

TIME TO THANK GOD & PEOPLE IN OUR LIVES
SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT – 5 DECEMBER 2021



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ST PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS 1:3-11

*Do we remember times when we felt sorry for ourselves?
When we felt miserable and thought we had every right to be miserable?
Times when we did not want people to take away our gloom and pessimism?*

In today's 2nd Reading, we could excuse Saint Paul if he felt miserable in prison. But, instead, he writes to the Christian community in Philippi about something very different.

He takes the time to pray in thanksgiving to God and to write about his prayer to the Philippian community.

SAINT BARBARA'S SANCTUARY

Just a few years ago, I was visiting northern Iraq during a time of reconstruction after the defeat of ISIS in Mosul.

The Parish Priest of Karamles in the Nineveh Plains drove me through several armed checkpoints from Erbil to Karamles. He showed me some of the devastating destruction, and the hard, ongoing work of rebuilding.

One of the special memories for me, was when we walked across the road to the nearby hillside Sanctuary of Saint Barbara. The area is an archaeological dream with so many thousands of years of history. *But it was the sacredness of the sanctuary that I felt strongly. Here was a holy place, a sacred place. A place of hope.*

If you continue on from Karamles, you come to Qaraqosh.
A number of families from Qaraqosh have resettled
in northern Brisbane and Logan after 2016.
I was looking forward to seeing their home community,
with its rich religious and cultural traditions.

I had seen photos of the havoc,
but the photos didn't prepare me for the terrible destruction that I was to witness.
And again, there was the hard, ongoing work of rebuilding.

The Archbishop of Qaraqosh shared with me,
stories of destruction and survival and hope and faith.

The Sanctuary of Saint Barbara remains clearly in my memory.
It was a place to thank God,
that despite the evil intentions of ISIS,
the Christian communities were able to escape and survive.

***The sanctuary of Saint Barbara was a sacred place,
where I could pray for families from the Nineveh Plains,
who had since settled in Brisbane and Logan.
And I prayed for the families who had returned
to live in the towns of the Nineveh Plains.***

The visit reminds me of St Paul and his gift
to be able to thank God for the Christians of Philippi.
Let us listen to part of his letter, written from prison,
to people so far away.

*'I thank my God every time I remember you,
constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you,
because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now.
I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you
will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.*

*It is right for me to think this way about all of you,
because you hold me in your heart,
for all of you share in God's grace with me,
both in my imprisonment and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel.
For God is my witness,
how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus.*

*And this is my prayer,
that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge
and full insight to help you to determine what is best,
so that on the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless,
having produced the harvest of righteousness
that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.'*

INVITATION TO SPEND TIME IN THANKSGIVING

Today I invite all of us to spend some time in thanksgiving.
Let us pause and silently pray for people we wish to thank.

[Pause and pray]

As we prepare for Christmas,
let us pause and thank God for the blessings that we have received.

[Pause and pray]

We think of those people to whom we would say

*'I thank my God every time I remember you,
constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you,
because of your sharing in the gospel'*

And if we haven't seen them for a while,
to say *'For God is my witness,
how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus.'*

And we could pray for them this Advent, to God with these words

*'And this is my prayer,
that your love may overflow more and more
with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best'*

GOSPEL OF LUKE 3:1-6

In today's Gospel passage, we hear the call of John the Baptist

*'the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness.
He went into all the region around the Jordan,
proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins,
as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,
'The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
"Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.
Every valley shall be filled,
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
and the crooked shall be made straight,
and the rough ways made smooth;
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."'*

And we ask ourselves this Advent –

How do we prepare the way for others to believe in Jesus this Christmas?

How do we reach out to the disillusioned, the seekers, the lonely?

Who will we invite to share our Christmas Mass this year?

Our four Christmas Masses are:

Christmas Eve December 24th - **Evening Mass at 6pm** and **Night Mass at 9pm**
and **Christmas Day Masses at 7.30am and 9.30am.**

WE THANK GOD FOR HELEN HICKEY

Today we thank God for the 20 years of service to this community as our Sacramental Coordinator.

We invite Mark to come forward and reflect on Helen's ministry.

[Sharing and presentation]

MEMBERS OF OUR PARISH FAMILY RETURNED FROM BLACKALL / TAMBO | THANK YOU

Members of our parish family who recently returned from Blackall / Tambo Parish are invited to come forward after Communion, and Mark will share the story of the Blackall Fete for us. Thank you to all who travelled to Blackall as family.

Let us pray in thanksgiving for the faith communities of Blackall / Tambo parish.

Let us Pray.

Father Gerry

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/120521.cfm>