



ONE MISSION, TWO PARISHES

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

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WEEKLY BULLETIN: SUNDAY 17 DECEMBER 2023

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT - YEAR B

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



Readings this week: Is 61:1 – 2, 10 – 11; Lk 1:46 – 50, 53 – 54; 1 Thess 5:16 – 24; Jn 1:6 – 8, 19 – 28.

Gospel Reflection ~ Greg Sunter

This week's gospel should sound very familiar. It is the gospel of John version of the passage used in last week's liturgy, which came from the gospel of Mark. Again it recalls the ministry of John the Baptist but it is given the particular slant of the gospel of John. Aside from the greater focus on the conversational interaction, it presents John as a 'witness'. This is perhaps more typical of the John gospel emphasis on personal encounter with Jesus. Rather than acting as something of a herald, as in last week's account, here John the Baptist is witnessing 'to speak for the light'. He makes a very clear distinction between himself and the Christ, his mission is simply to point towards the light; the Christ. Our common understanding of the word 'witness' tends to be related to legal situations: providing a witness statement or acting as a witness to a fact in court. The use of witness in this gospel carries a different connotation: to provide witness through action and lifestyle that draws others to wonder about and perhaps come to accept the motivating belief. It is this understanding of witness that all Christians are called to provide. We are called to witness to our beliefs in the way that we live our lives, engage with others and hold to certain truths. Of course, there are some Christians who believe that their witness needs to be more obvious and more clearly stated. They feel that providing witness, or testimony, to their faith through spoken proclamation has a greater potential to change lives. Whether we choose to witness through our words or through our actions it is essential that both words and actions have integrity; that there is no clash between what we proclaim and the way we live.

Have you thought? A time to Rejoice! This Sunday, the third Sunday of Advent is traditionally known as Gaudete Sunday. *Gaudete* is the Latin word for Rejoice! Advent was originally celebrated as a five week season and with the same fasting and penitential nature as the season of Lent. The third Sunday, Gaudete, was like a break for rejoicing in the midst of the fasting. When Advent was reduced to four weeks and the nature of the season altered, Gaudete Sunday was retained. The colour of this Sunday is rose – a celebratory colour – and it is reflected in the vestments worn by the priest and in the colour of the third candle used in Advent wreaths.

Living the Gospel – A Witness? Me? It came as something of a surprise to me to think that other people might observe the way I treated others and draw conclusions about my motivation. It was when I started to work with young people that the truth of this was revealed. I realised that my actions could speak so much louder than anything I might say. I hoped that the young people I was working with might stop some time and think to themselves, 'I wonder why he treats us all that way? I wonder how it fits with that religion stuff he talks about?' Well, I can hope can't I?

Gospel Focus – Same but different Having the same gospel passage from two different gospels used in the liturgy in consecutive weeks is an ideal opportunity to highlight the different focus adopted by the different gospels. The language of John's gospel is remarkably different from that of the three synoptic gospels (synoptic = 'seen together'). The synoptics share a fairly common narrative style, while John relies much more on metaphor and imagery – it is a more poetic language. In the gospel account of John the Baptist we see in John gospel's greater emphasis on the conversation around what was occurring, while the Markan version emphasises recording the event.

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: Tues. @ 5.00pm

Weds., Thurs. & Fri. @ 9.30am

Sat. @ 9.00am

RECONCILIATION

SL: Saturday 9.30am – 10.00am &

5.30pm – 5.50pm

SL: EXPOSITION & BENEDICTION

The Blessed Sacrament is exposed
for Adoration Wednesday

Start: 7.00pm | End: 8.00pm

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, Caratha McKerrow, 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 Sharon Hamilton for the casualties of war in
Ukraine, Israel and Gaza and for those whose anniversaries occur about this
time especially Tony Ferris, Ivan Damascus Pereira, James King, Carrie Willett,
Maxwell Lea, Lawrence Howes, Frank O'Connor, Stephen Defina, Peter Kelly,
Guido Cigana, Merlyn Alwis, Timothy Curtain, Zenon Salanowski, Julian Lobo,
Dan Carroll, Maurie Rolfs and Kel & Bryant Norman. May they rest in peace.

LITURGICAL CALENDAR THIS WEEK: **Advent ~ Thursday:** St Peter Canisius,
priest, doctor. **Saturday:** St John of Kanty, priest. **Masses this weekend:**
Preface of Advent II, Eucharistic Prayer III; Eucharistic Acc. No. III.

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

ST CHRISTMAS CARDS & 2024 COLUMBAN CALENDARS are now on
sale from the Piety Stall. St. Vincent de Paul Society cards are \$3.00 for a pack
of 5, Magellan Cards are \$7.00 for a pack of 10 and the 2024 Columban
calendars are \$ 9.00 each.

SL CARE GROUP'S annual fund-raising Hamper Raffle for Parish Hospitality
continues this weekend. Raffle tickets will be available for purchase this
weekend and the raffle will be drawn after 10.30am Mass this Sunday.

VINNIES CHRISTMAS APPEAL: Aussie families are struggling to survive the
increasing cost-of-living pressures this Christmas. Your generosity can provide
urgent relief for a family who's doing it tough this Christmas, and give them
hope for a better future.

WOOHOO - OUR HOUSE TEAMS NOW HAVE NAMES!

SL PRIMARY SCHOOL released the following information recently:
Congratulations to all of our Year 6 children who researched St Luke's School
story to find a name for our three house teams *and will be commissioned early
next year.* They did an amazing job and it was a tough decision as all
nominated names had their own special story to tell. We are very excited to
inform you that the three names are:

STAUNTON – Blue House ~ EGAN – Green House ~ D'PRAZER – Red House

BOTH SL & ST PRIMARY SCHOOLS have now finished their 2023 Academic
Year. Thankyou to the dedicated and committed Principals and Staff of both
Schools for all their efforts this year, working so well with the students and
Families in their care. May they all have an enjoyable time over Christmas and
a restful time during the holidays, to be ready then for the 2024 Academic Year.

DID YOU KNOW: We use various measures to determine success,
competence and/or excellence ... The VCE Atar results were published this
week just gone and **ST** Students who went to Emmaus College and finished
their VCE there this year, got higher than 90, scoring in the top 21 of Emmaus'
Students, says a parent who was pleased to share this information with the
Parish. If you have any doubts about the calibre of the Catholic Education
being offered at **ST**, this empirical data ought to put those doubts to rest,
permanently!

A VOCATION VIEW: Rejoice always! Our Saviour is near! The call to priesthood
and/or religious life is a source of great joy to those who embrace their call with
their whole heart, mind and soul. 1 Thes 5:16

STEWARDSHIP CORNER: "Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. Give
thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus."
1 Thessalonians 5:16 - 18 This scripture reading sums up Stewardship. "Rejoice
always" means place your trust in God; He will provide all that you need. "Pray
constantly" means prayer should be a running conversation with God
throughout the whole day, every day. "Give thanks in all circumstances"
means even in bad situations, thank God. Suffering a little bit helps build
empathy for others in similar situations and shows our dependence on God. (**ST:**
Weekly First Collection Presbytery Envelopes: \$246; Thanksgiving Stewardship
Envelopes this week: \$365; Vietnamese Donation: \$196.55; **SL:** Last week's Church
Stewardship Envelopes: \$388; Last week's Presbytery Stewardship Envelopes: \$339).

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	Melina Barcellona
	6:00 PM ST	Kelvin Chen
SUNDAY	8:30 AM SL	Lucy Ferris
	10:30 AM ST	Eli Tutor & Andrew Johny
	5.00PM ST	Thu Ngo & Hieu Nguyen

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF THE EUCHARIST

SATURDAY	6:00 PM SL	Olive Hammill
	6:00 PM ST	Peter Naughtin
SUNDAY	8:30 AM SL	Margaret Gearon
	10:30 AM ST	Chin L Tay
	5.00PM ST	Hung Dinh

SLIDE OPERATORS

SATURDAY	6:00 PM SL	Choir
	6:00 PM ST	Michelle Chen
SUNDAY	8:30 AM SL	Anthony Fernandez
	10:30 AM ST	Lee Min Yee
	5.00PM ST	Toan Tran

SL WELCOMERS 16/17 DEC

6:00 PM Volunteer
8:30 AM Janette Clark
10:30 AM Volunteer
HOSPITALITY
THE BASIC LITURGICAL MINISTRY

SL WELCOMERS 23/24 DEC

6:00 PM John Ryan
9:30 AM Joe Brogno
10:30 AM Margaret Gearon

16 AND 17 DECEMBER

Melina Barcellona
Kelvin Chen
Lucy Ferris
Eli Tutor & Andrew Johny
Thu Ngo & Hieu Nguyen

16 AND 17 DECEMBER

Olive Hammill
Peter Naughtin
Margaret Gearon
Chin L Tay
Hung Dinh

16 AND 17 DECEMBER

Choir
Michelle Chen
Anthony Fernandez
Lee Min Yee
Toan Tran

SL CHURCH CLEANING

23rd Dec. – Bianca's Team
Bianca Broccio, Shirley Prabha,
Libby Theodore, Merlyn Tauro
& Franca Leo

ST CHURCH CLEANING

16th Dec. @ 8am
Toan Tran, Dao Dinh,
Hieu Nguyen, Dieu Nguyen,
Hoang Nguyen, Anico Yee,
Dzung Vu & Trong Nguyen

23 AND 24 DECEMBER

Marge Santos
Caren Garlick
May McKeown
Trevis Yee & Mai Le
Van Truong & Doan Nguyen

23 AND 24 DECEMBER

Godfrey Thong
Susan Chen
Ian Holmes
Pat Kawalevski
Hoang Nguyen

23 AND 24 DECEMBER

Choir
Michelle Chen
Melina Barcellona
Manny Gonzalez
Theresa Nguyen

SL CHURCH FLOWERS

No flowers for Advent

ST CHURCH FLOWERS

No flowers for Advent

ST COUNTERS

This week Team 1:
Owen Grealy & Anthony Yeo
Next week Team 2:
Raj Fonn & Violet Fonn

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

CHRISTMAS ROSTER

MINISTERS OF THE WORD

SUNDAY	5:00 PM ST	24 AND 25 DECEMBER
	6:00 PM SL	Van Truong & Doan Nguyen
	9:30 PM ST	Bernie Brennan
MONDAY	8:30 AM SL	Hubert Lobo
	10:30 AM ST	Margaret Gearon
	5.00PM ST	Joelle Rousetty & Ryan Yee
		Doan Pham & Hélène Nguyen

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF THE EUCHARIST

SUNDAY	5:00 PM ST	24 AND 25 DECEMBER
	6:00 PM SL	Hoang Nguyen
		Melina Barcellona
	9:30 PM ST	Owen Grealy
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
	6:00 PM SL	Choir
	9:30 PM ST	Marg Yore
MONDAY	8:30 AM SL	Michelle Chen
	10:30 AM ST	Volunteer
	5.00PM ST	Lee Min Yee
		Toan Tran



ADVENT: The third Sunday of Advent is traditionally called **Gaudete Sunday**. Gaudete is the Latin word meaning "rejoice." This Sunday is so named because "Rejoice" is the first word in the entrance antiphon for today's Mass taken from Philippians 4:4,5: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice!"

MELBOURNE CATHOLICS: [O come, Emmanuel!](#)

MAJELLAN FAMILY MEDIA: [The light in the darkness - a message from our Provincial](#)

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.

Raise your voices ... Entrance Antiphon: Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice. Indeed, the Lord is near.

Response to the Psalm: My soul rejoices in my God.

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; he sent me to bring Good News to the poor. Alleluia!

Eucharistic Acclamation: Save us, Saviour of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free.

Communion Antiphon: Say to the faint of heart: Be strong and do not fear. Behold, our God will come, and he will save us.

ON THE JOURNEY THIS WEEK: Fr William Loh asks: have you ever felt like someone crying out in a spiritual wilderness? Mother Hilda has a prayer tip that will put love into the world right now. Plus, Fr Tony Percy says we have this magnificent question put to John, "Who are you?" in today's Gospel, and that's a question for us too. Darren McDowell has an Advent reflection on searching for happiness, and Pete Gilmore ponders who is in the manger. Plus, more great music!

Prepare for the Lord Jesus

3rd Sunday of Advent, Year B



Who is John the Baptist?

Indicate whether each answer is either true or false



The cousin of Jesus

☐ True
☐ False

A pharisee

☐ True
☐ False

Elijah

☐ True
☐ False

The son of Elizabeth

☐ True
☐ False

A preacher

☐ True
☐ False

The Messiah

☐ True
☐ False

Decipher the message that John the Baptist gave to the priests and temple helpers



use



2



The third Sunday in Advent is called Gaudete Sunday; the Sunday of Joy! How can we share our joy for the arrival of Jesus at Christmas?

Prepare for the Lord Jesus

3rd Sunday of Advent, Year B



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Indicate whether each answer is either true or false



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Decipher the message that John the Baptist gave to the priests and temple helpers



use



2



The third Sunday in Advent is called Gaudete Sunday; the Sunday of Joy! How can we share our joy for the arrival of Jesus at Christmas?



SUNDAY READINGS

READ AT HOME

Third Sunday of Advent

Year B

17 December 2023



Collect

O God, who see how your people
faithfully await the feast of the Lord's Nativity,
enable us, we pray,
to attain the joys of so great a salvation
and to celebrate them always
with solemn worship and glad rejoicing.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

Readings and Commentaries

The entrance antiphon for the third Sunday of Advent remains true to tradition. It's from Paul's letter to the Philippians (4:4-5). Its first word is "Rejoice" or in Latin "Gaudete" – hence the common title for this day, "Gaudete Sunday." Whatever the history of this term, today's readings (apart from the gospel) are filled with an infectious spirit of joy.

At this mid-point of the season our hopes and expectations are intensifying. The feast of Christmas will soon be here. Today's celebration gives us the opportunity to look beyond the hectic demands that December makes of us. It invites us to find a deeper well-spring of joy than that offered by all our end-of-the-year activities. This joy is truly the gift of God.

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

61:1–2, 10–11

The spirit of the Lord has been given to me,
for the Lord has anointed me.
He has sent me to bring good news to the poor,
to bind up hearts that are broken;

to proclaim liberty to captives,
freedom to those in prison;
to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord.

'I exult for joy in the Lord,
my soul rejoices in my God,
for he has clothed me in the garments of salvation,
he has wrapped me in the cloak of integrity,
like a bridegroom wearing his wreath,
like a bride adorned in her jewels.

'For as the earth makes fresh things grow,
as a garden makes seeds spring up,
so will the Lord make both integrity and praise
spring up in the sight of the nations.'

First Reading

The first few verses of today's reading from the prophet Isaiah are likely to sound familiar to readers and congregation alike. The gospel writer Luke puts them on the lips of Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth (Lk 4:18). They are the words with which Jesus first announces his mission. In that dramatic episode which prefigures Jesus' fate, he finds the initial enthusiasm of his hearers quickly turn to violent rejection.

The text for today consists of the first and last two verses of Chapter 61. It will repay the reader to take the time to read through the whole chapter and sense its spirit. It is a prolonged message of good news for the community that has returned from exile to Jerusalem. Examining the chapter in full will also reveal where the transition is made from one part to the other in the lectionary text. Perceptive readers may also note a connection with the mysterious servant of the Lord about whom we read in Holy Week; he too is endowed with God's Spirit (Is 42:1).

Each phrase of this joyful reading deserves to be savoured. The passage is set out in short lines, making it very easy for the reader to allow each one its due weight. The challenge for the reader is to sustain a spirit of joyful enthusiasm throughout the proclamation, but to do so at a measured pace without any hint of haste. This will enable the congregation to hear this litany of divine promises and take it all to heart.

Responsorial Psalm

Luke 1:46–50, 53–54

R. My soul rejoices in my God.

My soul glorifies the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.
He looks on his servant in her nothingness;
henceforth all ages will call me blessed. **R.**

The Almighty works marvels for me.
Holy his name!

His mercy is from age to age,
on those who fear him. **R.**

He fills the starving with good things,
sends the rich away empty.
He protects Israel, his servant,
remembering his mercy. **R.**

Responsorial Psalm

Unusually, the responsorial psalm is not taken from the Book of Psalms as such, but from the gospel of Luke. All will quickly recognise it as part of Mary's canticle of praise, the Magnificat. Though Mary's prayer is a New Testament text, found in the gospel of Luke, every verse has parallels in the prayers of the Old Testament. This enables us all to pray the Magnificat in profound solidarity with God's original and abiding people, even as it makes us mindful of the incarnation we are preparing to celebrate.

The response is an abbreviation of the first two lines of the Magnificat. The verses echo the message of the prophet Isaiah that we have just heard. This prayer should be a joy for both reader and congregation to pray.

**A reading from the first letter of St Paul
to the Thessalonians**

5:16–24

Be happy at all times; pray constantly; and for all things give thanks to God, because this is what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus.

Never try to suppress the Spirit or treat the gift of prophecy with contempt; think before you do anything - hold on to what is good and avoid every form of evil.

May the God of peace make you perfect and holy; and may you all be kept safe and blameless, spirit, soul and body, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. God has called you and he will not fail you.

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to John
1:6–8, 19–28**

A man came, sent by God.
His name was John.
He came as a witness,
as a witness to speak for the light,
so that everyone might believe through him.
He was not the light,
only a witness to speak for the light.

This is how John appeared as a witness. When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' he not only declared, but he declared quite openly, 'I am not the Christ.' 'Well then,' they asked 'are you Elijah?' 'I am not' he said. 'Are you the Prophet?' He answered, 'No.' So they said to him, 'Who are you? We must take back an answer to those who sent us. What have you to say about yourself?' So John said, 'I am, as Isaiah prophesied:

a voice that cries in the wilderness:
Make a straight way for the Lord.'

Now these men had been sent by the Pharisees, and they put this further question to him, 'Why are you baptising if you are not the Christ, and not Elijah, and not the prophet?' John replied, 'I baptise with water; but there stands among you unknown to you the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo his sandal-strap.' This happened at Bethany, on the far side of the Jordan, where John was baptising.

Second Reading

The second reading comes from the conclusion of the very first letter attributed to Paul the apostle. Written about the year 50, it is understood to be the oldest book in the New Testament. At that time there was still a vivid expectation that Christ would soon return in glory to bring all things to completion. This is one of the issues that prompt Paul to write to the Christian community at Thessalonica. In the section of the letter just prior to today's excerpt, Paul encourages the community to remain ready for the day of the Lord but to do so in a spirit of calm confidence.

This allows him to go on with advice about how they should be living their lives while they wait. It is all very positive and uplifting. He wants them to be happy, to pray constantly, to be thankful, to stay open to the Spirit, to let God bless them with holiness, and to trust God's faithfulness.

Every one of these good wishes remains welcome and timely. The pleasant task that readers have is to communicate them to the congregation in the same affectionate spirit with which Paul first wrote to the Thessalonians.

Gospel

Because Mark's account of the preaching of John the Baptist is quite short (we heard all of it last Sunday), today we have an extract from the gospel of John to fill the gap. John devotes much more space in his gospel to the role of the Baptist, partly at least to dispel any lingering misunderstanding about him. John the Baptist was not the Messiah but a witness to the Messiah.

The gospel reading is a combination of two passages from the first chapter of John. The first consists of three verses taken from the profound poetic meditation that opens the gospel (Jn 1:1–18). The Prologue interweaves reflection on the eternal-Word-made-flesh with comment on the Baptist: "He was not the light, but only a witness to speak for the light".

The second comes from the narrative that follows. John goes to great lengths to insist on the Baptist's subordinate status. Time and again he has the Baptist voice his own denials; he is neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the prophet. The question that the priests and Levites put to John – "Who are you?" – will become a recurring theme of the gospel in relation to Jesus. Where does he come from, and who is he? The answer to this is at last spelt out explicitly twenty chapters later, at the original end of the gospel (Jn 20:31).

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.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

FIRST READING (NRSV)

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah 61:1–2, 10–11

The servant of the Lord said:
"The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.
"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord,
my whole being shall exult in my God;
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
"For as the earth brings forth its shoots,
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise
to spring up before all the nations."

SECOND READING (NRSV)

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians 5:16–24

My brothers and sisters,
rejoice always, pray without ceasing,
give thanks in all circumstances;
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
Do not quench the Spirit.
Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything;
hold fast to what is good;
abstain from every form of evil.
May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely;
and may your spirit and soul and body
be kept sound and blameless
at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

GOSPEL (NRSV)

A reading from the holy gospel according to John 1:6–8, 19–28

There was a man sent from God,
whose name was John.
He came as a witness to testify to the light,
so that all might believe through him.
He himself was not the light,
but he came to testify to the light.

This is the testimony given by John
when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem
to ask him, "Who are you?"
He confessed and did not deny it,
but confessed, "I am not the Messiah."
And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?"
He said, "I am not."
"Are you the prophet?"
He answered, "No."
Then they said to him,
"Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"
He said,
"I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,
'Make straight the way of the Lord,'"
as the prophet Isaiah said.
Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.
They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing
if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?"
John answered them, "I baptize with water.
Among you stands one whom you do not know,
the one who is coming after me;
I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal."
This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

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)



Catholic Mission thanks the parish of St Luke the Evangelist for your support of this year's World Mission Day Appeal. Your generosity has empowered Church workers across 1047 mission dioceses, allowing them to spread the message of hope and love within their local communities. Your contribution of \$1,094.10 has been most gratefully received. Through your partnership with Catholic Mission, Sr. Carolina in Timor-Leste can continue providing life-saving treatment and essential resources for health, education and well-being. Your gift not only transforms individual lives but also fuels mission programs globally, reaching out to those in dire need. Many thanks!



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.**

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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call **13 18 12** or scan the **QR code to donate**.



Vinnies Christmas Appeal



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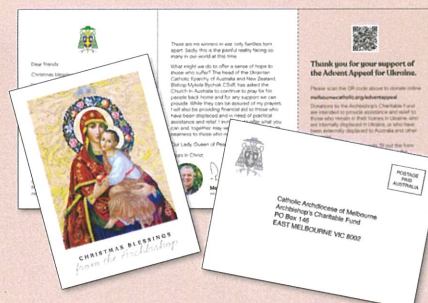
Photo: Yahya Hassouna/Getty Images



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