

PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST ... IS IT POSSIBLE?

Barack Obama's inauguration during the week and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza at the same time could be setting the scene for new peace initiatives in the Middle East. The politics of what is happening between the two warring sides is too complex for us in Australia to completely understand. No matter how irksome it is for those on the Arab side, they still look to the US for a lead in this matter. This is despite the fact that American domestic politics dictates that the US sees Israel as part of its hegemony. The reason for this, and the amount of moral and financial support the US is willing to give to Israel, confuses most Australians.

While some parts of Israel have been terrorised by Hamas' constant rocket attacks, the newspapers report that three Israeli civilians have been killed. Can that be the true number? In retaliation, Israel has killed 1,200 Palestinians, some of whom are militia. It is a David and Goliath contest. Besides the killing of civilians, Israel's destruction of the Palestinian infrastructure is unconscionable. Even the local Caritas office was destroyed. So our parish is directly involved because, I suppose, next Lent's Project Compassion money will go in part to rebuilding it. The second-in-charge in Caritas' international office in Rome is an Australian. Last week the Pope directed that some funds from the Vatican would go immediately to the people of Gaza. This will further infuriate the Israeli Government.

In all of this one thing that is clear is the efforts being made to neutralise the voice of the Pope. The relationship between the Vatican and

the state of Israel has almost broken down. Religious who work in the Holy Land are being denied re-entry visas after visiting their homeland for vacations. These expatriates are excellent Arab speakers pastorally ministering to the small Catholic community which sees that part of the world as their homeland. The concrete wall dividing the warring sides sometimes runs straight through church property. No



compensation is offered. Perhaps these are irritations that hardly rate a mention in the midst of the enormity of the situation, but combined with Jewish complaints about the thousand-year old Good Friday prayer for the conversion of the Jews and the successful attempts to character assassinate Pius XII, you have the beginnings of a good conspiracy theory at least. The state of Israel does not want the planned visit to the Holy Land by Pope Benedict to go ahead. Israeli media would be unable to control what he says and Israel does not

want the huge media contingent that accompanies the Pope snooping around and witnessing the humiliation that Israel meets out to Palestinians.

The Church's position is best expressed in the words of John Paul II, when he said, "they have a right to a homeland as does any civil nation, according to international law". Pope Benedict said last week, "there is room for everyone in the Holy Land". What's in it for the Israeli Government to alienate the Catholic Church beats me.

At his Sunday Angelus homily, Pope Benedict called for an "end to the tragedy" in Gaza. He spoke of "unheard of violence" that has killed hundred of "innocent victims...Let us remember

to the Lord today the hundreds of children, elderly, women who have fallen as innocent victims of unheard of violence (as well as) the wounded, those who are mourning their loved ones and who have lost their possessions,” he said. Benedict was even-handed (or was he being more politically correct than I am) in his statement, mentioning neither the Israeli or Palestinian side in the conflict.

During the recent violence in Gaza, Israel would not allow the media into Gaza. Media being what it is still had to get pictures back to TV stations and newspapers. Denied access, the media was obliged to interview only Israelis so the reporting was biased. The Palestinians must think we have turned a blind eye to their plight.

Israel has a right to defend itself and its citizens against Hamas missiles. But by ignoring the principle of proportionality, Israel is not being very smart. Like its ally, the US, Israel does not seem to understand the realpolitik of what is going on. The consequence of the war in Iraq means Israel’s allies are weakened with their military tied down in Iraq (and Afghanistan) enabling Iran to fill the political void. Iran, unlike Iraq, has real weapons of mass destruction. This is an unacceptable consequence for Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia and, I suggest, Israel. Iran is known to support Hezbollah on Israel’s northern border and Hamas on Israel’s southern border. President Ahmadinejad wants the complete destruction of Israel. Then there is the growing Islamist threat.

Remembering that the Arab world is united by religion and by culture, there is a fear that if ever they should join forces, Israel could not survive. The Palestinians are out-breeding the Israelis too. With the passing of time the Arabs could forget the defeat they suffered in their 1973 conflict with Israel.

One should be alarmed by the demonstrations in Jakarta. The only common element I can discern as to why people in Indonesia would take to the streets in support of the Palestinians is because of their common religious background. Religion will become a dominant issue in our lifetime. If we look at Islam in the same way as we look at Christianity, we are fooling ourselves. “Religious belief of any kind”, as Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O’Connor said, “tends now to be treated more as a private eccentricity than as the central and formative element” in western society. For most Australians religion is unimportant. That is not the case with those who follow Islam.

The Israeli defence spokesman who

unblinkingly announced that the military operation had been successful must have rocks in his head. Hamas will regroup. The grievances that propelled Hamas onto the political stage in 2006 are still present. Moderate Palestinian leaders have now be sidelined and their places taken by more radical factions. The boys we see every night on our TVs attending funerals in Gaza, do not go to school. Schools, even UN schools, have been destroyed. Unfortunately the action of the Israeli Government is educating these boys. Educating them to hate. They are the next generation of self-immolating martyrs and rocket builders.

The only good news I can see is Hilary Clinton. Yes, Hilary! Bill Clinton tried to bring about a successful diplomatic solution to this issue. He was passionate about finding a peaceful and just solution to this ever-present problem. Hilary, now in a position of influence, might just be the person to complete her husband’s dream of bringing a lasting peace to the land of our Lord. If I am right, what an irony. And have a happy Australia Day.

Father John.

Today’s Readings

First Reading Acts 22:3-16 Paul speaks of his dramatic encounter with Christ.

Second Reading 1 Corinthians 7:29-31 Paul warns against being too engrossed in the material things of the world.

Gospel Mark 16:15-18 Jesus commissions the Church to preach the Gospel to the whole world.

Next week: Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year B
Deut 18:15-20; 1 Cor 7:32-35; Mark 1:21-28

LITURGY CORNER

Today as we celebrate the Conversion of St Paul, let us keep in mind his contribution to those who profess a Christian faith. After his conversion, he made three missionary journeys, he spoke with eloquence about Jesus and the Christian life, he was a prolific letter writer and a man of great faith. *“The apostle St Paul, who proclaimed the truth of Christ to the whole world and did so after being Christ’s persecutor, spent himself in using every means to proclaim the Good News to the nations, committing himself with zeal to the unity and concord of all Christians. He has always been and continues to be venerated by the faithful, especially in this particular year, the bi-millennium of his birth, which the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI desired to institute as a special jubilee year. Thus ... it is permitted, in an extraordinary manner, that on 25 January 2009 ... a Mass according to the formulary ‘Conversion of St Paul’ ... may be celebrated... (Congregation for Divine Worship & the Discipline of the Sacraments, 30 May 2008)*

LENT 2009

There will be a Lenten Study Group at 10.00am in the Marian Centre commencing 26 February. If you are interested in attending, would you please ring the Parish Office so books can be ordered. Books are \$5 each; Music CD \$20. Any parish groups wanting books, please contact the office as well. *Sr Judy*

Feast Days this Week

Australia Day - Monday, January 26
St Thomas Aquinas - Wednesday, January 28
St John Bosco - Saturday, January 31

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

**DURING THE MONTH OF JANUARY
NO SERVICES WILL BE HELD
IN THE RETIREMENT VILLAGES.**

LITTLE ROCK SCRIPTURE STUDY GROUP will recommence on Wednesday 4 February at 10.00am until 12 noon in the Marian Centre and will continue each Wednesday for 8 Weeks. Topic: *Introduction to the Bible*. All are welcome. Please call the Parish Office by January 28 so books can be ordered.

AUSTRALIA DAY MASS AT 8.00 am

ST VINCENT de PAUL meetings resume this Tuesday 27 January.



LIFE BEGINS AT 50: Carnevale

A night of fun & music, on Saturday 14 February in the Parish Hall at 7.15pm. See the Church notice board for more details. Contact Agnes on 9634 2375.

ACOLYTES & ALTAR SERVERS Please collect your new rosters from the priests' sacristy and altar servers room respectively.

YOUTH LEADERS' BREAKFAST AND TRAINING DAY on Saturday 7 February with breakfast from 8.30 to 10.30am at Rooty Hill Parish Hall, 9 Adelaide Street, Rooty Hill. Training from 11.00am to 4.00pm. Youth leaders or anyone involved in ministry with young people are invited to attend. RSVP by Monday 2 February. See the noticeboard for details.

CATECHIST NEWS

Catechist AGM will be held on Monday February 9 at 7.30pm in the Church Hall. All Catechists to collect their books on the night.

A Retreat will be held for all Catechists on Tuesday February 10 at Marymount, David Street, Castle Hill at 10.30am. All Catechists welcome.

Catechist Commissioning Mass to be held on Sunday 15 February at the 10.30am Mass followed by morning tea in the Marian Centre.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION 2008-2009 Please continue to pray for our parish families participating in this preparation process. Sessions resume Monday 2nd and Tuesday 3rd February.



events & news for Youth & Young Adults ...

A HUGE THANK YOU to everyone involved in Summer Camp 2009. We had an awesome four days at Toukley with warm weather, good surf, great friends and outrageous adventure activities including the giant swing and leap of faith. Many thanks to the leaders and parents who made the camp a fantastic experience and to Fr Sunny and Fr John for their presence and support! To everyone who attended: How much fun did we have... too much!!! Keep posted for future Life Teen youth events in 2009!

LIFE Nights return on Sunday 1st February at 7:30pm for all high school teens in Years 9-12. Join us in the Hall straight after the Life Teen youth mass for a great night of activities, faith and friends! If you enjoyed Summer Camp, you won't want to miss LIFE Nights!

Into LIFE for high school teens in years 6-8 will return on Monday 2nd February in the Hall from 7-8:30pm. Come along and join us for an evening of games and activities. Bring \$2 for supper.

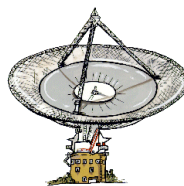
Life Teen produces fantastic **weekly podcasts** for free to help everyone get more out of our Sunday Mass. Listen to Mark 'Bible Geek' Hart give an insightful explanation and reflection on the upcoming mass readings. You can download these or listen to them online. Subscribe now from www.lifeteen.com or search for 'lifeteen.com' at the iTunes store. An excellent resource for lectors.

www.lifeteen.com is a great website for all teens and young adults. Get more out of our Catholic faith – the real answers and facts - along with the latest music and movie reviews and even just some random facts too!

www.lifeteenaustralia.com – for more info on what's on for youth and young adults at St Bernadette's or contact the Parish House on 9634 2622.

COOKING FOR THE NEEDY restarts in the Marian Centre this Tuesday 27 January.

ST BERNADETTE'S NETBALL CLUB Are you turning 7 in 2009 and would like to play netball? Please call Registrar - Jo Biggs on 8850 0324.



LIFE BEGINS AT 50 BUS TRIP to Parkes (the Dish), Western Plains Zoo (Dubbo), Forbes, Canowindra, Cowra, Grenfel, Yeoval and Wellington from 1st to 6th June \$745 pp twin share all inclusive price (\$175 single supplement). \$100 deposit. Phone Harry & Robin on 9634 3354 for details and bookings.

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
 Fr Sunny Michael, ms, Assistant Priest
 Sr Judy McLeod, rsm, Pastoral Associate
 Mrs Alice Bradshaw, Sacramental Co-ordinator
 Mr Ian Pomeroy, Into LIFE Youth Minister
 Mrs Frances Gallagher, Office Manager
 Mrs Monica Rubic, Parish Secretary (Finance: Mon-Thu)
 Mr Michael Watson, Maintenance Co-ordinator

Mass Times for this Week

Sunday	Sat	6pm
	Sun	7.30am, 9am, 10.30am & 6pm
		Parish LIFE TEEN Youth Mass
Weekdays	Mon	8.00 am (Australia Day)
	Tue	6.45 am
	Wed	6.45am, 9.15am
	Thurs	6.45am, 9.15 am
	Fri	6.45am, 9.15 am
	Sat	8am

Mass on Public Holidays at 8am

Reconciliation Sat 8.30am-9am; 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 Geoffrey Hannah, Jean Quinton, Fr John McCulloch, Cardinal Stephanos and Josef Gilenrainer who have died recently and for the anniversaries of Mary-Anne Langford, Bill Tait (Jan 21), Angela Forwood (Jan 28), Herbert Taylor and Jerry Ecarma (40 days).

ROSTERS FOR NEXT WEEKEND – January 31 & February 1

ACOLYTES/ SERVERS		LECTORS	EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF COMMUNION
VIGIL Zeno Hong S1	Caroline/Paul Dumapit Brian Mooney John Abernethy	Jessica Fearnside, Rebecca Barrett, Moira Mitchell, Marjorie, Dominic & Natasha Orioles, Harry and Robin Reyden, John Geoghegan	
7.30AM Joe Josue S2	Anne Parker Colleen Baines Matthew Troy	John O'Dea, Annemarie and Daryl Hill, Jennifer Wakeling, Matthew Troy, Fran Mulcahy	
9.00AM Budi Kawiadji S3	David Green Von Lulan Mike Lulan	David/Bettina Green, Sally Healey, John & Lois Donnelly, Aida Pereira, Von & Mike Lulan, Brian & Katrina Fitzalan	
10.30AM Edy Kesuma S4	Bill Gleeson Elizabeth Fogolin Michael Puckeridge	Buds Custodia, Campion, Rani & Cherani Fernando, Kerry Myers, Natalie Parmenter, Sandra & Johan Nelis, Rosary Roco	

6.00 PARISH LIFE TEEN YOUTH MASS MINISTRY ROSTER - February 1

Adult Servers Alex Tomic Gillian Pak	Extraordinary Ministers of Communion Bill Clasquin Darren Edwards Ian Pomeroy James Waters	Marc Clasquin Rosalie Sampath Sean Finucane Suzannah Ferry Sam Sampath	Musos Bass Erich Gracias Flor Piano Belinda Lee Guitar Daniel Ang Michael Smith Horns/Strings/ Winds Matthew Ashton
Altar Preparation Josh Becker			
Lectors Jen Austin Raquel Lobo Stef Musgrave	Projectionist Larissa O'Callaghan	Ushers Alfonso Aguilera Glen Ferry	
Altar Servers S5	Gift Preparation	Welcomers Tina Muscat Tony Muscat	

CHILDREN'S LITURGY No Children's Liturgy FLOWER ROSTER Sandra & Serieze Fernando	CHURCH HOUSEKEEPING Marion Heron, Marjorie Anderson, Caroline Higgins, Bernadette Logue, Maree Greenwell COUNTING (1st Collection) John Faehrmann Len Goldsworthy	COUNTING (2nd Collection) Rex Smith, Albert Leroy, Jeff Cronan, Joachim Schiller, John Moran BOOKSHOP Paula Boyd / Heather Woods / Jane Beard / Crystal Good / Giuli & Serge Dogulin
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