



## 2nd Sunday of Advent - Year C 4th & 5th December 2021

Parish Priest:  
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Parish Secretary  
Office: 9808 1006  
Dominique Hockey  
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Parish Office Hours  
Tuesday - Friday 9am—3pm

Baptisms & Weddings  
Please contact the Parish Office.

### St Scholastica's Primary

School  
Principal: Jenny Rohan  
9808 7279  
[principal@ssbennettswood.catholic.edu.au](mailto:principal@ssbennettswood.catholic.edu.au)

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Dear Parishioners of St Scholasticas,

In the second week of Advent we light the second purple candle of the Advent wreath and we pray for peace. Our world, our communities and our families long for peace and this is why praying for peace comes very naturally. One of the hallmarks of the Christmas story is when the angels appear to the shepherds and proclaim, "Peace on earth," in Luke 2:14. Also, in the readings for the midnight Mass at Christmas, we hear from the prophet Isaiah who says in these words: "For there is a child born for us, a son given to us and dominion is laid upon his shoulders; and this is the name they give him: Wonder-Counsellor, Mighty -God, Eternal-Father, Prince of Peace." (Is 9:6)

These titles tell us something about what the Reign of God is like - it is a peaceful reign and Jesus brings us peace in a number of ways. First, he gives us "inner peace". It begins with a relationship with God and hinges on our trust in God, "You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is focused on you because he trusts in you." (Isaiah 26:3) Therefore, choosing not to trust God will take us down the road to stress and anxiety. Inner peace is there for us to put our hand in God and draw his wisdom and strength as we take each step.

Second, "peace with others" begins as we understand that God has called us to be peacemakers in our world. The Hebrew word for peace is *Shalom*. The word shalom is beyond not fighting with others but shalom, in essence, allows us to look at others through the eyes of God. And God promises to those who look to Him the qualities of shalom - wholeness, completeness, soundness, and health. Thus, peace from God allows us to trust in God's promises in the midst of difficulties and challenges. Let us offer a light to others who do not yet know that peace.

Finally, to make the most of this advent week, please join me in praying the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi:

"Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.  
Where there is injury, pardon.  
Where there is doubt, faith.  
Where there is despair hope.  
Where there is darkness, light. And  
Where there is sadness, joy.  
Not so much seek to be consoled as to console  
To be understood, as to understand.  
To be loved. As to love  
For it's in giving that we receive  
And it's in pardoning that we are pardoned  
And it's in dying that we are born...  
To eternal life.  
Amen."

Have a good week ahead everyone!  
God bless  
Fr Think Nguyen PP



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## WEEKLY CALENDAR 2021

**All masses are unknown vaccination status unless noted otherwise.**

### Monday 6 December

No Service  
07.30pm Vinnies Meeting - GA

### Tuesday 7 December

09.00am Mass followed by Adoration/Rosary/Confession  
05.30pm School Graduation Mass  
07.30pm Young Adults Group

### Wednesday 8 December

10.00am Novena  
10.20am Rosary and Benediction  
11.00am Mass  
01.00pm Legion of Mary

### Thursday 9 December

09.00am Mass followed by Rosary/Confession  
07.30pm RCIA Program

### Friday 10 December

09.00am Mass followed by Rosary

### Saturday 11 December

09.00am Mass/Confession/Adoration - Fully Vaccinated  
05.30pm Mass - Fully Vaccinated Mass

### Sunday 12 December - Third Sunday of Advent

09.00am Mass - Fully Vaccinated Mass  
11.00am Mass - Fully Vaccinated Mass  
12.00pm Volunteers Thank You Lunch - School Quadrangle  
12.00pm Baptism of Mia Karunamoorthy  
12.00pm Interment of Frank & Josephine Postma  
05.30pm Mass - Unknown Vaccination Status Mass

### ROSTERS

Mass Time	1st Sunday of the Month 04/05 December 2021		
	Covid Marshall	Readers/Musician	Special Ministers
Sat 5.30pm	R Wates	Dianne Smith Pauline	Mary Ann Borg Christine Wates
Sun 9.00am	D Coniglio	Laurine Shane Judy	Rosa Coniglio Sangeetha Thomas
Sun 11.00am	R Lal & J Tong	April Lewis Dennis Y	Anna Marie Ziino Marie Serophim
Sun 5.30pm	B Figueirado	Hannah Menzies Rebecca	Marcia Nelson Netty Solomon

### ROSTERS

Mass Time	2nd Sunday of the Month 11/12 December 2021		
	Covid Marshall	Readers/Musician	Special Ministers
Sat 5.30pm	R Wates	Stephanie Rozario Lucy	Charlie Mellican Noela Corby
Sun 9.00am	J & M Natividad	Juancho Natividad Judy	Betty McDonald Joy Guinane
Sun 11.00am	R Lal & J Tong	Geetha Jayasuriya Henry	April Lewis Tam Pham
Sun 5.30pm	B Figueirado	Shenuk Perrera Sean	Michael Chan Netty Solomon

### Remembering Our Community

#### Sick

Pat Nitz, Maeve Coady, Kathleen Barr, Rachel Bransby, Nancy Simpson, Marian & Stephen McQuinn, Frances Murray, Joshua Muling, John Corby

#### Anniversaries

Maria & Francesco Perrella, Tony Borg, Frank & Josephine Postma

#### Recently Deceased

Kenneth Chester, Diana Marcuzzi

### Sunday 5.30pm - Unknown Status Mass - Must Book

To attend Sunday 5.30pm mass you will need to make a booking through TryBooking: <https://www.trybooking.com/BVMUE>  
As we are only allowed 50 people at this mass, we ask that only Unknown Status Parishioners attend. **This is the only mass where a booking is required.**

### Choir Practice for Christmas Masses

I invite any and all Choristers who can or may attend the choir for the 10 pm Mass to 2 practices:-

10 AM This Sunday 5th Dec after 9 o'clock mass; and  
10 AM Next Sunday 12th after 9 o'clock mass.

### Nativity Play 5pm & Vigil Mass Christmas Eve 5.30pm

With Advent beginning this past week and preparing our hearts for the Great Feast of Christmas, it's time to start thinking about our preparation with our families. One way to help your children have a lived experience is by participating in our Children's Nativity Tableau (including caroling) which will take place at 5pm on Christmas Eve, before the 5.30pm Youth and Family Mass. This mass will be a fully vaccinated mass.

To make it easier for families, we will have ONE rehearsal from 10-11:45am on Saturday, 18 December (after rehearsal we will costume the children to check sizes). Registration sheets are at the entrances to the church, and electronically in the Chimes and the school newsletter. **All are welcome to participate, over 12 years old will need a fully vaccinated certificate. Please return your registration form asap to the parish or the school office - or via email to the parish or school office. Thank you and God bless**

### Conversations and Prayer on Zoom

Join Fr Think for prayer and conversation over Zoom this Friday 3rd December at 7.30pm. <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3022571802?pwd=QzlleWp3M2JEdEY1UllmalBOSk5QT09>  
Meeting ID: 302 257 1802 Passcode: STSCHOLS

### Attending Mass - Please Remember

The only mass which you need to make a booking for is Sunday 5.30pm. If a person is 12 years old + 2 months old they must be fully vaccinated to attend a Place of Worship. The only exception is if it is a dedicated unknown vaccination status mass. All people attending a double vaccinated mass must be fully vaccinated and carry with them proof of their vaccination status. You must check in with the QR code before entering. You must sanitise your hands on entering and exiting the church. You can only enter via the back of the church - not from the Gathering Area or Side Entrance Doors.

You will be required to sign in upon entry and show your vaccination certificate to appointed Covid Marshalls.

#### Quote of the Week

"At this Christmas when Christ comes,  
will He find a warm heart?  
Mark the season of Advent by loving and  
serving the others with God's own love and concern."  
(Mother Teresa)

**St Scholastica's acknowledges that we gather, pray and live together on the land of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nations.**

**Justice of the Peace Bryan 9808 4813  
or 0428 883 462**



# NOTICEBOARD

## Reconciliation in Advent

Fr Thinh will be available to hear confession after Mass from 9.30-10.00am on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday during the season of Advent in preparing the Way for the Lord.

## Communion to the sick

Do you know anyone who is sick or housebound, who would like to receive a visit from Fr Thinh or Deacon An Le? Perhaps the sick/homebound person is feeling isolated from the parish community and would like to receive communion on a regular basis. Please phone the parish office on 9808 1006.

## Baptism at St Scholastica's

It is a requirement of the parish that a Baptism information night must be attended prior to having your child baptised. Contact the parish office on 9808 1006 to make a booking into one of the monthly sessions. Next session: February 2022.

## Updating your Thanksgiving

If you prefer to use Direct Deposit for your thanksgiving contributions and no longer require envelopes, please contact the Parish Office so we can cancel the supply of your envelopes and provide you with a new thanksgiving number.

## Thanksgiving Program

Due to the extended lockdown weekly Thanksgiving Envelopes are not able to be currently dropped in. If you would like to make a direct deposits for your Thanksgiving contribution, the parish account details can be found below.

- Account Name: St Scholastica's Parish
- BSB: 083 347
- Account Number: 68681 8033
- Reference: **Please use as reference:  
Envelope number**

You can set up a direct debit or monthly credit card giving by contacting the parish office.

## Piety Stall

The Piety Stall will be open each weekend until **Christmas** at the 5.30pm, 9.00am & 11.00am masses. **Columban Calendars, Christmas Cards and Daily Mass Books 2022** will be on sale as well as other religious items. If you wish to reserve any of these items please phone **Gil Muir on 0420 379 270**. The price per calendar is \$10.00; the Christmas cards come in pack of five (5) and cost \$3.00 per pack; and the Mass Books cost \$25.00.

## How to set up St Scholastica's Parish as favourite check-ins from Service Victoria:

1. Open the Service Victoria app on your phone.
2. Tap the 'clock' icon next to the check-in button.
3. You'll see a list of check-ins from the past 28 days.
4. Tap the check-in location you want to add to favourites - i.e. St Scholastica's Parish
5. You'll see a confirmation screen with a green tick. At the bottom of the confirmation screen, you'll see 'save as a favourite check-in'. Toggle the button to the right.
6. Press 'done'.
7. This will save the location to your favourite list. Your most recent 6 favourites will show on your home screen. View a complete list of your favourite locations by tapping 'see all' next to your most recent favourite check-ins on the home screen.

## St. Vincent de Paul Society: Christmas Appeal

The Christmas Appeal for the St. Vincent de Paul Society is being held with the second collection at all masses **this weekend, the 4th & 5th of December 2021**. Donation envelopes are available in the pews. Donation may be made by cash, credit card or cheques. Receipts will be issued on request.

Please give generously as many people are struggling to put food on the table, particularly because of the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Donations can also be made as follows:

- 1) By credit card by calling: 13 18 12 (Please allocate your donation to the Bennettswood Conference when calling) Receipts will be issued.
- 2) By making an online donation to: [vinnies.org.au](http://vinnies.org.au) (Please put Bennettswood Conference in the "comments" field) Receipts will be automatically emailed to donors.
- 3) Cheques or cash may be given to the Parish Office. Receipts will be issued on request.

## St. Vincent de Paul: Monthly Food Collection

The monthly food collections will be held **this weekend the 4th & 5th December 2021**. The most useful items are staples such as: pasta & pasta sources, rice, baked beans & other canned food & soups, canned fruit, spreads such as vegemite, peanut butter and jams and also breakfast cereals and long life milk as well as canned fish such as tuna and sardines. Thank you in anticipation for your generosity.



## **Gospel Reflection**

### **From the prophet Baruch:**

Jerusalem take off your robe of mourning and misery; put on the splendor of glory from God forever: wrapped in the cloak of justice from God.

### **Reflection:**

The prophet Baruch promises a time when we will be "wrapped in the cloak of justice." Justice is not merely one virtue among many. For God's community, it is the key virtue. It reflects the very way God treats us. In a community guided by justice, all are treated equally; all share in the community's resources; no one goes hungry or is treated unfairly.

### **So, we ask ourselves:**

- How did I feel when an injustice was done against me?
- What can I do to help another person not be treated in the same way I was?

***St Scholastica's Parish is committed to creating a child safe culture that safeguards children and young people including the safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children and young people, children and young people with a disability, and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.***



**Second Sunday of Advent Year C - 4th & 5th December 2021**

**Entrance Antiphon:** Cf. Is 30:19,30

O people of Sion, behold, the Lord will come to save the nations, and the Lord will make the glory of his voice heard in the joy of your heart.

**First Reading:** Bar 5:1-9

A reading from the prophet Baruch

*Jerusalem – God will show you splendour.*

Jerusalem, take off your dress of sorrow and distress, put on the beauty of the glory of God for ever, wrap the cloak of the integrity of God around you, put the diadem of the glory of the Eternal on your head: since God means to show your splendour to every nation under heaven, since the name God gives you for ever will be, 'Peace through integrity, and honour through devotedness'. Arise, Jerusalem, stand on the heights and turn your eyes to the east: see your sons reassembled from west and east at the command of the Holy One, jubilant that God has remembered them.

Though they left you on foot, with enemies for an escort, now God brings them back to you like royal princes carried back in glory.

For God has decreed the flattening of each high mountain, of the everlasting hills, the filling of the valleys to make the ground level so that Israel can walk in safety under the glory of God. And the forests and every fragrant tree will provide shade for Israel at the command of God; for God will guide Israel in joy by the light of his glory with his mercy and integrity for escort.

The word of the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

**Psalm:** Ps 125. R. v.3

**R. The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.**

When the Lord delivered Zion from bondage, it seemed like a dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, on our lips there were songs. **R.**

The heathens themselves said: 'What marvels the Lord worked for them!' What marvels the Lord worked for us! Indeed we were glad. **R.**

Deliver us, O Lord, from our bondage as streams in dry land. Those who are sowing in tears will sing when they reap. **R.**

They go out, they go out, full of tears, carrying seed for the sowing: they come back, they come back, full of song, carrying their sheaves. **R.**

**Second Reading:** Phil 1:3-6. 8-11

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Philippians

*Show yourselves sinless and without blame in the day of Christ.*

Every time I pray for all of you, I pray with joy, remembering how you have helped to spread the Good News from the day you first heard it right up to the present. I am quite certain that the One who began this good work in you will see that it is finished when the Day of Christ Jesus comes. God knows how much I miss you all, loving you as Christ Jesus loves you. My prayer is that your love for each other may increase more and more and never stop improving your knowledge and deepening your perception so that you can always recognise what is best. This will help you to become pure and blameless, and prepare you for the Day of Christ, when you will reach the perfect goodness which Jesus Christ produces in us for the glory and praise of God.

The word of the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

**Gospel Acclamation:**

Alleluia, alleluia!  
Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make straight his paths:  
all people shall see the salvation of God.  
Alleluia!

**Gospel:** Luke 3:1-6

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke

*All people shall see the salvation of God.*

In the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar's reign, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judaea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of the lands of Ituraea and Trachonitis, Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the pontificate of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah, in the wilderness. He went through the whole Jordan district proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the sayings of the prophet Isaiah: A voice cries in the wilderness; Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley will be filled in, every mountain and hill be laid low, winding ways will be straightened and rough roads made smooth. And all mankind shall see the salvation of God.

The Gospel of the Lord.  
**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

**Communion Antiphon:** Bar 5:5; 4:36

Jerusalem, arise and stand upon the heights, and behold the joy which comes to you from God.

**Third Sunday of Advent, Year C - 11 & 12 December 2021**

First Reading: Zep 3:14-18

Second Reading: Phil 4:4-7

Gospel: Luke 3:10-18

## Second Sunday of Advent - Year C

John the Baptist dominates the central weeks of Advent. His summons, 'Prepare the way of the Lord', has long been understood as summing up the message of the Advent season.

But it is not as if we have to mentally project ourselves 'back there' before the original coming of Jesus to hear the message of John. The hope that we as Christians cherish for the second coming of the Lord means that we can rightly identify with those in Israel who were the first to hear John's announcement of salvation and his summons to a change of heart.

The trajectory that runs through the Scripture for today is clear in the way the Gospel, containing the beginning of John's summons, picks up and positions the assurance proclaimed in the First Reading, Baruch 5:1-9. The prophecy of Baruch echoes in a post-exilic context much of the message of consolation contained in Second Isaiah (Isaiah 40-66). Foreseeing the return to Jerusalem of Israelites who had been exiled and scattered in foreign cities, the prophet tells the city to get ready to witness this wonderful homecoming. The exiles will return like princes, carried on litters by their former enemies. The way will be smoothed by the flattening of hills and other obstacles, the desert will be transformed into a paradise to make the journey a delight.

Detached from its original reference to Israel's return from exile, the prophecy later functioned as a vision of the 'home-coming' expected in the messianic age. The Gospel for today, Luke 3:1-6, has John the Baptist announce its imminent fulfilment. He is 'the voice' foretold by Isaiah (40:3), the one who cries in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord.'

What is particularly striking, I think, about Luke's presentation of John's message is the care with which he pins it down historically by mentioning all those rulers at the start: from the emperor in Rome to the high priests in Jerusalem. To relate 'sacred history' to what was going on in the world at large is a distinctive feature of Luke's contribution to Christianity, both in his Gospel and also in his second work, the Acts of the Apostles. Luke in this way pointed the early Church to the world as much as to say, 'It's not all bad out there!' Aspects of the world order at the time, especially the peace and legal structure of the Roman empire could be of assistance to the spread of the Gospel. So the salvation that John heralds and that Jesus will bring is not something confined to a purely spiritual realm detached from everyday life and history. It comes at a particular time, into a particular place and culture. As it works itself out – beyond the time of Jesus into that of the Church – it will interact with all the cultures that it meets, challenging them and transforming them as it seeks to bring the human race back to its true home in the Kingdom of God.

Beyond the vision of Baruch, what John sees is not just the return of the dispersed Israelites, but the 'way of the Lord'. At the head of the new humanity, restoring it to freedom, will be the figure of Jesus. Those whom he gathers and leads will be 'returned ones,' not now in the physical sense of returnees from exile, but in the biblical sense of 'return' which also denotes conversion of heart. Once again, this Advent, John summons us to the change of heart whereby the Church becomes ever more deeply the vanguard of a human race making its homecoming to God and its own true humanity. The vocation of the Church, as a whole and its local communities, is to be the 'light of the nations', so 'all humankind may see the salvation of God.'

The Second Reading, Philippians 1:3-6, 8-11, again catches up Paul's sense of Christian life as a time of preparation for the (second) coming of the Lord ('the Day of Christ'). Noteworthy is the sense of the Christian community as a 'work' that God, like a good craftsman, is bringing to completion. This is God's work – hence Paul's prayer. But we should not fail to notice his stress upon 'improving knowledge' and 'deepening perception' so that the community will always be able to 'recognise what is best'. Believers are not handed a perfect blueprint for salvation. In the ever-changing circumstances of human life and knowledge, we are summoned to a life of constant discernment: to ask what leads us to God, what leads us away; what gives us joy, what leaves us in sadness. Advent is a time of sharpening our sensitivity to the summons and calls of the Spirit.

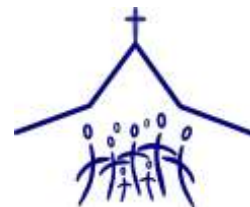
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Since returning from graduate studies in Oxford in 1977, Brendan Byrne has been Professor of New Testament at Jesuit Theological College in Melbourne, Australia, of which he was Principal (1992-97). He was Rector of Campion College, Kew (1979-84) and a delegate to the 33rd General Congregation of the Society of Jesus in 1983. He was a visiting professor at the Pontifical Biblical Institute, Rome, in 1993 and has also taught in East Asia and East Africa. He was a member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission (Rome) (1990-96) and President of the Melbourne College of Divinity (2000-01). He was elected a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities in 1999. Brendan Byrne is the author of nine books, edits the theological journal *Pacifica* and regularly gives workshops on scripture to clergy and parish communities.

**ST SCHOLASTICA'S PARISH**  
**CHRISTMAS SERVICES 2021**

**348 Burwood Highway – BENNETTSWOOD**  
**VIC 3125**

**Phone: 9808 1006 – Email: [stschpar@bigpond.net.au](mailto:stschpar@bigpond.net.au)**



**ADVENT**

**RECONCILIATION**

**WEDNESDAY 22 DECEMBER 2021**

**7.00 PM RECONCILIATION**

**CHRISTMAS EVE**

**FRIDAY 24 DECEMBER 2021**

**5:00 PM NATIVITY PLAY**

**5:30 PM MASS of VIGIL**

**All children are invited to come dressed as their favourite Nativity character.**

**7.30 PM CHRISTMAS CAROLS**

**8:00 PM MASS (UNKNOWN VACCINATION STATUS) Book Via TryBooking for this Mass**

**9.30 PM CHRISTMAS CAROLS**

**10:00 PM MASS**

**CHRISTMAS DAY**

**SATURDAY 25 DECEMBER 2021**

**9:00 AM MASS**

**11:00 AM MASS**

**HOLY FAMILY**

**SUNDAY 26 DECEMBER 2021**

**9:00 AM MASS**

**11:00 AM MASS**

**5:30 PM MASS (UNKNOWN VACCINATION) Book Via Try-Booking for this Mass**

**NEW YEAR'S EVE**

**FRIDAY 31 DECEMBER 2021**

**7:00 PM MASS**

**NEW YEAR'S DAY**

**SATURDAY 1 JANUARY 2022**

**9:00 AM MASS**



# *St Scholastica's Community*

*Christmas Eve Nativity 2021 - 5:00pm*

*Child's Name and Age* \_\_\_\_\_

*Parent's Name* \_\_\_\_\_

*Contact Phone Number* \_\_\_\_\_

*Contact Email* \_\_\_\_\_

*Yes, we will be attending Christmas Eve Mass at St Scholastica's for 2021 and our child/children are able to participate in the Nativity at 5:00pm.*

**\*\*Please remember this is a fully vaccinated Mass and anyone over 12 years and 2 months will need to show their vaccination certificate.**

**PLEASE SCAN AND RETURN THIS FORM ON EMAIL - or - PICK UP A HARD COPY AT THE BACK OF THE CHURCH OR FROM THE SCHOOL OFFICE and RETURN to the PARISH or SCHOOL OFFICE**

\*\*\*\*\*

*Saturday 18th December will be the only practice for the Nativity and will be held from 10-11:45am in the church. \*\**

*Please be on time as we only have 90 minutes to do our practice with all the children.*

*\*\*\*Parents of Grade 3 and under are required to stay for the practice please.\*\*\**

*(We will do costume fittings after this practice which may take another 15-mins with the parents helping their children. The costumes are already made.*

**The 18th Dec is THE ONLY REHEARSAL. THERE IS NO REHEARSAL on Christmas Eve Morning -**

**All Shepherds and Angels to arrive at 4.30PM on Christmas Eve to be dressed by their parents in the Lower Level of the Parish Hall**

*After the Nativity the children get changed with their parents and will sit with their families during Christmas Eve Vigil Mass.*



ST SCHOLASTICA'S PARISH

# THANK YOU LUNCH FOR VOLUNTEERS

Let us say 'Thank You' for all the work throughout this challenging year by catching up and sharing a BBQ together.

**SUNDAY 12TH DECEMBER**

**12:00PM**

**(AFTER THE 11AM MASS)**

**SCHOOL QUADRANGLE**

**BYO DRINKS AND CHAIRS**

RSVP BY 7TH DEC BY SCANNING THE QR CODE  
BELOW OR GOING TO:

[HTTPS://WWW.TRYBOOKING.COM/BWBJG](https://www.trybooking.com/BWBJG)

OR PHONING THE PARISH OFFICE ON 9808 1006





**WEEK 2**

# Waiting for salvation and renewal

'Prepare a way for the Lord.'

—Luke 3:4

**BE STILL**

Light two candles on your Advent wreath. Or if you don't have a wreath, light a special candle.

*We watch and wait.*

*To this waiting time we bring the experiences of the year past.*

*This circle of green reminds us of the love of God: endless, but ever new.*

Take a moment to allow whatever is in your heart to rise, and offer your thoughts to the loving care of the Lord in this second week of Advent. Our thoughts may turn to the year that has passed:

- For what am I thankful?
- What could I have done better?
- How have I journeyed with God and Jesus throughout the past year?

**This week**

Tuesday 7 December:  
St Ambrose, priest, doctor (memorial)

Wednesday 8 December:  
The Immaculate Conception  
of the Blessed Virgin Mary (solemnity)

**Listen or sing**

Sing or listen to '[In the Lord I'll be ever thankful](#)' (CWBII 522; GA 429).

Alternatively, you could sing or listen to '[Wait for the Lord](#)' (CWBII 251, GA 83).

**Pray**

*Loving God,  
Awaken our hearts as we keep this Advent time;  
allow us to draw near to you  
and to sit in your presence.  
Awaken our hearts as we keep this Advent time:  
that we may listen more deeply to your word in our lives  
and make room for Emmanuel.  
Amen.*

**OPEN THE WORD**

**Read**

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

In the fifteenth year of the rule of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judaea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of the territories of Ituraea and Trachonitis, Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, the son of Zechariah, in the desert. He went into the whole Jordan area proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the sayings of Isaiah the prophet:

*A voice of one crying in the desert:  
Prepare a way for the Lord,  
make his paths straight!  
Every valley shall be filled in,  
every mountain and hill be levelled,  
the crooked shall be straightened  
and rough places made into smooth roads,  
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.*

—Luke 3:1–6

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Ponder**

In his encyclical *Evangelii Gaudium* (*The Joy of the Gospel*), Pope Francis commends the practice of *lectio divina*, where we read God's word in prayer, dwelling on the aspects of a text that particularly strike us and asking that it 'enlighten and renew' us. The following questions may help with this:

- Lord, what does this text mean to me?
- What is it about my life that you want me to change in response to this text?
- What troubles me about this text?
- Why am I not interested in this?
- What do I find pleasant about this text?
- What is it about this word or phrase that moves me?
- What attracts me?
- Why does it attract me?

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## Pope's prayer intention for the month of December: Catechists

'Let us pray for the catechists summoned to announce the Word of God; may they be witnesses, with courage and creativity and in the power of the Holy Spirit.'

As we hold this intention in our hearts and prayers, we may also like to pray for all those who, in a particular way, dedicate their time to sharing and teaching the Word of God to others—parents, teachers, clergy, parish volunteers and others.

### Reflect

It feels as though we are coming full circle. Earlier this year, on the first Sunday of Lent, we read from the beginning of Mark's gospel that Jesus was driven into the wilderness (Mark 1:12-15). Now, at the start of the new liturgical year, the Gospel of Luke returns us to the wilderness. We are on a journey with John the Baptist, who, drawing from his Jewish heritage, exhorts us to listen and 'prepare!'

In recent months, we have been invited to 'Take the Way of the Gospel', reimagining our local Church as Mission communities through a time of prayer, listening and discernment. We have been encouraged to listen to the Spirit, to pray, to reflect deeply and to share with each other what we think God is asking of us at this time in our parishes and in the Archdiocese. Perhaps this is something we can build into the pattern of our Advent days: What is it that God is asking of me? What is it that God is asking of us? How is the Holy Spirit calling us into a renewed way of being in our local Church?

Perhaps the words of Henri Nouwen will help with this: 'Our God is a God who cares, heals, guides, directs, challenges, confronts, corrects. To discern means first of all to listen to God, to pay attention to God's active presence, and to obey God's prompting, direction, leadings, and guidance' (Henri JM Nouwen, *Discernment: Reading the Signs of Daily Life*, SPCK, 2013).

### RESPOND

#### Pray

Loving God,  
As we keep this Advent time,  
awaken our hearts to goodness and hope.  
Help us to hear your voice.  
Strengthen our voices as we work towards building  
a world where justice reigns.  
Through Christ, our Lord,  
Amen.



*Saint John the Baptist in the Wilderness* by Geertgen tot Sint Jans

#### Go out

Pope Francis prays throughout December that those summoned to announce the Word of God do so with courage and creativity, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. This week, in particular, we celebrate the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Even before her birth, the Holy Spirit was working intimately in God's plan for the salvation of the world. The power of the Holy Spirit calls us, too, into God's plan of salvation. Take some time this week to be the face of Christ to those you know who are busy with young families: you might like to provide a meal or other practical assistance, or just offer encouragement and a listening ear. Be the one who hears 'a voice crying out in the desert'.

## **Articles Regarding Religious Discrimination and Exemption**

It has been a particularly intensive fortnight in the discussions around religious discrimination and exemption at State and Federal levels. Please find below links that may be of interest for further reading, to help bring some understanding and clarity as to what is at stake in this very complex area.

Archbishop Peter A Comensoli: ***Religious Discrimination Bill will protect people of faith***

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/religious-discrimination-bill-will-protect-people-of-faith-20211124-p59btg.html>

(As there may be a paywall for some, I have attached the article above).

Prof John Haldane: ***Discrimination and the diversity of values: What Victoria's religious exemptions legislation doesn't understand***

<https://www.abc.net.au/religion/john-haldane-discrimination-and-the-diversity-of-values/13653354>

Jacinta Collins: ***Religious Discrimination Bill will let us all 'live and let live'***

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/religious-discrimination-bill-will-let-us-all-live-and-let-live-20211128-p59ct5.html>

(Article also attached).

Fr Frank Brennan SJ: ***Where to now with Religious Discrimination?***

<https://www.eurekastreet.com.au/article/where-to-now-with-religious-discrimination>

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### **Religious Discrimination Bill 2021 - The Age**

#### **A moderate protection for religious liberty**

The great figure of American history and the star character of today's favourite musical, Hamilton, had this to say about religious liberty:

"Remember civil and religious liberty always go together, if the foundation of the one be sapped, the other will fall of course." (Alexander Hamilton, *A Full Vindication of the Measures of Congress*, 1774)

After a long wait, we are now looking at a Religious Discrimination Bill in our federal Parliament, and it should be welcomed by all Australians, including the over 60% who profess a religious belief. The proposed law protects religious belief or activity, but also the right to not have a religious faith or participate in religious events.

If you believe in freedom for all, then you should support liberty to people of all faiths and none. If you believe in values like fairness, diversity and giving people a fair go, then you should support religious organisations being able to conduct their work according to their religious mission. It is perfectly normal for a range of views and beliefs to interact in a healthy democracy, and it is therefore reasonable to expect the laws of the land to protect each of those groups, especially if they are minority religious and ethnic ones who are vulnerable or face hostility.

More broadly, schools are an obvious example. Parents send their children to Catholic and other religious schools for a purpose – they want a Catholic education and it is reasonable to protect their right to do so.

In Australia, we aren't used to having to talk about religious freedom largely because we've taken it for granted. We are unlike other parts of the world in which you can lose your job, be locked up without charge, have your children denied an education, all because of the place you attend for worship. We should be grateful we don't face such heavy-handed discrimination.

Nevertheless, we would be a naive nation if we thought that serious discrimination on religious grounds does not occur, or cannot happen in Australia. My friends in other faith communities, including Jewish and Muslim ones, have shared stories that send a chill up my spine – tales of real discrimination and pain caused to people in the schools and families of their communities. In my own Christian tradition, I am hearing more and more tales of distress from young people whose reputation is torn apart online or who get socially ostracised because they express a religious view. That is not fair, and to be frank we should consider it un-Australian.

Given the increasing number of real challenges being faced by people of faith, the time is right to pass a law to protect their wellbeing, and to give parity to religious freedom alongside other important laws against discrimination. The Bill is moderate and should be un-controversial.

In fact, the Bill does not provide complete protection from every anti-religious discrimination, but it is at least a good start and a perfectly sensible foundation. It is something we can all rally around and support, without any fear of other rights being lost.

If you are not a believer, that's fine, no one is demanding that you change your mind. But out of fairness, I ask you to give your support to the protection of religious faith on the basis that in a free and open society, that's the right thing to do.

As Hamilton could see, civil and religious liberty always go together.

Peter Comensoli is the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne



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*Pray for  
the Unborn*



Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with Thee. Blessed art Thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.