

The West Wagga Wag

Issue 108

January 2012

Parish Notes

Thanks to all who have helped out with Come to Bethlehem and throughout the whole year. And God bless all of you who have served the Lord in hidden but extremely important ways raising the next generation and spreading God's Kingdom in our society.

Fr Gerard is away—until Jan 21st.

Rosary Group: Wed 9.30am San Isidore

Junior Legion: In Recess for holidays

Senior Legion: Wed 7pm all welcome

St V de Paul: meets Thur 7pm @ Ho.T

Defending the defenceless... Albury Australia Day Life & Family National Conference, 26-29 Jan Lake Hume Resort, 15yrs and under free lunch dinner and activities. Featuring superb speakers (including Mons Reilly & Steve Mosher (USA), Bishop Porteous and more). Details: Family Life International 02 9519 9111 www.fli.org.au mail@fli.org.au

Fr Michael Kennedy's ordination to Bishop—Thurs 9th Feb, 10.30 am. Watch for more details.

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The due date for the next Wag is:
Sunday February 5th

Bethlehem 2011 and Fr G's big Jubilee 25

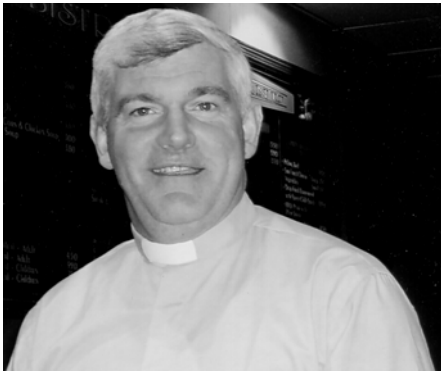
On Dec 20th Fr Gerard had his 25th anniversary of ordination:



Come to Bethlehem 2011



pastor's page



Christmastide and the New Year's period - once all the hype has subsided - is a wonderful time for spiritual reflection. There is time out from work, school and perhaps even the work of the home. There is just a possibility that unless we do take a little time out, 2012 will just be a repeat of last year. We are all creatures of habit and the rut we establish is easily maintained. After my annual holiday at home with family, I take a period of reflection early in January - a five day spiritual retreat in the beautiful grounds at Melbourne University. It is a time of reflection and rejuvenation.

Times of retreat are meant to be both refreshing and spiritually invigorating. Reflection is about recollecting past blessings and of present commitment with relation to God. Rejoicing in successes balances the repenting of past failures. In this way they might be avoided next time. There is also the healing for such disappointments.

To achieve any real and lasting benefit a holiday is also meant to be a holy-day. Indeed in the past when people worked 12-14 hour days six and sometimes seven days a week, any day off was known as a holy day; such were the days of Christmas, New Year's Day, Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Every other day was to work like a creature of the paddocks with head down and surviving on the intake of that day. But of course we are more than field animals grazing.

Our spiritual soul needs as much if not more nourishment than the cravings of the body. Our bodies make themselves felt when there is a need. But the soul usually falls into torpor or spiritual sloth with very little feeling, excepting perhaps the realization of the loss of fervour. Benedict, the Holy Father, is

painfully aware that in many parts of the world the practice of the faith is poor. There is probably nothing outstanding in this statement given the ease with which human beings exclude God from their life, their mind and their heart. Even Jesus complained saying, '...when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?' [Luke 18:8]

To help all, Pope Benedict has proclaimed to the world a **Year of Faith**. It will be from October 2012 until November 2013. The proclamation of such a spiritual year is to restimulate the awareness for faith in our lives. The Letter to the Hebrews states, 'faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen' [Hebrews 11:1]. Sensible people hope for God and the realization of an invisible yet eternal life with him. Moreover, normal people are convinced that God holds everything together. While the Catechism states that 'man's faculties make him capable of coming to knowledge of the existence of a personal God. Yet for man to be able to enter into real intimacy with him, God willed both to reveal himself to man, and to give him the grace of being able to welcome this revelation in faith' [CCC 35].

Interestingly, immediately prior to the Pope's announcement the Bishops of Australia proclaimed for all Australians a **Year of Grace**. This blessed time will precede the Year of Faith and be celebrated from Pentecost 2012 to Pentecost 2013. These two themes **Faith** and **Grace** marry beautifully within the spiritual life.

When Pope Benedict announced the **Year of Faith** he explained that it will also mark the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, concluding on the feast of Christ the King 2013. Benedict stated the Year of Faith 'will be a moment of grace and commitment to an ever fuller conversion to God, to reinforce our faith in Christ and to proclaim him with joy to the people of our time. ... Faith grows when it is lived as an experience of love received and when it is communicated as an experience of grace and joy'.

Similar to Pope Benedict, Archbishop Philip Wilson in proclaiming the **Year of Grace** invites and encourages all to respond wholeheartedly to the call for a

Year of Grace. This invitation is not just to individuals but also to our schools and universities, our social justice and welfare organisations and myriad committees and agencies who work with Christ to bring all to holiness.

Bishop Wilson wrote, 'we are invited to grow in prayer; to help others to pray and to pray better. 'We call ourselves to repentance for the areas in which we have failed, individually and corporately, by commission and omission. And we will celebrate the gift of holiness, the gifts of the Spirit, with which the Father has blessed us through the Risen Lord.'

On a deeply personal level may we all recommit on our prayer journey so that this "Pentecost" year will be for our nation and all Australians truly a "year of grace". To assist with this holy endeavour, I wish to suggest something both practical and profoundly salvific.

Both Jesus and the Blessed Virgin Mary have given us extraordinary means to holiness and eternal happiness. In keeping with the wish of the Sacred Heart of Jesus perhaps we can all recommit to the Nine First Friday devotions, thus availing ourselves of the graces promised. Similarly, Our Lady has provided us with the First Five Saturdays and the rewards that ensue. Next Friday Jan 6 and Saturday 7 are an opportunity to merit much grace and to further our faith as we spiritually begin our New Year. Parents especially can encourage their children in these blessed devotions during the Year of Grace and within the Year of Faith. The reward is out of this world.

Fr Gerard



January Jokes



VATICAN HUMOUR

After getting all of Pope Benedict's luggage loaded into the limo, (and he doesn't travel light), the driver notices the Pope is still standing on the curb.

'Excuse me, Your Holiness,' says the driver, 'Would you please take your seat so we can leave?'

'Well, to tell you the truth,' says the Pope, 'they never let me drive at the Vatican when I was a cardinal, and I'd really like to drive today.'

'I'm sorry, Your Holiness, but I cannot let you do that. I'd lose my job! What if something should happen?' protests the driver, wishing he'd never gone to work that morning..

'Who's going to tell?' says the Pope with a smile.

Reluctantly, the driver gets in the back as the Pope climbs in behind the wheel. The driver quickly regrets his decision when, after exiting the airport, the Pontiff floors it, accelerating the limo to 205 km's.. (Remember, the Pope is German..)

'Please slow down, Your Holiness!' pleads the worried driver, but the Pope keeps the pedal to the metal until they hear sirens.

'Oh no, I'm going to lose my license -- and my job!' moans the driver.

The Pope pulls over and rolls down the window as the cop approaches, but the cop takes one

look at him, goes back to his motorcycle, and gets on the radio.

'I need to talk to the Chief,' he says to the dispatcher.

The Chief gets on the radio and the cop tells him that he's stopped a limo going 205 kph.

'So bust him,' says the Chief.

'I don't think we want to do that, he's really important,' said the cop.

The Chief exclaimed, 'All the more reason!'

'No, I mean really important,' said the cop with a bit of persistence.

The Chief then asked, 'Who do you have there, the mayor?'

Cop: 'Bigger.'

Chief: 'A senator?'

Cop: 'Bigger.'

Chief: 'The Prime Minister?'

Cop: 'Bigger.'

'Well,' said the Chief, 'who is it?'

Cop: 'I think it's God!'

The Chief is even more puzzled and curious,

'What makes you think it's GOD'

Cop: 'His chauffeur is the Pope!'

Innocence is Priceless

One Sunday morning the priest noticed little Alex standing in the foyer of the church staring up at a large plaque.

It was covered with names and small Australian flags mounted either side of it. The six year old had been staring at the plaque some time so the priest walked up, stood beside the little boy, and said quietly, 'Good morning Alex.'

'Good morning Father', he replied, still focused on the plaque. 'Father, what is this?'

'Well, son, it's a memorial to all the young men and women who died in the service.'

Soberly, they just stood together, staring at the large plaque.

Finally, little Alex's voice, barely audible and trembling with fear asked, 'Which service, the 9 am or the 10.30 am?'



What kind of snake is good at maths?

An adder.

What do you call a gorilla wearing ear-muffs?

Anything you like! He can't hear you!

What do you give an elephant with big feet?

Plenty of room!

What's grey and squirts jam at you?

A mouse eating a doughnut!

What has six eyes but cannot see?

Three blind mice!

Joey: I lost my dog.

Lauren: Why don't you put an ad in the newspaper?

Joey: Don't be silly! He can't read.

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02-11-1998

Little Girl With Down Syndrome Takes Modeling World by Storm

by Steven Ertelt | LifeNews.com | The London Telegraph newspaper features a story on little Taya Kennedy, a 14-month-old girl who has Down's Syndrome but has taken the modeling world by storm. The camera loves her and she now has her own modeling agency that is booking her gig after photogenic gig.

Kennedy is just another example of the joy such children and people with Down syndrome bring to the world but who, tragically, see their lives snuffed out by abortion at a 90 percent rate.

'Taya is an incredibly photogenic, warm and smiley child, and that shines through in her photographs,' says Alysia Lewis, owner of Urban Angels, the prestigious UK model agency that has signed her up.

'We only open our books twice a year and select just a few new children each season.

'The standard is high; the desire for places strong. Taya is one of 50 children we chose from 2,000 applicants.

'That she has Down's Syndrome did not enter the equation. We chose her because of her vibrancy and sense of fun. Not all children are comfortable in front of a lens and with a photographer looking at them — especially when they are so young. But Taya was so relaxed and happy. She was just what we were looking for.'

Gemma Andre, Taya's mother,

says she is offended when people come up to her and tell her they're sorry her daughter has Down syndrome.

'I always believed my daughter was stunning but I thought, "I'm her mum. I'm biased,"' she says.

'When people say "poor you" I find it offensive and irritating,' said Taya's mother Gemma

'When the agency rang me and said, "We want her on our books. She's absolutely beautiful", I was delighted.



'I asked them if they were aware she had Down's Syndrome. They said: "It's immaterial. We've accepted her." At that moment I burst into tears. I was overjoyed, not so much because Taya was going to be a model. More importantly, she had competed on equal terms with every other child and succeeded.

'People can be really negative about children with Down's. They say they can't do this and won't be able to achieve that. It's incredibly frustrating. Someone said to me the other day: "I suppose she'll never be able to live an independent life," and I

said, "Why on earth not?"

'When people say "poor you" I find it offensive and irritating. The way I see it, some people cannot even have children and God has given me this special child.'

That's the attitude more people need to have about special needs children — all of whom were born under a threat much bigger to their lives than any medical condition or chromosomal disorder they may face: abortion.

Gemma says her daughter will go on to experience a happy, productive life — something 99 percent of people with Down syndrome say they have.

Researchers at Children's Hospital in Boston surveyed families where a member had Down Syndrome and found that Down Syndrome is a positive.

Among 2,044 parents or guardians surveyed, 79 percent reported their outlook on life was more positive because of their child with Down syndrome.... Skotko also found that among siblings ages 12 and older, 97 percent expressed feelings of pride about their brother or sister with Down syndrome and 88 percent were convinced they were better people because of their sibling with Down syndrome.

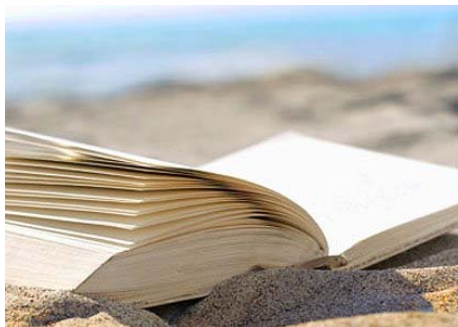


G. K. Chesterton on New Year's Resolutions

The object of a New Year is not that we should have a new year. It is that we should have a new soul ... Unless a particular man made New Year resolutions, he would make no resolutions. Unless a man starts afresh about things, he will certainly do nothing effective. Unless a man starts on the strange assumption that he has never existed before, it is quite certain that he will never exist afterwards. Unless a man be born again, he shall by no means enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

HOLIDAY READING

Pope Benedict XVI, 03-08-2011



When we have a break from our activities, especially during vacation time, we often take up a book we want to read. It is this very aspect that I would like to reflect upon today.

Each of us needs time and space for recollection, meditation, and calm ... Thanks be to God that this is so! In fact, this need tells us that we are not made for work alone, but also for thought, for reflection, or simply for following with our minds and hearts a tale in which we can immerse ourselves, “losing ourselves” in some sense to find ourselves subsequently enriched.

Naturally, many of the books we take up during our vacation are for the most part an escape, and this is normal. However, some people, particularly if they are able to take a more extended time of rest and relaxation, devote themselves to reading something more demanding.

I would therefore like to make a suggestion: why not discover a

few of the books of the Bible that are not commonly known? Or perhaps from which we have heard an occasional passage during the Liturgy but which we have never read in their entirety? Indeed, many Christians never read the Bible, and have a very limited and superficial knowledge of it.

The Bible – as the name suggests – is a collection of books, a little “library” [biblioteca] that came to be over the course of a millennium. Some of these “little books” that make up the Bible remain virtually unknown to the vast majority of people, even to good Christians.

Some are very short, like the Book of Tobias, a tale that contains a lofty sense of family and marriage; or the Book of Esther, in which the Hebrew Queen saves her people from destruction through her faith and prayer; or even shorter, the Book of Ruth, a foreigner who comes to know God and to experience His providence. These little books can be read in their entirety in an hour.

More demanding and true masterpieces are the Book of Job, which confronts the great problem of innocent suffering; Ecclesiastes, which is striking for the baffling modernity with which it challenges the meaning of life and the world; the Canticle of Canticles, a

stupendous symbolic poem on human love.

As you see, these are all books from the Old Testament. And the New? The New Testament is of course better known and its literary genre is less diversified. But the beauty of reading a Gospel in one sitting is worth discovering, as I also recommend for the Acts of the Apostles, or one of the Letters.

To conclude, dear friends, today I would like to suggest that you keep the holy Bible close at hand during the summer months and in moments of rest, so that you might enjoy it in a new way by reading some of its Books straight through, those that are less well known as well as those that are more familiar, such as the Gospels, but without putting them down.

In this way, moments of relaxation can become not only a time of cultural enrichment, but beyond this, also a source of spiritual nourishment, capable of nourishing our knowledge of God and conversation with Him; that is, prayer.

And this seems to be a beautiful occupation during the summer holidays: to take a book of the Bible in order to have a little relaxation, and at the same time, to enter into the great realm of God’s Word and to deepen our contact with the Eternal One, as the goal of the free time given to us by the Lord.

Pope Benedict: “Year of Faith” starts Oct 2012

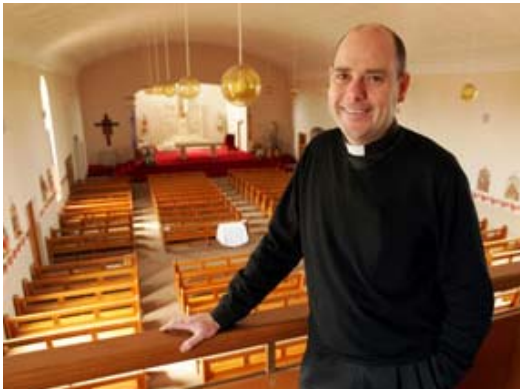
“I have decided to convoke a special “Year of Faith,” which will begin October 11, 2012 - the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council - and will conclude Nov 24, 2013, Solemnity of Christ, King of the Universe... [see Porta Fidei]

“The Servant of God Paul VI convoked a similar “Year of Faith” in 1967, during a period of great cultural changes.

“... now that a half century has passed since the opening of the Council, it would be opportune to remember the beauty and the cen-

trality of the faith, the need to strengthen and deepen it, both at the personal and the community level, and to do this in a perspective that is not so much celebratory, but rather, missionary – precisely in the perspective of the mission ad gentes and the new evangelization.

San Isidore raised Fr Michael Kennedy soon to be raised to Bishop



Growing up in San Isidore, Father Michael Kennedy was the youngest in a family of nine children. Now at 43 he is about to become the youngest bishop in Australia.

Pope Benedict XVI appointed Fr Kennedy as the Bishop of Armidale following the resignation of Bishop Luc Matthys who at 75 has reached retirement age.

"I am both honoured and humbled to have been chosen to be a successor of the Apostles as the Bishop of Armidale and my hope is to be a true shepherd and teacher of the people of Armidale so together we may grow in faith and build up the Body of Christ," Fr Michael says of his new appointment.

He also expressed his surprise and

joy at the appointment and as Bishop-elect, asked the faithful of Armidale to pray for him.

Bishop Matthys is delighted Fr Kennedy has been nominated as his successor.

"It is particularly pleasing that he comes from a rural background and will be

familiar with the needs of a country Diocese," he says adding that the priests, religious and laity of the Diocese of Armidale joined him in warmly welcoming the Wagga Wagga born-and-bred priest as their new bishop.

No date has yet been set for the installation of Bishop-elect Kennedy who is the fourth bishop to be appointed to dioceses across Australia by His Holiness since the beginning of the year.

Bishop-elect Kennedy began his studies for the priesthood at Vianney College, Wagga Wagga before furthering his studies in Rome at Propaganda Fide where he obtained a Licentiate in Sacred Theology. Ordained for the Diocese of Wagga in the late 1990s, he served as assistant priest in Albury and later became Rector of St Francis' Residential

College at Wagga Wagga's Charles Sturt University.

Currently, Bishop-Elect Kennedy is Vicar Forane (Dean) of the Murrumbidgee Deanery and serving as parish priest of Leeton, NSW. In addition he also teaches at his old alma mater, Vianney College where he lectures in moral theology.

Bishop Gerard Hanna of Wagga Wagga is full of support for the elevation of one of his senior priests to bishop.

"For the last 13 years Fr Kennedy has shown a very balanced approach to his pastoral ministry in the Diocese and I believe he is well suited to his new role of leadership as Bishop of the Diocese of Armidale," he says and expresses his full support for the appointment and his heartfelt congratulations.



DIOCESE OF ARMIDALE

The Holy Father has appointed as Bishop of Armidale Rev. Michael R. Kennedy, until now parish priest of Leeton, in the Diocese of Wagga Wagga, and lecturer in Moral Theology, Mariology and Church History at Vianney College.



Excerpt from the official letter announcing Fr Michael's election.

One Convert A Year - Archbishop Fulton J Sheen

Just suppose that outside of the necessary structure of the Church, there was only one in all the world who believed in it, who received Communion, acknowledged the primacy of Peter, assisted at Holy Mass. Just suppose that that one zealous believer the first year converted one unbeliever to Christ and his Church. Suppose that the next

year these two made a convert; then there would be four the second year.

And suppose the next year, these four made one apiece next year, then there would be eight converts at the end of the third year. Now how many would there be, from that one zealous believer, at the end of only thirty years?

There would be in the communion lines of the church at the end of the thirtieth year, one billion, seventy three million, seven hundred and forty-one thousand, eight hundred and twenty-four souls breaking their fast with the Bread of Life.

The Cross and the Beatitudes, p.67

Showing us the Way

There was once a man who didn't believe in the incarnation or the spiritual meaning of Christmas, and was skeptical about God. He and his family lived in a farm community. His wife was a devout believer and diligently raised her children in her faith. He sometimes gave her a hard time about her faith and mocked her religious observance of Christmas.

One snowy Christmas eve she was taking the kids to the Christmas eve service at church. She pleaded with him to come, but he firmly refused. He ridiculed the idea of the incarnation of Christ and dismissed it as nonsense.

"Why would God lower himself and become a human like us?! It's such a ridiculous story!" he said.

So she and the children left for church while he stayed home.

After they left, the winds grew stronger and the snow turned into a blizzard. As he looked out the window, all he saw was a blinding snowstorm. He sat down to relax before the fire for the evening. Then he heard a loud thump, something hitting against the window. And another thump. He looked outside but couldn't see. So he ventured outside to see. In the field near his house he saw, of all the strangest things, a flock of geese! They were apparently flying to look for a warmer area down south, but got caught in the snow storm. The snow had become too blinding and violent for the geese to fly or see their way. They were lost and stranded on his farm, with no food or shelter. They just fluttered their wings and flew around in circles

around the field blindly and aimlessly.

He had compassion for them and wanted to help them. He thought to himself, "The barn would be a great place for them to stay! It's warm and safe; surely they could spend the night and wait out the storm." So he walked over to the barn and opened the barn doors for them.

He waited, watching them, hoping they would notice the open barn and go inside. But they just fluttered around aimlessly and didn't notice the barn or realize what it could mean for them.

So he started whistling and calling to them. Nothing. He



shouted, jumped up and down, waved his arms. They didn't pay attention. He moved closer toward them to get their attention, but they just moved away from him out of fear. He went into the house and came back out with some bread, broke it up, and made a bread trail leading to the barn. They still didn't catch on. Starting to get frustrated, he went over and tried to shoo them, run after them, and chase them toward the barn. They only got scared and scattered into every direction except toward the barn. None of his attempts to get them into the barn succeeded. Nothing he did could get them to go into the barn where there was warmth, safety, and shelter; nothing he did could make them enter the one

place where they could survive.

Feeling totally frustrated, he exclaimed, "Why don't they listen to me! Why don't they follow me! What's wrong with them! Can't they see this is the only place where they can survive the storm! How can I possibly get them into the one place to save them!"

He thought for a moment and realized that they just won't follow a human. He said to himself, "How can I possibly save them? The only way would be for me to become like those geese. If only I could become like one of them! Then I could show them the way! Then I could save them! They would follow me, not fear me. They would trust me, and I would lead them to safety."

He stood silently for a moment as the words that he just said reverberated back to himself in his mind: "If only I could become like one of them--then I could show them the way--then I could save them." He thought about his words, and remembered what he said to his wife: "Why would

God want to be like us? That's so ridiculous!"

Something clicked in his mind as he put these two together. It was like a revelation, and he began to understand the incarnation. We were like the geese--blind, gone astray, perishing. God became like us so He could show us the way and make a way available to save us. That is the meaning of Christmas, he realized in his heart.

As the winds and blinding snow abated, his heart became quiet and pondered this epiphany. He understood what Christmas was all about. He knew why Christ had come. Suddenly years of doubt and disbelief were shattered, as he humbly and tearfully bowed down in the snow, and embraced the true meaning of Christmas.

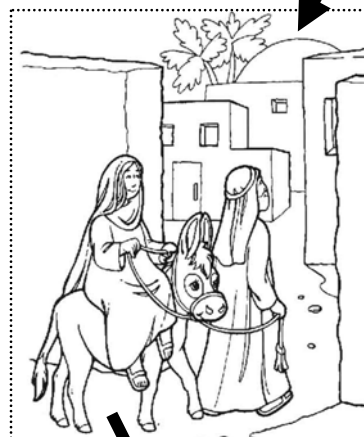
The West Wagga Wag

West Wagga Parish



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

Mary is... The Mother of God!



Holy Mary, mother of God,
pray for us sinners now
and at the hour of our death,
amen.