

Saturday, 20th Decemberr 2003.

## **'It's been 12 days of family torture', says dad**

### **Twin brother wants just one birthday present: Daniel back**

FOR bright-eyed young children and their parents, the 12 days of Christmas are a time of immense joy and anticipation.

But for the family of missing Palmwoods boy Daniel Morcombe, the past fortnight has been a living agony.

"It's been 12 days of family torture," Daniel's dad Bruce Morcombe said yesterday as the family struggled to celebrate both

Daniel and twin brother Bradley's 14th birthday.

"Half of him's (Bradley) not here today," said mum Denise.

The Morcombes used the intense focus on Daniel's birthday for yet another desperate plea.

"We're very ordinary folk.

"We want our Daniel back." "Anybody that has any information at all , now is the time.

We have had enough pain.

Please come forward." Mrs Morcombe, whose tearstained face bears the hallmarks of a mother who has not slept much since Daniel vanished from the Kiel Mountain Road overpass on Sunday, December 7, said she was convinced somebody close to Daniel's suspected abductor "knows something".

"There has to be somebody out there that has seen Daniel with a man and that blue car," Mrs Morcombe said.

"We have to find that person that's got Daniel ... He can't just vanish into thin air... somebody's got him, somebody knows where he is.

"Somebody, whether it's a neighbour or a friend.

People talk, someone must have some information," Mrs Morcombe said.

Bradley has not talked much of Daniel's disappearance but the pain is obvious.

"He's quiet and fairly private in that regard," Mr Morcombe said.

"Look at his eyes, he is very sad," Mrs Morcombe said.

"There's actually a birthday card that Daniel bought for him sitting next to Daniel's bed," she said.

"We didn't give it to Bradley today because it would probably upset him too much." Stella Maris Catholic Parish's Father Jan Bialasiewicz shared a special scripture with Bradley before inviting him to light a candle of hope for his brother.

"Whatever is hidden away will be brought out into the open and whatever is covered up with will be found and brought to light," Father Jan read from the Gospel of Luke.

For Mrs Morcombe, a photograph of Daniel and Bradley enjoying Christmas last year with their cousins in Melbourne, is one of her most treasured possessions at this time.

They have also taken enormous comfort for the huge level of support they've received from the Coast community.

"We are getting cards and letters and flowers and food from people we don't even know," Mrs Morcombe said.

"The support has been terrific," Mr Morcombe said.

"It changes the pace of the day.

You usually get up feeling a little glum, but as a couple of phone calls come and you may meet someone down the street, it changes your perspective.

Every little bit helps." The family hope that Coast residents will continue to light their candles each night at 6pm to maintain their prayer vigil for Daniel.

Yesterday, family and friends joined in a special ceremony in which they relit Daniel and Bradley's baptismal candle.

Father Jan prayed to God that He would watch over his children.

"May your servants Daniel and Bradley, who are celebrating their 14th birthday be abundantly blessed as we thank you for another year of life.

We ask you for their protection and guidance," he prayed.

Police have been flooded with calls from the public this week since releasing an image of an early 1980s dark blue, fourdoor sedan that was seen near Daniel on the Sunday afternoon he vanished.

Daniel was to catch a bus to Sunshine Plaza to have a haircut and buy Christmas presents but never made it.

A man, described as being middleaged, was seen about three metres from Daniel underneath the overpass about 2.

10pm.

Anyone with information should call Crimestoppers urgently on 1800 333 000.