

Let us remember in our prayers ...

Recently deceased: Richard Bryant, Sr Wendy Beckett, Ivy Rosario, Tess Lehman, Dylan Lunel, Bruno Ottaviano
Anniversaries: Ron Hawkins, Dragica Gugich
Sick: Judy & John Kerr, Sergio Amadio, Patrick Sweeney, Patricia O’Hara, John Davidson, Mary-Rose Webb, Kathy Choate, Mercedes Ramos, Murray Casey, Barbara Ward, June-Marie James

We have been advised of the recent death of Tess Lehman. Tess was housekeeper in the presbytery from 1983-1990 during the time that the Camillian Fathers administered St Joseph’s Parish and was also an active member of the Parish. May she rest in peace.

NO ROOM FOR CHRIST AT CHRISTMAS?

By Dr Sarah Bachelard, from ABC Religion & Ethics

The story of Christmas is an old, old story — told and retold, its elements like river stones worn and smooth to the touch, comforting, connecting many of us back to our childhoods. There is its familiar cast of angels and worshipping oxen, exotic travellers bearing mysterious sounding gifts, picturesque shepherds, Mary and Joseph standing meekly by the manger while a star rests over them and the swaddled child. Of course, this is actually a composite picture which comes from merging the stories of Jesus’s birth told in the gospels of Luke and Matthew, but there is wisdom in our attachment to it. The whole tableau is a bit like an icon through which we may glimpse deeper and deeper levels of meaning, each of its elements signifying in a deceptively simple way the intersection of God’s reality with human experience.

Through Mary, we glimpse the necessity of undefended availability to God; through Joseph, the power of responding to what reality actually *is* (as opposed to what we *think* it is or *should be*); through the presence in the stable of foreigners and shepherds, we are taught that the truth of God cannot be confined to one system or one people, and more often than not is made visible to those who seem least likely. The star symbolises the cosmic significance of this birth — the story doesn’t explain or argue for this stupendous claim, it just testifies to it; and the oxen (imagined in the tradition) suggest its implications for the more than human world.

And finally, the child Jesus, around whom all these elements are constellated, signifying a radical subversion of our understanding of divinity — a God for us, God with us, God as one of us — and a radically different way of being human: vulnerable, open, receiving his life as gift for others.

Yet woven through this tableau of dense presence, of angels, animals, shepherds, parents, child and wise men, is a briefly noted absence — they are there because there was ‘no room for them at the inn,’ ‘no place for them’ indoors. Actually, it’s only in Luke’s gospel that we are told there was ‘no place’ at the inn, but this element of our Christmas icon is emphasised in other ways by Matthew and John. According to Matthew, immediately after Jesus is born, King Herod seeks to kill him, and Joseph is warned in a dream to escape with his young family into Egypt. And the same insight is expressed more philosophically by John. Of Jesus, he wrote (John 1:9-11): The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. This, John goes on to say, is the judgement of the world, "that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light" (John 3:19).

So from the very beginning of the story of Jesus, the gospels want us to know, God was (and is) not welcome here — we like our world self-enclosed, we do not want a rupture in the system, we are frightened of what the call to live differently might mean for us and cost us. And so we squeeze God out — out of the inn, of the city, of our lives. At the heart of the Christmas tableau, despite Mary’s obedience and all the pretty angels, is the looming darkness of a great *NO* — a resistance to this life of God, which is offered to us as gift and yet so often seems to us a threat. Throughout this year, we have repeatedly witnessed the consequences of this great *NO*: in the merciless slaughter of men, women and children; in the displacement of millions of people; in the refusal on the part of many nations to welcome them; in hundreds of thousands of unreported instances of cruelty, disregard, violence, greed, the human family — indeed, the whole created world — is suffering from refusals of love and compassion, justice and solidarity. *Continued next page*

MASS TIMES	
Monday	5.30pm
Tuesday/Wednesday/Thursday	9am
Friday	7am
Saturday Reconciliation	5.15 - 5.45pm
Saturday Vigil	6pm
Sunday	8am, 10am, 6pm

CONTACT DETAILS	
Office	Monday - Friday: 9.30am to 4.00pm
Phone	9381 0400
Postal	PO Box 568, Wembley 6913
Web	www.stjosephssubiaco.org.au
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MUSIC & HYMNS 10am	Entrance: 43	Offertory: 323	Communion: 173	Recessional: 336	Setting: ICEL Mass (393)
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Parish Priest	Monsignor Kevin Long PhD kevin.long@perthcatholic.org.au	Pastoral Assistant	Bart Welten sacraments@stjosephssubiaco.org.au
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Youth Ambassador	Tina Perez enquiries@stjosephssubiaco.org.au	Safeguarding Officers	
Parish Council Chair		Parish Council Chair	Alan Jennings enquiries@stjosephssubiaco.org.au

PARISH ROSTERS	Please refer to your respective rosters.			
Sanctuary	11 January	Marina Wong & Rita Lee	18 January	Florrie Taviera & Sr Margaret

Please note: During January, all Mass times at St Joseph’s will continue as usual.

NO ROOM FOR CHRIST AT CHRISTMAS? (From previous page)

So the *consequences* are all too obvious. But the *sources* of this refusal, this *NO* to giving God place in our lives, seem at first glance profoundly mysterious — don’t we all want to live in a world where peace, joy and good will reign? What is it in us that so often squeezes God out, that finds no room, refuses the gift, that settles for so much less? What gets in our way of being human the way Jesus is human — utterly receptive to the healing, life-delighting, life-generating love of God? The gospels suggest, each in their own way, responses to these questions. For Luke, there being "no room" is not so much about conscious refusal, as preoccupation, busyness and distraction. Remember, Joseph and Mary have travelled to Bethlehem amidst a great mass of people to take part in the census. From the point of view of the inn-keeper they are invisible. They and their child are, literally, *crowded out* by what appear to be more urgent, more pressing matters. For Matthew, the refusal of place for Jesus follows from a more direct rejection and intention to expel. King Herod senses a threat to his power and the way he wields it when he hears of the birth of a new "king." For John, there’s a different take again: "no room" for Jesus in the world follows simply from reluctance to let go familiar and compromised ways of being. It’s the refusal to be changed by encounter with God — fear of the light. And maybe we recognise ourselves in one or all of these responses — in fact, who doesn’t? Inattention, aggression in the face of threat, resistance to change. And underneath them all, one way or another, is our hurt, our dividedness and fear.

We know from experience that the natural human responses to being hurt are to shut down or lash out, to protect ourselves or seek vengeance. Yet just here lie the roots of so much of the violence and alienation that bedevil our world. The thing about Jesus is that he radically subverts these natural human ways of managing, surviving and displacing our pain onto others. He comes among us as vulnerable as we ourselves are, as a child; he lives with us, as exposed to rejection, misunderstanding, violence and, ultimately, death. And with his whole life, witnesses to the possibility of living amidst the pains and terrors of this world responding only ever with love. We know for ourselves how painful this is. If you’ve ever sought to forgive someone who has hurt you badly, or to let go bitterness or a grudge; if you’ve ever chosen not to render evil for evil; if you’ve chosen to let pass opportunities for self-promotion or self-justification, or tried to engage conflict with patience and generosity, you know how excruciating is Jesus’s way and how little we succeed in giving ourselves to it out of our own resources.

Discipleship of Jesus is about so letting him into our lives that we too grow in the grace to love instead of hate or turn away, that we too grow in freedom from the compulsion to defend ourselves or retaliate. We *know* the life and healing that flows when we let this happen, when we let go our frightened grip. I see it over and over again — watching people care for those who are sick, with tenderness and compassion; people making room for the difficult members of a community, people reaching out to those who grieve. When we open our hearts to Christ and his way, to his counterintuitive and demanding practice of solidarity and vulnerability, making of our lives a gift for others, we become with him part of the healing of the wounded world, apostles of peace and joy. It touches the big things in life, but it’s also a whole lot of little things — making room for love, opening a different kind of space, with simple gestures like holding your tongue at Christmas lunch, holding back on that derogatory remark that could so easily be inserted, letting that moment of possible offence go through to the keeper.

Thomas Merton wrote, "Into this world, this demented inn, in which there is absolutely no room for him at all, Christ has come uninvited." He has come. He’ll take any space you give him and transform it.

Visit abc.net.au/religion/ for more articles.

PARISH OFFICE: The Office will reopen at 9.30am on Tuesday 8 January.

REMINDER: Plenary Council Discussion Group Feedback forms are due **now**. Please drop completed forms in the Plenary Council boxes located in the Church foyer and side entrance or return them to the Parish Office.

FATHER ADAM SZUSTAK WORKSHOP OPPORTUNITY

6.30pm Sunday 6 January, Monday 7 January

Father Adam Szustak is a Dominican Father from Poland who travels around the world to deliver inspirational talks. He has been invited to Perth in January to present workshops. Father Adam will be speaking at St. Simon Peter Church Ocean Reef (6 Jan) and Our Lady Queen of Poland Maylands (7 Jan). For more information contact either Gabriela 0410 537 457 or Ada 0431 695 495.

29TH ANNUAL FLAME CONGRESS

18 – 20 January

The 29th Annual Flame Congress in the spirit of the 2020 Plenary Council is to be held at John XXIII College, Mt Claremont from Friday 18 to Sunday 20 January. Guest speakers include Carlos Alberto Jaron, Eddie Russell FMI SD, Anne Marie Gatenby, Kaye Rollings FMI and Cyrus D’Souza FMI. Mass is at 11.30am on Sunday, with free Evening Rallies on Friday and Saturday at 7.30pm. For more information contact fmi@flameministries.org or Kaye Rollings on 0421 605 502.

PARISH DIARY		
Sunday 6 January		The Epiphany of the Lord, Solemnity Church: <i>Golden Jubilee Mass Sister Clare Sciesinski</i>
Monday 7 January	9am	Monday, Weekday of Christmas Time <i>Optional: St Raymond of Penyafort, Priest</i> Funeral Service: <i>Dylan Lunel</i> <i>Monsignor Kevin</i>
Tuesday 8 January	10am	Tuesday, Weekday of Christmas Time Requiem Mass: <i>Bruno Ottaviano</i> <i>Monsignor Michael Keating</i>
Wednesday 9 January	5.30pm	Wednesday, Weekday of Christmas Time Tribune Chapel: <i>Centering Prayer</i>
Thursday 10 January		Thursday, Weekday of Christmas Time
Friday 11 January		Friday, Weekday of Christmas Time
Saturday 12 January		Saturday, Weekday of Christmas Time