*St. Theresa’s Parish Community Newsletter*



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 16 Drummartin St., Albion 3020

 Principal: Rob Macklin

Mother of God Primary School - 93631734

 Blanche St., Ardeer 3022

 Principal: Assunta Iacovino

*“Do Small Things Well”*

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SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT Year B 9 & 10 December 2023

RECONCILIATION Saturday 16th December

 9am at Queen of Heaven 10am at St Theresa’s 11am at Mother of God

CHRISTMAS MASS TIMES

Christmas Eve Sunday 24th December Mother of God Church, Blanche St., Ardeer 6.00pm

 Queen of Heaven Church, Holt St., Ardeer 8.00pm

 St Theresa’s Church, Drummartin St., Albion 12.00 Midnight

 Mother of God Church, Blanche St., Ardeer (Pol) 12.00 Midnight

Christmas Day Monday 25th December Queen of Heaven Church, Holt St., Ardeer 9.00am

 Mother of God Church, Blanche St., Ardeer (Polish) 10.15am

 St Theresa’s Church, Drummartin St., Albion 10.30am

ANNUAL MELBOURNE OVERSEAS MISSION APPEAL.

A volunteer based missionary organisation with a focus on providing face to face assistance to disadvantaged communities - Papua New Guinea, Peru, Pakistan and Israel A special collection will be taken up today at each Mass, please give generously.

2024 COLUMBAN ART CALENDAR

Calendars are on sale this weekend - $10each. The Columban Art Calendar is an iconic Catholic Calendar, well-known for its traditional religious paintings and liturgical information and is a major fundraiser for Columban Missionaries Buy one today.

PARISH CARAVAN, Safety Beach / Dromana

If you would like to use our Caravan, please call the Parish Office on 9311 3091 to book. It sleeps up to six (very cosy) and costs $60 per night. Great opportunity to get away during the summer holidays. Days available from 7th to 19th January, 28th January onwards.

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| MASSES THIS WEEK ST THERESA’SDrummartin St, Albion 9.00am Friday10.30am SundayMOTHER OF GODBlanche St, Ardeer10.00am Wednesday(Pol) 9.00am Thurs 6.00pm Friday (Polish) 5.30pm Saturday10.15am Sunday (Polish)QUEEN OF HEAVENHolt St, Ardeer  8.00am Wed 9.00am Sunday |  | READERS/COMMENTATORS NEEDEDMother of God’s reader/commentator roster is low on people. Is there anyone who regularly attends Saturday night Mass and is willing to be a part of this service to the parish? Please talk to one of the current readers or call the office on 93113091. CHRIST’S CATHOLIC COMMUNITYMeeting Thursday, 7.00 - 8.30pm, at Queen of Heaven ChurchCOLLECTIONS RECEIVEDThanksgiving $792 Loose Money $315 Presbytery $527COUNTERS 17th December  Team 1: D Catania, E Catania, C XuerebREADINGS Today Next WeekIsaiah 40.1-5,9-11 Isaiah 61.1-2a,10-11Ps 85.8ab+9,10-11,12-13 Luke 1.47-48,49-50,53-542 Peter 3.8-15 1 Thessalonians 5.16-24Mark 1.1-8 John 1.6-8,19-28 |

*St Theresa’s Parish is* committed *to the safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults*

OLD TESTAMENT COMMENTARY by Mark O'Brien

**Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11**

As has been pointed out in earlier commentaries, the book of Isaiah is thought by many modern scholars to be a combination of three ‘books’: the bulk of Isaiah 1–39 goes back to the eighth century BCE prophet of Jerusalem called Isaiah; Isaiah 40–55 is the work of an unknown prophet or group during the Babylonian exile; while Isaiah 56–66 is a post-exilic addition. No doubt these later prophets and editors thought they were advancing the thinking of the ‘founding’ figure; the whole Isaiah corpus is presented in 1:1 as a vision that unfolds its meaning in the words of the book.

Our passage announces the imminent liberation of Jerusalem which had been captured by the Babylonians; the city is portrayed as a mother bereft of her children but they are about to return. Prophets sought to do what we all do – make sense of reality. We believe they were inspired and that their take on reality is a true one. A key plank in their theological platform was to proclaim – and defend against contrary views – that the God of Israel is Lord of creation and history. When Israel was conquered by foreign powers, the prophets saw this as God’s just punishment for Israel’s wrongdoing. God, as Lord of history, summons a nation to do the job for a designated time but if it oversteps its divine ‘brief’ God will bring it to book and punish it, just like Israel. How will God punish a nation such as Babylon? By summoning another nation, such as Persia and its emperor Cyrus (see Isaiah 45). How foreign nations were expected to know all this is not explained – all theologies are limited and can only do so much. The value of this theology for believers is that history is not chaos or chance: God is fully in charge and working to bring the evil to book and establish justice. If this message was not preached then God is nodding on the job or is a capricious God or a fake and one needs to find another provider.

In our passage, the prophetic voice announces the end of the period of chastisement for past wrongs and the preparation of a highway through the wilderness (God is Lord of creation) for a grand return of the exiles. Note the universal purpose behind God’s action; it is not just for the sake of Israel but that ‘the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all mankind shall see it’. God’s ultimate purpose is universal salvation and universal salvation lies in all knowing and acknowledging God. The prophetic voice then commands a joyful messenger to convey the good news to mother Zion (in the Greek version the ‘joyful messenger’ is literally ‘the evangelist’ – presumably the origin of the term for the authors of the Gospels, the ‘Good News of Jesus Christ’).

The last part of the reading marks an important shift in the kind of imagery or metaphor to describe God. It begins with the warrior God, returning home victorious from battle with the spoils of war. War imagery is a familiar one in the Bible and an all too familiar one in our modern world. But this imagery gives way to that of a shepherd with his flock, tenderly caring for each one. Why this move? Israel’s theologians were realistic and did not retreat from their, at times, violent and fraught world into a make-believe one. They believed that God is present in some way in the violence of war otherwise human history is sheer chaos and there is no justice. The liberation from Babylon involved conquest by the Persian Cyrus. But they also believed that God ‘enters’ our war zones not to conquer and destroy – what is the point of this for an all-powerful God unless he/she is a monster – but to enable us to move beyond such violence. Their faith conviction gives voice to the hope that eventually war will be replaced by peace, captured in the image of the warrior God being revealed as the Shepherd God with a flock of sheep for an ‘army’. As the church begins a new liturgical year it is important to once again give voice to this hope.