



HE WILL BAPTISE YOU WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT AND FIRE

Today's Gospel is about John the Baptist. At the end of the story, John, the cousin of Jesus says, "I baptise you with water, but someone is coming, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire." John was concerned because the people thought he was the Messiah.

Just as people are attracted today to the exotic, the stigmatics, those who see visions or claim to communicate with those "on the other side", so in John's time, people wanted to view this strange man. He was entertaining too, for he attacked his audience, "Brood of vipers!" he yelled at them, "Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" You can imagine children, hiding behind their parents, wide-eyed, scared at the sight of him, but still inquisitive. You can visualise the adolescents giggling, yet intrigued, as was Herod, who had been reproved by John because of his relationship with Herodias, his brother's wife, and for all the other evil things that he had done. Amongst other things there was a small case of adultery, and a little bit of incest of which John did not approve. Herod didn't like hearing the truth and so he had him thrown into prison. But even here Herod wanted to be in the presence of John and liked to listen to him.

We'd call him eccentric. John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather girdle around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. He lived in the desert. No doubt his hair was dishevelled and he had an unkempt look.

Despite this, his words had a ring of authenticity about them. "If anyone has two tunics he must share with the person who has none. And the one with something to eat must do

the same". This was a strong social justice message. To the tax collectors, he said simply, "Exact no more than your rate". To soldiers, "No intimidation! No extortion! Be content with your pay!" 'Being content with your pay' sounds like Work Choices to us, but combined with the message to repent, to change, to think of others, it was a novelty that appealed to this audience. The audience came from Jerusalem, Judea and areas around the River Jordan.

Around 97AD, a Jewish writer named Josephus wrote a best-seller called *Antiquities of the Jews*. He supports the gospel writers because



he says that crowds were greatly moved by hearing John's words. This is significant because Josephus writes about John but mentions Jesus only twice and then briefly. In fact, scholars dispute that the alleged two mentions of Jesus are mentions about Jesus at all. They claim the 'mentions' are so dubious, they are probably forgeries. This supports the claim that John was considered a more significant or important

figure than his cousin. His ministry was cut short by his untimely death at the hand of Herod's gaolers following Herod's drunken birthday party.

There was some ill-feeling between the two sets of disciples, John's and Jesus' and even Jesus himself. "Then the disciples of John came to him saying 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?'" Jesus was put on the spot and answered, "Can the wedding guest mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast." Jesus goes on in the same breath to talk about using "new wineskins for new wine." John's disciples probably went away as confused as we are at hearing such an unsatisfactory answer. Jesus was

much more relaxed about life than his cousin, John. John's disciples felt John was certainly equal to Jesus or probably superior. Far from fasting, the gospel writers have Jesus constantly having meals with both friends and enemies. On one occasion he even tells a vertically challenged man to get out of his tree because he was inviting himself not only to dinner, but to actually stay at the house. "Zacchaeus, come down. Hurry, because I must stay at your house today". The gospel writers are silent about what Mrs Zacchaeus thought of this self-invited guest.

The same Josephus, in a work called *The Jewish War*, written about 75 AD, mentions a Jewish sect called the Essenes. They were a group like the Pharisees and the Sadducees. This group is first mentioned by Philo of Alexandria, (20 to 54 AD). The Essenes lived a communal, celibate life. They lived like a modern religious community with all their money, food and property shared in common. Of interest to us is their ritual immersion in water every morning. This may have been what John was doing when he said, "I baptise you with water...". Baptism, from the Greek, *baptizo*, means "immersing", "performing ablutions" or "washing". The baptism of Jesus was to be different, according to John. "He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire." The baptism of Jesus by John, incidentally, is one of the new Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary.

The Essenes are linked to the community at Qumran. The settlement was situated not far from the Dead Sea. It was in the caves located in the desert cliffs that scrolls were discovered, about 900 documents in all. In part, the scrolls give some insight into the life and customs of the Essenes before and at the time of John and Jesus. We know them as the Dead Sea Scrolls and they came to light in 1947. The last ones were discovered in 1956. They have now been translated and fit into three categories. One group is biblical manuscripts, another is the non-canonical texts that never made it into our canon of scripture and finally, texts of rules and blessings. Some scholars link the Qumran Community with the Essenes and John the Baptist. The jury is still out about how certain and positive the links are.

What we do know is that Jesus was less strict and less demanding than John. Perhaps we should be grateful that Jesus was the Messiah (instead of John) and hence we are followers of Jesus rather than trying to follow the more ascetical way of his cousin.

Father John

LITURGY CORNER

The Gospel for this third Sunday of Advent has John the Baptist giving 'ground rules' for ethical living - sharing with others and no exploitation or intimidation. Ethical living is not necessarily easy particularly in this day and age when we are faced with questions about climate change and responsible use of the earth's resources. What is the Christian response which underpins an ethical approach to life?



Today's Readings

First Reading: Zephaniah 3:14-18. A day of festival is coming and we have every reason to rejoice.

Second Reading: Philippians 4:4-7. God's peace is ours and it makes us happy.

Gospel: Luke 3:10-18. John's baptism is only the beginning. Jesus will bring everything to fulfilment.

Next week: 4th Sunday of Advent Year C
Micah 5:1-4; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-44.

Feast Day this Week

St John of the Cross - Monday, 14 December

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

ATTENTION LECTORS & SPECIAL MINISTERS of the EUCHARIST: Volunteers are requested for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Please place your name on the roster sheet in the foyer.

RETIREMENT VILLAGES SCHEDULE THIS WEEK:

Warrina—Mass & Anointing of the Sick on Tuesday 15 December at 4pm in the chapel.

Nuffield & Hopetoun - Mass & Anointing of the Sick on Wednesday 16 December at 4pm in the chapel at Farrer Brown Court.

Nordby - Mass & Anointing of the Sick on Thursday 17 December at 4pm.

Wirreanda - Communion Service & Anointing of the Sick on Thursday 17 December at 11am.

Kilvinton - Communion Service & Anointing of the Sick on Friday 18 December at 2pm at Brian King Gardens.

Flinders - Communion Service & Anointing of the Sick, Saturday 21 November 10am at Donnington Court.

DINNER WITH GERALDINE DOOGUE: You are invited to join in a two course dinner and an evening of thoughtful conversation with ABC TV/radio presenter Geraldine Doogue speaking on '*Spirituality: Making Connections in our World*' on Friday 12 February 2010 at 7.30pm in St Bernadette's Parish Hall. The cost is \$45.00 pp. Details: www.catalyst-for-renewal.com.au.

USHERS AND COLLECTORS are needed to assist with the large congregations at Christmas Masses. A roster sheet is now displayed in the foyer.

HAMPER MASS TODAY

Thank you to all who have brought in hampers for the needy today. These hampers will be sorted in the Parish Hall and distributed to the families this Tuesday. If you have not, as yet, brought in your hamper, please take it to the Parish Office tomorrow for distribution on Tuesday.

HELPERS NEEDED to sort and distribute these hampers this Tuesday 15 December. All you need is a car, some helping hands and be available from 7.15am. Please contact Maureen Scully on 9634.6925 if you can help

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 from under the Christmas Tree to the right of the altar and all donations can be placed in the box under the tree. 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.



ANGELS AND SHEPHERDS NEEDED Do you have a budding angel or shepherd who is school age and would like to be part of the dramatisation of the Nativity Story at the 5pm Christmas Eve Mass here at Castle Hill. If so, come to a practice at St Bernadette's Church on Monday 21 December at 10.00am. All welcome. Any enquiries to Monica Fitzalan: 0413 839091.

CHRISTMAS MASSES 2009

Thursday, December 24 - Christmas Eve

- 5.00pm Children and Young Families' Mass
- 7.00pm - Family Mass
- 9.30pm - LIFE TEEN Youth Mass
- 12.00pm - Traditional Midnight Mass
(preceded by carols from 11.30pm)

Friday, December 25 - Christmas Day

7.30am, 9.00am, 10.30am – NO EVENING MASS

Reconciliation

- 2nd Rite:** Tuesday 22 December at 7.30pm
- Saturdays 8.30am – 9.30am & 4.30pm – 5.30pm.
- Tuesday December 22: 9.45am & 7.30pm [Rite II]
- Wednesday December 23: 9.45 am
- Thursday December 24: 9.45 am



ST BERNADETTE'S CHRISTIAN MEDITATION GROUP meets in the Lourdes Centre, 31b Brisbane Road, Castle Hill. (follow the lighted pathway), Thursday Evenings 7.30 – 8.30. Newcomers very welcome. Phone Marilou Sandejas 9680 4531 (sandejas@ozemail.com.au) or Lesley Maker 9873 1221 (jandlmaker@optusnet.com.au.) The Christian Meditation group will close for a Christmas break on 17 December, 2009 and resume on 14 January, 2010.

BOOKSHOP NEWS Columban Calendars are available at the Bookshop for only \$7.00 each.

Vinnies Christmas Cards (pack of 10) are \$6.50.

LECTORS please collect your 2010 roster from the foyer.



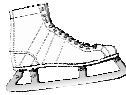
Youth & Young Adults Ministry

LIFE Nights presents (for Grades 8 to 12 and bring a friend). **Pool Day** – Sunday Dec 13 10:30 till 2:00

\$5 entry + bring packed lunch and swim gear.
Waves Fitness & Aquatic Centre - Cnr Mileham & Oxley Ave, Baulkham Hills



Ice Skating – Sunday Dec 20 1:30 till 3:00
\$18 entry + bring nibbles
Sydney Ice Arena, 11 Solent Circuit, Baulkham Hills



Into LIFE is on holidays till next semester but there are combined youth activities till summer camp.

HAMPER DELIVERIES: This Tuesday the youth of the parish will join the Vinnies team to deliver the Christmas hampers. Ages **16yrs +** are welcome to join but those under 18yrs need a permission letter allowing them to join in and be driven by our parishioners. Start at the Church at **8:30 am** and back by lunch time.

YOUNG ADULTS: Birthday Party for Jesus

All Young Adults (**18-35yrs**) are invited, so bring a friend for a fun social evening. Food and beverages provided, Cost is only \$15 per head.

Time: 7:30pm Sunday, December 20th

Location: 367 Old Northern Rd Castle Hill
please RSVP by 16 Dec to ym@stbernadette.org.au.

SUMMER CAMP 2010: QUICK! SPACES ARE FILLING FAST: Are you up to the excitement? Join us on January 18 - 21 for this fantastic annual event. Four fun-filled days of beach, crazy activities, friends and faith and a great way to start the new year! For anyone in **Years 6-12**. Registration forms in the foyer following mass this weekend. Keep a keen eye online at www.lifeteenaustralia.com and make sure you don't miss out on your spot!

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

STATUE OF OUR LADY WITH ST BERNADETTE

The Parish owns a beautiful statue of Our Lady with St Bernadette. Parishioners can borrow the statue for a week in 2010 by placing your names on the roster in the foyer. Book it for a special occasion: anniversary, birthday etc, or simply to encourage prayer in your home. Enquiries: Janina Mousley 9899 6060 or Alfred Jacobs 9894 8123.

Prayer for the *Year of the Priest, 2009 - 2010*

Loving God,
You have given to your church men to fulfil the role of priest.
May they have the courage and strength to lead your people ever closer to you.
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 Veronica Rogers and Avis Lawrie who have died recently and for the anniversaries of Charles Davis, Audrey Kilby, Jerry Aguila Ecarma (Dec 20), Nicola Ann Rochford (Dec 18), Paz Martinez and Gerald Barnes and in remembrance of Crisostomo and Pura Martinez..

Prayers for the Sick: Adeline Chong, Mick Daly, Monique Guy and Rita Gatt.

ROSTERS FOR NEXT WEEKEND – December 19 & 20

ACOLYTES/ SERVERS	LECTORS	EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF COMMUNION
VIGIL Budi Kawiadji S3	Vince Connelly Ray Scully Jessica Fearnside	Jessica Fearnside, Rebecca Barrett, Marjorie, Dominic & Natasha Orioles, Harry Reyden, Jackie/Cassandra Holden, Moira Mitchell, John Geoghegan
7.30AM Edy Kesuma S4	Tony Falzon Patricia Bright John O'Dea	Rose & Peter Huby, Gerard & Geraldine Kearney, Carmel Moriarty, Joyan Fife
9.00AM Michael Lopez S5	Trevor O'Shea Brian Blacklock Joanne O'Shea	Christine Kelly, Rodney Jilek, John Hogan, John Leach, Hilary Fong, Joan Claxton, Gi Zenere, Mike Reidy, Yvette Braganza
10.30AM Joe Lorenzo S1	Tony Smith Philip Golamco Trinity Abbertson-Woo	Tim Abrams, Coney & Charlie Lau, Letty & Robert Yu, Ollie Nguy, Susana Lorenzo, Adel Boudib, Dawn Wickramasinghe

6.00 PARISH LIFE TEEN YOUTH MASS MINISTRY ROSTER - December 20

Adult Servers	Extraordinary Ministers of Communion	Musos
Andrew Tomic James Madry	Adam Chioatto Belinda Lee Darian Jessup-Lonsdale Jen Austin	Bass Daniel Ang Singers Alison Wong Annabel Irawan Julia Calixto Sara Ang Maree Calabria Natalie Jones
Lectors Josh Chaney Mystique Nelis Nicci Heidegger	Jeremy Smith Martin Collins Stef Musgrave Sean Finucane Veronica Sahabu	Piano Alice Bradshaw Guitar Michael Smith
Altar Servers S2	Projectionist Josh Becker	Horns/Strings/Winds Matthew Ashton
Gift Preparation Ben Mules	Ushers Paul Musgrave Phillip Smith	Welcomers Ingrid Fizely Jana Fizely

CHILDREN'S LITURGY School Holidays No Children's Liturgy	CHURCH HOUSEKEEPING Margaret Griffin, Margaret Sanders, Faye Goldsworthy, Maree Greenwell	COUNTING (2nd Collection) Barry Halpin, Bernie Good, Stephen Dowd, Debbie Fang, Eugenia Fidel
FLOWER ROSTER Tess de la Concepcion	COUNTING (1st Collection) Sandra Watson Michael Watson	BOOKSHOP Carmel Adams / Carmel Moriarty / Bernadette Logue / Dora Saleh / Patricia Smith