



# *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.

## *14<sup>TH</sup> / 15<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER—THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT, YEAR A*

Dear Parishioners, Visitors to our parish and Friends,

### **MEANING AND IMPORTANCE OF THE NATIVITY SCENE**

Pope Francis offers a reflection on the various elements that make up the nativity scene in order to appreciate their deeper meaning. First, there is the background of a starry sky wrapped in the darkness and silence of night. We represent this not only out of fidelity to the Gospel accounts, but also for its symbolic value. We can think of all those times in our lives when we have experienced the darkness of night. Yet even then, God does not abandon us, but is there to answer our crucial questions about the meaning of life. Who am I? Where do I come from? Why was I born at this time in history? Why do I love? Why do I suffer? Why will I die? It was to answer these questions that God became man. His closeness brings light where there is darkness and shows the way to those dwelling in the shadow of suffering (cf. Lk 1:79).

The landscapes that are part of the nativity scene also deserve some mention. Frequently they include the ruins of ancient houses or buildings, which in some instances replace the cave of Bethlehem and become a home for the Holy Family. The ruins are the visible sign of fallen humanity, of everything that inevitably falls into ruin, decays and disappoints. This scenic setting tells us that Jesus is newness in the midst of an aging world, that he has come to heal and rebuild, to restore the world and our lives to their original splendour.

With what emotion should we arrange the mountains, streams, sheep and shepherds in the nativity scene! As we do so, we are reminded that, as the prophets had foretold, all creation rejoices in the coming of the Messiah. The angels and the guiding star are a sign that we too are called to set out for the cave and to worship the Lord.

“Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us” (Lk 2:15). So the shepherds tell one another after the proclamation of the angels. A beautiful lesson emerges from these simple words. Unlike so many other people, busy about many things, the shepherds become the first to see the most essential thing of all: the gift of salvation. It is the humble and the poor who greet the event of the Incarnation. The shepherds respond to God who comes to meet us in the Infant Jesus by setting out to meet him with love, gratitude and awe. Thanks to Jesus, this encounter between God and his children gives birth to our religion and accounts for its unique beauty, so wonderfully evident in the nativity scene.

It is customary to add many symbolic figures to our nativity scenes. First, there are the beggars and the others who know only the wealth of the heart. They too have every right to draw near to the Infant Jesus; no one can evict them or send them away from a crib so makeshift that the poor seem entirely at home. Indeed, the poor are a privileged part of this mystery; often they are the first to recognize God's presence in our midst.

The presence of the poor and the lowly in the nativity scene remind us that God became man for the sake of those who feel most in need of his love and who ask him to draw near to them. Jesus, “gentle and humble in heart” (Mt 11:29), was born in poverty and led a simple life in order to teach us to recognise what is essential and to act accordingly. The nativity scene clearly teaches that we cannot let ourselves be fooled by wealth and fleeting promises of happiness.

**PARISH PRIEST:** Fr Mario Zammit

**PARISH SECRETARY:** Mary Peeris

**PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL**

**CHAIR:** Michelle Robertson

**COUNCIL MEMBERS:**

Domenica Ashworth;

Timothy Boyle

Margaret Bradley

Adrian Daly

Moira Di Cesare

Karen Frost

Russell Lew-Kee

**SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE CHAIR:**

Michelle Penson (0499 891 101)

**PARISH PROGRAMME COORDINATORS:**

Jan McCaffrey (0423 478 504)

Elizabeth Williamson (0447195553)

**PARISH OFFICE:**

52 Yarra Street Heidelberg 3084

t: 9457 1066

e: heidelberg@cam.org.au

w: cam.org.au/heidelberg

Facebook.com/stjohnheidelberg

Instagram.com/stjohn.heidelberg

**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

**FIRST RECONCILIATION,**

**FIRST COMMUNION, CONFIRMATION:**

Parish Secretary (9457 1066)

**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

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

## 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.*

**CHARISMATIC MASS:** All welcome to join us for the last time in 2019 and Christmas break-up on Thursday, 19th December at St Thomas the Apostle Church, 251 Diamond Creek Rd, Nth Greensborough. Praise & worship at 7:30pm followed by Mass. Details, contact Rose 9434 3962 or Emilia 0418 120 902.

**DO YOU KNOW OF SOMEONE WHO CANNOT GET TO MASS ANY LONGER?** Would they like to be visited and perhaps have communion taken to them? Contact Elizabeth 0447195553

**PHILIPPINES MISSION IMMERSION TRIP, JANUARY 2020:** Let us keep those going to the Philippines in our prayers. Thanks for your support.

**CELEBRATION OF SIGNIFICANT ANNIVERSARIES:** Please inform the parish office so we can celebrate with you as a community.

**HOME MASSES AND/OR FAMILY BLESSINGS IN 2020:** anyone who would like to organise a Mass at home to share with neighbours, family and friends. Having a Mass at home is a very peaceful and calming experience that creates a strong sense of community. You are invited to take part in this initiative. A blessing of the families can also be included. Please contact the Parish House, 9457 1066.



## PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

**BAPTISMS:** Elenor Denaro, Ivana Jade & Estelle Grace Aloise.

**THE SICK:** Gordon Eng, Giovanni Mirabella, Vita Nativo, Mary-Teresa Wright.

**ANNIVERSARIES:** Elsie and George Elliott, Annie & Stanley Cunningham, Ronald Berry, George O'Callaghan, Jacinta Pinkerton, Phyllis D' Couto, John Maliyekkal, Mary Sullivan.

**RECENTLY DECEASED:** Anne Chang.

*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.*

**GEMS AND FRIENDS 50+:** Last activity for the year: Morning Melodies 'Christmas Show' 17th December at Lower Plenty Hotel 4 Main Road Lower Plenty. Includes tea/coffee, Devonshire tea, lunch and complimentary beer, wine or soft drink. \$20. Opens at 9:30am. Show starts at 10:30am. **FULLY BOOKED.**

**THE GEMS** will break over the Christmas—New Year period and resume on Tuesday 4th February. If you would like to catch up for a cuppa and a chat over the break please contact Elizabeth (044719555)

**ST JOHN'S WALKING GROUP:** Monday 16th December. Will be walking to Ivanhoe where we visit the very special tea shop then back to Heidelberg. Welcome to join us. Contact: Jan 0423478504

**BOTTLE TOPS AND BREAD TAGS FOR CHARITY:** Please continue collecting plastic bottle tops for charity. Please note: not all bottle tops are good for this job. Please check that there is a '2' or a '4' within the recycling sign, on the inside of the cap. Typically fresh milk bottles and soft drink bottles. We are also collecting bread tags. According to Breadtags for Wheelchairs, it takes 200 kg of tags to bring in enough money to buy one wheelchair. Please place in container in church foyer. Thank you.

|   |  |                   |                      |                                  |
|---|--|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| 14 Dec / 15 Dec   | <b>Sat 6:00pm</b>  | <b>Sun 8:30am</b> | <b>Sun 10:30am</b>   | <b>Sun 5:00pm</b>                |
| 1st Reader  | Sue Lew-kee  | Ronnie Maloney    | Elizabeth Williamson | Mary Kotefski                    |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Reader  | Grace Lew-kee  | Peter Penson      | Michael Leonard      | Margaret Andrews                 |
| Communion   | Jan Mc Caffrey   | Bill Barnes       | Brian McIntosh       | Des O'Brien                      |
|   | Donna Richardson   | Barbara Barnes    | Tim Boyle            | Leo Cosio                        |
|   | Noel Micallef  | Val Wallis        | Mary Furlan          | Charito Cosio                    |
|   | Leela Cherubim   | Alice Wong        | TBA                  | Jenny Holloway                   |
| 21 Dec / 22 Dec   | <b>Sat 6:00pm</b>  | <b>Sun 8:30am</b> | <b>Sun 10:30am</b>   | <b>Sun 5:00pm</b>                |
| 1st Reader  | Pamela Smith   | Barbara Barnes    | Bob Dowling          | Des O'Brien                      |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Reader  | Noel Micallef  | Garry Sproules    | Michelle Robertson   | Rosemary Vecchies                |
| Communion   | Lorraine Mascarenhas   | Chris Ratnayake   | Leo Hernandez        | Sally Tramontana                 |
|   | Domenica Ashworth  | Pauline Griffiths | Ann Domaingue        | Leela Cherubim                   |
|   | Maria Basilone   | Margaret Bradley  | Geraldine Manuel     | Matthew Sanders                  |
|   | Adrian Daly  | Bobbie Bartkus    | Yannick Jonas        | Olivia Sanders                   |
| Counters  | <b>15 Dec:</b> Leo Cosio, Leo Hernandez, Yannick Jonas & <b>22 Dec:</b> Jack Naden & A Team. |                   |                      |                                  |
| <b>Collection Weekly Average for October</b>  |  |                   |                      |                                  |
| Parish  |  | Presbytery        |                      | <b>HEIDELCARE : 0490 254 928</b> |
| Stewardship   | \$3085.28  | Stewardship       | \$723.08             |                                  |
| Loose   | \$698.62   | Loose             | \$350.00             |                                  |
| <b>Thank you</b> 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

Tuesday 24th December

**CHRISTMAS EVE:** 7:00pm @ OLMC Nalleijerring Centre

Wednesday 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.*

Tuesday 31st December

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

Wednesday 1st January

**NEW YEAR'S DAY:** 10:30am

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

**BLESSING OF NATIVITIES:** at all Masses this weekend. As we prepare for the celebration of the birth of Jesus, we are invited to bring our nativities or statues of baby Jesus for a special blessing.

**CHRISTMAS MASS AT THE AUSTIN HOSPITAL:** The December Mass at the Austin Hospital will be held at 9:30am on Christmas Day. All welcome to join.

**SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION (CONFESSION)** Before Christmas: the Second Rite of Reconciliation will be celebrated at our parish on Friday 20th December at 7:30pm. We gather to pray and prepare ourselves as a community and then have time for individual reconciliation.

**CHRISTMAS GIFT CARDS:** This Christmas you can give a gift that continues giving! Give a gift to those less fortunate by buying an MSSP Gift Card. Money donated supports the education of the young adults, members of the Jose' De Piro Kabataan Orkestra in the Philippines. You can nominate the amount you would like to donate. For further information contact the parish office.

**VINNIES CHRISTMAS APPEAL:** at all Masses this weekend. Money collected at this appeal will be given to our Heidelberg Vinnies conference for use among less fortunate people. Thank you for your continued generosity towards Christ in the poor! Thank you for your support with food towards the Christmas hampers.

**SACRAMENTAL PROGRAMME 2020 FOR THOSE NOT ATTENDING ST JOHN'S PARISH SCHOOL:** Reconciliation 12th November (Year 3), Eucharist 13th June (Year 4) and Confirmation 2nd August (Year 6). Enrolment is **now open**. For application forms and further information email [elizabeth.williamson@cam.org.au](mailto:elizabeth.williamson@cam.org.au). Applications for all sacraments close Monday 2nd March 2020.

**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.

**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](mailto:heidelberg@cam.org.au) or leave a message on the parish answering machine (9457 1066—press 3 to leave a message). Thank You.

**FAMILY CHRISTMAS EVE MASS:** Thank you to those families who responded to a request to take an active part in this Mass.

**MELBOURNE OVERSEAS MISSION APPEAL:** The special collection in aid of the Melbourne Mission Fund raised \$675.95. Thank you for your generosity.

**THANKSGIVING ENVELOPES IN THE CHURCH PORCH!**

**FIRST READING**

Isaiah 35:1-6,10

Let the wilderness and the dry-lands exult, let the wasteland rejoice and bloom, let it bring forth flowers like the jonquil, let it rejoice and sing for joy. The glory of Lebanon is bestowed on it, the splendour of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of the Lord, the splendour of our God.

Strengthen all weary hands, steady all trembling knees and say to all faint hearts, 'Courage! Do not be afraid. Look, your God is coming, vengeance is coming, the retribution of God; he is coming to save you.' Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, the ears of the deaf unsealed, then the lame shall leap like a deer and the tongues of the dumb sing for joy, for those the Lord has ransomed shall return. They will come to Zion shouting for joy, everlasting joy on their faces; joy and gladness will go with them and sorrow and lament be ended.

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM**

Psalm 145:6-10

**TOGETHER:** Lord, come and save us**LEFT SIDE**

It is the Lord who keeps faith for ever,  
who is just to those who are oppressed.  
It is he who gives bread to the hungry,  
the Lord, who sets prisoners free

**RIGHT SIDE**

It is the Lord who gives sight to the blind,  
who raises up those who are bowed down,  
the Lord, who protects the stranger  
and upholds the widow and orphan

**LEFT SIDE**

It is the Lord who loves the just  
but thwarts the path of the wicked.  
The Lord will reign for ever,  
Zion's God, from age to age.

**TOGETHER:** Lord, come and save us**SECOND READING**

St James 5:7-10

Be patient, brothers, until the Lord's coming. Think of a farmer: how patiently he waits for the precious fruit of the ground until it has had the autumn rains and the spring rains! You too have to be patient; do not lose heart, because the Lord's coming will be soon. Do not make complaints against one another, brothers, so as not to be brought to judgement yourselves; the Judge is already to be seen waiting at the gates. For your example, brothers, in submitting with patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Alleluia, alleluia!

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me;  
he sent me to bring Good News to the poor.

Alleluia!

**GOSPEL**

Matthew 11:2-11

John in his prison had heard what Christ was doing and he sent his disciples to ask him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or have we got to wait for someone else?' Jesus answered, 'Go back and tell John what you hear and see; the blind see again, and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised to life and the Good News is proclaimed to the poor; and happy is the man who does not lose faith in me.'

As the messengers were leaving, Jesus began to talk to the people about John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swaying in the breeze? No? Then what did you go out to see? A man wearing fine clothes? Oh no, those who wear fine clothes are to be found in palaces. Then what did you go out for? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and much more than a prophet: he is the one of whom scripture says: Look, I am going to send my messenger before you; he will prepare your way before you. I tell you solemnly, of all the children born of women, a greater than John the Baptist has never been seen; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he is.'

**THE KINGDOM OF GOD: 'ALREADY, BUT NOT YET.'**

In response to the question put to him by John the Baptist's disciples, Jesus points to a great variety of miraculous deeds that he has performed. From this they—and John—should be able to conclude that he was the long-awaited Messiah, performing the deeds that Isaiah foretold.

We may well think that this was all very good for the few thousands of afflicted people who accessed Jesus' healing power during his lifetime. But where does that leave the vast mass of the afflicted down the centuries to our own day?

Some kind of answer may lie in the 'already-not yet' aspect of the Kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus. It has dawned in his first coming but is by no means fully arrived. That must await his second coming. We proclaim this in our Creed, expressing the hope that God's sovereignty in the universe will one day be complete.

In the meantime, the miracles remain a 'beachhead' of the kingdom to give us hope. They teach us to see the afflicted not as punished by God (an all too prevalent error) but as people particularly apt to receive and become instruments of God's power.

The same goes for the poor: the Good News that is 'preached' to them is of a piece with the first Beatitude proclaimed by Jesus at the beginning of his great Sermon (Matthew 5-7). The poor are 'blessed', not precisely in their poverty, but because God has adopted their cause and one day will see that it prevails.

Fr Brendan Byrne sj