



ST JOHN'S CATHOLIC PARISH

52 Yarra Street

HEIDELBERG

We acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which our parish stands, the Wurundjeri-Balluk clan of the Woi wurrung people in the Kulin Nation. We respectfully recognise elders, both past and present, and join in a silent prayer for healing of the pains caused by our ancestors.

Central to the mission of St John's Parish is an unequivocal commitment to fostering the dignity, self-esteem and integrity of children and young people and providing them with a safe, supportive and enriching environment to develop spiritually, physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially.

22ND / 23RD DECEMBER—FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT, YEAR C

Dear parishioners, visitors and friends,

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

This Tuesday we celebrate the great feast of Christmas. Our focus will go on the cute young child lying in the manger. In our parish we have the beautiful tradition of having a child and his (or her) parents stand-in for Mary, Joseph and the child Jesus. Personally I find this a very significant aspect of our celebration as it reminds me what the child Jesus, God made human for us, looked like in the hands of Mary and her husband Joseph.

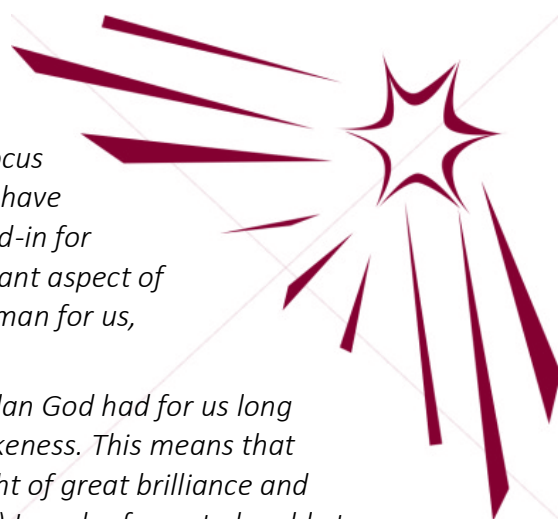
Christmas is a great celebration as it brings to fulfilment the plan God had for us long ago. Out of love, God created us; created us in his own image and likeness. This means that God placed in us something of himself. (I imagine God as being a light of great brilliance and myself to have within me a small flame, a part of God's brilliance) In order for us to be able to grow fully into this image of God, God chose to show himself to us. God does this firstly through creation around us; when we look at creation we can wonder and marvel about the creator of all! Then he shows us himself through his relationship with the people of Israel whose story is narrated in the books of the Old Testament. Finally, at the fullness of time, God chose to speak his full and final word in Jesus, the Word of God made flesh for us.

This young child in the manger is the face and voice of God for us. God did not come down in our midst as an impressive giant, superhero or great warrior king with a strong army; he came to us in the humility of a simple child. Through the simplicity of this young child, God wishes to attract us and invite to enter into a faith relationship with him.

In Bethlehem Mary placed her new-born child in a manger—a feeding trough for animals. Even at his birth Jesus invites us to approach him and feed on him, he is food for us. We can look at ourselves as being a humble manger where Jesus can be born in our daily life and in the life of our family today. As a feeding trough, we too can be open to offer Jesus to those around us and to the world. We can offer Jesus to our partners, children in our family, friends and work mates. Like the manger in Bethlehem, we can hold Jesus up to the world to engage with. In order for us to be able to offer Jesus to the world, we need to be ready to receive him first. We need to empty ourselves of the business and concerns of life and welcome Jesus once again in our lives this Christmas.

I hope and pray for all of us that this Christmas we once again engage with the God who came to live in our midst—'set up tent among us'—as the gospel of John so nicely puts it! God gave us himself as the greatest gift of all, let us also reach out to be God to those around us. May God bless us all this Christmas and may God's blessings travel with us as we start a new and blessed year 2019!

Fr Mario



PARISH PRIEST: Fr Mario Zammit
PARISH SECRETARY: Mary Peeris
PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL CHAIR:
Christopher Ratnayake
CHILD SAFETY OFFICER:
Michelle Robertson m:0409 533 100
SACRAMENT COORDINATOR:
Sr Loreto Lynch rsm

PARISH OFFICE:
52 Yarra Street Heidelberg 3084
t: 9457 1066
e: heidelberg@cam.org.au
w: cam.org.au/heidelberg
facebook/stjohnheidelberg
OFFICE HOURS:
Mo, Tu, Th, Fr; 9:30am to 2:30pm

MASS TIMES:
WEEKEND: Saturday: 6:00pm
Sunday: 8:30am, 10:30am, 5:00pm
AUSTIN HOSPITAL:
3rd Sunday of the Month at 9:30am
WEEKDAYS: 9:15am

RECONCILIATION (CONFESSION):
Saturdays at 9:45am & 5:30pm
or by appointment
BAPTISMS: Sundays at 11:45am, by
appointment
BAPTISM INFORMATION EVENING:
Last Thursday of each month at
7:30pm in the parish house, except
Dec and Jan
WEDDINGS: By appointment

ROSARY: Monday to Saturday after
morning Mass
EXPOSITION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT:
Wednesday: 7:30pm - 9:00pm;
Thursday: 9:40am - 11:00am,
Friday: 8:00am - 9:00am

LECTIO DIVINA: Every second and
fourth Monday of the month at
7:00pm, in the parish house
LEGION OF MARY: Every Tuesday night
at 7:00pm in the parish house;
contact Sue 9459 8604
PARISH PILGRIM STATUE OF MARY:
To have the statue of Mary in your
home for one week contact Marj
McBroom m: 0414 289 304

ST JOHN'S CATHOLIC PARISH PRIMARY:
PRINCIPAL: Maureen Stella
ADDRESS:
55 Cape St Heidelberg 3084
t: 9459 2963;
office@sjheidelberg.catholic.edu.au

HALL HIRE:
Fran Gasior: m:0417972317
10:00am-5:00pm; Mon-Fri only

NEW PARISHIONERS WELCOME:
Please contact parish office to
introduce yourself

PARISH PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we the parishioners of St John's are grateful for all we have received from the men, women and children of our past. Help us to cherish and maintain our parish heritage. Most of all, enable us to be people who welcome the stranger, the needy, the sick and the lonely. Like St John, our patron saint, may we be people who love others, as your Son Jesus, asked us to do. We make this prayer, through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

DOWNLOAD THE MELBOURNE CATHOLIC APP FOR IPHONE AND ANDROID: Search for Mass times across parishes and deaneries, access the archbishop's homilies, read trending news, daily Mass readings, prayers and weekly reflections, events and updates from Plenary Council 2020. iPhone App Store: <https://itunes.apple.com/au/app/melbourne-catholic/id1440438862?mt=8&ign-mpt=uo%3D4>; Android Play Store: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.ionic.melbournecatholic>

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF COMMUNION During Weekend Masses: We urgently need more parishioners to come forward and take on this ministry in order for us to be able to continue offering Communion as both Body and Blood at our weekend Masses. A workshop will be held on Monday 28th January at 7:00pm in the parish church. All welcome to join.

THE GEMS: enjoyed their last gathering for the year this week at the Lower Plenty Hotel for Morning Melodies—An Elvis Christmas. We will now break till February, our first gathering being, Thursday February 7th. Please note that next year we will be meeting on a Thursday.

PHILIPPINES MISSION IMMERSION TRIP, 4TH TO 19TH JANUARY 2019: Please participate in this experience by your prayers for the group, as well as by supporting this experience financially. Follow us on Facebook (<facebook.com/stjohnheidelberg/>) and Instagram (<Instagram.com/stjohn.heidelberg>); we will try to post as many photos and reports as possible! During this time, Fr Ted Teal and Fr Wayne Edwards will be celebrating Masses at St John's. There will be a Communion Service on Mondays 7th and 14th January at 9:15am.

USED POSTAGE STAMPS: At this time of the year we send and receive a number of Christmas cards and greetings. Used postage stamps can be resold to stamp collectors and the money sent to help missionary activities in different parts of the world. Please save your used postage stamps and drop them off at the parish office or at the sacristy. Thank you.

PLENARY COUNCIL 2020: What is God asking of us in Australia at this time? Have your say by Wednesday 6th March, 2019. Details: <http://www.cam.org.au/plenary/>. There are take home cards in the church porch. We are all encouraged to take part in this process.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

THE SICK: Jenny Ferriere, Marie Hankin, Elizabeth Larkin, Francis Micallef, Joyce Quinn, Noeline Zerna.

ANNIVERSARIES: Elvie & George Elliott, Matthew & Kathleen Nihill, Adeline Sharkey

RECENTLY DECEASED:

*Names on the sick list remain for six weeks, unless otherwise advised.
Please submit any items for the newsletter, including sick, recently deceased and anniversaries, by **Thursday morning** latest. Thank you.*

22 Dec / 23 Dec	Sat 6:00pm	Sun 8:30am	Sun 10:30am	Sun 5:00pm
1st Reader	Sue Lew-Kee	Marguerite Ryan	Leela Cherubim	Peter Penson
2 nd Reader	Maddy Lew-Kee	Claire Newsome	Robyn Laurie	Matthew Sanders
Communion	Lorraine Mascarenhas	Margaret Bradley	Doris Schembri	Charito Cosio
	Maria Basilone	Elizabeth Williamson	Tim Boyle	Leo Cosio
	Emma chang	Leo Hernandez	Leonore Giliberto	Michelle Penson
	TBA	Teresa Lincoln	TBA	TBA
29 Dec / 30 Dec	Sat 6:00pm	Sun 8:30am	Sun 10:30am	Sun 5:00pm
1st Reader	Brain Garrone	Elizabeth Williamson	Claire Newsome	Rosemary Vecchies
2 nd Reader	Jan Mc Caffrey	Michael Leonard	Grace Lew-Kee	Mary Kotefski
Communion	Leela Cherubim	Stanly Devasia	Geraldine Manuel	Sally Tramontana
	Donna Richardson	Pauline Griffiths	Sue Lew-Kee	Matthew Sanders
	Jeanette O'Sullivan	Peter O'Donoghue	Doris Schembri	Olivia Sanders
	TBA	Val Wallis	TBA	TBA
Counters	23 Dec: Garry Sproules, Janice McGrath, Giuseppe Amoroso & 30 Dec: Des O'Brien, Shane Byrnes.			
Collection Weekly Average for November				Heidelcare Co-Ordinator
Parish		Presbytery		December: Elaine 0490 254 928
Stewardship	\$2965.34	Stewardship	\$599.69	January: Elaine 0490 254 928
Loose	\$638.68	Loose	\$320.00	N.B. No morning tea in January
Thank you for supporting St John's financially. Please advise if your credit card is lost/stolen or the expiry date has changed.				

CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR MASS TIMES

Monday 24th December

CHRISTMAS EVE: 7:00pm @ OLMC Nalleijerring Centre

Tuesday 25th December

MIDNIGHT MASS: starting at 11:30pm with Carols

CHRISTMAS DAY: Masses at 8:30am & 10:30am

AUSTIN HOSPITAL MASS: at 9:30am

No evening Mass on Christmas Day.

Monday 31st December

NEW YEAR'S EVE: 9:15am & 7:00pm

Tuesday 1st January

NEW YEAR'S DAY: 10:30am

No 9:15am Mass on New Year's Day.

MASS AT THE AUSTIN HOSPITAL: will be held on Christmas Day at 9:30am. Volunteers are kindly asked to be at the chapel at 8:30am to help with the patients. Parishioners are invited to support the patients by their presence.

PARISH OFFICE CLOSURE: St John's parish office will be closed from Wednesday, 19th December to Friday, 4th January 2019. For any urgent requests, please email: heidelberg@cam.org.au or leave a message on the parish answering machine (9457 1066—press 3 to leave a message). Thank You.

2019 SACRAMENT PROGRAMME at St John's: Reconciliation (year 3 and higher) on 17th & 24th October (St John's Primary), 7th November (other schools); First Communion (year 4 and higher) on 15th June at the OLMC Nalleijerring Centre; Confirmation (year 6 and higher) on 11th August at St Patrick's Cathedral. For St John's parishioners who do not attend St John's primary, enrolments for all sacraments need to be in by not later than Monday 5th March. Contact parish secretary for details.

STEWARDSHIP (THANKSGIVING) ENVELOPES: The next instalment of Stewardship Envelopes is ready to be picked up from the porch of the church. Envelopes are in alphabetical order. Thank all of you for your generosity as we continue to invest in the future of our parish community. Your continued financial contributions to stewardship help the parish meet all its financial commitments and ensures that the resources we inherited can be passed on to future generations.

CHRISTMAS OFFERING ENVELOPES: are available in the pews. Money contributed to the Christmas Offering supports our parish priest, sick and retired priests, priests in poorer parishes and the ministry of the archbishop. Thank you for your generosity. These envelopes can be placed in the weekly collection baskets.

ST VINCENT DE PAUL: thank you to all parishioners for all the groceries and other non-perishable items donated to Vinnies for the Christmas hampers to be given to families in need of assistance. Thank you also for your financial contribution last weekend. \$2,321.10 was collected for the St Vincent De Paul Christmas Appeal.

Wishing all parishioners, visitors and friends a Very Holy and Happy Christmas. May we be able to see the presence of God among us in the face of the child Jesus.

Fr Mario



FIRST READING

Micah 5: 1-4.

The Lord says this: You, Bethlehem Ephrathah, the least of the clans of Judah, out of you will be born for me the one who is to rule over Israel; his origin goes back to the distant past, to the days of old. The Lord is therefore going to abandon them till the time when she who is to give birth gives birth. Then the remnant of his brothers will come back to the sons of Israel. He will stand and feed his flock with the power of the Lord, with the majesty of the name of his God. They will live secure, for from then on he will extend his power to the ends of the land. He himself will be peace.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM*Psalm 79: 2-3. 15-16, 18-19*

TOGETHER: Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.

LEFT SIDE (AMBO SIDE)

O Shepherd of Israel, hear us,
shine forth from your cherubim throne.
O Lord, rouse up your might,
O Lord, come to our help.

RIGHT SIDE (PRIEST'S SIDE)

God of hosts, turn again, we implore,
look down from heaven and see.
Visit this vine and protect it,
the vine your right hand has planted.

LEFT SIDE (PRIEST'S SIDE)

May your hand be on the man you have chosen,
the man you have given your strength.
And we shall never forsake you again:
give us life that we may call upon your name.

TOGETHER: Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.

SECOND READING

Hebrews 10:5-10.

This is what Christ said, on coming into the world: You who wanted no sacrifice or oblation, prepared a body for me. You took no pleasure in holocausts or sacrifices for sin; then I said, just as I was commanded in the scroll of the book, God, here I am! I am coming to obey your will.'

Notice that he says first: You did not want what the Law lays down as the things to be offered, that is: the sacrifices, the oblations, the holocausts and the sacrifices for sin, and you took no pleasure in them; and then he says: Here I am! I am coming to obey your will. He is abolishing the first sort to replace it with the second. And this will was for us to be made holy by the offering of his body made once and for all by Jesus Christ.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

I am the servant of the Lord: may his will for me be done.

Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Luke 1:39-45.

Mary set out and went as quickly as she could to a town in the hill country of Judah. She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. Now as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry and said, 'Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord? For the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy. Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled.'

BLESSED IS SHE WHO BELIEVED

Today's Gospel brings us to the threshold of Jesus' birth. Presuming our knowledge of the Annunciation to Mary, it describes the meeting between Mary and her cousin, Elizabeth. In this 'Visitation' story, the two women share their remarkable experience, and faith overflows in new insight, knowledge and celebration.

Mary has surrendered in faith to the extraordinary role that Gabriel has announced to her. In faith, too, she has obeyed the angel's additional command to go and seek out the 'sign' consisting in the pregnancy of her elderly cousin. Biblical faith does not presuppose signs already given; it acts, goes on its journey, and then discovers confirmatory signs. This is how Elizabeth's pregnancy functions for Mary. The lesser wonder brought about by God's power (the conception of a child to parents of advanced years) confirms her faith in the far greater marvel: that with God's Spirit taking the role of male parent she is to become the mother of her people's Messiah.

As soon as she hears Mary's greeting, Elizabeth experiences within her womb the infant John leaping with joy. Already he is beginning his role of pointing to the Messiah. Hence Elizabeth confirms what Mary has hitherto simply believed: that she is indeed pregnant with the Messiah whose role and destiny Gabriel had announced.

Elizabeth insists that Mary is 'blessed,' not simply because she is 'the mother of my Lord,' but in her believing ('Blessed is she who believed'). As supremely in her case, faith is the channel through which God's power flows into the world.

Fr Brendan Byrne sj