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VISION



Easter Edition, March 2011
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EASTER

From The Minister's Desk

The time for perhaps the greatest celebration of the Christian Year is almost here as in April we rejoice in the death and the resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ. At Christmas we remember the birth of Jesus, the Incarnation, God become like us and living with us. But Christmas has no meaning until we complete the story at Pentecost. The culmination of spiritual history for the Christian believer is the centrality of the resurrection to our faith. Without the resurrection Christianity has no meaning, no depth. Christmas leads up to the culmination of Easter Day and then leads away to Pentecost as God manifests Himself completely in the Holy Spirit.

Easter has always been a special time for me in the life of the congregations in which I have ministered. People find the suffering of Good Friday difficult to take and to understand but the joy of Easter Day and of resurrection animates our lives and our faith as God becomes real to us in that great victory over sin and death. Resurrection day shows the power of God and the strength that gives to us in contemplating our own life and death. John's Gospel records that when the risen Lord appeared to His disciples on the evening of Easter Day He said to them 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' He then breathed on them and said 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.' (John 20:19-23 (NRSV))

As glorious as the resurrection is to the believer, it is a stumbling block to the seeker, the sceptic, the agnostic and the unbeliever. No one has ever seen anything like it before. People have had near death experiences and been resuscitated but no one, except for Jesus Christ, has been resurrected, brought back to life never to die again. This is an astounding claim but one that is central to the Christian faith. Down through the centuries theologians and scholars have tried to give explanations for it but for me, central to my faith, is the actuality of the resurrection. N.T. Wright, a contemporary English theologian has written a huge tome on the resurrection. John Dominic Crossan and N.T. Wright, among others, have entered into intellectual debate about the resurrection of Jesus but what matters in the long run is our own personal response of faith to the good news of Easter Day.

The great Easter hymn concludes with these words:
But the pain that he endured
alleluia!
Our salvation has procured;
alleluia!
Now exalted he is king'
alleluia!
And the angels ever sing;
alleluia!



May these words resound from the lips of thousands this Easter Day as we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

-Paul Logan

Calendar of Events

MARCH

Friday 4 th	12 noon - World Day of Prayer at Wesley Mission Friday Music: Sayaka Eguchi (violin)
Wednesday 9 th	Ash Wednesday Communion Service
Thursday 10 th	2.30pm. Council of Christians and Jews Meeting. Lecture and Kocher luncheon in Ferguson Hall
Friday 11 th	Friday Music: Nexas Saxophone Quartet
Friday 18 th	Friday Music: "Charisma" - David Miller (piano), Julia Ryder (cello), Ros Dunlop (clarinet)
Friday 26 th	Friday Music: Edwin Taylor (organ)

APRIL

Friday 1 st	Friday Music: Tracy Wan (violin)
Wednesday 6 th	Fellowship Meeting. Guest speaker: The Rev. Graham Long, Wayside Chapel
Friday 8 th	Friday Music: Alistair Duff-Forbes (violin)
Friday 15 th	Friday Music: Alana Blackburn (recorder)
Sunday 17 th	Palm Sunday
Thursday 21 st	Maundy Thursday <i>Tenebrae</i> Service 6.15 pm
Friday 22 nd	10am - Good Friday Service <i>No Friday Music</i> 2pm – John Stainer's The Crucifixion in concert
Sunday 24 th	Easter Sunday

Friday 29 th	Street Stall Friday Music: Kurt Ison (organ)
MAY	
Wednesday 4 th	Fellowship Meeting. Guest speaker: The Rev. Dr David Gill
Friday 6 th	Friday Music: Victoria Jacono-Gilmovich and the Strelitzia Piano Trio
Friday 13 th	Friday Music: Judith Rough (soprano) Cathy Davis (piano)
Friday 20 th	Friday Music: Jenny Compton (violin)
Friday 27 th	Friday Music: Stacey Yang (organ)

Editorial

The first issue of Vision for 2011 comes out post Christmas and pre Lent. It comprises a gallimaufry of reports, reflections and reminiscences through which are expressed gratitude to God that we have managed continuous worship at St. Stephen's without suffering a dramatic decline in our membership or our visitors even though we still have no permanent minister after over a year.

The excellent quality of our interim ministers, the unrelenting hard work of a few members of the congregation and, as always, our rigorous, reputed music ministry have unflaggingly contributed to this continuous witness.

.So, "In faith and hope and love with joyful trust we move..." into 2011,

May you experience a **Blessed Easter** season.



News from the Organ Bench



By Mark Quarmby

(Director of Music)

The choir returned at the end of January after a well earned break following the busy Christmas period. Over the past few months we have welcomed several new choristers who have made a huge contribution to the music at St Stephen's. Arthur and Ruth Lockley have been involved in church music for many years and travel down from the Blue Mountains every Sunday to be with us. Their son, Gavin, is an outstanding Australian composer and singer and has also sung with us on one occasion. Linda Vitali-Alchin has sung at weddings around Sydney, often with her sister. A young mother, she has joined the St Stephen's choir so she can sing sacred choral music. We also welcome Kieren Gromowski as our new tenor scholar. Kieren has just finished his HSC at the Conservatorium of Music where he studied piano and singing.

We are always looking for new choristers, particularly altos and more men so if you are interested in joining us, please see me or Anthony. You need to be able to read music and sing in tune.

We are looking forward to a great year of music making with the Easter period being the next busy time with extra music.

The Friday Music concerts have resumed for 2011. Each week we can enjoy a first class performance. Come along and bring your friends as it is much more rewarding to perform in front of a good-sized audience. If St James can get a couple of hundred people attending their Wednesday lunchtime series, why can't we on Fridays?

With all our musical activities at St Stephen's, we desperately need a publicity officer to tell everyone what is on! If you would like to do this, please see Rosalie or me. There is not much point putting in all the long hours of work to sing and play to an almost empty church.

VALE – Malcolm Catt

Malcolm Catt died on Australia Day after liver cancer took hold of him suddenly after some time in remission

He always sat right up the front and sang the hymns well.

I didn't know he was a musician. He had his LMus. A in piano at 15 and played a Mozart concerto under Sir Eugene Goossens. He regularly played chamber music and often performed concerts with the Central Coast Orchestra. Indeed, he came from a very musical family. His sister is the Director of Music at the historic South Brisbane St. Andrews Anglican Church where she is overseeing the restoration of their historic organ. He gave up a musical career to become a leading obstetrician. However, he was an organist at the Gosford Uniting Church.

Malcolm's funeral was held on Wednesday, 2nd February at 10 am, conducted by the Rev. Dr David Gill and the Rev. Graham Woolnough of Gosford Uniting Church.

The family requested the presence of the choir to lead the hymns. The soloist was Matthew Cin who sang in January at the last service Malcolm attended which meant so much to him in his dying days. By request Byron Westbury played the trumpet.

The fact that the church was packed with mourners on a working day attests to the high regard in which this gentle man was held.

Successful Street Stall

On 26th November, the Handcraft Group together with the Fellowship Group held their most successful street stall on Macquarie Street.

The Hand Craft group hold their regular stall on Communion Sundays as well as on other special events such as Australia Day, but the street stalls in November and April are the “Big Events”.

Items on sale are cards, clothing, knick- knacks, cakes, jams, preserves, plants and books which target the passing parade on Macquarie Street.

The small but dedicated group work tirelessly throughout the year preparing and assembling stock for the stalls the proceeds of which are clearly put to good use, providing funds for a variety of contributions to the church – the latest being the purchase of new pew Bibles. A few of these were purchased by members of the congregation in dedication to loved ones.

Donations of materials or goods for the stalls are always welcome as is help in person on the day of the stall.

Inquiries to Margaret de la Garde.

Geoff Allan



The Third Temptation as recorded in the gospel of Luke reads:

Then he (the tempter) brought Jesus to Jerusalem and placing Him on the pinnacle of the temple said to Him, "If you are God's son, throw yourself from this; for it is written;

*He will give his angels charge of you, and
They will bear you on their hands, lest you strike your foot against a stone.*

William Manson writes: A Jewish Midrash (ancient commentary on part of the Jewish Scriptures) contains a tradition which is sometimes quoted in this connexion. "When King Messiah is revealed, he comes and stands upon the roof of the Holy Place: then will he announce to the Israelites and say, *ye poor, the time of your redemption is come.*

The Messiah, casting himself from the temple pinnacle on which he stood, would be a sign to the people to precipitate revolt against the enemies of Israel and of God.



The Passover Meal in Jesus' time

Lamb: Eaten roasted or in a thick stew with vegetables

Unleavened Bread: Flat loaves made of wheat or barley flour, salt and water.

Wine: Four glasses of wine mixed with water drunk to represent the four phases of redemption of Exodus 6:6-7

Bitter Herbs: Represented the cruel bondage in Egypt. They include onions, garlic, radishes and peppers.

Foods included after Jesus time:

Haroseth: Made to resemble the mud mortar of Egyptians bondage, it contains ground apple, raisins, figs, nuts, wine and honey.

Baked Eggs: Among the many traditions is that they were an ancient symbol of suffering.

Parsley and Salt Water: The rabbis taught that the salty water represents the tears of the angels for the Egyptians who drowned in the Red Sea.

Other foods commonly eaten at ancient feasts: Grapes, raisins, dates, figs, prunes, apricots, almonds, walnuts, wheat, barley, carob, seeds, honey, olives, pickles, cucumbers, cheese, dried fish

Stonework Restoration

You will be glad to know that restoration of our Macquarie St façade is slowly drawing to an end and we shall certainly rejoice when we can see the new cross finial and beautifully re-pointed stonework again. Although the work has taken much longer than expected I am sure the results will be most pleasing. Unfortunately the stonemason cannot guarantee a date when the supportive hoarding and main scaffold can be removed but we are hopeful this can happen by the end of March. As the stone restoration progresses to the lower part of the building a smaller less obtrusive protective hoarding will be erected on street level for another few weeks.

By way of explanation for the extended work you should know that once the restoration commenced and closer inspections were possible, numerous defects in additional areas of the stonework were noticed. Some of these were joints in the parapet walls which had been repaired about 30 years ago with material that is now considered unsuitable as it allows moisture penetration around its edges causing further stone deterioration. It has been necessary to stabilise the stone on all parapet walls to satisfy an order imposed by the City of Sydney Council to make the area safe. Some of the repaired areas will be covered by lead capping to further protect them. The Church Council has decided to proceed with this additional work being mindful of their duty of care towards the building for the future and also to avoid having to re-erect very expensive scaffolding within the next 10 years. The cost of all of this repair work will total about \$700,000 funded mainly by the sale of share holdings (which further reduces our reserves).

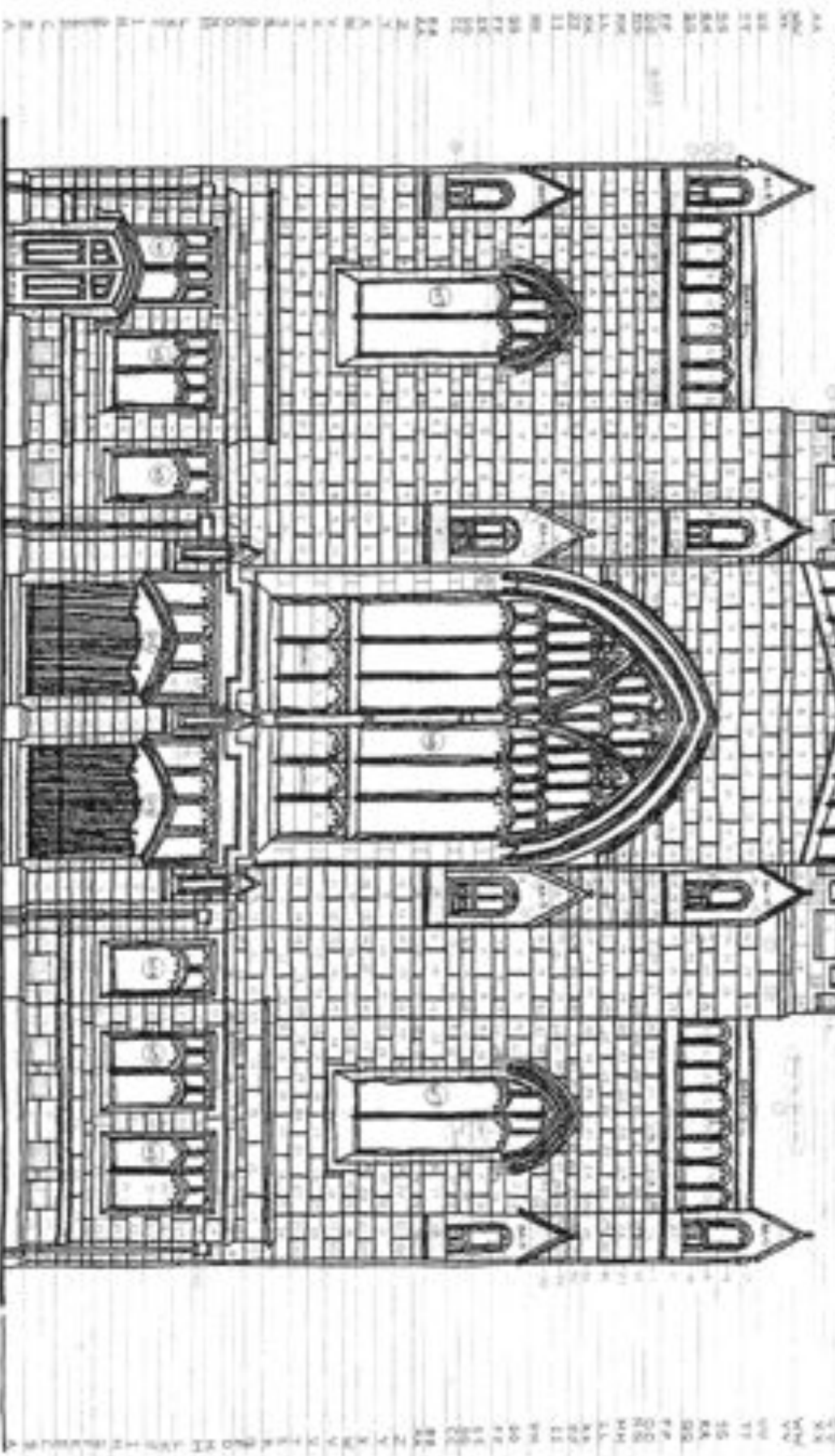
In previous issues you have read about the St Stephen's Building Conservation Appeal supported by the National Trust. This appeal has now reached almost \$32,000, of which the Handcraft Group has provided \$5,000 and one member of the congregation has donated \$10,000. If these significant contributions could be matched by any members or friends of St Stephen's in the near future this would help us to comply with the terms of a Heritage Grant application that was submitted to the NSW Department of Planning in December.

Our Heritage Architect considers that we stand a good chance of gaining a grant up to a maximum of \$75,000 **but** we are required to match this with our own funds if successful. Results will be known during March. I urge you and your families and those who may have association with St Stephen have to support the appeal. We plan to carry out much-needed conservation work along the passageway to Phillip St to comply with fire exit regulations and accessibility and to repair some of the windows. All donations, no matter how small, will be gratefully received and receipted, and those over \$2.00 are of course tax-deductible. Cheques should be made out to **St Stephen's National Trust Conservation Appeal.**

Sheena Wiard
Coordinator, Property Resource Group

Working drawing of St. Stephen's
 facade showing how each piece of
 stone is labelled.

Supplied by architects MBRS
 & Partners and courtesy of
 Scampha NSW Pty Ltd



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Venice for the Independent Senior Traveller

Venice is a magical city to visit at any age. When you seek to travel in Italy at a later stage in your life, then I believe that the experience is even more pleasurable and enriching than at a younger age. Last year, I went back to Venice for a short visit in the company of a wonderful friend and travelling companion - and the city seemed even more beautiful and extraordinary than before. On our first day, we wanted to revisit Saint Mark's Basilica, only to find that the piazza had started to flood. All those who wished to visit the basilica had to queue on duckboards. As the queue was already very long, we decided to seek out the less famous basilica of Santa Maria dei Frari which is tucked away in a quieter part of the city. There to our delight, we discovered some wonderful works of art, including a famous painting by Titian. Afterwards, we enjoyed a delicious light lunch at a small café bar, where we were given a warm welcome – and where we seemed to be the only tourists.

I have discovered that travelling independently can still be so enjoyable and rewarding, even when you are a Senior Citizen! It is such a shame that it usually takes quite a few months of earnest saving - which involves sacrificing a number of treats - in order to return with a respectable balance on your credit card!



An Exchange to Salisbury.....for 30 minutes!!

For 4 weeks in January 2011, I travelled around the UK and Spain. A highlight of the trip was the 2 days I spent in Salisbury. It is a beautiful and typical 'English' town with a massive cathedral and great pubs. After a busy morning walking round the town I headed over to the Cathedral for a private tour with Andrej who is the Organ Scholar there, on exchange from Sydney (St. James). After the service I was lucky to be taken up to the organ loft to spend 30mins playing their stunning Organ. It's a great instrument to play and the sound fills the building - a truly amazing experience. I'm still pinching myself in disbelief that I actually played it. While in Salisbury, I also visited Stonehenge which was COLD and WINDY!!

In London I went to a service at St Paul's and at Westminster Abbey. I also took a look around the Temple Church and St Brides' on Fleet Street which are tucked away from the street but are beautiful and with impressive four-manual organs. In Edinburgh I visited St. Giles Cathedral which has a relatively 'new' organ in place. Unfortunately, the Cathedral in Madrid was closed for work, but as at St Paul's I was able to climb up to the top of the dome from which I had a wonderful panoramic view of the city.

So while the purpose of my trip was not specifically to enhance my organ skills, I feel that I certainly came away with a much more appreciative view of both countries, their culture and, naturally their beautiful organs.

David Tagg, Organ Scholar



David Gill

From September 2010 to the end of January 2011, St Stephen's was blessed with the ministry of Revd Dr David Gill. What rich and memorable services we had! David gave us a new and profound experience of worship with his example of reverence and his passion for discovering the true Gospel meaning. His sermons were beautiful: resonant, entertaining, searching and heartfelt.

Yet, as a congregation, we were not 'allowed' to passively enjoy the erudition and exposition, the humour and insight of David's words – no, we were regularly challenged to recall our own faith promises, our destiny as Christians and our personal call to service.

The embrace of God – the limitless reach of divine love – was a central message in David's sermons, and we were invited, prompted – and prodded – to respond to this love, this hope, this grace. We thank David for his shining months with us at St Stephen's, for the gift of his moving worship and the privilege of witnessing faith embodied. May we respond, as we have been invited, and truly walk in peace, loving - and serving - God 'In the name of Christ'.

Lea Richards

A member of an official board in the process of appointing a new pastor finally lost his patience. He'd just witnessed the committee reject applicant after applicant for some minor fault – real or imagined. It was time for some soul searching. So he stood up and read the following letter purporting to be from another applicant: "Understanding your pulpit is vacant, I should like to apply for the position.

I have been a preacher and writer with considerable success. Some say that I'm a good organizer and leader. I am over 50 years of age and have never preached in one place for more than three years. In some places I have left town after my words caused riots and disturbances. I must admit that I have been in jail three or four times, but not because of any real wrongdoing.

My health is not too good though I still accomplish a great deal. The churches I have preached in have been small though located in large cities like yours.

I've not got on with religious leaders in the towns I have preached. In fact, some have threatened me and even physically attacked me.

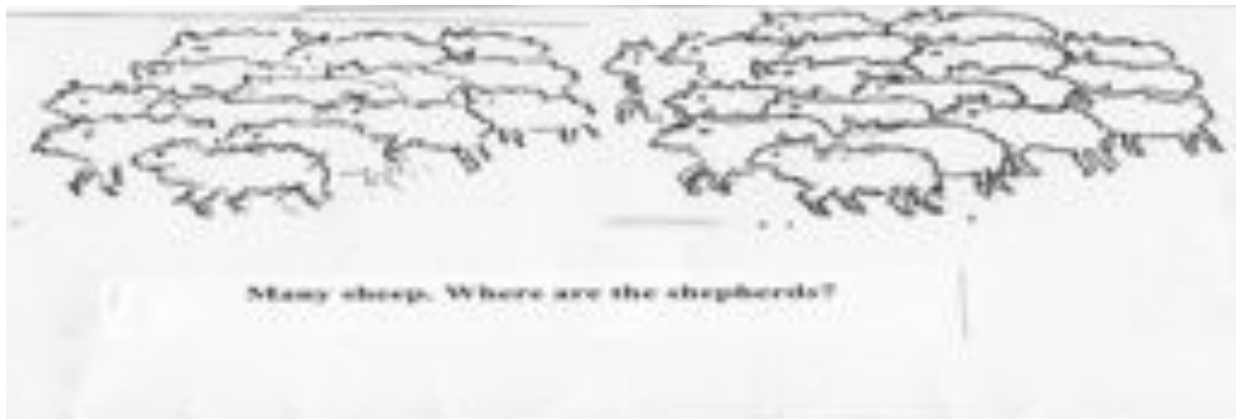
I am not too good at keeping records. However, if you can use me, I promise to do my best for you."

The Board member turned to the committee and said, "Well, what do you think? Shall we call him?"

The good church folk were appalled! Who is this person who had such colossal nerve to apply?

The Board member replied, "It's signed, 'The apostle Paul' "

Anon



Building or Destroying?

I watched them tearing a building
down

A gang of men in a busy town
With a heave and a ho and lusty
yell

As they swung a beam and a side
wall fell.

I asked the foreman, 'Are these
men skilled

As the men you'd hire to build?'

He laughed and said, 'No indeed!

Just common labour is all I need;
I can easily wreck in a day or two

What builders have taken years to
do!'

And I asked myself as I went away,
Which of the roles I've tried to play

—

Am I a builder who works with
care,

Measuring Life by rule and
square?

Am I shaping my deed to a well
made plan,

Patiently doing the best I can?

Or am I a wrecker who walks the
town,

Content with the task of tearing
down?

CREATIVE PUNS FOR "EDUCATED MINDS"

No matter how much you push the envelope, it'll
still be stationery

Two silk worms had a race. They ended up in a
tie.

Atheism is a non-prophet organization.

Two hats were hanging on a hat rack in the
hallway. One hat said to the other, "You stay
here; I'll go on a head".

A short fortune-teller who escaped from prison
was a small medium at large.

A rubber band pistol was confiscated from algebra
class because it was a weapon of math disruption

I wondered why the baseball kept getting bigger.
Then it hit me.

Don't join dangerous cults. Practise safe sects!

A backward poet writes inverse.

When cannibals ate a missionary, they got a taste
of religion.

From Ruani



A Franciscan Benediction

May God bless you with discomfort
at easy answers, half-truths and
superficial relationships
so that you may live deep within
your heart.

May God bless you with anger
at injustice, oppression and
exploitation of people
so that you may work for justice,
freedom and peace.

May God bless you with tears
to shed for those who suffer
pain,
rejection, hunger and war
so that you may reach out your
hand to comfort them and turn
their pain into joy.

And may God bless you with
enough foolishness
to believe that you can make a
difference in the world
so that you can do what others
claim cannot be done
to bring justice and kindness to
all our children and the poor.

Amen

The Editor, Vision,
St. Stephen's Uniting Church,
197, Macquarie Street, Sydney. 2000

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Vision welcomes ideas, suggestions, original verse and prose, book, film and play reviews, humour, concerts you can recommend. Please send your letters by mail (197 Macquarie Street, Sydney, 2000), fax (02-9230 0316), or email (office@ssms.org.au), or drop them at the office. **Next issue June 2011, contributions required by 15 May 2011.**

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