



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.

7TH / 8TH DECEMBER—SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT, YEAR A

Dear Parishioners, Visitors to our parish and Friends,

On 1st December, Pope Francis published an Apostolic Letter on the meaning and importance of the nativity scene. In the coming weeks I would like to share with you some parts of this letter. You may also find the full text on our parish website: cam.org.au/heidelberg.

The enchanting image of the Christmas crèche, so dear to the Christian people, never ceases to arouse amazement and wonder. The depiction of Jesus' birth is itself a simple and joyful proclamation of the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God. The nativity scene is like a living Gospel rising up from the pages of sacred Scripture. As we contemplate the Christmas story, we are invited to set out on a spiritual journey, drawn by the humility of the God who became man in order to encounter every man and woman. We come to realise that so great is his love for us that he became one of us, so that we in turn might become one with him.

... I wish to encourage the beautiful family tradition of preparing the nativity scene in the days before Christmas, but also the custom of setting it up in the workplace, in schools, hospitals, prisons and town squares. Great imagination and creativity is always shown in employing the most diverse materials to create small masterpieces of beauty. As children, we learn from our parents and grandparents to carry on this joyful tradition, which encapsulates a wealth of popular piety. It is my hope that this custom will never be lost and that, wherever it has fallen into disuse, it can be rediscovered and revived.

The origin of the Christmas crèche is found above all in certain details of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, as related in the Gospels. The evangelist Luke says simply that Mary "gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn" (2:7)....

Coming into this world, the Son of God was laid in the place where animals feed. Hay became the first bed of the One who would reveal himself as "the bread come down from heaven" (Jn 6:41). Saint Augustine, with other Church Fathers, was impressed by this symbolism: "Laid in a manger, he became our food." Indeed, the nativity scene evokes a number of the mysteries of Jesus' life and brings them close to our own daily lives....

Why does the Christmas crèche arouse such wonder and move us so deeply? First, because it shows God's tender love: the Creator of the universe lowered himself to take up our littleness. The gift of life, in all its mystery, becomes all the more wondrous as we realise that the Son of Mary is the source and sustenance of all life. In Jesus, the Father has given us a brother who comes to seek us out whenever we are confused or lost, a loyal friend ever at our side. He gave us his Son who forgives us and frees us from our sins.

Setting up the Christmas crèche in our homes helps us to relive the history of what took place in Bethlehem.... Its portrayal in the crèche helps us to imagine the scene. It touches our hearts and makes us enter into salvation history as contemporaries of an event that is living and real in a broad gamut of historical and cultural contexts.

In a particular way, the nativity scene invites us to "feel" and "touch" the poverty that God's Son took upon himself in the Incarnation. It summons us to follow him along the path of humility, poverty and self-denial that leads from the manger of Bethlehem to the cross....

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 Nov and Dec
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.*

FAMILY CHRISTMAS EVE MASS: Each year on Christmas Eve St John's Parish celebrates the Family Christmas Eve Mass. We invite your child/children to take an active part in this year's mass. Mass will be celebrated on Tuesday 24th December at 7:00pm in the OLMC Nalejerring Centre OLMC, on Yarra Street. Students from Year Prep to Year 12 are welcome to take part in one of the following ministries: reader (Year 4—12); prayer of the faithful (Year 2—12); offertory procession (Year P—12); altar server. If your child is interested in taking part, please email their name, year level and the ministry they would like to be involved in: elizabeth.williamson@cam.org.au

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

BOTTLE TOPS TO MAKE PROSTHETIC HANDS FOR CHILDREN: Thank you for collecting and dropping off your '2' and '4' clean plastic bottle tops.

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

GEMS AND FRIENDS: meetin on Tuesday 10th December at 10:00am in the Francis Xavier meeting room. All welcome to join us for games, conversation and morning tea. Visitors welcome; transport available. Elizabeth 0447195553

ALONE FOR LUNCH ON CHRISTMAS DAY?: If you, or someone you know of, is to be alone for lunch on Christmas Day and would like to join with others in a similar position, please contact the parish house 94571066 or heidelberg@cam.org.au to reserve a seat by Friday 20th December. Donation \$15.

St John's Walking Group: St John's Walking group will be travelling by train to the city then exploring and learning about some of the arcades and alleyways that are becoming increasingly popular. To join us please contact Jan on 0432478504.

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.

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

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

RECENTLY MARRIED: Christiana Madi and Christian Ardon;
Ashleigh Boyle and Gerry Dimasi.

THE SICK: Constance Anne Chang, Christopher Dabal, Gordon Eng, Giovanni Mirabella, Vita Nativo, Mary-Teresa Wright.

ANNIVERSARIES: Keith Ashworth, Dominic Nesci, Marie Lanigan.

RECENTLY DECEASED: Sr Jan Geason rsm, Lynette Stark.

*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.*

7 Dec / 8 Dec	Sat 6:00pm	Sun 8:30am	Sun 10:30am	Sun 5:00pm
1st Reader	Jan Mc Caffrey	Claire Newsome	Michelle Robertson	Peter Penson
2 nd Reader	Moira Di Cesare	Michael Leonard	Bob Dowling	Leela Cherubim
Communion	Sue Lew-Kee	Oliver Kmita	Liz Sier	Sally Tramontana
	Emma Chang	Jerzy Kmita	Vin Sier	Mark Aiello
	Jeanette O'Sullivan	Jack Naden	Ann Domaingue	Matthew Sanders
	Marco Di Cesare	Fiona Curry	Geraldine Manuel	Olivia Sanders
14 Dec / 15 Dec	Sat 6:00pm	Sun 8:30am	Sun 10:30am	Sun 5:00pm
1st Reader	Sue Lew-kee	Ronnie Maloney	Claire Newsome	Mary Kotefski
2 nd 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	Elizabeth Williamson	Jenny Hollaway
Counters	8 Dec: Stephen Devenish, Nicole Pellizzaro, Thomas Bechelli & 15 Dec: Leo Cosio, Leo Hernandez, Yannick Jonas.			
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.				

MELBOURNE OVERSEAS MISSION APPEAL: This weekend at all Masses in support of the mission fund of the Melbourne archdiocese. Donations of \$2 and over are tax deductible.

ST VINCENT DE PAUL WINTER APPEAL COLLECTION: Next weekend, 14th and 15th December, at all Masses. Thank you for your continued support to this ministry in our parish.

ST JOHN'S CHRISTMAS CAROLS: hosted by the parish primary school on Wednesday 11th December in the church gardens. 6:00pm BYO picnic dinner and drinks. Carols at 7:00pm. Please join us!

BLESSING OF NATIVITIES: at all Masses on the weekend of 14th and 15th December. 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.

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 MASS TIMES: Christmas Eve 7:00pm Vigil Mass at the OLMC Nalleijerring Centre. Midnight Mass starting at 11:30pm with Carols. Christmas Day Masses at 8:30am and 10:30am. No evening Mass on Christmas Day. New Year's Eve, Masses at 9:15am and 7:00pm. New Year's Day, morning Mass at 10:30am (no 9:15am Mass).

STEWARDSHIP (THANKSGIVING) ENVELOPES: The January to April instalment of Stewardship Envelopes is ready to be picked up from the porch of the church. Envelopes are in alphabetical order. Thank you for your continued generosity and support.

2019 CHRISTMAS MARKET: in support of St Catherine of Alexandria Parish in Bataan, Philippines, raised a total of \$300.00. Thank you for your support for this initiative. Donations to the Mission in the Philippines are tax deductible.

CHRISTMAS GIFT CARDS: Another way of supporting the missionary activity of the Church this year is by purchasing a Christmas Gift Card. Often Christmas gifts may be simply put aside soon after Christmas. When you buy the Christmas Gift Card the money goes to help those who are poor, helping them build a better life. You can nominate the amount you would like to give. All gift donations are tax deductible. For further information contact the parish office.

2020 COLUMBAN CALENDARS: can be purchased for \$10.00 from the parish office or the church vestry before or after Mass. Christmas cards are also available for \$7 a pack of 10. Proceeds support the work of our parish St Vincent de Paul society conference.

REQUEST FOR TRANSPORT: an elderly parishioner living in Rosanna is requesting help to come to our Sunday 10:30am Mass. Anyone who can kindly offer transport to and from the church please contact the parish office.

SACRAMENTAL PROGRAMME 2020 FOR THOSE NOT ATTENDING ST JOHN'S PARISH SCHOOL: Reconciliation in 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.

ST VINCENT DE PAUL CHRISTMAS HAMPERS: Thank you for all your donations in support of our ministry by our volunteers.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 11:1-10

A shoot springs from the stock of Jesse, a scion thrusts from his roots: on him the spirit of the Lord rests, a spirit of wisdom and insight, a spirit of counsel and power, a spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. (The fear of the Lord is his breath.) He does not judge by appearances, he gives no verdict on hearsay, but judges the wretched with integrity, and with equity gives a verdict for the poor of the land. His word is a rod that strikes the ruthless, his sentences bring death to the wicked. Integrity is the loincloth round his waist, faithfulness the belt about his hips. The wolf lives with the lamb, the panther lies down with the kid, calf and lion cub feed together with a little boy to lead them. The cow and the bear make friends, their young lie down together. The lion eats straw like the ox. The infant plays over the cobra's hole; into the viper's lair the young child puts his hand. They do no hurt, no harm, on all my holy mountain, for the country is filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters swell the sea. That day, the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples. It will be sought out by the nations and its home will be glorious. and its home will be glorious.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 71:1-2. 7-8. 12-13. 17

TOGETHER: Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever.

LEFT SIDE

O God, give your judgement to the king,
to a king's son your justice,
that he may judge your people in justice
and your poor in right judgement.

RIGHT SIDE

In his days justice shall flourish
and peace till the moon fails.
He shall rule from sea to sea,
from the Great River to the earth's bounds.

LEFT SIDE

For he shall save the poor when they cry
and the needy who are helpless.
He will have pity on the weak
and save the lives of the poor.

RIGHT SIDE

May his name be blessed for ever
and endure like the sun.
Every tribe shall be blessed in him,
all nations bless his name

TOGETHER: Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever.

SECOND READING

Romans 15:4-9

Everything that was written long ago in the scriptures was meant to teach us something about hope from the examples scripture gives of how people who did not give up were helped by God. And may he who helps us when we refuse to give up, help you all to be tolerant with each other, following the example of Christ Jesus, so that united in mind and voice you may give glory to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It can only be to God's glory, then, for you to treat each other in the same friendly way as Christ treated you. The reason Christ became the servant of circumcised Jews was not only so that God could faithfully carry out the promises made to the patriarchs, it was also to get the pagans to give glory to God for his mercy, as scripture says in one place: For this I shall praise you among the pagans and sing your name.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths: all people shall see the salvation of God. Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Matthew 3:1-12

In due course John the Baptist appeared; he preached in the wilderness of Judaea and this was his message: 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.' This was the man the prophet Isaiah spoke of when he said: A voice cries in the wilderness: Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight.

This man John wore a garment made of camel-hair with a leather belt round his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem and all Judaea and the whole Jordan district made their way to him, and as they were baptised by him in the river Jordan they confessed their sins. But when he saw a number of Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism he said to them, 'Brood of vipers, who warned you to fly from the retribution that is coming? But if you are repentant, produce the appropriate fruit, and do not presume to tell yourselves, "We have Abraham for our father," because, I tell you, God can raise children for Abraham from these stones. Even now the axe is laid to the roots of the trees, so that any tree which fails to produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown on the fire. I baptise you in water for repentance, but the one who follows me is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to carry his sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fan is in his hand; he will clear his threshing-floor and gather his wheat into the barn; but the chaff he will burn in a fire that will never go out.'

CONVERSION OF HEART

Today's gospel presents us with the appearance and preaching of John the Baptist. John's message, 'Prepare a way for the Lord,' virtually sums up the theme of the Advent season. Nonetheless, it is not all that easy simply to take his words and proclaim them as 'Good News.' Jesus hardly filled the role of preacher of end-time doom that John here sketches out for him here.

What is essential and something that truly paves the way for the Good News that Jesus will bring is John's summons to conversion of heart. The physical 'way' (road) that Isaiah wanted prepared for Israel in the wilderness is now one that must be prepared in the wilderness of the human heart. Then the Good News will truly be able to enter in when finally it is proclaimed.

The greatest obstacle to that entrance is complacency, a complacency resting upon privileged status (as in the claim, 'We have Abraham for our father') and a sense that one is morally superior to everyone else and so can rest secure.

Unlike John, Jesus will 'baptise with the Holy Spirit and with fire.' That is, he will seek to catch up human lives into the fire that is God's love, a sense of which it is the task of the Spirit to communicate. But a 'baptism' of this kind will only take effect in truly repentant and converted hearts. John's water baptism and his challenging message prepare human hearts for the entrance of this good news about God's love, this true 'knowledge of the Lord' that Jesus will fully impart.

Fr Brendan Byrne sj