejoice. Consider the Lord and his strength; constantly seek his face. (R.)
3. Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, the judgements he spoke. O children of Abraham, his servant, O sons of the Jacob he chose. (R.)
4. He remembers his covenant for ever, his promise for a thousand generations, the covenant he made with Abraham, the oath he

swore to Isaac. (R.)

## Second Reading

11:8, 11-12, 17-19

### A reading from the letter to the Hebrews

It was by faith that Abraham obeyed the call to set out for a country that was the inheritance given to him and his descendants, and that he set out without knowing where he was going.

It was equally by faith that Sarah, in spite of being past the age, was made able to conceive, because she believed that he who had made the promise would be faithful to it. Because of this, there came from one man, and one who was already as good as dead himself, more descendants than could be counted, as many as the stars of heaven or the grains of sand on the seashore.

It was by faith that Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac. He offered to sacrifice his only son even though the promises had been made to him and he had been told: It is through Isaac that your name will be carried on. He was confident that God had the power even to raise the dead; and so, figuratively speaking, he was given back Isaac from the dead.

## The word of the Lord.

## Gospel Acclamation

Heb 1:1-2

Alleluia, alleluia! In the past God spoke to our fathers through the prophets; now he speaks to us through his Son. Alleluia!

## Gospel

1:26-38

### The holy Gospel according to Luke

When the day came for them to be purified as laid down by the Law of Moses, the parents of Jesus took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord – observing what stands written in the Law of the Lord: Every first-born male must be consecrated to the Lord – and also to offer in sacrifice, in accordance with what is said in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. Now in



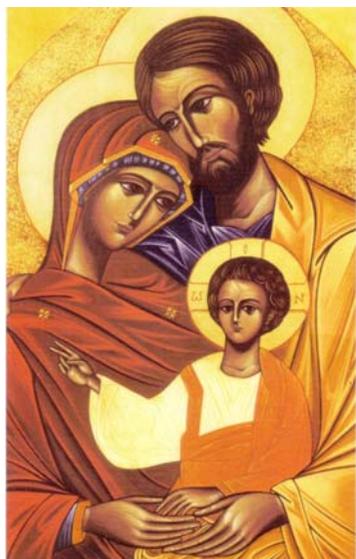
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**Website: [nowraparish.org.au](http://nowraparish.org.au)** Incorporates the Church Communities of St Michael, Nowra; St Patrick, Berry

Sacred Heart, Bomaderry; Mary, Help of Christians, Culburra; St Joseph, Kangaroo Valley; Holy Spirit, Vincentia

The Feast of the Holy Family

28 December 2008



## THE FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY

### Sunday Masses for the Holiday Season:

**Nowra:**... Vigil 6pm, 8.00am, 9.30am & 6.00pm

**Berry:** 8.00am

**Bomaderry:**.....9.30am

**Culburra:**...Vigil 6.00pm, and 8.00 a.m.

**Vincentia:** Vigil 6.00pm, 8.00 & 9.30am

**S/heads:** Vigil 6.00 pm.(27 Dec /3 Jan/10 Jan.09)

**Kangaroo Valley:** 11.00 am

### MASSES DURING THE WEEK

**Nowra:** Mon. 7.00am Tues/Wed/Thurs. 8.15am

Fri. 7.00am and 11.30am, Sat. 9.00 a.m.

**Berry:** Tues. 5.30 pm

**Culburra :** Thurs. morning 9.00.a.m.

**Vincentia:** Mon/Thurs/Fri 8.00 am,

Tues/Wed 5.30 pm

**Kangaroo Valley:** Tues/Thurs and Sat. 11.00am

(Divine Office 10.40am), Wed Mass 6.20am. (Lauds at 6am)

### CONFESSION/RECONCILIATION

**Nowra:** Sat 11.30am – 12.30pm,

**Culburra:** Sat. 5.30pm

**Vincentia:** Sat 5.00 – 5.30pm

**THANK YOU** As an expression of appreciation and gratitude for the support and generosity of so many parishioners throughout the year, and especially at Christmas time, a *Triduum of Masses* will be offered for your intentions and needs over the Christmas season. *May you be blessed with peace and good health in 2009.*

### THURSDAY JANUARY 1<sup>ST</sup> 2009 – FEAST OF MARY MOTHER OF GOD.

The actual word used in the Greek theology is *theotokos* meaning: 'God-bearer', and therefore 'Mother of God', because the one she bears is God.

The title Mother of God - had been given to Mary in popular devotion from the second century onwards, and it was confirmed by the Council of Ephesus in AD 431 to assert the full divinity of her Son. " Mary is Mother of God from having borne in His humanity, a son who is personally God."

And of course in the Gospel scene of the Visitation, Elizabeth greeted Mary as "the mother of my Lord"



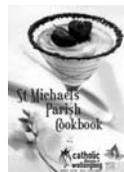
**CHRISTMAS MASS 2<sup>ND</sup> COLLECTION** – a portion of the second collection is distributed to some of the Nursing Homes in the area to assist in caring for the aged. Among the residents are many parishioners; we will also contribute towards Caritas in its work to assist refugees and displaced peoples.

**HOLY SPIRIT ST VINCENT DE PAUL CONFERENCE (Vincentia)** would like to thank everyone who so generously contributed to the Christmas Appeal.



\$1,250 was collected at the Church with another \$2,500 in special donations – a total of \$3,750. Your generous donations have helped many families.

**OUR LADY HELP OF CHRISTIANS, Culburra** - The Conference of St Vincent de Paul Society will conduct its Christmas Appeal this weekend 27/28 December. Please support the Society in their endeavours to help others



**ST MICHAEL'S PARISH COOKBOOK** – a fundraising event for World Youth Day 2008 – there are still copies available – **SELLING AT \$2.00 A COPY** – all proceeds to the St Vincent de Paul Society.



An extract from Pope Benedict's World Day of Peace message for 2009:

Once again, as the new year begins, I want to extend good

wishes for peace to people everywhere. With this Message I would like to propose a reflection on the theme: *Fighting Poverty to Build Peace*. Back in 1993, Pope John Paul II, in his Message for the World Day of Peace that year, drew attention to the negative repercussions for peace when entire populations live in poverty. Poverty is often a contributory factor or a compounding element in conflicts, including armed ones. In turn, these conflicts fuel further tragic situations of poverty... Faithful to this summons from the Lord, the Christian community will never fail, then, to assure the entire human family of her support through gestures of creative solidarity, not only by "giving from one's surplus", but above all by "a change of life- styles, of models of production and consumption, and of the established structures of power which today govern societies". At the start of the New Year, then, I extend to every disciple of Christ and to every person of good will a warm invitation to expand their hearts to meet the needs of the poor and to take whatever practical steps are possible in order to help them. The truth of the axiom cannot be refuted: "to fight poverty is to build peace."



*Mass will be offered over the Christmas period for all parishioners who have died over the past 12 months. May they rest in eternal peace.*