



National Council of
Churches in Australia

Newsletter December 2, 2014

Bishop Philip Huggins,
Interim General Secretary.



St Nicholas of Myra

Greetings!

"The Conference of Bishops and Representatives of the Middle Eastern Churches in Australia ask us to pray together, this Sunday, for Christians in the Middle East.

A Prayer of St Ephraim and the other information we have received is re-printed below.

This all coincides with the Remembrance of Nicholas of Myra, c342.

A Collect for that day prays: *"Almighty God, in your love you gave your servant Nicholas of Myra a perpetual name for deeds of kindness both on land and sea: Grant, we pray, that your Church may never cease to work for the happiness of children: the relief of the poor, and the help of those tossed by tempests of doubt or grief; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen."*

Praying for grace to go with our best efforts, **may we never cease to work for the happiness of children**

Jesus speaks to us about how the angels of each child are continually communicating with God about their well-being.

"See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in Heaven." (Mt .18:10).

We contemplate this word of Jesus, His love for all, His yearning that *"not one of these little ones should perish"* (Mt .18: 12-14), in relation to the violence and suffering in the Middle East this year.

We are aware of what it is to live here in Australia and not in Syria, Iraq and most places in the Middle East, sadly.

Our best way to express our relief and gratitude is to live as Jesus teaches, to help the poor and grieving through **The Christmas Bowl** and to pray as we are bidden .

In the Holy Spirit, let us imagine, as we pray, a world in which every child is safe, free of fear.

Free from the fear of violence, war, hunger and dis-ease of any kind.

Free to play, study, learn, flourish .

Imagine if all policies - Government policies too - were designed through the eyes of children, so their happiness was the clear focus.

Imagine thus the joy of the angels who *" always see the face of my Father who is in Heaven."*

May it be so. Amen and Amen..."

A defining experience for me this year happened in July-August. Whilst I was helping the National Council of Churches in Australia as Interim General Secretary, our first grandchild was born.

Beautiful Betty, born into a family of love and every security.

Meanwhile, at the NCCA, our vivid contact was with the Middle East conflicts, through the Churches:

- The reality of innocent children in terror, being murdered by bombs and rockets between Israel and Gaza;
- The cruelty of ISIS – “*the banality of evil*” in Hannah Arendt’s phrase.
- The abject poverty of children in refugee camps, if they could even reach them.

Meanwhile, photos kept coming from home of sweet little Betty.

Jesus’ words to us make plain that we should see life, shape our work and public policy by **looking at the world through the eyes of children:**

In Advent, let us meditate on these words of Jesus. Let His Word and Spirit intersect:

And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them and said, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. (Matthew 18:2-6 ESV)

“See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.

(Matthew 18:10 ESV)

What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish. (Matthew 18:12-14 ESV)

Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to him, saying, “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” (Luke 18:15-17 ESV)

In our NCCA, we are always refreshing our wonder, delight and enchantment in a child-like gratitude for life. We do our best to see the world through the eyes of children and make sure their God-given gifts flourish in the divine plan and providence. May God’s grace continue to support our best efforts.

Prayer for Peace

“Almighty God and Creator, You are the Father of all people on the earth. I beseech You to guide all the nations and their leaders in the way of justice and peace. Protect us from the evils of injustice, prejudice, exploitation, conflict and war. Help us to put away mistrust, bitterness and hatred. Teach us to cease the storing and using of implements of war. Lead us to find peace, respect and freedom. Unite us in the making and sharing of tools of peace against ignorance, poverty, disease and oppression. Grant that we may grow in harmony and friendship as brothers and sisters created in Your image, to Your honour and praise. Amen

St Ephraim the Syrian



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Churches in Australia

*“Comfort, Comfort my people,
says the Lord” (Isaiah 40:1)*

Prayers for Christians in the Middle East

The prayer will be held under the auspices of "The Conference of Bishops and Representatives of the Middle Eastern Churches in Australia."

All Donations will be sent to Middle Eastern refugees

Prayers will be raised in each Church during the Divine Liturgy
(The Holy Mass) on the 7th of December.



Young Langaletu carries the Cross at this week's school presentation night. She represents our future.

A welcome to the new General Secretary!

Sr Elizabeth Delaney sgs has accepted appointment as the General Secretary of the NCCA, and we held a special welcoming morning tea for her last week.



A welcoming cake



Welcome to the NCCA! Fr Shenouda (NSW Ecumenical Council), Sr Elizabeth, Mike Semmler (NCCA President), Liz Stone (Assoc Interim General Secretary).

Loving, committed people focused on the Christmas Bowl.



Incoming General Secretary, Sr Elizabeth Delaney sgs.

This week we farewell Executive Director **Rev Ken Sumner** who is leaving the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission (NATSIEC) to take up a position with the Uniting Church's Congress in Victoria. We thank him for his wise counsel and sharing in our work.

And this week we welcome **Mr Cameron Haig** to NCCA as the National Coordinator for the Safe Church Training Agreement. Cameron will be based in our Melbourne office and together with our member churches and church partners we look forward to strengthening and expanding the training program. (Next to Alistair in the photo above.)