

St Michael's Parish, Nowra

Incorporating the Catholic Communities of St Michael's, Nowra – St. Patrick's, Berry – Sacred Heart, Bomaderry - Help of Christians, Culburra – St Joseph's, Kangaroo Valley – Holy Spirit, Vincentia.



Facebook: www.facebook.com/pg/stmichaelsparishnowra

Web page: www.nowraparish.org.au

Email: office@nowraparish.org.au

Office Telephone: **4423 1712**

Bookings for Weekend Masses, please see notice inside bulletin

Fourth Sunday of Advent

REJOICE

20th December 2020

THE ILLUSION OF INVULNERABILITY

Fr. Ron Rolheiser OMI

Whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger. That's a pious axiom that doesn't always hold up. Sometimes the bad time comes and we don't learn anything. Hopefully this present bad time, Covid-19, will teach us something and make us stronger. My hope is that Covid-19 will teach us something that previous generations didn't need to be taught but already knew through their lived experience; namely, that we're not invulnerable, that we aren't exempt from the threat of sickness, debilitation, and death. In short, all that our contemporary world can offer us in terms of technology, medicine, nutrition, and insurance of every kind, doesn't exempt us from fragility and vulnerability. Covid-19 has taught us that. Just like everyone else who has ever walked this earth, we're vulnerable.

I'm old enough to have known a previous generation when most people lived with a lot of fear, not all of it healthy, but all of it real. Life was fragile. Giving birth to a child could mean your death. A flu or virus could kill you and you had little defence against it. You could die young from heart disease, cancer, diabetes, bad sanitation, and dozens of other things. And nature itself could pose a threat. Storms, hurricanes, tornadoes, drought, pestilence, lightning, these were all to be feared because we were mostly helpless against them. People lived with a sense that life and health were fragile, not to be taken for granted.

But then along came vaccinations, penicillin, better hospitals, better medicines, safer childbirth, better nutrition, better housing, better sanitation, better roads, better cars, and better insurance against everything from loss of work, to drought, to storms, to pestilence, to disasters of any kind. And along with that came an ever-increasing sense that we're safe, protected, secure, different than previous generations, able to take care of ourselves, no longer as vulnerable as were the generations before us.

And to a large extent that's true, at least in terms of our physical health and safety. In many ways, we're far less vulnerable than previous generations. But, as Covid-19 has made evident, this is not a fully safe harbor. Despite much denial and protest, we've had to accept that we now live as did everyone before us, that is, as unable to guarantee own health and safety. For all the dreadful things Covid-19 has done to us, it has helped dispel an illusion, the illusion of our own invulnerability. We're fragile, vulnerable, mortal.

At first glance, this seems like a bad thing; it's not. Disillusionment is the dispelling of an illusion and we have for too long (and too glibly) been living an illusion, that is, living under a pall of false enchantment which has us believing that the threats of old no longer have power to touch us. And how wrong we are! As of the time of this writing there are 70.1 million Covid-19 cases reported worldwide and there have been more than 1.6 million reported deaths from this virus. Moreover the highest rates of infection and death have been in those countries we would think most invulnerable, countries that have the best hospitals and highest standards of medicine to protect us. That should be a wake-up call. For all the good things our modern and post-modern world can give us, in the end it can't protect us from everything, even as it gives us the sense that it can.

Covid-19 has been a game-changer; it has dispelled an illusion, that of our own invulnerability. What's to be learned? In short, that our generation must take its place with all other generations, recognizing that we cannot take life, health, family, work, community, travel, recreation, freedom to gather, and freedom to go to church, for granted. Covid-19 has taught us that we're not the Lord of life and that fragility is still the lot of everyone, even in a modern and post-modern world.

Classical Christian theology and philosophy have always taught that as humans we are not self-sufficient. Only God is. Only God is "Self-sufficient Being" (*Ipsum Esse Subsistens*, in classical philosophy). The rest of us are contingent, dependent, interdependent ... and mortal enough to fear the next appointment with our doctor. Former generations, because they lacked our medical knowledge, our doctors, our hospitals, our standards of hygiene, our medicines, our vaccines, and our antibiotics, existentially felt their contingency. They knew they weren't self-sufficient and that life and health could not be taken for granted. I don't envy them some of the false fear that came with that, but I do envy them not living under a pall of false security. Our contemporary world, for all the good

things it gives us, has lulled us asleep in terms of our fragility, vulnerability, and mortality. Covid-19 is a wake-up call, not just to the fact that we're vulnerable, but especially to the fact that we may not take for granted the precious gifts of health, family, work, community, travel, recreation, freedom to gather, and (yes) even of going to church.

Available seats for Vigil Masses

Nowra	5:30pm	250 (outdoor Mass, with 500 capacity)
Berry	7:00pm	300 (outdoor Mass, with 500 capacity)
	8:00pm	110
	9:30pm	130
Bomaderry	5:30pm	20
Culburra	6:00pm	FULL
	7:30pm	80 seats available

Vincentia **Full** - call **0435 862 156** or email for details
Kangaroo Valley **Full**

Christmas day Masses - Places available

Christmas Masses

Christmas Vigil ...Thursday 24th

Nowra	5:30pm - Outdoor Mass (b.y.o. seat) 8:00pm 9:30pm	}	TO REGISTER RING: 0477 427 396.
Berry	7:00pm - Outdoor Mass (b.y.o. seat)		
Bomaderry	5:30pm		
Culburra	6:00pm This mass is FULL 7:30pm Places available		

Kangaroo Valley 8:00pm --- This mass is FULL

Vincentia	5:30pm 7:00pm 8:30pm	}	<div style="background-color: #cccccc; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">These masses are FULL</div> holyspiritvincentia@gmail.com
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Christmas Day ...Friday 25th

Nowra	8:00am 9:30am	}	TO REGISTER RING: 0477 427 396.
Berry	8:00am		
Bomaderry	9:30am		
Culburra	8:00am		

Vincentia	8:00am 9:30am	}	TO REGISTER EMAIL: holyspiritvincentia@gmail.com
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**** PLEASE NOTE CORRECTION TO MASS TIME FOR KANGAROO VALLEY ****

Kangaroo Valley 9:00am --- to register email: ronankangaroo1@gmail.com

SINGING at Masses

We have been notified that singing at Mass will be allowed HOWEVER the wearing of MASKS is STRONGLY ADVISED.

Registering for the Christmas Masses

The last day for Christmas Registrations will be 3pm Monday 21st December.



In line with Government changes, the parish has been asked to include contactless check-in system, via a QR code. They look like this and you will see several displayed around the churches.

- For those who have smart phones/tablets you will be instructed (helped) to scan the QR code
- Once you scan the QR code, you will fill in the details required. **PLEASE NOTE** - only one registration is required per family, as the registration form will ask for the number of people No need to individually check in each member of your family.
- Masses will have 3 check-in stations
 1. Pre-registrations
 2. QR self-check in &
 3. QR check-in assistance required.Greeters will help you to the correct station.
- Upon completion of your registration, your mobile/tablet will display a receipt which you will show to the Attendance Monitor (leave your phone open).
- We are expecting large numbers at the 5:30pm Nowra Vigil and 7:00pm Berry Vigil (max. capacity 500) so we ask you to arrive in plenty of time for 'check in'

During this busy and every changing time, we ask for your patience and understanding. Families/couples may sit together, however please be socially distant from other families/members of the congregation.

If the Christmas Mass you wish to attend is at capacity, consider going to another Mass or attending one of the outdoor Vigils.

On behalf of the **Catholic Women's League Nowra**, we wish to thank parishioners for their continued support of our Christmas Raffle. We will now be able to support all our charitable works throughout 2021.

WINNERS: The first prize went to ticket 2642 – Kath Gleeson and second prize to ticket 2759 – Rickie Gilligan. Thank you and God bless you and your families.

CAtHFAMILY

CAtH FAMILY brings you a selection of activities, prayer rituals, crafts and recipes from their website to assist parents and grandparents in being the first educators in faith for their kids. Don't miss CathKids <https://cathfamily.org/activities/>

CatholicCare

We are always here, if you ever need... These are challenging times for everyone and CatholicCare are here to support you and your family to navigate the uncertainty. We offer confidential online and phone counselling to support you with the frustration of managing family emotions, relationship pressures and employment changes. To find out more about CatholicCare's counselling service call us on 4254 9395 or email intakeservice@catholiccare.dow.org.au



We prayerfully remember the recently deceased **Edward** (Ted) **Burgess** and **Tony Dunn** (formerly of Bomaderry) and all those whose anniversaries occur at this time, **Tony Aulsebrook** and
We pray also for all who have died from Covid-19 in Australia and worldwide.

We must look to Mary's example and know how to deal with the glorious impossibilities of God. Look how she turned the world upside-down by making one simple statement.

Calvin Miller: The Christ of Christmas, Reading for Advent

Entrance Antiphon Cf. Is 45:8

Drop down dew from above, you heavens, and let the clouds rain down the Just One; let the earth be opened and bring forth a Saviour.

A reading from the second book of Samuel 2 Sm 7:1-5. 8-12. 14. 16

Once David had settled into his house and the Lord had given him rest from all the enemies surrounding him, the king said to the prophet Nathan, 'Look, I am living in a house of cedar while the ark of God dwells in a tent'. Nathan said to the king, 'Go and do all that is in your mind, for the Lord is with you.'

But that very night the word of the Lord came to Nathan: 'Go and tell my servant David, "Thus the Lord speaks: Are you the man to build me a house to dwell in? I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be leader of my people Israel; I have been with you on all your expeditions; I have cut off all your enemies before you. I will give you fame as great as the fame of the greatest on earth. I will provide a place for my people Israel; I will plant them there and they shall dwell in that place and never be disturbed again; nor shall the wicked continue to oppress them as they did, in the days when I appointed judges over my people Israel; I will give them rest from all their enemies. The Lord will make you great; the Lord will make you a House. And when your days are ended and you are laid to rest with your ancestors, I will preserve the offspring of your body after you and make his sovereignty secure. I will be a father to him and he a son to me. Your House and your sovereignty will always stand secure before me and your throne be established for ever."

Responsorial Psalm Ps 88:2-5. 27. 29. R. see v.2

(R.) For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.

1. I will sing for ever of your love, O Lord;
through all ages my mouth will proclaim your
truth. Of this I am sure, that your love lasts for
ever, that your truth is firmly established as
the heavens. (R.)

3. He will say to me: 'You are my father,
my God, the rock who saves me.'
I will keep my love for him always;
for him my covenant shall endure. (R.)

2. 'I have made a covenant with my chosen one;
I have sworn to David my servant:
I will establish your dynasty for ever
and set up your throne through all ages.' (R.)

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans Rom 16:25-27

Glory to him who is able to give you the strength to live according to the Good News I preach, and in which I proclaim Jesus Christ, the revelation of a mystery kept secret for endless ages, but now so clear that it must be broadcast to pagans everywhere to bring them to the obedience of faith. This is only what scripture has predicted, and it is all part of the way the eternal God wants things to be. He alone is wisdom; give glory therefore to him through Jesus Christ for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Acclamation Lk 1:38

Alleluia, alleluia!

I am the servant of the Lord: may his will for me be done. Alleluia!

Gospel Lk 1:26-38

The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. He went in and said to her, 'Rejoice, so highly favoured! The Lord is with you.' She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, 'Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'But how can this come about, since I am a virgin?' 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you' the angel answered 'and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. Know this too: your kinswoman Elizabeth has, in her old age, herself conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God.' 'I am the handmaid of the Lord,' said Mary 'let what you have said be done to me.' And the angel left her.

Communion Antiphon Is 7:14

Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son; and his name will be called Emmanuel.