



ONE MISSION, TWO PARISHES

Saint Timothy's & Saint Luke the Evangelist
Catholic Parishes, Forest Hill & Blackburn South

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WEEKLY BULLETIN: SUNDAY 24 DECEMBER 2023

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT - YEAR B

REACH OUT IN LOVE AND MERCY: MARK 6: 32 - 34



Readings this week: 2 Sam 7:1 – 5, 8 – 12, 14, 16; Ps 88:2 – 5, 27, 29; Rom 16:25 – 27; Lk 1:26 – 38.

Gospel Reflection ~ Greg Sunter

We have reached the final Sunday in the season of Advent – a time of preparing ourselves to recognise and celebrate Christ's presence in the world, both historically and in an ongoing, timeless way. This week's gospel account of the Annunciation is an ideal culmination to this season as we recall Mary's emphatic 'Yes' to all that was being asked of her. At the end of the Advent season of reflection and preparation to recognise Christ's presence in the world and in our lives, what better response could there be than to simply say, 'Yes'?

In a world that is driven by selfishness and the drive to push one's self ahead of others, Mary's selfless act stands as a challenge to our modern society. Even in her own time, Mary's decision must have been an enormously difficult one – one that had the potential to bring great shame on herself and Joseph. Yet, her decision is made swiftly and in faith. She trusts God absolutely and gives her life over into God's hands. That is perhaps the supreme act of faith; to say 'Yes' to God so completely that you are prepared to hand over direction and control of your own life.

Few of us tend to be visited by angels who lay out God's plan for us as clearly as Gabriel did for Mary. For most of us, it is a challenge to discern God's desire for us; to realise what it is that we are called to do and then give ourselves fully to that call. In the hustle and bustle of life, it is difficult to hear anything that God may be trying to ask of us. Perhaps the example of Mary's 'Yes' is a reminder to be still enough to hear the question in the first place!

Scriptural context: Throughout the gospel of Luke, great importance is placed on the people in society who were regarded as the 'lesser ones'. The mission of Jesus, as described in Luke's gospel, is directed towards those who were unimportant in the eyes of society. In first century society, women were regarded as much less in status than men. So it is significant that the first revelation of Jesus is made to a woman, Mary. The angel Gabriel announces that Mary has won God's favour. For a woman to win God's favour would have been unimaginable to many Jews at the time, yet, through this woman God was revealed in human form.

Have you thought? What about Joseph? Luke's account of the Annunciation (and indeed much of the infancy narrative) focuses its attention on Mary. But what of Joseph? How does he react to the news that his betrothed wife is pregnant? By Jewish Law and tradition, Mary could well have been stoned to death if Joseph had denounced her. Even if Joseph allowed people to think that he was the father of her child, this would have caused an enormous scandal – a breach of the sanctity of the betrothal vow. However, foreshadowing the compassion of Jesus himself, Joseph acts purely out of compassion and continues with his marriage to Mary.

Different View – Virgin births: Some critics of Christian tradition argue that the account of the virgin conception and birth of Jesus is merely a literary device used to give status to Jesus' birth. At the time, it was not an uncommon device to accord a significant figure a heroic or even virginal birth. In Greek, Egyptian and even Roman legend, several characters are credited with virgin births. Some authors point to the fact that it is only the gospels of Matthew and Luke and none of the earlier writings that portray Mary as a virgin. The argument suggests that assigning Jesus a virgin birth was an attempt to place Jesus alongside other historical and legendary figures as a person of great status.

REACH OUT IN ...

Whitehorse Deanery
Eastern Region
Archdiocese of Melbourne

Rev Father Gerard

Parish Priest

Sonya O'Farrell

Part-time Parish Secretary

Wednesdays,

Thursdays & Fridays

10.00am – 2.00pm

SUNDAY MASS

ST: & SL: Saturday Vigil @ 6.00pm

Sunday ST: @ 10.30am Australian

5.00pm – Vietnamese

& SL: @ 8.30am

WEEKDAY MASS & SL: ROSARY

ST: Weds. & Thurs. @ 9.15am

Fri. @ 10.00am

1st Wednesday of the month

@ 10.00am Mass of Anointing.

SL: Thurs. & Fri. @ 9.30am

Sat. @ 9.00am

RECONCILIATION

SL: Saturday 9.30am – 10.00am &

5.30pm – 5.50pm

SL: EXPOSITION & BENEDICTION

In recess this week.

MACS Catholic Primary School

21 Stevens Road, Vermont, 3133 Vic

Tel: (03) 9878 4188

Ms. Anne Maree Jones Principal

Email: principal@sttims.catholic.edu.au

Website: <https://sttims.catholic.edu.au/>

MACS Catholic Primary School

46 Orchard Grove,

Blackburn South Vic 3130

Tel: (03) 9877 4023

Mrs. Clare Ryan: Principal

Email: principal@slblackburnstn.catholic.edu.au

Website: slblackburnstn.catholic.edu.au

Prayer to Saint Timothy

O God, who adorned Saint Timothy with apostolic virtues, grant, through his intercession that, living justly and devoutly in this present age, we may merit to reach our heavenly homeland. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Patron Saint of stomach and intestinal disorders.

Prayer to Saint Luke the Evangelist

O St. Luke, you were chosen to reveal in preaching and writing God's love for the poor. Moved by the heavenly Spirit of Love, you detailed the life of Jesus, showing His divinity and His genuine compassion for all human beings. Help those who already glory in God's name to persevere in one heart and one mind and inspire all people that they may hear the Good News of Salvation. Amen

Patron Saint of artists, physicians, surgeons, students and butchers.

WE REMEMBER IN PRAYER this weekend all who are sick, especially Kit Bing Fan, Max Marino, Tony Keaney, Kathryn Holmes, Therese O'Donoghue, Stewart Davis, Trevor Stowe, Jerry Donoghue, Veronica and all those Parishioners unable to be among us this weekend. For all who have died recently especially Rose Loh, Ana Moimoi and Thomas Holden, for the casualties of war in Ukraine, Israel and Gaza and for those whose anniversaries occur about this time especially Patricia Bevans, Alan Hardy, Jack Pirera, Mary Mann, Francesco Boccaccio, Maria Cassano, Eloide Leonardi, Ninetta, Laura Ciritelly, Augusto Tenorio, Vita & Felicetta Boccacci, Georgina Gleeson, Anthony Ling, Yem Yem, Livinia Fernandez, Way & Am Ma, Jason Huang, Maria Abadilla, Patrick McCoffrey, Antonia Gonsalves, Julia De Bono, Mario Cardenti, Oswald Grealy and Colin Kidd. May they rest in peace.

DEAR PARISHIONERS: "You will have noticed for some weeks in the Prayers of the Faithful, we have been praying for a special intention for "Veronica" who is the adult grand daughter of Joe Ferlazzo. She and her young family were facing an unknown future due to a motor vehicle accident. Praise God, the matter has been resolved and we now give thanks that our prayers have been answered. Praise the Lord."

LITURGICAL CALENDAR THIS WEEK: Christmas time ~ Monday: The Nativity of the Lord; Tuesday: St Stephen, the first martyr; Wednesday: St John the apostle, evangelist; Thursday: The Holy Innocents, martyrs; Friday: St Thomas Becket, bishop, martyr; Masses this weekend: Preface of Advent II, Eucharistic Prayer I; Eucharistic Acc. No. I.

CHRISTMAS ARRIVES ON MONDAY and it is a Holy Day of Obligation.

SL CARE GROUP gratefully acknowledges your kind and generous support this year for its annual raffle to provide hospitality throughout the year on occasions, especially after Funerals. Total raised = \$626.70. The winners of the Hampers this year are: Anne Lobo, Lesley Cormick, Joanne Nolan, Mary White and Samantha.

THANKYOU to all SL & ST Parishioners who have contributed in any way to our Advent Season this year in either or both Parishes that has made a difference on Sundays and during the week to our preparations. May they prove to be blessings that lay the foundation for a sacred, holy and happy celebration of Christmas for all of us this 2023!

THE REAL POINT OF CHRISTMAS: What is the real point of Christmas? ... Is it not consoling to see how, despite all the misunderstandings, the message of Jesus of Nazareth is heard? Is it not only conflict that the message has produced but also and even more the miracle of understanding, so that across ages and cultures, an even across the boundaries between religions, human beings find one another in his name. Distance vanishes and people are drawn together when this name is spoken ... For Christmas says to us, amid all our doubts and bewilderment: God exists. Not as an infinitely distant power that can at best terrify us. Rather God exists as One who can be concerned about us; God is such that everything we are and do lies open to God's gaze. But that gaze is the gaze of Love. For anyone who accepts this in faith and knows it in faith, there is no longer any ultimate isolation. God is now here. The light that one man became in history and for history is not an accident or something powerless, but Light from Light. The hope and encouragement that emanate from this light thus acquire a wholly new depth. But precisely because it is an entirely divine hope, we can and ought accept it as also an entirely human hope and pass it on to others. (Benedict XVI 'Benedictus')

A VOCATION VIEW: Mary was called to be open to the extraordinary. What do you need to say "let it be" in response to God's call to you? Trust that the Lord is with you and will guide you always. (Luke 1:26-38)

STEWARDSHIP CORNER: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!" – Luke 1:28 After Jesus, we look to Mary as an ideal steward. Her entire life was lived in obedience to God's call. Mary teaches us to live with joy for all we have been given. Just as the moon reflects the light of the sun, Mary reflects the light of Christ. Like Mary, we are called to reflect Christ's light to the world through our gratitude and generosity. (ST: Weekly First Collection Presbytery Envelopes: \$230; Thanksgiving Stewardship Envelopes this week: \$250; Vietnamese Donation: \$269.25; SL: Last week's Church Stewardship Envelopes: \$286; Last week's Presbytery Stewardship Envelopes: \$300).

WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS who have walked upon and cared for this land for thousands of years. We acknowledge the continued deep spiritual attachment and relationship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to this country and commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of Reconciliation.

WEEKEND PARISH MINISTRY ROSTER

MINISTERS OF THE WORD

SATURDAY	6:00 PM SL	23 AND 24 DECEMBER	Marge Santos
	6:00 PM ST		Caren Garlick
SUNDAY	8:30 AM SL		May McKeown
	10:30 AM ST		Trevis Yee & Mai Le
	5.00PM ST		Van Truong & Doan Nguyen

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF THE EUCHARIST

SATURDAY	6:00 PM SL	23 AND 24 DECEMBER	Godfrey Thong
	6:00 PM ST		Susan Chen
SUNDAY	8:30 AM SL		Volunteer
	10:30 AM ST		Pat Kawalevski
	5.00PM ST		Hoang Nguyen

SLIDE OPERATORS

SATURDAY	6:00 PM SL	23 AND 24 DECEMBER	Choir
	6:00 PM ST		Michelle Chen
SUNDAY	8:30 AM SL		Melina Barcellona
	10:30 AM ST		Manny Gonzalez
	5.00PM ST		Theresa Nguyen

SL WELCOMERS 23/24 DEC

6:00 PM John Ryan
8:30 AM Joe Brogno
10:30 AM Margaret Gearon
HOSPITALITY
THE BASIC LITURGICAL MINISTRY

SL WELCOMERS 30/31 DEC

6:00 PM Edna Lee
9:30 AM Marie Pekish
10:30 AM Volunteer

SL CHURCH CLEANING

30th Dec. – Roster in recess for Christmas

ST CHURCH CLEANING

30th Dec. @ 9am
 Hoang Nguyen, Anico Yee,
 Dzung Vu & Trong Nguyen

30 AND 31 DECEMBER

Joe Ferlazzo
 Rachel Greal
 Peter McKeown
 Stefanie Chin & Eli Tutor
 Dung Luong & Thuy Nguyen

30 AND 31 DECEMBER

Olive Hammill
 Mary Italiano
 Melina Barcellona
 Laura Cigana
 Hung Dinh

30 AND 31 DECEMBER

Choir
 Michelle Chen
 Megan McLean
 Lee Min Yee
 Toan Tran

SL CHURCH FLOWERS

24 Dec. - Kate Skowronska

ST CHURCH FLOWERS

24 Dec. - Parishioners

ST COUNTERS

This week Team 2:
 Raj Fonn & Violet Fonn
 Next week Team 3:
 Peter Deayton & Kelvin Chen

CHRISTMAS ROSTER

MINISTERS OF THE WORD

SUNDAY	5:00 PM ST	24 AND 25 DECEMBER	Van Truong & Doan Nguyen
	6:00 PM SL		Bernie Brennan
	9:30 PM ST		H. Lobo & V Vinsonclero
MONDAY	8:30 AM SL		Margaret Gearon
	10:30 AM ST		Joelle Roussetty & Ryan Yee
	5.00PM ST		Chi Nguyen & Helene Nguyen

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF THE EUCHARIST

SUNDAY	5:00 PM ST	24 AND 25 DECEMBER	Hoang Nguyen
	6:00 PM SL		Melina Barcellona
	9:30 PM ST		Owen Greal
MONDAY	8:30 AM SL		Lynda Kilroe-Smith
	10:30 AM ST		Anico Yee
	5.00PM ST		Hoang Nguyen

SLIDE OPERATORS

SUNDAY	5:00 PM ST	24 AND 25 DECEMBER	Choir
	6:00 PM SL		Marg Yore
	9:30 PM ST		Choir
MONDAY	8:30 AM SL		Volunteer
	10:30 AM ST		Lee Min Yee
	5.00PM ST		Toan Tran



ADVENT: On the fourth week of Advent, we light the final purple candle to mark the final week of prayer and preparation as we wait for the birth of our Saviour. This final candle, the "Angel's Candle," symbolises peace.

MELBOURNE CATHOLICS: May the Prince of Peace be with you this Christmas, plus the Archbishop's 2023 Christmas Message.

MAJELLAN FAMILY MEDIA: May your Christmas be filled with love, peace, and joy! 🙌

SAFETY STATEMENT: We are committed to a safe and nurturing culture for all children and vulnerable persons in our Church. Saint Luke the Evangelist Parish Blackburn South holds the care, safety, wellbeing of children and vulnerable persons as central and fundamental responsibilities of the Church. This commitment is drawn from and inherent to the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ, with love, justice and the sanctity of each human person at the heart of the Gospel.

Love and Mercy: Mark 6: 32 - 34

Parish Groups & Contacts

Lectors, Registrars, Collectors,
 Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist,
 Slide Projector Operator & Rosters

ST: Corrie Quimbo 9412 8499

SL: Margaret Gearon 0409 807 135

Baptism Preparation

ST: Mary Italiano 9412 8499

Vietnamese Community

Hoang Nguyen 0422 400 116

Andy Tran 0422 382 109

Vietnamese Youth

John Dinh 0448 977 037

Parish Collection Preparers

ST: Barry Silvester &

Michael Kawalevski

Stewardship Counters

SL: Dale Dixon - 0433 885 087

Steve Kilroe-Smith - 0404 864 232

Parish Pastoral Council

As we are one Mission now, it has been suggested that we require only one Chair?

Parishes Safeguarding Committee

Theresa Nguyen, Mary Italiano,

Darren McLean - 0417 774 504

Janette Clark - 9877 2292

Fr Gerard - 9877 2292

Parish History

SL: Margaret Gearon - 0409 807 135

Whitehorse Deanery - Fr Gerard

Finance Committee

Bernard Negline

Parish Accountant

SL: Hall Hire

Sonya O'Farrell @ the

Parish Office - 9877 2292

Church Sacristan

ST: Margaret King & Hoang Nguyen

SL: Greg Grant - 0401 644 474

Church Housekeeping

ST: Margaret King 9412 8499

Church Cleaning & Flowers

SL: Megan McLean - 0419 347 693

Church Linen

SL: Beryl Kanagalinggam

Parish Garden Maintenance

ST: Des Connors, Leo Watson,

Anico Yee & Vietnamese Community

SL: Darren McLean - 0417 774 504

Holy Communion to the

housebound - Fr Gerard

Parish Choirs

ST: Mary Italiano & Theresa Nguyen

SL: Lina & Maria Mafi

0411 136 043

Parish & School Fete Committee

SL: Mrs. Clare Ryan - 9877 4023

School Advisory Council

ST: Ms. Anne Maree Jones 9878 4188

SL: Mrs. Clare Ryan - 9877 4023

School Parents' Association

ST: Ms. Anne Maree Jones 9878 4188

SL: Mrs. Clare Ryan - 9877 4023

St Vincent de Paul Conference

For Assistance: 1800 305 330

(Freecall: Monday to Friday 10am-3pm)

Parish Contacts:

ST: John McCoy

SL: Tony Lobo &

Steve Kilroe-Smith

Raise your voices ... Entrance Antiphon: Drop down dew from above, you heavens, and let the clouds rain down the Just One; let the earth be opened and bring forth a Saviour.

Response to the Psalm: For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! I am the servant of the Lord: may his will for me be done. Alleluia!

Eucharistic Acclamation: We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.

Communion Antiphon: Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son; and his name will be called Emmanuel.

SL: MARGARET GEARON'S HISTORY OF THE PARISH & SCHOOL PART II is now available free from the Church Narthex/Foyer, please take one with you as you go today. Another way to get to know our Story ...

PROCLAIM ~ THE OFFICE FOR MISSION RENEWAL: [Download](#) the third Take the Way of the Gospel consultation report.

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC SAFEGUARDING LTD: [ACSL Newsletter Vol. 6, Ed. 10. December 2023](#)

CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES VICTORIA: [December 2023 Newsletter](#)

SAFEGUARDING ALIVE: [December 2023](#)

LITURGY NEWS BRISBANE: [Liturgy News Summer 2023](#)

ON THE JOURNEY THIS WEEK: Fr Joshua Whitehead says Christmas Eve is a time of preparation, joy, and primarily it's a time of anticipation. Mother Hilda says when you utter the words, Happy Christmas, pray swiftly in your heart for that person; "May you know that he came for you." Fr Tony Percy says faith gives us a great light to see God, but also to see ourselves and to see others in the human condition. Fr Sean Cullen says Christmas is radiant light, like a new sunrise and Sr Mary Helen Hill OP asks as we kneel before Jesus during these Christmas days, what will we offer him? How will we give glory to his holy name? Plus, more great music!

His name will be Jesus

4th Sunday of Advent, Year B

Draw a picture of yourself doing something special for your family or friends during Christmas



In the story of the Annunciation, the angel Gabriel tells Mary that God has chosen her to bring his Son into the world. What are some ways that we can bring Christ into the world for others?

Use the words below to find out what the angel Gabriel and the Blessed Virgin Mary are saying to each other.

favoured one!
The _____ is with you.
Don't be _____!
God is _____
with you. You shall
have a _____ and his
name will be _____.



I am the

of the Lord!
Let this

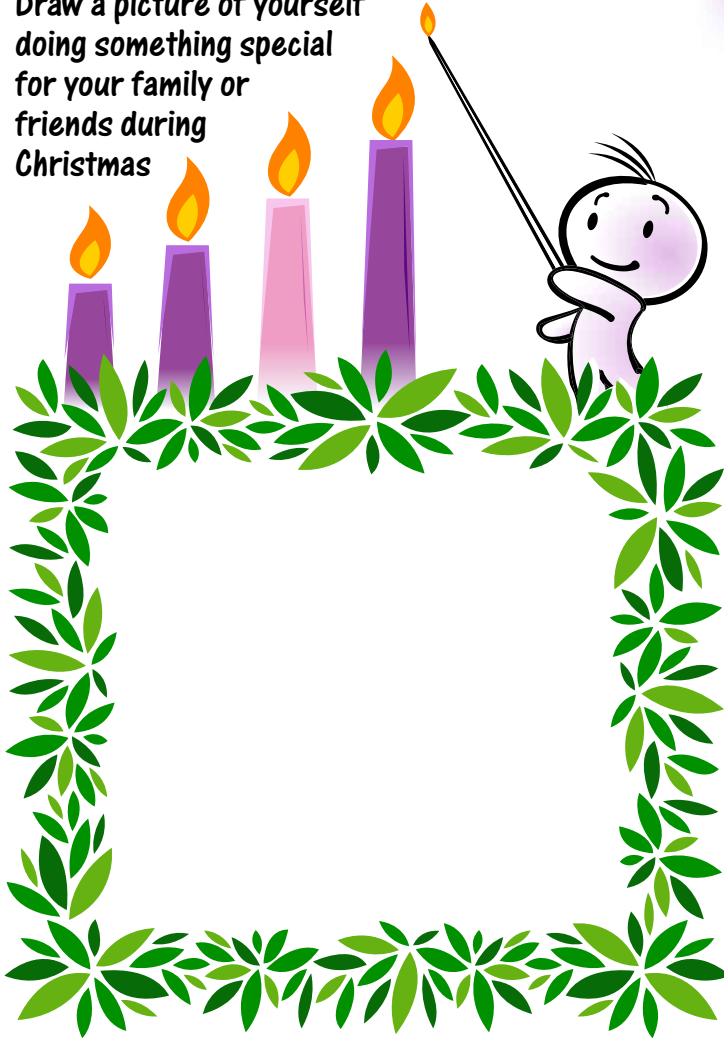
as you
have said.

Jesus afraid happen servant Lord Greetings pleased son

His name will be Jesus

4th Sunday of Advent, Year B

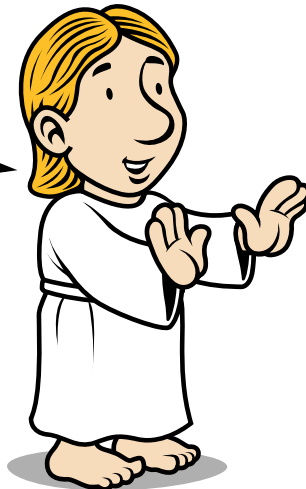
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Don't be _____!
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I am the

of the Lord!
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have said.

Jesus afraid happen servant Lord Greetings pleased son

SUNDAY READINGS

READ AT HOME

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Year B

24 December 2023



Collect

Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord,
your grace into our hearts,
that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ your Son
was made known by the message of an Angel,
may by his Passion and Cross
be brought to the glory of his Resurrection.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

Readings and Commentaries

Our spirit of hope has been growing in intensity as the weeks of Advent have passed. In a rather paradoxical way we have been encouraged to look forward by progressively moving back in time. We began with the final day of the Lord, then turned our attention to the mission of John the Baptist, and now we focus on the birth of the Messiah.

All this looking both to the future and to the past serves but one purpose: that we live joyfully and faithfully in the present. Such a simple thing to state, but such a challenge to achieve. It is only by God's grace that we can live in the present, free from the burden of a dead past and untroubled by fear of an unknown future. For this grace we give thanks today.

A reading from the second book of Samuel
7:1–5, 8-12, 14, 16

Once David had settled into his house and the Lord had given him rest from all the enemies surrounding him, the king said to the prophet Nathan, 'Look, I am living in a house of cedar while the ark of God dwells in a tent.' Nathan said to the king, 'Go and do all that is in your mind, for the Lord is with you.'

But that very night the word of the Lord came to Nathan:

'Go and tell my servant David, "Thus the Lord speaks: Are you the man to build me a house to dwell in? I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be leader of my people Israel; I have been with you on all your expeditions; I have cut off all your enemies before you. I will give you fame as great as the fame of the greatest on earth. I will provide a place for my people Israel; I will plant them there and they shall dwell in that place and never be disturbed again; nor shall the wicked continue to oppress them as they did, in the days when I appointed judges over my people Israel; I will give them rest from all their enemies. The Lord will make you great; the Lord will make you a House. And when your days are ended and you are laid to rest with your ancestors, I will preserve the offspring of your body after you and make his sovereignty secure. I will be a father to him and he a son to me. Your House and your sovereignty will always stand secure before me and your throne be established for ever."

Responsorial Psalm **Ps 88:2–5, 27, 29**

R. For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.

I will sing for ever of your love, O Lord;
through all ages my mouth will proclaim your truth.
Of this I am sure, that your love lasts for ever,
that your truth is firmly established as the
heavens. **R.**

'I have made a covenant with my chosen one;
I have sworn to David my servant:
I will establish your dynasty for ever
and set up your throne through all ages.' **R.**

He will say to me: 'You are my father,
my God, the rock who saves me.'
I will keep my love for him always;
for him my covenant shall endure. **R.**

First Reading

It may not be obvious to contemporary believers, especially those unfamiliar with the Old Testament, that today's first reading, from the second book of Samuel, is a highly political manifesto. It presents a ringing endorsement of a particular theological tradition in Jewish history. It declares divine approval for the royal house of David and for the building of the temple in Jerusalem. Together these two initiatives will assure Israel of peace ("rest from their enemies").

But both of these were contentious issues in ancient times, and elsewhere the scriptures record dissenting points of view. A trace of this can be found in verses 6-7 that have been omitted from today's passage – a timely reminder that it is always valuable to compare the lectionary text with the full version in the Bible.

The reading as we have it revolves around a contrast. It is not David who will build a house (i.e. a temple) for the Lord, but the Lord who will build a house (i.e. a royal dynasty) for David. David's desire to build a temple – "Look, I am living in a house of cedar while the ark of God dwells in a tent" – is countered later in the reading by the Lord's reply – "The Lord will make you great; the Lord will make you a House". Readers will need to ensure that the congregation grasps this fundamental dynamic.

The reading as a whole offers a constant message of assurance. The Lord promises his people a place of rest and security, and pledges everlasting faithfulness. This promise and pledge will be remembered in the gospel for today. Since the bulk of the reading is in the form of God's word to David, it should be read with a suitable degree of solemnity.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 88/89 mirrors the theme of the first reading. It's a lengthy song of praise to God for creation and for the choice of David and his descendants as kings of Israel. The verses for today are taken from the beginning and the middle of the psalm.

The response is a slight variation on the first verse of the psalm. It is expressed in the first person singular but gives voice to our common desire to sing God's praises.

Readers will note that the first verse is spoken by this faith-filled individual, but the remaining two are spoken in God's name. This transition from human response to divine initiative may not be easy for the reader to convey. What remains the same is the joyful recognition of God's steadfast love.

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans

16:25–27

Glory to him who is able to give you the strength to live according to the Good News I preach, and in which I proclaim Jesus Christ, the revelation of a mystery kept secret for endless ages, but now so clear that it must be broadcast to pagans everywhere to bring them to the obedience of faith. This is only what scripture has predicted, and it is all part of the way the eternal God wants things to be. He alone is wisdom; give glory therefore to him through Jesus Christ for ever and ever. Amen.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke

1:26–38

The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. He went in and said to her, 'Rejoice, so highly favoured! The Lord is with you.' She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, 'Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'But how can this come about, since I am a virgin?' 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you' the angel answered 'and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. Know this too: your kinswoman Elizabeth has, in her old age, herself conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God.' 'I am the handmaid of the Lord,' said Mary 'let what you have said be done to me.' And the angel left her.

Second Reading

The text for today's second reading is the short burst of praise that concludes Paul's magisterial letter to the Romans. This is the only letter of Paul that ends with a doxology; perhaps the prayer came independently from a Christian worship service and was added to the letter as a conclusion. The effect is an unusual continuity of prayerful praise between the psalm and the second reading. In that sense the reader does not have to change gear.

However the first sentence of the reading does pose a challenge. It's another of those typically Pauline passages where the thoughts tumble out one after the other and create a rather complex unit. Readers will need to practice it carefully. The opening declaration is strong: "Glory to him . . . the Good News I preach". The remainder of the sentence is like a long appendix prompted by mention of the "Good News". The reader's task is to sustain the congregation's attention throughout this passage, enabling them to grasp the unfolding of Paul's thought.

The remaining sentences are relatively short and clear. One further challenge is for the reader to proclaim the "Amen" as a decisive conclusion to the reading without the congregation automatically joining in. Readers using the NRSV will find it a mixed blessing. It is set out in helpful sense lines, but leaves the entire passage as a single unbroken sentence which only reaches its climax at the last moment.

Gospel

Since the gospel of Mark gives no account of how Jesus came to be born, the lectionary turns to the gospel of Luke for today's Mass. The passage chosen – that of the annunciation – recurs often on feast days of Mary but, surprisingly, is only heard on Sunday once every three years, on this fourth Sunday of Advent.

After first focusing on the end times, then on John the Baptist, Advent finally encourages us explicitly to prepare for the birth of the Saviour. The story of the annunciation is very familiar, so much so that it may be useful to find fresh insight from some of the masterpieces of art it has inspired. Luke's narrative is a work of art in its own right. He draws on ancient traditions to craft an account of something that is unimaginably new. This son of David will be Son of God.

Luke invites us to contemplate the scene once more and wonder at the interplay of divine initiative and human response, of grace and nature. He also drops a hint of the great mystery that lies ahead: Mary's response – "let what you have said be done to me" – will find its counterpart in Jesus' prayer – "not my will but yours be done" – in the garden of Gethsemane.

An alternative translation of the scripture readings is given here from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). This may be particularly useful for those in parishes which use the NRSV Lectionary.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

FIRST READING (NRSV)

A reading from the second book of Samuel 7:1–5, 8–12, 14, 16

Now when David, the king, was settled in his house,
and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him,
the king said to the prophet Nathan,
"See now, I am living in a house of cedar,
but the ark of God stays in a tent."
Nathan said to the king,
"Go, do all that you have in mind, for the Lord is with you."
But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan:
"Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the Lord:
Are you the one to build me a house to live in?
I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep
to be prince over my people Israel:
and I have been with you wherever you went,
and have cut off all your enemies from before you;
and I will make for you a great name,
like the name of the great ones of the earth.
"And I will appoint a place for my people Israel
and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place,
and be disturbed no more;
and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly,
from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel;
and I will give you rest from all your enemies.
"Moreover the Lord declares to you, David,
that the Lord will make you a house.
When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors,
I will raise up your offspring after you,
who shall come forth from your body,
and I will establish his kingdom.
"I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me.
Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me;
your throne, David, shall be established forever."

SECOND READING (NRSV)

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans 16:25–27

To God who is able to strengthen you
according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ,
according to the revelation of the mystery
that was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed,
and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles,
according to the command of the eternal God,
to bring about the obedience of faith—
to the only wise God,
through Jesus Christ,
to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

GOSPEL (NRSV)

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke

1:26–38

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God
to a town in Galilee called Nazareth,
to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph,
of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

And the angel came to Mary and said,
"Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you."

But she was much perplexed by his words
and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

The angel said to her,
"Do not be afraid, Mary,

for you have found favour with God.

And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son,
and you will name him Jesus.

He will be great,
and will be called the Son of the Most High,
and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David.
He will reign over the house of Jacob forever,
and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Mary said to the angel,
"How can this be, since I am a virgin?"

The angel said to her,
"The Holy Spirit will come upon you,
and the power of the Most High will overshadow you;
therefore the child to be born will be holy;
he will be called Son of God.

"And now,
your relative Elizabeth in her old age
has also conceived a son;
and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren.
For nothing will be impossible with God."

Then Mary said,
"Here am I, the servant of the Lord;
let it be with me according to your word."
Then the angel departed from her.

Concluding Prayer

Solemn Blessing for Advent

May the almighty and merciful God,
by whose grace we have placed our faith
in the First Coming of his Only Begotten Son
and yearn for his coming again
sanctify us by the radiance of Christ's Advent
and enrich us with his blessing.

Amen.

As we run the race of this present life,
may he make us firm in faith,
joyful in hope and active in charity.

Amen.

So that, rejoicing now with devotion
at the Redeemer's coming in the flesh,
we may be endowed with the rich reward of eternal life
when he comes again in majesty.

Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God,
the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, come down on us
and remain with us for ever.

Amen.

(Adapted from the Solemn Blessing for Advent, *The Roman Missal* p. 709)





ONE MISSION, TWO PARISHES

Saint Timothy's & Saint Luke the Evangelist
Catholic Parishes, Forest Hill & Blackburn South
Parish Office for both Parishes: 17 Stevens Road Forest Hill Vic 3133
Parish Office tel: 03 9412 8499; Presbytery tel: 03 9877 2292
Email: foresthill@cam.org.au | Web: sttimothys.org.au
Email: blackburnsouth@cam.org.au | Web: blackburnsouth.org.au
REACH OUT IN LOVE AND MERCY: MARK 6: 32 - 34



2023 CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR'S DAY MASS SCHEDULE

St Luke the Evangelist Blackburn South

- SL & ST 6.00pm 24/12/2023
Family Mass
@ Blackburn South
- SL & ST 8.30am 25/12/2023
Christmas morning Mass
@ Blackburn South
- SL & ST 9.30am 1/1/2024
New Year's Day Mass
@ Blackburn South

St Timothy's Forest Hill

- ST 5.00pm 24/12/2023
Vietnamese Christmas Eve
Mass @ Forest Hill
- ST & SL 24/12/2023
(9.00pm Carols)
9.30pm Christmas Mass
during the Night @ Forest Hill
- ST & SL 10.30am 25/12/2023
Christmas morning Mass
@ Forest Hill
- ST 5.00pm 25/12/2023
Christmas Day afternoon
Vietnamese Mass
@ Forest Hill
- ST 9.30am 1/1/2024 New
Year's Day morning
Vietnamese Mass
@ Forest Hill



**Two Parishes and ONE Mission ... from delegation to participation ...
Please travel safely and a Happy & Holy Christmas to all.**



Ten ways to Invite People Home this Christmas

“Come home for Christmas!” There are people who have lost touch with the Church who long to come back, especially at Christmas time, but are hesitant to take the first step. In this leaflet we explore the practicalities of inviting people ‘home’ to their local parish this Christmas.

1. Pray for them

During Advent, light a candle each night and pray for one special person who has lost touch with their parish community. As part of your prayer ask God to show you the best way to reach out to this person.

2. Ask forgiveness

Advent is a season of renewal in preparation for Christmas. This Advent, let's examine the ways in which we have made it difficult for people to belong to the Church, whether by our lack of love, judgmental attitudes or by simply ignoring them. Ask God's forgiveness and say 'sorry' to an individual who is distanced from the Church.

3. Write a letter

Thoughtfully and prayerfully write a letter or Christmas card to a loved one, expressing what's in your heart and what it would mean to you if he/she joined you at Christmas Mass this year.

4. Host drinks after Mass

Arrange for drinks to be held (at home or at a local venue) after the Christmas Vigil Mass this year. Then invite your friends, including those who are far from the Church, to join you—for drinks *and* Mass!

5. Involve children

Children have a natural ability to soften hearts. Involve them in your efforts to welcome, invite and reach out to people this Christmas.

6. Hold a nativity play

A children's nativity play held in your home or street is a friendly way to proclaim Christ to the neighbours. Send out invitations, prepare the children, welcome people as they arrive, and finish with Christmas carols. To top it off, warmly invite your 'audience' to visit their local church on Christmas Day.

7. Send an invitation

Design a Christmas card on behalf of your local parish and include Christmas Mass times. Then letter-box-drop all the Catholics in your area. By joining with other Christian churches in your locality, a strategy like this can work well as an ecumenical venture.

8. Advertise widely

As well as letter-box-drops, check that Mass and Reconciliation times and other parish activities during Advent and Christmas are well publicized. Is there a clear sign outside the church? Are they listed in the bulletin? Submit an attractive advertizement to local media outlets.

9. Affirm and empower gifts

One way to involve 'distanced Catholics' in the life of the parish is to acknowledge their talents and put them to work. Whether it be serving meals to the poor, collecting for Christmas hampers, assisting with the children's liturgy or organizing the parish Christmas party, let people know that they are needed and valued.

10. Proclaim Jesus at home

When visitors enter your home, do they 'catch' the spirit of Advent and Christmas? Display symbols of faith, light the Advent wreath each evening, decorate a Jesse Tree, display a nativity scene, fill your home with beautiful Christmas carols and a spirit of love.

Helpful Hint

During Advent hold an evening of welcome for people who have been away from the Church and who wish to reconnect. Two simple ways to invite people to share their story: E.g., "How did you come to be here tonight?" "What happened that led you to lose touch with your Catholic community?" Invite parishioners to share their experience of belonging to this parish.

TeresaPirola.net

Text: Teresa Pirola

Design: Sarann Ryan

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Hungry, anxious and desperate.

**CHRISTMAS WILL LOOK DIFFERENT
THIS YEAR FOR STRUGGLING FAMILIES.**



This Christmas, more people are experiencing poverty and on the brink of homelessness. After struggling with the cost-of-living crisis for over a year, they barely have anything left to hold on to. As the crisis deepens, so does their desperation. Your urgent help can provide relief.

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Vinnies Christmas Appeal



St Vincent de Paul Society
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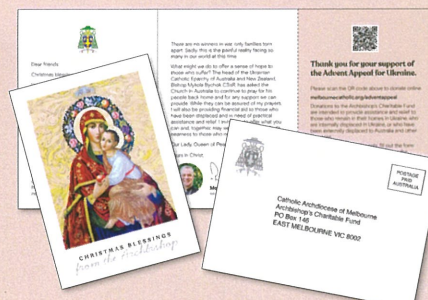
Photo: Yahya Hassouna/Getty Images



ADVENT APPEAL FOR *Ukraine*

Please take a card and envelope
or donate online:

melbournecatholic.org/adventappeal



(Donations of \$2 and above are tax deductible)



Dear friends

In these Advent days of preparation, we are invited to open our hearts and make a home within us for the child Jesus, the Prince of Peace. He is indeed *Emmanuel*—‘God with us’.

Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to visit our brothers and sisters in Ukraine. While there I attended the funeral of a fallen soldier at the Garrison Church of Sts Peter and Paul in Lviv, where they host upwards of 12 funerals a day. The image that has stayed with me is that of three generations of women—a mother who lost her son, a wife who lost her husband and a daughter who would never see her father again.

There are no winners in war, only families torn apart. Sadly, this is the painful reality facing so many in our world at this time.

What might we do to offer a sense of hope to those who suffer? The head of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Australia and New Zealand, Bishop Mykola Bychok CSsR, has asked us to continue to pray for his people back home and for any support we can provide. I invite you to offer what you can and, together, may we too be a sign of God’s nearness to those who need it most.

Yours in Christ,



P. Comensoli

Most Rev Peter A Comensoli
ARCHBISHOP OF MELBOURNE

Image: Church of the Nativity of Mary, Irpin, Ukraine.



CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE
OF MELBOURNE