



## THE FIRST DISCIPLE

It is interesting that in the early centuries of the Church, theologians and spiritual writers wrangled about how to define the various tenets of our faith. Indeed it was not until the Council of Ephesus in 431AD, there was definitive agreement that Mary could truly be called the Mother of God.

We rejoice in today's feast and the extraordinary privileges of Mary because Jesus, in entrusting her to John as he died on the cross, also gave Mary to us all. But of course Jesus himself pointed out to us that what makes Mary great is not so much the fact that she gave birth to him, but rather that she heard the word of God and kept it. She was the first disciple and we are called to imitate her in faithfully responding to God's call in our lives.

There is very little in the Scriptures about Mary, but Luke gives us an insight into the character of this unique person, when he describes in his infancy narrative how she "treasured" the things that were being revealed to her and then "pondered them in her heart."

I once heard the celebrated Canadian spiritual writer, Ronald Rolheiser, examine this notion of pondering and he helped me to realise that it was saying something much more profound than I had previously realised. The word 'ponder' in the ancient biblical languages actually means much more than simply 'thinking about' or 'thoughtfully reflecting on' : it certainly means to go deeply into

the subject, but it also suggests that we actually enter into and are part of the experience.

Thus, Rolheiser pointed out that Mary's 'pondering' was at its most intense as she stood at the foot of the cross. There she could not influence the outcome of the events but she was not simply standing by helpless either. By accompanying her son, Jesus, through his passion and death, she actually took part in the passion.



He compared her role to that of a filter. For example, a water filter sifts out all the toxins and impurities so that we are left with pure water. Likewise, as Mary stood at the foot of the cross with her son Jesus, she helped to filter out all the pain and suffering, the cruelty and sin of the world, so that she could pour forth the purity of God's love.

Rolheiser then invited us to ponder this as the ultimate image of true discipleship. As part of the Body of Christ, brothers and sisters of the Lord, we are called to imitate Mary and enter into the mystery of Christ's passion and death by standing alongside all those in need and absorbing their pain and suffering. On this great Feast of Mary, may the Holy Spirit enable us to make Christ present to the world in this way.

Timothy J Buckley, CSsR  
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**St AGNES'**  
CHURCH



### OUR VISION

*"Everything is to be oriented towards the praise and glory of God".*

### OUR MISSION

The St Agnes' Parish Community strives to make our Vision a reality by a commitment to:

- holiness in the image of Christ
- proclaim the good news of salvation
- minister within the faith community
- the service of all, particularly those in need

## Gospel Reflection

There's a lot going on this Sunday! Being January 1st, we celebrate the beginning of the New Year in our secular calendar. In the past, this day was celebrated liturgically as the Feast of the Circumcision to mark the eighth day of Jesus' life when, as for all Jewish boys, Jesus would have been circumcised in accordance with the covenant made by Abraham and God. This event is acknowledged in today's reading. Today, this day is celebrated as the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. January 1st was always a special day for honouring Mary, and the Church has confirmed that by making this day a special celebration of Mary's role as mother of Jesus. This day also concludes the Octave of Christmas, the eight days from Christmas Day to January 1st that provide a special focus to the whole Christmas liturgical season. Finally, since introduced by Pope Paul VI in 1967, January 1st is recognised by the Church as World Day of Peace. A very busy day indeed!



Interestingly, today's gospel is virtually the same as the gospel used at the dawn liturgy on Christmas Day and follows directly on from the gospel used at Christmas Midnight Mass. It completes the nativity story with the shepherds' visit to the manger in Bethlehem. Despite what would appear to be a lot of excitement around the birth of her child, Mary is portrayed as remaining very calm, pondering all these things in her heart. It is a measure of Mary's acceptance of all that she had been asked to do. Despite the incredible series of events that led to and surrounded the birth of Jesus, Mary accepted with enormous grace the role she was asked to play in the salvation of the world. Perhaps it is Mary's calm in the midst of great events that makes this day an appropriate one to mark as World Day of Peace.

### From the perspective of...The Shepherds

What must the shepherds have made of the events surrounding the births of Jesus? Shepherds occupied a very lowly status in Jewish society—they were generally regarded as thieves and cut-throats. Suddenly, these very lowly characters were thrust into great events: visions of angels; prophecies; the birth of the Messiah; and powerful experiences of the greatness of God. The gospel says they went back to their sheep glorifying and praising God. They must have been changed by this experience. Perhaps they never really made sense of what

happened to them but more likely it was the beginning of a whole new life experience.

### Have you thought? What a woman!

Luke's image of Mary is a very strong one. We must remember that Mary was no more than a girl - probably 14 or 15 years old. This was the usual age for young women to marry at that time. However, there wasn't much that was normal about the previous nine months of her life. In the midst of all the chaos involved in giving birth away from home and in less than ideal circumstances, she remains completely calm and 'treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart'. What an extraordinary young woman!

### Living the Gospel - A Peaceful New Year?

It is traditional around New Year's Day to make resolutions for the upcoming year: changes that affect the way you live; the way you treat others; setting goals to aim for and work towards. In this context, it is interesting that the Church marks this day as a World Day of Peace. Perhaps, in amongst the self-promises to give up smoking, get a bit more fit, work and study harder and treat little sisters better, we might find time to consider ways in which we can bring about a more peaceful world - even just my little bit of it.

Greg Sunter, LiturgyHelp.

### Prayer for the New Year

Lord, at the beginning of this new year,  
I offer you my life.

Come take my voice, may the words I speak be  
filled with encouragement and goodness.

Come take my hands, may the work they create be  
generous and giving.

Come take my feet, may the journey I walk be led  
by your spirit within.

Come take my life Lord, for I love your goodness,  
your kindness and your leading. Amen.

### Thank You

A special thank you to our Pastoral Assistant, Peter, who has been working tirelessly over the Christmas-New Year period. In particular, Peter assisted at all the Christmas Masses in St Agnes' Church and organised our unique Nativity scene. A very special thanks also to Jenni Searson who organised the music for all our Christmas Masses in the Church. Jenni and her volunteers sang at the five Masses in St Agnes, as well as, at MacKillop College! Thank you to our volunteers at all our chapels and MacKillop College who helped to make our Christmas Masses a special time for all who attended.



## Parish Retreat

Will be held on Saturday, 11 February at the Francis Retreat Centre, Bonny Hills. It will be a one day retreat. All parishioners, teachers and parents are most welcome. Register on line via the St Agnes' website using the following steps, or call the Presbytery Office.



- Website: [www.stagnesparish.org.au](http://www.stagnesparish.org.au).
- Click on Parish Education link.
- On the RHS click on Parish Registrations.
- This will take you to School Interviews, enter Event code for Parish Retreat - 422eh - then click green 'Go' button.
- This will take you to Retreat Registrations.

## Office Closures

The following offices will be closed on Monday, 2 January.

- Presbytery Office.
- Parish Administration Office & Property Services.
- Diocesan Investment Fund.
- Youth Hub.
- MacKillop Gift Shop. Will re-open on Wednesday, 4 January at 10.00am.

## Weekday Mass Time Change

### Monday 2 January

As Monday is a public holiday, Mass will be held at 9.00am in St Agnes' Church.

## MacKillop Gift Shop

The gift shop has for sale a wide range of gifts, religious items and cards. It will be open 10.00am to 2.00pm Wednesday to Friday this week. It is located on Hayward Street, behind KFC. The phone number is 6584 9779.



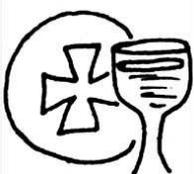
## Holy Hour

Holy Hour will be held on Saturday, 7 January in St Agnes' Church at 8.30am, following 8.00am Mass. All are invited.

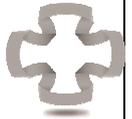
## Coeliac Hosts

Coeliac Hosts are available for parishioners who prefer these hosts. Prior to Mass commencing please go to the Sacristy and speak with our Pastoral Assistant, Peter O'Driscoll, and then sit towards the front of the Church.

Coeliac hosts are available at the Chapels.



## Remember in Prayer



**Recently Deceased:** Moira Jamieson, Shirley Wrampling.

**Anniversaries:** Bruce Wood, Ben MacPherson, Barrie Masterson, Margaret Langtry, Ern O'Reilly, Molly and Robert Friggens, Fr Thomas Cusack, Fr William Hanley.

**Other Mass Intentions:** Janelle Ramstadius, Cathleen Connors, Jon Blacklock, Marija Miller, Pat Chuck, Peter Chuck, Danny Sarks, Mary Sarks, Hilton Dodds, Minnie Downes, Nora Downes Roberts, Beryl Thomas, Stan Condon, donor intentions and Masses of thanksgiving.

## Blood Donations

Donating blood is an important community service requiring new donors to ensure there is sufficient blood for patients in need.

To find out how to become a donor, or for more information call 131 495, or visit the website: [www.donateblood.com.au](http://www.donateblood.com.au).

## Mary, the Holy Mother of God

'May the Lord uncover his face to you and bring you peace'. Pope Paul VI declared New Year's Day the World Day of Peace. It is appropriate because on this day we honour Mary who brought the Prince of Peace into the world. Better than anyone else, she knew the peace that is at once her Son's gift and the fruit of a life lived in obedience to God. *St Paul's Missal.*

Mary must have been a rich source of information about Jesus for the early Christian community: as Luke wrote, Mary 'treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart'. She lived an eventful and relatively long life (having outlived her son and presumably her husband), so those who were privileged to share her memories would have heard stories that were shaped by the wisdom of hindsight.

*LiturgyHelp*

## Quote

'You don't choose your family. They are God's gift to you, as you are to them.'  
Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

Need help with your parish giving?

Call Trudi  
(02) 6588 7444



*Parish Giving Programme*

**Parish Priest**

Father Leo Donnelly

**Assistant Priest**

Father Peter Wood

**Assistant Priest**

Father Roland Agrisola

**Pastoral Assistant**

Peter O'Driscoll

T (02) 6584 9970

**Presbytery Office**

47 Hay Street Port Macquarie

PO Box 23

T (02) 6583 1024

E [pastoraloffice@stagnesparish.org.au](mailto:pastoraloffice@stagnesparish.org.au)

[www.stagnesparish.org.au](http://www.stagnesparish.org.au)

**Office Hours:**

8.30am - 4.30pm

**PARISH MASSES**

**ST AGNES' CHURCH** | Hay Street, Port Macquarie

**Monday to Thursday:** 5.15pm

**Friday:** 12.05pm

**Saturday:** 8.00am, 6.00pm Vigil

**Sunday:** 7.30am, 9.00am, 5.00pm

**Please note:** Weekday Masses at 9.00am on Public Holidays

**Reconciliation:** Friday 11.30am -12 noon, Saturday 11.30am - 12.30pm

**Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament:**

*1st Saturday of the month 8.30am - 9.30am.*

**ST FRANCIS CHAPEL** /Lochinvar Place, Port Macquarie

**Contact:** Sr Anne Hannigan

Ph 6589 9814 or 0419 243 259.

**Communion Service or Mass:** 9.30am Monday - Thursday

**Sunday Mass:** 9.30am

**CHRIST THE KING CHAPEL** | Boronia St, Port Macquarie

**Contact:** Sr Anne Hannigan

Ph: 6589 9814 or 0419 243 259

**Weekday Mass:** See Notice On Chapel Door

**Mass:** Saturday Vigil - 4.30pm

**Rosary:** 1st Saturday of the month 4.00pm.

**ST BERNARD'S, TELEGRAPH POINT** | Rollands Plain Rd, Telegraph Point

Thursday: 6.00pm.

**STAR OF THE SEA, LAKE CATHIE** | Ocean Drive, Lake Cathie

**Sunday:** 8.00am.

**FEAST DAYS**

**St Basil the Great & St Gregory Nazianzen**

Monday, 2 January

**The Most Holy Name of Jesus**

Tuesday, 3 January



**St Raymond of Penyafort**

Saturday, 7 January

**ROSTERS**

7 & 8 January 2017

**READERS AND COMMENTATORS**

**6pm Vigil:** Alan Wheatland  
Margaret Donnelly  
Bill Skane

**7.30am:** Joanne Hogan  
David Hogan  
Jim O'Brien

**9.00am:** Matthew Field  
Josephine Mockford  
Mary Bennett

**5.00pm:** Hannah Post  
Brayden DeCastro  
Ellen Hales

**9.00am:** Anne Thurgate  
Phoebe Morris  
Cathy Hawtin  
Albert Jacobs

**5.00pm:** Tim McCosker  
Pauline Murphy  
Chris McCarron  
Jacky McCarron

**GIFT BEARERS ROSTER**

**6pm Vigil:** B & G Green

**7.30am:** B & W Arthur-Pfeil

**9.00am:** L Fuller & J Howle

**MINISTERS OF THE EUCHARIST**

**6pm Vigil:** Des Grissell  
Charlie Peoples  
Thelma McFarlane  
Barry Johnson

**7.30am:** Greg Grace  
Beverly Arthur-Pfeil  
Wendy Pfeil  
Lisa Toomey

**THE STATUE OF OUR LADY**

Bill & Marse Coghlan  
Villa 1, 10 Braemar Drive  
Port Macquarie

Phone: 6584 2470

**NEXT WEEK'S READINGS**

**The Epiphany of the Lord, Yr A**

Isaiah 60:1-6, Psalm 71;

Eph 3:2-3, 5-6; Matthew 2:1-12

**DIOCESAN INVESTMENT FUND PAYS 2.15% AT CALL!**

There are no fees or charges on your account. *AGENTS: Mrs Veronica Rinkin & Mrs Mary O'Brien*  
DIF Office, Parish Administration Centre, Phone: (02) 6583 7439 9am – 1pm Monday - Friday