

The West Wagga Wag

Issue 107

December 2011

Coming Events

Solemnity of Immaculate Conception of Blessed Virgin Mary, Thurs 8
Prayer Service for Peace: Thurs 8-22
Dedication Anniversary of Holy Trinity Church, Sat 17
Christmas Novena Begins, Sat 17
Silver Jubilee of Priesthood, Tues 20
Come to Bethlehem, Thurs 22
Come to Bethlehem, Fri 23
Come to Bethlehem, Sat 24
Nativity of the Lord, Sun 25
Bethlehem Pack Up, Mon 26
Feast of the Holy Family, Fri 30
Mary, Mother of God, Sun 1 Jan
RECONCILIATION TIMES
2nd Rite Ho.T Church, 7pm Mon 19
Holy Trinity Church 11am-12, Sat 24
CHRISTMAS MASS TIMES
Morning Mass Ho.T 7am Sat 24
Christmas Vigil: Holy Trinity School Hall 6.45pm Sat 24
Masses on Christmas Day, Sun 25
San Isidore Church 8am
Holy Trinity Church 9am
St Michael's Church 9.30am
Home of Compassion 10.30am
[No evening Mass Christmas Day]
Mon 26 Morning Mass Ho.T 7am
Pack up Bethlehem from 8.30am
Loreto Home of Compassion 5.45pm

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The due date for the next Wag is:
Sunday January 7

Come to 'Come to Bethlehem'

"Let us all go to Bethlehem this year!"

A chorus of angels proclaimed to the shepherds in the fields that the Saviour was born and they decided to go and see this for themselves, "Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us" (Luke 2:15).

Unlike the shepherds, there isn't a chorus of angels telling us to journey to Bethlehem, but that doesn't mean we can't experience the real wonder of Christmas for ourselves. It might seem strange inviting parishioners to Bethlehem but still there are some who have not been along to steep themselves in this great community and parish activity.

For eight years now the parish, led by a dedicated few, has worked hard to bring the joy of Christmas to the city of Wagga Wagga.

Come to Bethlehem as a display endeavours to capture the true meaning of Christmas. Jesus first came to Earth in a way most humble and unexpected. Christmas in the commercial world usually doesn't ignore the real meaning behind Christmas but all glitz does impress more than a smelly little Christmas crib.

It is most edifying that the parish formula of sets, actors



and animals still draws crowds of people. It is a lot of work but it also brings much joy to the young and much grace to willing participants. God has blessed our parish Bethlehem in many ways and not just at Christmas time.

This Christmas can you spare an hour or so and make a contribution? There are so many ways to lend a hand and so many ways to be enriched by God's favour upon us. There are never too many people to help; before Bethlehem during the city set up; during Bethlehem by acting or working one of the stalls and finally Monday 26th December putting things away.

Of special mention are all the teenagers who make an invaluable contribution. Thanks to the parents who bring them along and support us. Please consider giving a hand this year if you haven't before.

Again at 8pm on Thursday 22 December, Friday and on Saturday – Christmas Eve after the 6.45pm Mass Bethlehem will be open to all.

We have three little babes for the main role at Bethlehem, what will be this year?

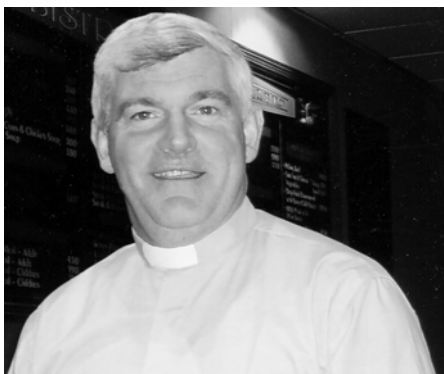


Congratulations!

To Cath Vella on her 70th birthday;

To Fr Gerard on his 25th anniversary of ordination.

pastor's page



Have you ever wondered why the rich young man in the Gospel didn't correspond to Christ's call (Matthew 19:21)? Perhaps it was because there were so few people were praying for vocations. Very few at that time could realize the great need there was to pray for totally dedicated disciples of Jesus Christ. So Jesus says to us, 'pray the Lord of the harvest to send labourers into the Harvest' (Luke 10:2).

If the young men and women of the 21st Century, rich in opportunities for employment, pleasure, travel, luxury and ease, are going to give up everything and respond to the challenge of a divine call, lovingly embraced and persevered in it, then each Catholic must pray without ceasing for more Vocations to the priesthood and the consecrated life. We all must believe without doubting and hope without discouragement, knowing that the grace won by prayer will fill young people with a deep and abiding zeal for God's service. It is a public service which is the greatest "career" on earth because it is a life call from Almighty God.

If we Catholics enlivened by a living faith and indomitable hope, manifest sufficient love for God and have an authentic charity towards our neighbour, then the true love of Jesus will shine in the hearts of our youth. Hopefully they will see a true reflection of Christ's love for them through us. The young men and women of tomorrow can discern the transitory nature of this world's allurements and lovingly seek the perfection of a divine vocation with its eternal reward and everlasting happiness (Matthew 19:29). For 'Love is a fire no waters avail to quench, no flood to drown; for love, a man (or woman) will give up all that he has in the world, and think nothing of his loss.' (Song of Songs 8:7)

On the occasion of my 25th anniversary of ordination, I thought I would I be really egotistical and give you a simple illustration from my own life and vocation. Because that's the one I know best though many priests and religious could give a similar story. I have been in religious life for 30 years and a priest for 25 years. But for the nine years prior to entering the religious seminary as many of you know I was a bus mechanic and lastly an interstate tourist bus driver. I was good at my job. I enjoyed it a great deal.

Traveling all over Australia, meeting all sorts a fine people. I was making plenty of money. There were many opportunity to do whatever I desired. I had intended to own my own coach business as had my father. There were even many chances to meet that particular young lady with whom I could spend the rest of my days. After all most of the young ladies think they would like to marry the coach captain!

What was it that changed me? Why am I writing this today? I firmly believe that someone somewhere was praying for more priestly and religious vocations. Someone was in prayer before Jesus Christ present in the Blessed Sacrament or at Mass. Someone was interceding for a vocation to be answered. It was someone whom they would probably never meet in this life as they prayed the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

On a Friday afternoon I was at the Blessed Sacrament chapel of All Saints in Perth and had just gone to confession when the priest, completely out of the blue, said, "why don't you give your life to God?" What a question! Well I can tell you that it came as a real shock and I was out of that chapel as quick as I could. I didn't go back for two weeks. But someone somewhere kept on praying. Someone was paying the necessary vocational price; grace was being sought from God.

Actually, the more I thought about the question the more reasons I found why I should not and could not be a religious... let alone a priest. There were hundreds of reasons. I had never liked school. Imagine doing long years of studying philosophy, theology, Scripture, history, homiletics and apologetics to name a few. When you're free you don't want to be tied by obedience. If there is plenty of

opportunity to marry, celibacy is the furthest thing from your mind. If you have spent long years earning precious dollars which are stacked in the bank you're not about to give it all to the poor.

No there seemed no reason to even consider the question of giving oneself to God as a possibility. That is no reason but one. Someone somewhere was praying for vocations. I believe that's why I'm in West Wagga Wagga. Prayer works. But it wasn't my prayer.

The Lord by means of the grace merited by another praying person secured for me the invitation, the time and the wherewithal to answer my vocation. A vocation undeserved and unmerited and at first not even wanted.

A vocation is a spiritual reality. It can only be gained by grace. No reason but love of God can really move a person to give up all and follow the poor, chaste, obedient Christ (Matthew 8:20). But someone must pay the price. Someone must make the sacrifice to supply the Church with Vocations. This is what the Lord has told us to do. 'Pray the Lord of the Harvest to send labourers into the harvest' (Matthew 9:38).

God does the calling but sometimes we must also offer an invitation. I'm very glad that I was invited to answer my vocation. The call was there but there needed to be the human invitation backed by a good deal of pray, as well.

For those of you who have already been praying so faithfully for so long, I want to thank you. Thank you because who knows if it were not the very graces that you obtained in prayer from God that inspired my vocation. Thank you because I am very happy to be the Lord's missionary. To compare what I had, with what I have, is not possible. There is no comparison. It is enough to say that it is definitely better. Recalling one's vocation inspires us to 'pray the Lord of the harvest to send labourers into the Harvest'.

Fr Gerard

Christmas Jokes

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(See Luke 2:1-16) 12-25-2005

STAR LIGHT, STAR BRIGHT, FIRST
OUTRAGEOUSLY BRIGHT, BLINDING,
SUPERNATURALLY GIGANTIC STAR I SEE
TONIGHT ...

I am a bus driver for high school kids. It is Christmas time and the kids all gave me cards and presents. Now I'm thinking, "Man, I must be a good driver and the kids even like me."

I opened the cards when I got home. On the inside of one card it said: "Thanks for not killing us yet. We really appreciate it."

As goofy George had a habit of giving his wife strange Christmas gifts, she was not surprised when he came one night carrying a tiny, branchless tree. Attached to a lone limb was a shotgun shell.

"All right, George," said his wife, truly stumped this time.

"What is it?"

"Why, honey." George smiled, "it's a cartridge in a bare tree."

"May I speak to the person in charge of gift wrap?"

"Sorry, she's all tied up!"

One Christmas Eve Santa Claus decided to give his reindeer a vacation. In their place, he got eight monkeys to pull the sleigh. The names of the monkeys were Do, Re, Fa, So, La, Ti, and Do.

"What about Mi?"

All right, you can pull the sleigh, too!

What did Adam say on Christmas night?

"It's Christmas, Eve".

What did Santa say to Mrs. Claus on Christmas Eve?

Looks like rain, dear.

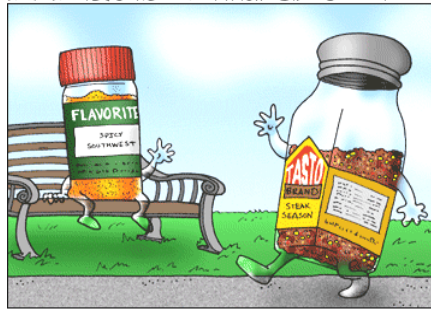
What nationality is Santa Claus? North Polish.

What do elves learn in school? The Elf-abet!

Why does Santa have 3 gardens? So he can ho-ho-ho.

What do you call a cat on the beach at Christmas time? Sandy Claus!

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Thanks to Mark Highum 12-19-2005
SEASON'S GREETINGS

There once was a Tsar in Russia whose name was Rudolph the Great. He was standing in his house one day with his wife. He looked out the window and saw something happening. He says to his wife, "Look honey. It's raining."

She, being the obstinate type, responded, "I don't think so, dear. I think it's snowing."

But Rudolph knew better. So he says to his wife, "Let's step outside and we'll find out."

Lo and behold, they step outside and discover it was in fact rain. And Rudolph turns to his wife and replies, "I knew it was raining. Rudolph the Red knows rain, dear!"

Q: What goes Ho, Ho, Swoosh, Ho, Ho, Swoosh?

A: Santa caught in a revolving door!

Santa and his reindeer need to be really quiet when they deliver presents so no one will know they are there.

One Christmas Eve when they landed on a roof top, there was a loud, "Snort, snort, sniff, honk, honk, sniff." "Shhh," said Santa and he proceeded to get out of the sleigh.

Once again, louder this time, there was a "Snort, snort, sniff, honk, honk, sniff."

Dogs began to bark in the neighborhood. "Shhh," Santa said again, "Stop doing that." He started to lift his sack of toys out of the sleigh when he heard it again, even louder.

"SNORT, SNORT, SNIFF, HONK, HONK, SNIFF."

Lights came on all over the neighborhood. Some people opened their windows and stuck out their heads trying to see where the noise came from.

Horrified, Santa jumped back in the sled and flew off to the North Pole. When he got there, he lined up all the reindeer and said, "OK, we are not going to deliver any more presents until the reindeer who is trying to be funny by making those noises confesses and apologizes."

He waited. No reindeer came forward. "I know who it is," said Santa. He held up a piece of paper. "I've written your name here and I will read it. But I want to give you a chance to do the right thing,"

Still no reindeer came forward. So Santa did the only thing he could. He read off the rude-nosed reindeer.

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12-18-2009
I HOPE YOU ARE AWARE THAT THIS IS A HUGE
CONFLICT OF INTEREST

WE DON'T REALLY EAT CHRIST'S BODY -- OR DO WE?

By MARY BETH BONACCI

It's easy to go to Mass on auto pilot. You genuflect, go into the pew, sit down, stand up, kneel, mumble prayers, think about your girlfriend or your plans for the afternoon, mumble prayers, stand again, shake someone's hand, kneel, get up, walk up the aisle, receive the body and blood of Christ...

Hey, wait a minute!

Receive the body of Christ? Take His actual flesh into your mouth and into your digestive system, eat the flesh of a guy who lived 2000 years ago? You do that? You do it without even thinking about it?

Maybe it's time to do a little thinking. Do you believe that's what you're doing? Or is Communion just another part of the Mass for you? Do you take it seriously, or is it just one more hoop to jump through before you get to go home and talk on the phone?

A lot of Catholics aren't too clear on this whole concept of the Eucharist. They're not too sure what it is. The Church doesn't really believe it's the actual body and blood of Christ, does it? It's just a symbolic thing, right? A meal, right? I Mean, otherwise it'd be too gross to even think about, much less do.

Well, guess again. The Church does believe the Eucharist is the real body and blood of Christ. After the words of consecration ("This is My body ..." and "This is My blood..."), the bread and wine are no longer bread and wine. They've become Jesus Christ: body, blood, soul and

divinity. He's there.

So how did we come up with this one? Did a bunch of bishops get together? ("Hey guys, here's a good one. We'll make them believe that the wine becomes blood. That'll freak them out!") No. We don't need to make this stuff up. Like everything else, we believe it because Christ told us it's true.

It all happened in the Gospel of



After Jesus said that His flesh is real food and His blood is real drink, "many of His disciples drew back and no longer went about with Him" (Jn 6:66).

John. Jesus was teaching His disciples, talking about bread. And He said something really astounding. He said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood you have no life in you ... for My flesh is real food indeed and My blood is real drink indeed" (Jn 6:53-55). He was pretty adamant on the point.

The disciples figured He didn't really mean it. They asked again. And again. He insisted He meant it. "Real food indeed. Real drink indeed." They should've known when He said, "Truly, truly." He wasn't fooling around.

They naturally freaked out. Living the commandments was

fine. Loving your neighbour was nice. But cannibalism wasn't really their gig. The next chapter says, "After this many of His disciples drew back and no longer went about with Him" (Jn 6:66). He lost a lot of support. But He never said, "Come on, guys! I didn't really mean it! It's just symbolic." He let them go. Christ wouldn't do that over a misunderstanding. He meant what He said.

So how do we get this bread which is really His body? He told us at the Last Supper. "And He took bread and when He had given thanks He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me." And likewise he took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood" (Lk 22:19-20).

So Christ made things pretty clear. Unless we eat His flesh, we have no life within us. Receiving the Eucharist is a big deal. It's essential to our life in Him. It's essential to staying on the right side of the gap between God and man.

It's a pretty awesome thing when you think about it. God, the big God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God who created the universe and holds it in existence -- He comes into you in a very real, very physical way. He becomes tangibly present in your body, He gets as close as He possibly could.

When you understand that, you get a little better understanding of people who go to Mass every day. They're not just going to sit down, stand up,

WE DON'T REALLY EAT CHRIST'S BODY -- OR DO WE? continued

mumble prayers and kneel. They're going to receive the body, blood, soul and divinity of Christ. They're going to drink Him into their lives, literally, so that He remains present to them. They're going so that, with Him constantly present, they'll be better able to love as He loves. They'll be stronger Christians and live better lives. They don't go because they're really good people. At least that's not why I go. I go because I need a lot of help.

All of this tells us something about how we should approach Communion. He said, "Do this in remembrance of Me." Not "Do this thinking about your homework," or "Do this without paying attention." Receiving the Eucharist is a profound act. It's as close as you'll get to God in this life. If we want to receive all the

benefit we can from it, we need to have the right attitude. Our approach needs to be prayerful, respectful and reverent.

We also need to approach the Eucharist "clean." We can't just

from strengthening your faith, receiving Communion unworthily will diminish it. I believe it was Voltaire who said that the way to lose your faith is to commit a serious sin and then go to Communion. It's a "grace drain" and it's really wrong.



So the Eucharist is serious business. It's the best thing we have going in our day to day life - - constant, ongoing contact with the living God. It's our "daily bread" that nourishes our spiritual life. It provides our USRDA of grace.

sin all week, and then expect to receive the body and blood of Christ. Receiving worthily means going to Him with a clear conscience. If you've committed a serious sin which you haven't confessed, to go to Communion would be another serious sin. It's a "slap in the face" to God. Far

Don't take the Eucharist lightly. Pay attention to the consecration. Something really incredible is happening. And don't settle for "starvation rations." Receive the Eucharist often. It's your spiritual food. You need it.



Four Prayers for Christmas

There are four types of prayer: adoring God; thanking Him; making up for sins; and asking for things. (MC)

ADORATION

Oh Lord, amid the straw and hay
Beneath the Christmas Star You lay,
Who rule the stars both near and far,
I **adore** You humbly for what You are.

THANKSGIVING

Immutable, invulnerable,
Those small, soft hands are pierceable
Priesthood holy now begun
I **thank** You Lord for what You've done.

ATONEMENT

Son of God and son of Adam,
Whom our treacherous sins must sadden,
I, deserving not to be God's son,
I **Beg pardon** for what I've done.

PETITION

Word made flesh, Emmanuel,
Of Whom Isaiah did foretell,
With gifts eternal You have come,
I **ask for** what I'm to become.

To God the Father, God the Son,
And Holy Spirit, Three in One,
Adoration, thanks, atonement
And **petitions** from humble hearts
be sent.



I **adore** You for what You are.
I **thank** You for what You've done.
I **beg pardon** for the wrong I've done.
I **ask for** what I'm to become.

A Visit from the Christ Child

'Twas the morning of Christmas,
when all through the house
All the family was frantic,
including my spouse;
For each one of them had one
thing only in mind,
To examine the presents St. Nick
left behind.

The boxes and wrapping and
ribbons and toys,
Were strewn on the floor, and the
volume of noise,
Increased as our children began a
big fight,
Over who got the video games,
who got the bike.

I looked at my watch and I
said, slightly nervous,
"Let's get ready for church, so
we won't miss the service."
The children protested, "We
don't want to pray:
We've just got our presents,
and we want to play!"

It dawned on me then that we
had gone astray,
In confusing the purpose of this
special day;
Our presents were many and very
high-priced ,
But something was missing -- that
something was Christ!

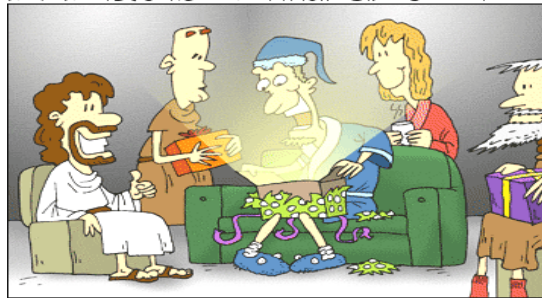
I said, "Put the gifts down and
let's gather together,
And I'll tell you a tale of the
greatest gift ever.
"A savior was promised when
Adam first sinned,
And the hopes of the world upon
Jesus were pinned.

Abraham begat Isaac, who Jacob

begat,
And through David the line went
to Joseph, whereat
This carpenter married a maiden
with child,
Who yet was a virgin, in no way
defiled.

"Saying 'Hail, full of Grace,' an
archangel appeared
To Mary the Blessed, among
women revered:
The Lord willed she would bear --
through the Spirit -- a son.
Said Mary to Gabriel, 'God's will
be done.'

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Thanks to Andrew S.
ETERNAL LIFE, MY FAVORITE ... THANKS
JESUS!

"Now Caesar commanded a tax
would be paid,
And all would go home while the
census was made;
Thus Joseph and Mary did leave
Galilee
For the city of David to pay this
new fee.

"Mary's time had arrived, but the
inn had no room,
So she laid in a manger the fruit
of her womb;
And both Joseph and Mary
admired as He napped
The Light of the World in his
swaddling clothes wrapped.

"Three wise men from the East had
come looking for news
Of the birth of the Savior, the King
of the Jews;
They carried great gifts as they
followed a star --
Gold, frankincense, myrrh, which
they'd brought from afar.

"As the shepherds watched over
their flocks on that night,
The glory of God shone upon them
quite bright,
And an angel explained the intent of
the birth,
Saying, 'Glory to God and His peace
to the earth.'

"For this was the Messiah whom
prophets foretold,
A good shepherd to bring his
sheep back to the fold;
He was God become man, He
would die on the cross,
He would rise from the dead to
restore Adam's loss.

"Santa Claus, Christmas presents,
a brightly lit pine,
Candy canes and spiked eggnog are
all very fine;
Let's have fun celebrating, but leave
not a doubt
That Christ is what Christmas is
really about!"

The children right then put an end to
the noise,
They dressed quickly for church, put
away all their toys;
For they knew Jesus loved them and
said they were glad
That He'd died for their sins, and to
save their dear Dad.

What's the next number in this series?! 11, 6, 3, 5, 4, ...

If you work out the number pattern, you won't be guessing, you'll know exactly what the next number is, beyond the shadow of a doubt.

Let us know if you work it out—no guessing, just knowing that you know.

MY FIRST CHRISTMAS IN HEAVEN

This poem was written by a 13 year old boy who died of a brain tumor that he had battled for four years. He died on December 14, 1997. He gave this to his mom before he died. His name was Ben.

I see the countless
Christmas trees
around the world below
With tiny lights, like Heaven's
stars,
reflecting on the snow

The sight is so spectacular,
please wipe away the tear
For I am spending Christmas with
Jesus Christ this year.

I hear the many Christmas songs
that people hold so dear
But the sounds of music can't
compare
with the Christmas choir up here.

I have no words to tell you,
the joy their voices bring,
For it is beyond description,
to hear the angels sing.

I know how much you miss me,
I see the pain inside your heart.
But I am not so far away,
We really aren't apart.

So be happy for me, dear ones,
You know I hold you dear.
And be glad I'm spending
Christmas
with Jesus Christ this year.

I sent you each a special
gift,
from my heavenly home
above.
I sent you each a memory
of my undying love.

After all, love is a gift
more precious
than pure gold.
was always most
important
the stories Jesus told.

Please love and keep each other,
my Father said to do.
I can't count the blessing or love
has for each of you.

So have a Merry Christmas and
Wipe away that tear
Remember, I am spending
Christmas with
Jesus Christ this year



Hear ye, hear ye!

Fr Gerard's ordination silver jubilee!



All Invited!

Tuesday 20 December
6.30 pm Mass at Holy Trinity , then
parish dinner in Holy Trinity School
Hall;
please RSVP for catering by Monday 12
December; call Julia 0407 931 274 AH;
Jackie 6931 2774 or 0407 312 773

The West Wagga Wag

West Wagga Parish



Serving: Ashmont,
Collingullie,
Glenfield, Lloyd,
and San Isidore



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A voice calling in the wilderness,
'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for Him!'
Mark 1:3

J	Z	P	T	V	R	I	V	E	R	T	U	W	T	P
T	L	U	S	E	L	K	X	B	A	P	T	I	Z	E
N	B	X	U	Y	R	K	G	Y	S	L	Z	L	D	Q
M	D	E	S	E	R	T	W	J	O	R	D	A	N	P
F	O	P	S	A	H	N	I	O	F	Y	B	J	O	R
U	H	T	T	J	W	R	U	W	R	O	C	K	S	E
E	J	O	R	J	C	A	F	V	I	T	Z	B	O	P
A	V	H	A	H	W	O	F	D	D	L	H	Z	G	A
S	U	J	I	O	N	F	N	L	O	O	G	Y	N	R
I	H	I	G	N	I	I	I	F	C	C	L	R	J	E
N	X	I	H	E	E	W	V	Y	E	U	L	I	Q	G
S	O	A	T	Y	P	R	O	T	K	S	X	H	I	T
B	P	H	H	I	P	H	I	L	J	T	S	Z	U	I
E	T	K	D	Z	V	V	C	G	T	S	F	P	I	S
F	P	A	T	H	S	J	E	S	A	N	D	A	L	S

HONEY	BAPTIZE	SINS	LOCUSTS	JORDAN
PATHS	RIVER	VOICE	WORTHY	CONFESS
STRAIGHT	WILD	DESERT	PREPARE	SANDALS