

ECHO



The magazine of ST JOHN'S CATHOLIC PARISH HEIDELBERG

DECEMBER 2014

CHRISTMAS BLESSINGS

A message from Fr Mario

Dear parishioners, visitors and friends,

Happy Christmas!

It is time again for us to celebrate Advent and Christmas: Emmanuel, God-is-with-us. Christmas teaches us to stop and look around and see God in our every day life. God chose to become one like us and live our own life. God is still part of our environment and our daily life and as we journey on we need to become ever more aware of God's presence.

Where is God? Where do we find God? Perhaps the first and simplest answer to this question is 'Church.' We go to Church to meet God and be in God's presence. Yet we cannot lock God in our churches and leave him there; God is with us every day, God travels with us wherever we go. God is in our relationships, in our work, in our leisure; God is everywhere. Our job as disciples of Jesus is not so much to bring God to the world as to unearth him; to find him and point him out to the world.

At times we are tempted to look for God in the peace and quiet. Perhaps it is much easier for us to lift our minds in prayer when life is ordered and we are in control. In the first book of Kings (19:11-13) the prophet Elijah goes up to the mountain of God for a private meeting with God. While he was there he was faced by a powerful wind, but God was not in the wind; then came an earthquake, but God was not in the earthquake; finally there was stillness, and God spoke to Elijah in the stillness.

Yet we know from our own personal experience that God is not only in this stillness, but more often in the messiness that life throws at us. We need to learn to see God at

work in our lives when things do not go as we plan them. I am sure that Joseph was not impressed when they realised Mary had to give birth in a stable. We can sense the same pain in the garden of Gethsemane and on Golgotha, and when the disciples were faced with an empty tomb. In each of these situations I am sure those involved wondered where God was, but we know that God was in each of these moments, and God is in our own daily mess.

This Christmas let us make an effort to continue gently unearthing God in our own life, in the life of our families and in the moments when we least expect to find him!



May the blessings of the Emmanuel be with us all!

Christmas Celebrations:

Wednesday 24th Dec

7pm Special Children's Mass

(This year it will be celebrated in Our Lady of Mercy College Gym - all welcome.)

12mn Mass in the Church

(Starting at 11:30pm with Carols)

Thursday 25th December

Masses at 8.30am & 10.30am

Plus 9.30 am (Austin Hospital)

NO 5pm Mass on Christmas Day.

From St Johns Primary School

In this edition of the Echo we have asked St Johns School Children for special items about Christmas.

Christmas Poem

A bright star shone from afar,
guiding the way.
Sweet melody pierced the silence,
Sweet as a sun-kissed cherry.
Look, floating down from the sky,
an angel's feather;
the soft colour of heather.
In a manger, among the cattle,
lay baby Jesus beginning to settle.
So in the darkness of that cold, dim night
shone a ray of hope, a ray of light.
(Alyssa V, Year 3/4)

Mass at Christmas

We enter through the brown doors. I
softly touch the holy water with my
heart open. I hear the choir sing like
angels in heaven. My knees lower to bow
to my Lord. When I pray I hear the Lord,
Prince of Life, the one who will come for
us. Our Saviour.
(Cora L, Year 3/4)

Dear Santa Claus, J

I heard you needed a new best elf!
Firstly I'm a good builder because I have
built a huge robot out of spare parts so I
can help you build and make toys.
Secondly I am mature because I don't
laugh when someone does something silly
or makes a mistake.
Thirdly I am strict but have a sense of
humour. So I am not bad to the elves and
will make them laugh.
Fourthly I make lovely desserts and
dinners so you and Mrs Claus will have
delicious dinners.
My fifth reason is I don't get distracted
so I get on with things.
From your trusty Elf Jonas (Year 2)
P.S. I work until 12.00 am which means I
can work ALL night.

Dear Santa,

I have heard that
you need a number
one elf. Well it's
your lucky day so stop looking because
I'm here! I think you would be pretty
impressed if I was your number one elf.
First of all, I could probably make 50 or
60 toys each hour with my magic hammer
it glows gold and sparkles like silver.
Second of all if you choose me I will have
a night crew and a day crew. The night
crew will sleep in the day and work in the
night. The day crew will sleep in the night
and work in the day and I'll control them
but I won't be bossy. Thirdly at the end
of each day I'll do the house chores for
Mrs Claus.
Fourthly in the morning and the night I'll
check on the reindeers, sprinkle magic on
them and polish Rudolph's nose. Fifthly I
will tuck you and Mrs Claus into bed and
give you hot milk and cookies.
My sixth reason is I'm really fast at
typing because I have magic fingers that
just move up and down and that can help
me, help you with writing back to kids.
Kind regards from Ava Elf (Year 1/2) J

Dear Santa,

For Christmas, please remember the
poor, sick and homeless.
Bring them Joy, Happiness, Love, Peace
and Hope.
Bring a cure to Ebola to doctors,
also a cure for cancer, alcohol, drugs,
headaches and all of the diseases in
the world.
Relieve the pain of the sick and help
everyone enjoy Christmas.
From Alex (Year 3/4)



ST JOHN'S CATHOLIC TENNIS CLUB (SJCTC)



The Club conducted its Annual General Meeting on 21st of November. Our Club is different to many sporting and other organisations. that have difficulty in getting members to AGM's for concern they will be forced onto a Committee. Compared to many Clubs, our AGM this year was well attended with 28 attendees. Although on occasions it is difficult for some Clubs to have members prepared to act on an Executive Committee, we at SJCTC this year have members wanting to be on the Club's Committee.

We have a new President, Paul Marcon, Des O'Brien stepping into the role of Secretary and Mark de Villiers the Club's new Treasurer.

The Club has social tennis on Friday mornings and Sundays. Junior competition occurs on Friday nights and Saturday mornings. Competition tennis is played on Tuesday Wednesday nights and Thursday afternoons and nights .

Coaching takes place on before school on Tuesday Wednesday and Thursday mornings and after school on Monday Tuesday and Thursday.

With approximately 180 participants the Club's courts are used to capacity. In order to accommodate the many wanting to play competition under the St John's banner, the Club hires an additional 5 courts on Tuesday nights and 10 courts on Saturdays.

Although many members are from outside the Parish, the Tennis Club is the only organisation in the Parish providing a sporting activity for the youth of the Parish, including boys and girls from our School. The club has 90 young participants playing tennis on Saturdays.

The Club operates on a sound financial footing. It is self funding with members providing most of the revenue enabling it to provide first class facilities. Many Clubs against which SJCTC competes are on Council land and receive Council support.

We at SJCTC are grateful for the sponsorship received from the local Bendigo Community Bank. Parishioners are encouraged to support the Bendigo Community Bank.

The Club is served by a strong Committee supported by its members.

Parishioners requiring information on the Club are invited to contact Des O'Brien on 0438 796 986.

Des O'Brien

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**FATHER JOSEPH DALLU, MNGAZI VILLAGE,
MOROGORO, TANZANIA, AFRICA**

We first met Father Joseph in Darwin in 2010 when he concelebrated Mass at the funeral of our son, Greg. He was assistant Priest in the Parish of Palmerston, Darwin, which was Greg's Parish, and had been there for two years. He had been invited to Australia by Bishop Eugene Hurley, Bishop of Darwin, for one year, but due to Visa complications with his replacement, his stay was extended by a further year.

We invited him to come to Melbourne before he returned to Africa and he stayed with us for five days. During this time we took him to some of the sites of Melbourne – St Patrick's Cathedral, St Francis Church in Lonsdale Street, and, not to be outdone, the MCG, where he was impressed with the Sporting Museum. He also concelebrated Mass at St John's where Fr Ted warmly welcomed him.

One evening I asked him if he had Television where he lived and he replied that they did not have power!! They also did not have running water and the women of the village had to travel for half an hour to the river with 10 litre containers on their heads!! This is pretty hard to comprehend in our society! We felt we would have to do something to help him.

Just before Father Joseph returned to Africa, the Palmerston Parish in Darwin decided to support Father in his Parish in Africa, by raising funds to establish a water supply and provide the means for them to operate on solar power. The group was prepared to donate money on an ongoing basis by weekly/monthly contributions rather than to do any particular "fundraising". Bishop Eugene Hurley is totally aware and approving of their activities.

A Committee was established and a Bank Account opened with the Commonwealth Bank of Australia under the name of Mngazi Organisation. All monies raised were to be deposited into this account and would be strictly accounted for, with regular reports being given to all the nominated parishioners who are involved in this venture.

On our part, which was before we were aware of the activities in Darwin, we had already decided to do what we could here in Melbourne to raise some funds for Fr Joseph and with the help of St John's Parish supporting our Elvis night, which included a raffle and with many private donors sponsoring our walk on the Camino, we raised \$10,360.00. Upon learning of the actions of the people in the

Palmerston Parish, they were happy for our monies to be sent to and included with theirs.

The Committee in Darwin gave Fr Joseph the go-ahead for surveyors to search for water and they were fortunate to find a very good supply of clear water at a depth of 80 meters that would produce 35,000-40,000 litres of "beautiful" water per hour. The people were so excited and grateful!

Fr Joseph was asked to obtain three quotes for the work to be carried out. This was duly done and he submitted the paperwork to the Committee for approval to have the work commenced. The cost would be \$25,586. The Committee applied a great deal of planning to this project and advised Fr Joseph that the Drilling Company would submit their invoices to the Mngazi Organisation in Darwin and they would be paid directly through The Commonwealth Bank of Australia, after verification that the work had been completed satisfactorily. The son of one of the Committee members was chosen to travel to Morogo at the expense of two generous benefactors, to obtain a hands-on assessment of the situation and returned with a detailed positive report on the project at hand.

The solar power project, which supplies lighting and electrical outlets to the two buildings of the Parish Centre has also been completed, at a cost of \$5,370.55.

Father Joseph says. "This has changed our lives completely."

The final project, which is ongoing, is to sponsor young people from Mngazi Village in further Secondary/Tertiary education for the benefit of the village.

Father Joseph's biggest personal project now is to build a new Church to accommodate the influx of people from other regions. They have been gathering local stone for more than 3 years to use for the Church and it is very exhausting work in the hot sun. Hopefully, they will see their way clear to start building in the not too distant future.

We pray for Fr Joseph that he will be able to fulfil his Pastoral duties in his immediate Parish, which serves as the hub for seven outlying mission stations located up to 100km away, to which he has to travel constantly. This is a rural area with subsistence farmers eking out an existence from their small holdings. When we asked if he was sorry to be leaving Australia, he replied "I miss my people".

May God bless Fr Joseph.

Patricia and Francis Seymon