



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.

21ST / 22ND DECEMBER—FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT, YEAR A

Dear Parishioners, Visitors to our parish and Friends,

MEANING AND IMPORTANCE OF THE NATIVITY SCENE

Born in a manger, God himself launches the only true revolution that can give hope and dignity to the disinherited and the outcast: the revolution of love, the revolution of tenderness. From the manger, Jesus proclaims, in a meek yet powerful way, the need for sharing with the poor as the path to a more human and fraternal world in which no one is excluded or marginalized.

In the cave, we find the figures of Mary and Joseph. Mary is a mother who contemplates her child and shows him to every visitor. The figure of Mary makes us reflect on the great mystery that surrounded this young woman when God knocked on the door of her immaculate heart. Mary responded in complete obedience to the message of the angel who asked her to become the Mother of God. Her words, "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38), show all of us how to abandon ourselves in faith to God's will. By her "fiat," Mary became the mother of God's Son, not losing but, thanks to him, consecrating her virginity. In her, we see the Mother of God who does not keep her Son only to herself, but invites everyone to obey his word and to put it into practice (cf. Jn 2:5).

At Mary's side, shown protecting the Child and his Mother, stands Saint Joseph. He is usually depicted with staff in hand, or holding up a lamp. Saint Joseph plays an important role in the life of Jesus and Mary. He is the guardian who tirelessly protects his family. When God warned him of Herod's threat, he did not hesitate to set out and flee to Egypt (cf. Mt 2:13-15). And once the danger had passed, he brought the family back to Nazareth, where he was to be the first teacher of Jesus as a boy and then as a young man. Joseph treasured in his heart the great mystery surrounding Jesus and Mary his spouse; as a just man, he entrusted himself always to God's will, and put it into practice.

When, at Christmas, we place the statue of the Infant Jesus in the manger, the nativity scene suddenly comes alive. God appears as a child, for us to take into our arms. Beneath weakness and frailty, he conceals his power that creates and transforms all things. It seems impossible, yet it is true: in Jesus, God was a child, and in this way he wished to reveal the greatness of his love: by smiling and opening his arms to all.

The birth of a child awakens joy and wonder; it sets before us the great mystery of life. Seeing the bright eyes of a young couple gazing at their newborn child, we can understand the feelings of Mary and Joseph who, as they looked at the Infant Jesus, sensed God's presence in their lives.

"Life was made manifest" (1Jn 1:2). In these words, the Apostle John sums up the mystery of the Incarnation. The crèche allows us to see and touch this unique and unparalleled event that changed the course of history, so that time would thereafter be reckoned either before or after the birth of Christ.

God's ways are astonishing, for it seems impossible that he should forsake his glory to become a man like us. To our astonishment, we see God acting exactly as we do: he sleeps, takes milk from his mother, cries and plays like every other child! As always, God baffles us. He is unpredictable, constantly doing what we least expect. The nativity scene shows God as he came into our world, but it also makes us reflect on how our life is part of God's own life. It invites us to become his disciples if we want to attain ultimate meaning in life.

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.*

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.

CHRISTMAS MASS AT THE AUSTIN HOSPITAL: The December Mass at the Austin Hospital will be held at 9:30am on Christmas Day. No Mass will be held on the third Sunday of December.



PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

RECENTLY BAPTISED: Aston Chan.

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

ANNIVERSARIES: John & Catherine Smith, Anthony Italia, Sheila & Bill Jackson, Anthony Silva, Vivienne Perera, Roland Silva, Elizabeth Dickenson, Matthew and Katherine Nihill.

RECENTLY DECEASED: Elsa Di Domenico, Antonio Campese, John Grindlay.

*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.*

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|---|--|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| 21 Dec / 22 Dec | Sat 6:00pm | Sun 8:30am | Sun 10:30am | Sun 5:00pm |
| 1st Reader | Pamela Smith | Barbara Barnes | Bob Dowling | Des O'Brien |
| 2 nd Reader | Noel Micallef | Garry Sproules | Michelle Robertson | Rosemary Vecchies |
| Communion | Jan McCaffrey | 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 |
| 28 Dec / 29 Dec | Sat 6:00pm | Sun 8:30am | Sun 10:30am | Sun 5:00pm |
| 1st Reader | Brian Garrone | Jack Naden | Elizabeth Williamson | Leela Cherubim |
| 2 nd Reader | Zen Zebrowski | Pietro Sciotto | Robyn Laurie | Matthew Sanders |
| Communion | Emma Chang | Oliver Kmita | Liz Sier | Des O'Brien |
| | Jeanette O'Sullivan | Jerzy Kmita | Vin Sier | Leo Cosio |
| | Donna Richardson | Val Wallis | Nigel Mant | Charito Cosio |
| | Noel Micallef | Jack Naden | Marni Mant | Jenny Holloway |
| Counters | 22 Dec: Jack Naden & A Team & 29 Dec: Des O'Brien, Peter Peyton, Percival Makin. | | | |
| Collection Weekly Average for October | | | | |
| Parish | | Presbytery | | HEIDELCARE : 0490 254 928 |
| Stewardship | \$3085.28 | Stewardship | \$723.08 | |
| Loose | \$698.62 | Loose | \$350.00 | |
| 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

Tuesday 24th December

CHRISTMAS EVE: 7:00pm @ OLMC Nallejerring 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 & 6:00pm

Wednesday 1st January

NEW YEAR'S DAY: 10:30am

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

CHRISTMAS MASS AT THE AUSTIN HOSPITAL: The December Mass at the Austin Hospital will be held at 9:30am on Christmas Day. Parishioners are invited to participate in this Christmas Mass and celebrate with the Catholic patients spending Christmas in hospital. Thank you.

PARISH OFFICE CLOSURE: St John's parish office will be closed from Monday, 23rd December to Monday, 20th January 2020. 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.

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. Applications for all sacraments close Monday 2nd March 2020.

TAP AND GIVE: To say that we are living in a cash-less society, is an understatement! We all use credit and debit cards and less coins and notes. In our weekly collections and in our thanksgiving programme, many now opt to use direct debit from their bank or credit cards. Often we may turn up at church and realise we have no money for the collection. This is the common experience in many churches. In the church porch you may have noticed a small flashing screen. This is a new donation point. You can now donate to the parish collection by tapping your credit card or debit card on this screen. Each tap will donate \$5.00 to the church. This will be divided two-thirds to the parish and one third to the presbytery, like the rest of the loose collection. Thank you.

ST VINCENT DE PAUL: Thank you for your financial contribution last weekend. \$2,175.05 was collected for the St Vincent De Paul Christmas Appeal.

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.

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

Isaiah 7:10-14

The Lord spoke to Ahaz and said, 'Ask the Lord your God for a sign for yourself coming either from the depths of Sheol or from the heights above.' 'No', Ahaz answered 'I will not put the Lord to the test.' Then Isaiah said:

'Listen now, House of David: are you not satisfied with trying the patience of men without trying the patience of my God, too? The Lord himself, therefore, will give you a sign. It is this: the maiden is with child and will soon give birth to a son whom she will call Immanuel, a name which means "God-is-with-us."

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 23:1-6

TOGETHER: Let the Lord enter; he is king of glory

LEFT SIDE

The Lord's is the earth and its fullness,
the world and all its peoples.
It is he who set it on the seas;
on the waters he made it firm.

RIGHT SIDE

Who shall climb the mountain of the Lord?
Who shall stand in his holy place?
The man with clean hands and pure heart,
who desires not worthless things.

LEFT SIDE

He shall receive blessings from the Lord
and reward from the God who saves him.
Such are the men who seek him,
seek the face of the God of Jacob.

TOGETHER: Let the Lord enter; he is king of glory

SECOND READING

Romans 51:1-7

From Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus who has been called to be an apostle, and specially chosen to preach the Good News that God promised long ago through his prophets in the scriptures.

This news is about the Son of God, who, according to the human nature he took, was a descendant of David: it is about Jesus Christ our Lord who, in the order of the spirit, the spirit of holiness that was in him, was proclaimed Son of God in all his power through his resurrection from the dead. Through him we received grace and our apostolic mission to preach the obedience of faith to all pagan nations in honour of his name. You are one of these nations, and by his call belong to Jesus Christ. To you all, then, who are God's beloved in Rome, called to be saints, may God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ send grace and peace

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

A virgin will give birth to a son; his name will be Emmanuel: God is with us.

Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Matthew 1:18-24

This is how Jesus Christ came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a man of honour and wanting to spare her publicity, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins.' Now all this took place to fulfil the words spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel, a name which means 'God-is-with-us'. When Joseph woke up he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do: he took his wife to his home.

GOD WITH US

A note of foreboding attends the circumstances of Jesus' birth as told by Matthew. We, the readers of the gospel, know that Mary's pregnancy has come about 'through the Holy Spirit' (Mt 1:18). But no other actor in the drama, including Joseph, knows that at the time. In Jewish culture betrothal required the same fidelity as marriage. Mary's situation is therefore precarious: she is liable to the severe penalties laid down by the Law of Moses for adultery.

Joseph knows that obedience to the Law requires him to divorce Mary. But, being a 'righteous person,' he wants to do so in a way that will spare her public shame and the full rigour of the Law. In this he 'models' keeping the Law in the way in which Jesus, with supreme authority, will interpret it—where what he calls the 'weightier matters of the Law' (justice, mercy and faith [23:23]) have priority.

The angel's announcement turns everything around. Mary's pregnancy has not come about through infidelity but through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Her child will carry the name of Israel's former saviour Josue, but his 'saving' role will have to do primarily with reconciliation with God ('save the people from their sins').

It will also involve a new sense of God's presence, reflected in a second name: 'Emmanuel—God-with-Us.'

In the person of Jesus, people will experience the divine saving presence. And after his resurrection, he will continue to be 'with' his Church in its communal life and worldwide mission to the end of time (Mt 28:19-20).

Fr Brendan Byrne sj