

PARISHES OF ST PETER CHANEL BERALA & ST JOSEPH THE WORKER AUBURN SOUTH

www.stpeter-stjoseph.org.au

Parish Office: 60 Kingsland Rd, Berala, 2141. Tel: 96447787;
info@stpeter-stjoseph.org.au

Parish Priest: Fr Thomas Kurunthanam: kurunthanam@gmail.com;
Assistant Priest: Fr Peter Kwak: pdkwak@gmail.com



Saint Peter Chanel



Happy Christmas

Our God became Flesh

The Word Became FLESH! For many it is hard to believe that God could have a human birth and human life. So much so that there was news about the Imam of Lakemba mosque issuing a fatwa on the Muslims who dared to share the joy of Christmas. Yet we cannot deny that the greatest thing ever happened in the human history is God becoming man. We are delighted to celebrate it.

We have Masses at three different times for this Christmas. Each of these Masses has a different Gospel account to tell of God coming into human history. At the Vigil Mass we read the account from the 1st chapter of Matthew's Gospel which speaks of the genealogy of 42 generations from Abraham to Jesus. This well and truly gives us the historical background of Jesus birth and how it fits in with the history of salvation God has for us. At the midnight Mass we proclaim the Gospel of St Luke which narrates socio political situation in which Mary gave birth to baby Jesus. The day Mass has got the Gospel reading from St John's writing. He states bluntly that the 'The Word was made flesh, he lived among us.' Our God fitted Himself into our human history and situation. We celebrate this great mystery at this feast of Christmas. Are we letting God into our life and situation?

There are Christians for whom fitting Christ into the busy schedule of life is a big juggle. Sundays are the family days to sleep in and go out for recreation. They are annoyed that demands are made on them to let Christ in the midst of their already busy life. They are good people who make sure their children did their First Communion, and other Sacraments. They are gentle people who speak only courteously so that they will not offend anyone. They are as gentle and polite as Pharisees. Yet Christ may not find a place in their lives very easily.

But the birth of Jesus was not announced such well-mannered people. His birth was announced in "Beth Sahur", a place known for shepherds gossiping and whispering to one another. It is the openness and simplicity of their lives that made them eligible to hear the message from the angels who said, "Glory to God in the highest, Peace to People of Good Will." Acceptance is more important than appearance. Wilful undertaking is more important than feeling good.

I wish you all peace and joy of Christmas. May you always cherish Christ being with you. May the promises of Christ realise more fully in in the New Year, in your life.



Holy Mass at Berala: Monday-Friday: 6.45 AM; Tuesday 7 PM Novena, & Mass; Wednesday—Friday 9.15 AM Saturday 8 AM

Lord's Day: Saturday 5 PM (Vigil), Sunday 8 AM, 10 AM; **Reconciliation at Berala:** Saturday 9.30 AM

Holy Mass at Auburn South: Lord's Day, Sunday 9 AM, **Reconciliation** Sunday 8.30 AM

Baptisms, Weddings, and Anointing of the Sick by Appointment



Bethlehem

Two years ago Fr Thomas visited Bethlehem as part of his one month Sabbatical study in Jerusalem. It was the second time he was visiting Bethlehem and other holy places in Israel. Here is an excerpt from the travelogue he wrote for his parishioners then.

Beit Sahour which means place of whisper is the shepherds' field where the news of Jesus' birth was first announced. The story is that the shepherds are known for gossiping in the night as they keep watch of the sheep. They would peep into people's life for juicy stories to gossip. Therefore they did not have a good reputation in the society. Yet it is to them the good news of the birth of a Saviour was first announced.

What we see in the fields now is a church built and maintained by Franciscan Friars. They are the official custodians of most of the Catholic sites in the Holy Land. Visiting some of the caves preserved by the Franciscans as part of the church, one gets an insight into the life of the Shepherds. It was normal for people to sleep in caves. At the entrance of the cave they will have the animals and in the inner part of the cave is where the family members slept like sardines packed in a basket. It suited them to do so in cold winters to keep themselves safe and warm. So when Pregnant Mary was provided a place in the manger, it was not so much a matter of dejection as sometimes we might be led to believe. It surely was the poorer alternative to the room in the inn.

The old church which is built on the cave where Jesus was born is a huge church with marks of many centuries of claims and reclaims of the building. It itself is built on the site of a much earlier Byzantine church which was destroyed before the crusades. The present church was spared by the Persians when they invaded Bethlehem, because they saw some of the murals had Persian men depicted as the magi. Later when the Muslims invaded Bethlehem, they too spared the church because the bishop of the place then offered hospitality to the Muslims. Now they have an old mosque right in front of the church.

Under the main Altar of the church is the cave where Jesus was born. The rush of pilgrims to visit this holy site is so much that unless you are prepared to wait for a long time and endure all the pushing around, you will miss out. This church is under the care of the Greek Orthodox Church. Adjacent to the old basilica is a new church built and looked after by Franciscans. Of Course it is a Catholic Church. Between these two churches there is an Altar for the Coptic Orthodox church. The Catholic Church of St Catherine is built on the top of the cave where St Jerome, and St Paulina lived.

St Jerome was an amazing man. This ascetic man from late fourth and early fifth century is known for translating Bible and commenting on Bible. In his twenties he travelled to Rome from present Croatia and Hungary area where he got baptized. Then studied theology and he moved to Antioch where he furthered his studies. There he got ordained as a priest. That was not the end of his pilgrimage. He went to Constantinople and struck friendship with St Gregory of Nazianzus. Later he travelled to Bethlehem where he settled down for a monastic life with Paulina and a group of disciples. His spiritual discipline is known as 'Desert Spirituality'.

Then again God's ways are mysterious. The story of this land is also connected with Rachael, Abraham, David, Jesus himself, Jerome and so on with all their oddities. Against human logic, promises of hope are realised in all these stories. That is the hope I too have for the besieged Palestine and for her Church.

Boxing Day

On Boxing Day there will be two Masses at St Peter Chanel: 6.45 AM and 9.15 AM. It is the ordination anniversary of Fr Thomas and he will be celebrating the thanksgiving Mass at 9.15 AM. All are welcome to the Mass.

NEW YEAR DAY

New Year Day is also the Solemn Feast of Mary Mother of God. There will be two Masses on this day, first one at 6.45 AM and then in the evening at 7.00 PM Novena to our Lady, followed by Mass.



Many people have helped to prepare for Christmas. There are different teams who set up the Cribs on the portico of St Peter Chanel Church, inside St Peter Chanel Church, and inside St Joseph the Worker Church. Putting up the Christmas trees in each of the churches needed effort. There are volunteers who put up illuminations in Berala and in Auburn South churches. It was hard work removing the chewing gum marks on the St Peter Chanel Church grounds. The volunteers to train the angels and children for the Vigil celebration. The Choir and singers were practising for many weeks. The Liturgy Committee and Altar Society were in top gear.

The Liturgical minsters helped with serving at Masses. Many people have brought gifts for Society of St Vincent de Paul to distribute. Volunteers brought wine and slices for the social after Midnight Mass. Volunteers helped set it up. To all those who helped in some way or another, thank you very much.

A number of people have greeted Fr Thomas and Fr Peter with Christmas Cards and Gifts. They thank you for your friendship and the appreciation.

Feasts of the Week

27 December – St John, apostle, evangelist. Feast



St. John, the son of Zebedee, and the brother of St. James the Great, was called to be an Apostle by our Lord in the first year of His public ministry. He became the "beloved disciple" and the only one of the Twelve who did not forsake the Savior in the hour of His Passion. He stood faithfully at the cross when the Savior made him the guardian of His Mother. His later life was passed chiefly in Jerusalem and at Ephesus. He founded many churches in Asia Minor. He wrote the fourth Gospel, and three Epistles, and the Book of Revelation is also attributed to him. Brought to Rome, tradition relates that he was by order of Emperor Dometian cast into a cauldron of boiling oil but came forth unhurt and was banished to the island of Pathmos for a year. He lived to an extreme old age, surviving all his fellow apostles, and died at Ephesus about the year 100.

St. John is called the Apostle of Charity, a virtue he had learned from his Divine Master, and which he constantly inculcated by word and example. The "beloved disciple" died at Ephesus, where a stately church was erected over his tomb. It was afterwards converted into a Mohammedan mosque.

John is credited with the authorship of three epistles and one Gospel, although many scholars believe that the final editing of the Gospel was done by others shortly after his death. He is also supposed by many to be the author of the book of Revelation, also called the Apocalypse, although this identification is less certain.

28 December – Holy Innocents, martyrs. Feast

During this octave of Christmas the Church celebrates the memory of the small children of the neighborhood of Bethlehem put to death by Herod. Sacrificed by a wicked monarch, these innocent lives bear witness to Christ who was persecuted from the time of His birth by a world which would not receive Him. It is Christ Himself who is at stake in this mass-murder of the children; already the choice, for or against Him, is put clearly before men. But the persecutors are powerless, for Christ came to perform a work of salvation that nothing can prevent; when He fell into the hands of His enemies at the time chosen by God it was to redeem the world by His own Blood.

Our Christmas joy is tempered today by a feeling of sadness. But the Church looks principally to the glory of the children, of these innocent victims, whom she shows us in heaven following the Lamb wherever He goes.

HOLY SOULS

Please pray for the peaceful repose of Marie Irwin, Peter Michael, P Smith; Gert & Jack Herrmann, Mary Della Smith, John William Smith, Michael Smith, John Anthony Smith, Giovanni and Amabile Cicuto, Kevin O'Brien, Ellen, Jim & Ron O'Brien, Hugh, Kathleen & Owen McDermott, Kathleen Orth, Mary, John Bull, Clem Hill & Michael Hickey, Vincent Boyd, Domenico Patti,

And the deceased members and friends of the following families Donnellan, Ross & Mitchell, Barrett, Tony Phillips, Clare & Walter Phillips, Jean & Edward Hulston, Slattery, Oconnor, Mullins, Willoughby

and for those whose anniversaries occur at this time Joso & Kata Zivkovic, Albino and Caternina Bertuzzi, Tereitano, Reitano,
May Their Souls Rest in Peace



MERRY CHRISTMAS

