



THE NEW ENEMY IS THE MILITANT ATHEIST

Every week the Letters Editor in the *Sydney Morning Herald* prints a letter or two from an atheist. Atheists are becoming more militant and strident in their criticism of believers, particularly the Catholic Church. This anti-God push has taken on new forms, like the “There’s Probably No God” campaign on the London buses. Here Greg Craven writes in *The Age* about the issue.

Attacking Christians is not really clever, witty or funny. From time immemorial, this world has been troubled by plagues. From bogong moths in Canberra to frogs in biblical Egypt, unwelcome and unlovely creatures have the awkward habit of turning up in bulk.

Just now, we are facing one of our largest and least appealing infestations. Somewhat in advance of summer’s blowflies, we are beset by atheists. Worse, they are not traditional atheists. These tended to be quiet blokes called Algie with ancillary interests in nudist ceramics, who were perfectly happy as long as you pretended to accept a pamphlet in Flinders Lane.

No, the new hobby atheist is as brash, noisy and confident as a cheap electric kettle. They want everyone to know that they have not found God, and that no one else should. Their particular target seems to be Catholics. On the surface, this is odd, as there are plenty of other religious targets just waiting to be saved from a vengeful, non-existent deity. Smaller herds, such as the Christadelphians or the Salvation Army, might seem more manageable. But the Catholic Church has two incomparable advantages as an object of the wrath of proselytising atheists. First, it is the biggie. Taking out the Catholics is the equivalent

of nuking the Pentagon. Guerilla bands of Baptists and Pentecostals can be liquidated at leisure.

Second, the Catholics have the undeniable advantage that they do still demonstrably believe in something. Attacking some of the more swinging Christian denominations might mean upsetting people who believe a good deal less than the average atheist.

Mind you, the appeals of atheism as a diverting pastime are not immediately obvious to those of us who are on relatively easy terms with God.

Why would anyone get so excited about the misconceptions of third parties as to the existence of a fourth party in which they themselves do not believe?

The answer is twofold. First, the great advantage of designer atheism is that you get to think of yourself as immensely clever. After all, you are at least much brighter

than all those dumb asses who believe in a supreme being, such as Sister Perpetua down the road, Thomas Aquinas, Isaac Newton and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. So satisfying.

The second factor has to do with wit. For some reason, contemporary Australian atheism seems to consider itself terribly funny. Its proponents only have to wheel out one of the age-old religious libels to lose control of their bladders. To outsiders, of course, it is a bit like watching a giggling incontinent drunk at a party. This is not to say that believers - and perhaps especially Catholics - do not get seriously irritated by atheists. They do, but not because atheists are fearfully clever or Wildely funny.

Frankly, the prime reason the average believer finds the common or garden atheist as appealing as a holiday in Birchip is because they consign



them to that sorry category of individuals who spend their lives loudly congratulating themselves on their own intelligence without noticing that no one else is joining the chorus. Thus, as a Catholic, I do not normally sense in some tabloid atheist the presence of a supreme discerning intellect. I simply place him or her in much the same pitiable bin of intellectual vulgarities as the chartered accountant who cannot see the art in Picasso, the redneck who cannot admit of indigenous culture, and the pissant who cannot see the difference between Yeats and Bob Ellis.

It is not deep perception we encounter here, but a critical failure of imaginative capacity. It is a bit like the old joke: how many atheists does it take to screw in a light bulb? None - no matter what they do, they just can't see the light.

The second wearying thing about the new atheism is that it is not new at all. It is so banally derivative of every piece of hate mail ever sent to God that I am amazed Satan has yet to sue for copyright infringement. No old chestnut is too ripe, rotten or sodden, especially when it comes to the Catholics as accredited suppliers of what apparently is the Christian equivalent of methamphetamine.

In an average week of atheistic bigotry in the Melbourne media, we can expect to learn that Catholics endorse child molestation, hate all other religions, would re-introduce the crusades and the auto de fe at the slightest opportunity, despise women, wish to persecute homosexuals, greedily divert public moneys for their own religious purposes, subvert public health care, brainwash children, and are masterminding the spread of the cane toad across northern Australia.

Applied to the average totalitarian dictatorship, this charge sheet would be over the top. Ascribed to virtually any ethnic minority, it rightly would result at least in public revulsion and quite possibly in criminal charges. But applied to Christians, it seems to be accepted as just another modern blood sport, like the vilification of refugees and the elimination of the private life of the families of public figures.

At the bottom, of course, lies hate. I am not quite clear why our modern crop of atheists hates Christians, as opposed to ignoring or even politely dismissing them, but they very clearly do. There is nothing clever, witty or funny about hate.

Greg Craven is vice-chancellor of the Australian Catholic University

CANTEEN TENDERS CALLED for St Bernadette's Primary School canteen. Please see the noticeboard for details.

LITURGY CORNER

The Feast of Christ the King is a relatively new one in the Church calendar. It was established in 1925 by Pope Pius XI after the world had experienced the horrors of World War I and been shocked at the brutality and destruction of that conflict between so-called civilised and Christian nations. The role of the Church in social and cultural life was diminishing and there was a greater separation of Church and State.

The Summit

The Rite of Welcome. At the 9am Mass, this parish liturgical celebration, which marks a person's decision to undertake the journey of becoming a Catholic, will take place. This public Rite highlights the fact that the catechumens' (one who is not baptised) commitment to Christ involves a commitment to a specific community of people - and that the parish community welcomes them and offers their commitment to support the catechumens and candidates (baptised into another Christian tradition) over the coming months. Please pray for these people whose photos are at the back of the church and write your name as a way to show your commitment and thus encourage them.



Today's Readings

First Reading: Daniel 7:13-14. Daniel tells of his vision of the Lord returning as a glorious king.

Second Reading: Apocalypse 1:5-8. The Apocalypse describes the risen Jesus returning as a mighty king.

Gospel: John 18:33-37. St John recounts the dialogue between Jesus and Pilate. Jesus is a king, but his kingdom is not of this world.

Next week: 1st Sunday of Advent Year C

Jer 33:14-16; 1 Thess 3:12-4:2; Luke 21:25-28,34-36.

Feast Day this Week

Ss Andrew Dung Lac & Companions - Tues, 24 Nov

HOLY HOUR every Thursday from 8.00 to 9.00pm including Rosary, prayers, hymns & scripture reading. All welcome!

ATTENTION READERS: A limited number of copies of *Break Open the Word* containing Sunday Mass readings for 2010 - Year C are available from the Parish Office for \$10 each.

SCHOOL 'THANKSGIVING MASS' on Thursday 26 November at 9.15am. Parishioners are warmly invited to attend. The new school song will be launched at this Mass. Morning tea will be served in the Parish Hall following the Mass.

DESPERATELY NEEDED: Volunteer drivers to take people to appointments through the week. Phone Marion Heron on 9659 9385 if you can assist.

BOOKSHOP NEWS Columban Calendars are available at the Bookshop for only \$7.00 each. **Vinnies Christmas Cards** (pack of 10) are \$6.50.

NOVEMBER MASSES

Those who wish to have their loved ones remembered during the month of November are asked to include the names on the special November Mass offerings envelopes, and the Parish will add these names to the Book of Remembrance on the sanctuary. Only the names of recently deceased and anniversaries will be noted in the bulletin.

Parishioners are also invited to place a photo of any recently deceased parishioner or relative on the board in the Church foyer. Please place the name of the deceased person on the back of the photo with details of your name, address and phone number.

DIOCESAN WORKS FUND APPEAL

Thank you to all who have contributed to the latest DWF Appeal. Envelopes are available once again this weekend and all donations are gratefully accepted.

A GIFT BEYOND CHRISTMAS is a project which supports disadvantaged families and mature age HSC students at Loyola Senior High School Mount Druitt. Gift envelopes are available in the foyer of the church on the board with hamper situations. Also available are copies of the Principal's report on the usage of the \$10,000 that was donated last year to this wonderful project. Please take a copy if you are interested.

LIFE BEGINS AT 50: Christmas Dinner on Saturday 5 December at 7.30 in the Parish Hall. Three course meal \$50.00pp. Final numbers and money by Fri 27 Nov. Money can be left at the Parish Office in an envelope with your name and marked to Howard's attention. Contact 9899 8983 for RSVP.

Cards/ Mahjong: Marian Centre Fri 27 Nov 7.30pm.

COLLECT YOUR PLANNED GIVING ENVELOPES

Those parishioners who contribute to the Planned Giving Programme by envelope are asked to collect your boxes containing the next 12 months supply of envelopes from the church foyer.

REPARATION PRAYER GROUP: The first meeting of this group will be held in St Bernadette's Church on Wednesday 2 December at 8.00pm followed by a cuppa. It is a response to Geraldine's talk on October 28. Future meetings will be in the Church or Parish Office Basement on Wednesday nights at 8.00pm.

BLANKETS FOR THE NEEDY: Well done and thank you to everyone involved with making squares for Vinnies. Over 70 blankets have been completed this Winter. The final morning tea for 2009 is on this Tuesday 24 November at 10am in the Marian Centre. All welcome. Transport available if needed. RSVP Jo 9634 5961 or Hilary 9894 5913.

ST BERNADETTE'S FOOTBALL (SOCCER) CLUB

is accepting registrations for the 2010 season on Sunday 6 December from 9am to 12 noon outside the Parish Hall. For details phone Peter Baguley 0414 960472.



CHILDREN'S LITURGY VOLUNTEERS are needed to assist at 9am Mass on Sundays in 2010. If interested please call Shane Robinson on 9634 8362.



Youth & Young Adults Ministry

LIFE Nights presents (for Grades 8 to 12 and bring a friend) **Lock in night** - 4th to 5th December. Come hang with the gang in the hall under the church from Friday at 7:30pm till the next morning - Saturday at 10am. The cost is \$10 per person. This includes supper and breakfast.



Into LIFE is this Monday 7 - 8.30pm in the parish hall. Bring \$2 donation for food & drink. All in Years 6 - 8 are welcome to attend. **NB** Monday 30th - wear old clothes for a messy night.

BOOT CAMP 2010 Are you up to the challenge? Join us in January (18 - 21) for 4 days of beach, sand and epic challenges for anyone in years 6-12. Registration forms in the foyer following mass next weekend

Point to Ponder: Mark 18:37 Jesus says to Pilate "I was born and came into the world for this one purpose, to speak about the truth. Whoever belongs to the truth listens to me." Am I ready for the second coming of Christ? Have I followed his commandments closely?

Pray For: Preparations for summer camp have commenced, big prayers that all goes amazingly!!!

Need some inspiration or some faith facts? This fantastic web site is for you - www.lifeteen.com.



Christmas Hampers

On Sunday December 13 at 6.00pm the annual Christmas Hamper Mass will be celebrated. Once again we are looking for your generous support of this Parish initiative to bring the spirit of Christmas into the homes of needy families who struggle to meet the basic necessities of life.

Firstly, we need your donation of hampers, so kindly take a label from the foyer and return it to the church on the weekend of 12/13 December.

Please read the information on the notice board regarding the assembly of the Hampers.

We ask for consistent sizing of the hampers, not only for the handling but also for equitable distribution to the receiving families.

Secondly, we need your support in helping us sort the hampers in the Parish Hall and then distributing them to the families on Tuesday December 15. A work sheet has been posted on the notice board in the church foyer. Please indicate the times you are available to help or call Maureen Scully on 9634 6925.



Prayer for the Year of the Priest, 2009 - 2010

Gracious and Holy Lord God,
We pray for the priests you have called to model the life of Jesus in the midst your church -
may they be blessed with the gifts of your Holy Spirit and may they be assured of the support of your people.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

St Bernadette's Parish Community
Parish House, 367 Old Northern Road, Castle Hill, NSW 2154

Telephone 9634 2622 Fax 9899 3511 Email: admin@stbernadette.org.au
 Web page: http://www.stbernadette.org.au

Parish Staff

Fr John Boyle, Parish Priest
 Fr Eugene Szondi, Assistant Priest
 Sr Judy McLeod, rsm, Pastoral Associate
 Mr Luke Hackett, Pastoral Associate (Youth)
 Mrs Frances Gallagher, Office Manager
 Mrs Monica Rubic, Parish Secretary (Finance: Mon-Thu)
 Mr Michael Watson, Maintenance Co-ordinator
 Mr Darren Edwards, Maintenance

Mass Times for this Week

Sunday Sat 6.00pm
 Sun 7.30am, 9.00am, 10.30am &
 6pm Parish LIFE TEEN Youth Mass

Weekdays Mon 6.45am
 Tue 6.45am,
 Wed 6.45am, 9.15am
 Thurs 6.45am, 9.15am
 Fri 6.45am, 9.15am
 Sat 8.00am

Mass on Public Holidays at 8.00am

Reconciliation Sat 8.30am-9.00am; 4.30pm-5.30pm

Baptisms and Marriages: By appointment only. Contact the Parish House. Please note the Church law: Parents are obliged to take care that infants are baptised in the first few weeks. As soon as possible after the birth or even before it, they are to go to the pastor to request the sacrament for their child and to be prepared properly for it. [Can. 867 §1]

St Bernadette's Parish School: Mr Paul Colyer, Principal 9634 2898

Please pray for Cathy Clancy, Brian Mooney, Sr Claire Kerby and Florence Daley who have died recently and for the anniversaries of Sr Eileen Markham, Mary Agius (Nov 26) and Elizabeth Kennedy (Nov 23).

Prayers for the Sick: Abel De Guzman, Carmen Nazareth and Adeline Chong.

ROSTERS FOR NEXT WEEKEND – November 28 & 29

ACOLYTES/ SERVERS	LECTORS	EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF COMMUNION
VIGIL Edy Kesuma S10	Vanessa D'Emanuele Martin Collins Clare Budge	Joanne Barrett, Carol Cividin, Esther Coleiro, Beverley Curtis, Lucille Wilson, Maureen Fearnside, Richard & Cheryl Koen, Warren Hiser
7.30AM Michael Lopez S6	Anne Parker Colleen Baines Matthew Troy	Lina Josue, Alfred & Gladys Tsang, Colleen & Eric Woodhead, Jo Wickens
9.00AM Joe Lorenzo S7	David Green Von Lulan Mike Lulan	Karen & David Askey, Christine & Hubert Jenneke, Cathy & Greg Piggott, Trevor & Joanne O'Shea, Lena Madry
10.30AM John Maker S8	Bill Gleeson Elizabeth Fogolin Michael Puckeridge	Anita Christy, Pauline Camilleri, Dorothy Finucane, Elizabeth Fogolin, Philip & Yolanda Golamco, Margaret Hawkes, Winnie & Henry Li

6.00 PARISH LIFE TEEN YOUTH MASS MINISTRY ROSTER - November 29

Adult Servers	Extraordinary Ministers of Communion		Musos	
Marc Clasquin James Madry	Adam Chioatto Alison Wong Belinda Lee	Ian Pomeroy Monica O'Callaghan Tina Muscat	Bass Daniel Ang	Singers Darian Jessup- Lonsdale
Lectors Stef Musgrave Jen Austin Lesley Musgrave	Darren Edwards Fran Rogers	Vanessa Muscat Veronica Sahabu	Piano Alice Bradshaw	Sara Ang Monique O'Callaghan
Altar Servers S9	Projectionist Josh Becker		Guitar Michael Smith	Natalie Jones Bec Burrowes Julia Calixto
Gift Preparation Michael Piggott	Ushers Paul Musgrave Alfonso Aguilera	Welcomers Melissa Fenech Alison Wong	Horns/Strings/ Winds Matthew Ashton	

CHILDREN'S LITURGY Ingrid Fizely Jana Fizely	CHURCH HOUSEKEEPING Karen D'Souza, Christine Gracia, Jana Fizely COUNTING (1st Collection) Bert Hofstaetter Helga Hofstaetter	COUNTING (2nd Collection) Karl Procter, Anne Cheung, John De Brincat, Joe Morgan BOOKSHOP Maureen Gain / Rose Huby / Christine Jenneke / Maria Barros / Bernadette Boulos
FLOWER ROSTER Sandra Fernando		