



Sunday 25th December 2023

Parish Priest: Fr. Steven Rigo **Assistant Priest:** Fr. Martin Tanti & Fr Ananda Maddineni MSFS

Parish Pastoral Associates: Sandy Starbuck & Sr. Margaret Sapsford

The Partnered Parishes of:

St. Mary's

204 Grimshaw St.,
Greensborough, 3088

Parish: 9435 1543 **Presbytery:** 7036 9329

Email: Greensborough@cam.org.au

Website: www.cam1.org.au/greensborough

Secretaries: Tanya O'Meara & Lisa Leahy

Mass Times

Tuesday to Friday: Mass 9.15am

Saturday: Vigil Mass 6.30pm

Sunday: Mass 8.00am, 10.00am & 5.00pm

Reconciliation Times

Saturday: 5.45pm-6.15pm before evening
Mass

Parish School Principal

Mrs. Marisa Matthys **Ph:** 9433 4000 **or Email**
principal@smgreensborough.catholic.edu.au

Sacred Heart & St Peter's

25 Gipson Street,
Diamond Creek 3089

Parish: 9401 6361

Email: DiamondCreek@cam.org.au

Website: www.pol.org.au/diamondcreek

Secretary: Pat Guatta

Mass Times

Wednesday & Friday: Mass 9.15am

St Peter's: 1st & 3rd Saturday 7.15pm

Sunday: Mass 9.00am

Reconciliation Times

Friday: 9.45am to 10.15am

Parish School Principal

Mr. Jim O'Sullivan **Ph:** 9438 1590 **or Email**
principal@shdiamondcreek.catholic.edu.au

St. Thomas the Apostle

251 Diamond Creek Road,
Greensborough Nth 3088

Parish: 9434 7373

Email: greensboroughnorth@cam.org.au

Website: www.pol.org.au/greensboroughnorth

Secretary: Lisa Leahy

Mass Times

Tuesday & Thursday: Mass 9.15am

Saturday: Vigil Mass 6.00pm

Sunday: Mass 10.30am

Reconciliation Times

Saturday: 9.30am to 10.00am

Parish School Principal

Mr David Delaney **Ph:** 9434 4565 **or Email**
principal@stgreensboroughnth.catholic.edu.au

Please send any bulletin contributions to greensboroughnorth@cam.org.au by 12noon Wednesday to ensure inclusion in the weekend bulletin. Thank you

PARISH OFFICE HOURS

Sacred Heart: Will be closed from Tuesday 16th January - reopens Tuesday 23rd January.

St Mary's: Will be closed from Wednesday 27th December - reopens Wednesday 3rd January.

St Thomas: Will be closed from Wednesday 27th January - reopens Tuesday 2nd January.

Will be closed from Tuesday 30th January - reopens Tuesday 13th February.



SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

Reflections on the Gospels for Christmas Day, Feast of the Holy Family, Feast of Mary, Holy Mother of God (1 January), and Feast of the Epiphany.
25th December 2023.

<https://www.australiancatholics.com.au/reflections-christmas-1-jan-epiphany>



Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne

www.cam.org.au

St Mary's Facebook page

facebook.com/stmarysgreensborough/

Our Partnered Parishes respectfully acknowledge the Wurundjeri people who are the traditional custodians of this land and we pay respect to the Elders past and present.

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM FR STEVEN RIGO

Dear Parishioners of Sacred Heart, St. Mary's, and St. Thomas,

As we come to the end of 2023 we look back at a year of a global burgeoning economic hardship, violent conflicts whereby innocent people are dying in wars being waged, and natural disasters, some of which are as a result of climate change. This has certainly been a year of turmoil and calamities, and perhaps a year that beckons us to think and act differently from before. It seems to me that the choice is ours, individually and globally for things to change.

I have for many years been an avid viewer of the late night showing of ABC's "The Drum", only to discover a few days ago that last Friday's episode (15th December) was to be the last. It is a terrible shame because it offered a platform for honest and various opinions from experts and commentators across diverse fields of current social importance. It has been one source of learning for me for a number of years. I was fascinated that this final episode revolved around "HOPE". In her opening remarks, the host, Julia Baird said "As we near the end of a year marked by economic hardship and global conflict, we focus on hope." The first topic of discussion for the panel was "How they find hope and what it looks like." Ms. Baird quoted a Harvard University study which concluded that "those who hold onto hope were far better off; they were less depressed and anxious and less likely to have chronic illness and were more likely to have a longer life." She then interviewed Andrew Weir, a public servant and author who writes about 'solutions', who stated that "Hope is about imagining a better world and then taking action to do it. It's a belief that action takes us to somewhere better. The future we have today is not a given...we are in control of our actions...if we take action today, our future will be a bit better..." The conversation then moved to each of the panelists being asked how they found hope. If you have a chance, I encourage you to watch the last episode of "The Drum" on ABC iView. For me, the topic reinforced our theme for Advent this year – "Messengers of Hope" – that's what we are called to be, especially in these times. Maybe the events of this last year can lead us to consider what we truly hunger for, what should cause us anger and a desire to make this world a better place than what it is, and how we can be Messengers of Hope in the world we touch.

As I reflect on the first Christmas, I think of the historically transformative event when God immersed himself intimately into the mess of human history because of God's great love for humanity and all created order. It was because God sought to address what was wrong and unjust in the world and for us to find in him a vision for a more harmonious future that is consistent with God's dream for us, and for us to participate in furthering God's creative plan for all creation. May we in the coming year be receptive to the ways God seeks to engage us to be bearers of hope through action.

As we approach the end of 2023, I would like to express my gratitude and my well-wishes to you all, the parishioners of our three partnered parishes. Particularly, I would like to publicly express my gratitude to our Assistant priests – Martin Tanti and Ananda Maddineni. In January we all experienced the sadness of the untimely death of Tao Pham as he was preparing to visit his family in Vietnam. The celebrations of his funeral Mass at St. Thomas' then in the Vietnamese community church in Keysborough and finally in his own home town in Vietnam were beautiful testaments of how much loved he was. It was shortly after Tao's funeral that we were offered Ananda on a temporary basis. He has had an extensive ministry in the Caribbean, United States, Indonesia and India and he has fitted in well among us, we learning from him, and I am sure, he learning from us.

I am extremely grateful for the support and dedicated commitment to pastoral work in our parishes by Sandy Starbuck and Sr. Margaret Sapsford, our Pastoral Associates. Sandy comes with 12 years of experience from St. Peter's, Epping and Christ the Light Parish of Doreen, Kinglake, Mernda and Whittlesea. She has taken on her role with enthusiasm and has established herself by connecting with our school and the various groups in our parish. Margaret Sapsford had hip surgery in August after a long time struggling to get around, but she has also had a bit of a relapse that has kept her away from the parish for several months. We hope to see her back early in the new year.

I am particularly grateful to Pat Guatta, Lisa Leahy and more recently, Tanya O'Meara, our parish secretaries who are the immediate face and voice of the parish offices and who especially assist me in my administrative responsibilities. We regularly meet as a Parish Team and have refined ways that we work together across our three parishes. Sadly, Tanya is resigning as she is taking on full-time care of her father at home. I am grateful for the way Tanya has fitted-in and taken on her role working with Lisa in our parish office. We will now advertise a position for another secretary to start early in the new year.

Over the past year we have developed more ways we can work together across our three parishes, such as our combined Faith Development Team which prepares the schedule of the Sacramental program for our three schools and prepares the Faith Formation evenings for our school parents; our combined Liturgy group which plans the seasons of liturgical celebrations and major feasts, and our Partnered Parishes Plenary Facilitators Committee which explored ways we can implement in our own locality the expressions of parishioners for change in the Church. I am grateful for the enthusiasm they bring to as they assist us to express our faith in life.

I would also like to express my deep gratitude to Jim O'Sullivan, David Delaney and Marisa Matthys, our school principals for their professional, calm and dedicated leadership as well as to all our school staff.

I value their work because it is together that we lead our parishes in pastoral care, education and spiritual formation, especially of our school communities and particularly our children.

It is with sadness that I have to say that David is retiring after his Long Service Leave and Jim has been asked to temporarily be the Principal of St. Pius, West Heidelberg. In the meantime St. Thomas will be led by the current Acting Principal, Joanne Nolen and Gina Murphy will take on the role of being Acting Principal at Sacred Heart until the positions of Principal will be advertised at these two schools.

We are also reliant on the many groups and committees with whom we work collaboratively, particularly the Parish Pastoral Councils, Finance Committees, the School Advisory Boards and Parish Education Board. I would like to express my deep gratitude to the many individuals and groups who dedicate so much time and energy to the life of our parishes in liturgy, pastoral care, catechesis, faith formation, fundraising, peer support and ministry and property maintenance and development because they are committed to the enrichment of our communities by what they do. In general I would like to thank everyone's involvement in the life of our parishes because your contribution and participation is what continues to give these communities their great spirit and energy and expresses a welcome to those who come to us with their needs.

This year I also celebrated 40 years of ordination to the priesthood and I want to express my deep gratitude to those who organised its celebration beginning with the 10.00 am Mass on August 20th at St. Mary's. The speeches given by parishioners were truly humbling and its celebration with you reinforces for me why I remain a priest – I am grateful for your support of me. The collected gifts for me will assist me, hopefully in 2025 to do a sabbatical.

Finally, I thank the many parishioners who have showered me with gifts for Christmas; for your thoughtfulness and care of me throughout the year. I pray that each of you may have a joyous, peace-filled celebration of Christmas with your loved ones. May God guard you and keep you safe these holidays, especially as you travel. I pray that you may be revitalized for the coming year and that God blesses you and your loved ones abundantly with all you need throughout 2024 – a new year of new opportunities for growth within ourselves, in our relationships with one another, and with God who continues to make his home among us in the messiness of our lives and can enable us to be a people of hope in a troubled world.



Parish Priest)

MESSAGE FROM SANDY STARBUCK-PASTORAL ASSOCIATE

Dear Parishioners

"...in a time lacking in truth and certainty and filled with anguish and despair, no woman should be shamefaced in an attempting to give back to the world, through her work, a portion of its heart." (Louise Bogan) Over 20 years ago I received a book from my sister in America entitled, *"Simple Abundance – A Daybook of Comfort and Joy"* (Sarah Ban Breathnach). I haven't looked at the book for a number of years and I only have it in my office because I brought some books in to donate to our library. Having been encouraged to write a Christmas message to the community I opened the book for inspiration! Low and behold, I opened to September 6 – titled *"Working from the Heart."* This defines my pastoral ministry – to work from my heart.

"Work is love made visible." – Kahlil Gibran. This has been my prayer throughout this year, to be that loving presence of Christ to all I meet and most especially, those who call me to come to them with the Good News of Jesus present to them in service.

My work became my response to knowing Jesus, my daily practice of worship. He has been with me all my life and I can appreciate that may sound simplistic, but I have known of the presence of Christ in my life, as my friend since I was very young girl. How do I know this? I learned to recognize him through the actions of others, the love and kindness shared with me, the many people who took my hand walked with me, forming me, giving me language to express my love of Jesus, confidence to share that love and the certainty that I am where He has led me.

Fr Steven's homily for this past Sunday's Gospel, reminds us that John the Baptist "did not identify himself with the religious authority...he identifies himself by his relationship with God" specifically by his relationship with Jesus. This relationship defines John, not as the long-awaited Messiah, but as a witness to what a relationship with Christ will bring into our lives, into our world, the light that only shines brightly through love of Christ. Let us help each other for the times the light in our hearts is but a mere flicker by burning brightly reflecting the love our God for each of us.

So here I am...a year into my journey here to see the many ways the Good News is put in action, how to hear the love of Christ being spoken and importantly, how to *listen* with a compassionate heart, for the unspoken which comes from the essence of the human person. None of which would be possible if not for your efforts in making me welcomed in all areas of Parish life. You have invited me into your groups to learn how God's Spirit is at work there and shared the history and the experiences which reflect **"Work is love made visible!"** Thank you for your patience and your support which has strengthened me in times of doubt. I look forward to 2024 with excited anticipation as we continue our missionary journey in being a messenger of hope for all God's people.

Wishing you a very Blessed Christmas and may your love of Jesus be reflected in your laughter, your smile, your joy and love throughout the Christmas Season.

God bless!! **Sandy Starbuck, Pastoral Associate**



Lectionary Art and Reflection by Jenny

Joyful peace is the atmosphere of Luke's account of the birth of Jesus. Nonetheless, the peace arises amid the darker realities of life: 'there was no room for them at the inn'. Peace and joy are messages that we badly need today. More than ever we need to know that the light of Christ shines in the darkness and that the light is associated with the vulnerability of new life rather than the power of political might.

Nativity of the Lord (Christmas) Midnight

25 December

First Reading Is 9:1-7

A son is given to us.

The people that walked in darkness
has seen a great light;
on those who live in a land of deep shadow
a light has shone.
You have made their gladness greater,
you have made their joy increase;
they rejoice in your presence
as men rejoice at harvest time,
as men are happy when they are dividing the
spoils.
For the yoke that was weighing on him,
the bar across his shoulders,
the rod of his oppressor,
these you break as on the day of Midian.
For all the footgear of battle,
every cloak rolled in blood,
is burnt
and consumed by fire.
For there is a child born for us,
a son given to us
and dominion is laid on his shoulders;
and this is the name they give him:
Wonder-Counsellor, Mighty-God,
Eternal-Father, Prince-of-Peace.
Wide is his dominion
in a peace that has no end,
for the throne of David
and for his royal power,
which he establishes and makes secure
in justice and integrity.
From this time onwards and for ever,
the jealous love of the Lord of hosts
will do this.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 95:1-3. 11-13 R. Lk 2:11

**(R.) Today is born our Saviour,
Christ the Lord.**

1. O sing a new song to the Lord,
sing to the Lord all the earth.
O sing to the Lord, bless his name. (R.)
2. Proclaim his help day by day,
tell among the nations his glory
and his wonders among all
the peoples. (R.)
3. Let the heavens rejoice and earth
be glad,
let the sea and all within it thunder praise,
let the land and all it bears rejoice,
all the trees of the wood shout for joy
at the presence of the Lord
for he comes,
he comes to rule the earth. (R.)
4. With justice he will rule the world,
he will judge the peoples with
his truth (R.)

Second Reading Ti 2:11-14

God's grace has been revealed to all people.

God's grace has been revealed, and it has made
salvation possible for the whole human race and
taught us that what we have to do is to give up
everything that does not lead to God, and all our
worldly ambitions; we must be self-restrained
and live good and religious lives here in this
present world, while we are waiting in hope for
the blessing which will come with the Appearing
of the glory of our great God and saviour Christ
Jesus. He sacrificed himself for us in order to
set us free from all wickedness and to purify
a people so that it could be his very own and
would have no ambition except to do good.

Gospel Acclamation Lk 2:10-11

Alleluia, alleluia!

**Good News and great joy to all
the world:**

**today is born our Saviour, Christ
the Lord.**

Alleluia!

Gospel Lk 2:1-14

Today a saviour has been born for you.

Caesar Augustus issued a decree for a census of
the whole world to be taken. This census – the
first – took place while Quirinius was governor of
Syria, and everyone went to his own town to be
registered. So Joseph set out from the town of
Nazareth in Galilee and travelled up to Judaea,
to the town of David called Bethlehem, since he
was of David's House and line, in order to be
registered together with Mary, his betrothed,
who was with child. While they were there the
time came for her to have her child, and she gave
birth to a son, her first-born. She wrapped him
in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger
because there was no room for them at the inn.
In the countryside close by there were shepherds
who lived in the fields and took it in turns to
watch their flocks during the night. The angel
of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of
the Lord shone round them. They were terrified,
but the angel said, 'Do not be afraid. Listen,
I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared
by the whole people. Today in the town of David
a saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the
Lord. And here is a sign for you: you will find a
baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a
manger.' And suddenly with the angel there was
a great throng of the heavenly host, praising God
and singing:

'Glory to God in the highest heaven
and peace to men who enjoy his favour.'

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Reflection by Fr Michael Tate

The glory of God and profound peace reaching out to embrace the whole of humanity are dynamically related in the baby in the manger. This is the song of the angels, and it is our privilege to join in that song at this Christmas Mass.

Every baby is a promise of a new future which fills one with hope. But *this* baby is unique. *This* Jewish boy baby is the body language of God. *This* baby is the sonburst of God entering our dark world. *This* baby shows us that God is not impossibly remote but, rather, God is as intimately close as a vulnerable infant.

And *this* baby fulfils all the yearning of the human heart. We want to love to the utmost. We want to be loved to the utmost. *This* baby enables both because he is without any finite boundaries or restraints: He is in-finite love reaching out to us.

Can we grasp all this? Probably not. So, like the little lambs nuzzling up to the manger, we just follow some deep intuition which says: 'I must kneel in adoration, it is good to be here.' We could pause for a moment to pray for the resolve to do our bit to echo the angel's message: 'I bring you good news of great joy to be shared by all peoples.'

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