

Voice from the Vicarage 8th December 2022

Dear All,

I have many sins but I think I can say that jealousy is not too often one of them. However, I must admit that I had a bit of a twinge of that most unattractive of failings as I thought of our **Sister Cara** winging her way towards the land of our Saviour's birth tomorrow! In just a few days she will be by the sea of Galilee. In just a few days she will be in Nazareth. In just a few days she will have to stoop to enter the small door into the church at Bethlehem, and then she will be in Jerusalem...



The little door into the place of greatest love...Bethlehem

We pray for travel mercies for her and others from the diocese making the pilgrimage with Bishop Brad. She has promised to remember us in prayer at the holy places, but if you have something specific you would like her to pray for there, then do feel free to send her an email while she's away. She probably won't answer it (!) but she **will** pray for your intentions. (crgreenham@gmail.com)

De-westernising the Lord.

Of course while a pilgrimage to the Holy Land can be a wonderful spiritual experience, it challenges too. My first pilgrimage many years ago as a young priest confronted me with the truth that I had unwittingly 'westernised' my Middle Eastern Saviour. And finding silence in the holy sites, filled as they are with pilgrims and tourists was not easy. I had to work hard not to resent them and their noise. Silence comes in snatches there (as here) and one has to find an 'inner' stillness in the midst of the external hustle and bustle, not least in Jerusalem, to say nothing of one's own *internal* bustle which can be like a relentless tree full of monkeys.

Mind bending and heart swelling...

Cara will be where it happened, but over the next few weeks, Christians all over the world, wherever they are, will immerse themselves in the mind bending but heart swelling 'old, old' story which is yet mysteriously ever new. And as they tell his story, the risen Christ will be in their midst. Myers windows change from year to year and need to in order to make it worthwhile coming back. What an exhausting challenge it must be to have to come up with something bigger and better than the previous year! That is not *our* way, and if the greatest drama ever staged is not exciting enough for some, then there is little we can do about it, for ours is a revealed, rather than a made up drama.

Mechanical fantasies and plaster realities..

Today as I passed by the crowds queuing to see the annual display in Bourke Street I wondered about the separation of the several windows filled with mechanical fantasies from the plaster realities of the Holy Family found in the window the *other* side of the entrance to the store. Was it out of respect, or was it to ensure that the crowds were not corralled into seeing 'religious' figures that might even challenge those who see them to ask themselves the question, '**What think ye of Christ?**'

Of course no one is compelled to believe a single word of the remarkable dogma that is the Christian faith. God has created us perfectly free to disbelieve in him. But if you *do* believe it (Lord, help my unbelief), unless you are required by obligation to work or care for the sick, you will surely honour the Lord by worshipping him at this the Feast of his birth. You will not be disappointed. As English mystic and playwright Dorothy Sayers wrote way back in 1938, '*The Christian faith is the most exciting drama that ever staggered the imagination of man.*'

However, we in the Church must take care to ensure that the amazing story told in the Gospels and articulated in the Creeds does not become so commonplace to us that it loses its capacity to keep us wondering.

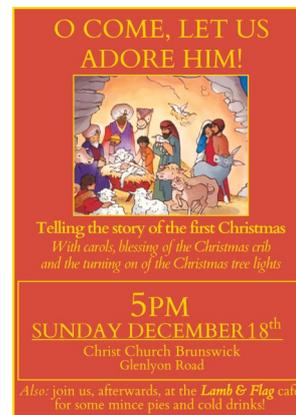
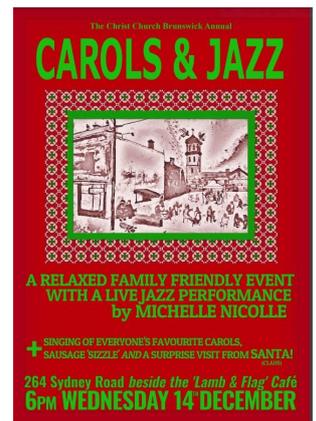
And be sure of this: the story of the birth of the Son of God to the Virgin Mary told by someone who believes it has a power to attract that wondering in others, although it can of course also attract their contempt or ridicule. That you must live with, even cheerfully.

Anyways, tell it we will in Brunswick!

A busy and blessed couple of weeks...

It's my prayer that in the midst of all the activity of the Sydney Road, our offering of **Carols with a bit of jazz** next **Wednesday** will be busy with people and a blessing to people.

I hope you might have invited someone to come along.



NEXT SUNDAY (18th) at 5

there will be Carols as we listen to the story of the birth of Our Saviour. A few of the carols will be sung by a little cantor group getting together for the occasion. **A 'live' baby Jesus will set the scene.** We will build the crib during the service in readiness for its blessing at Midnight Mass, and we'll turn on the Christmas tree lights. The tree arrives tomorrow. They assure me the needles will stay on until 12th night! I'm hoping so..

Much love, +*Lindsay*

This SUNDAY during Lamb 'B & B' in the parish café, Cecilia Fairlie will guide us in reflections about a piece of Christian art.