

### THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

#### FIRST READING *Isaiah 61:1-2,10-11*

*A reading from the prophet Isaiah.*

The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for the Lord has anointed me. He has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to bind up hearts that are broken; to proclaim liberty to captives, freedom to those in prison; to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord. 'I exult for joy in the Lord, my soul rejoices in my God, for he has clothed me in the garments of salvation, he has wrapped me in the cloak of integrity, like a bridegroom wearing his wreath, like a bride adorned in her jewels. 'For as the earth makes fresh things grow, as a garden makes seeds spring up, so will the Lord make both integrity and praise spring up in the sight of the nations.'

The word of the Lord.

#### RESPONSORIAL PSALM

*Luke 1:46-50,53-54*

*R. My soul rejoices in my God.*

1. My soul glorifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour. He looks on his servant in her nothingness; henceforth all ages will call me blessed. R.
2. The Almighty works marvels for me. Holy his name!  
His mercy is from age to age, on those who fear him. R.
3. He fills the starving with good things, sends the rich away empty. He protects Israel, his servant, remembering his mercy. R

#### SECOND READING *1 Thess 5:16-24*

*A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians.*

Be happy at all times; pray constantly; and for all things give thanks to God, because this is what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus. Never try to suppress the Spirit or treat the gift of prophecy with contempt; think before

you do anything – hold on to what is good and avoid every form of evil. May the God of peace make you perfect and holy; and may you all be kept safe and blameless, spirit, soul and body, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. God has called you and he will not fail you.

The word of the Lord.

#### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

*Isaiah 61:1 (Luke 4:18)*

Alleluia, alleluia!

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

Alleluia!

#### GOSPEL

*John 1:6-8,19-28*

*A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.*

A man came, sent by God. His name was John. He came as a witness, as a witness to speak for the light, so that everyone might believe through him. He was not the light, only a witness to speak for the light. This is how John appeared as a witness. When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' he not only declared, but he declared quite openly, 'I am not the Christ.' 'Well then,' they asked 'are you Elijah?' 'I am not' he said. 'Are you the Prophet?' He answered, 'No.' So they said to him, 'Who are you? We must take back an answer to those who sent us. What have you to say about yourself?' So John said, 'I am, as Isaiah prophesied: a voice that cries in the wilderness: Make a straight way for the Lord.' Now these men had been sent by the Pharisees, and they put this further question to him, 'Why are you baptising if you are not the Christ, and not Elijah, and not the prophet?' John replied, 'I baptise with water; but there stands among you – unknown to you – the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo his sandal-strap.' This happened at Bethany, on the far side of the Jordan, where John was baptising.

The Gospel of the Lord.

#### GOSPEL REFLECTION

*Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18*

This Sunday, called Gaudete (Latin for "rejoice"), marks the halfway point of Advent. The rose candle is lit, and the second reading begins, "Rejoice always!" This upbeat mood can come to a full stop, however, when the requirement extends to giving thanks in all circumstances. I remember my friend, suffering blinding headaches after her third caesarean section, was also dealing with her crying newborn, the head lice her son brought home from kindergarten and sewage overflow in her house after a ball had been flushed down the toilet. She cried, "If I have one more circumstance, I will be giving thanks in an institution!" I'm convinced the only thing that gets us through terrible times is "prayer without ceasing." This is not thanking God that this chaos is God's will, but that we are not in it alone. The One who came to be with us at Christmas is holding us in love. Gaudete!

#### CREED

I believe in God,  
the Father almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth,  
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son,  
our Lord,  
*(All bow during these two lines)*  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried;  
he descended into hell;  
on the third day he rose again  
from the dead;  
he ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of God  
the Father almighty;  
from there he will come to judge  
the living and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and life everlasting.  
Amen.

# ST PAUL'S PARISH

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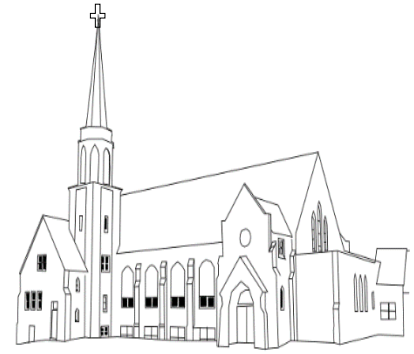
Parish Priest: Fr. Raymond Bugeja

Parish Secretary: Mrs Loretta Meilak

St Paul's School Principal: Mrs Maria Mercuri

School Tel: 9354-8970

**St Paul's Parish strives to create an environment where children are safe, respected and cared for.**



## PARISH OFFICE HOURS:

Mon - Friday: 10.30am to 3.30 pm.

## MASSES:

**Weekends: Saturday:** 6:00 pm (vigil),  
8.00pm (Neo Catechumenate)

**Sunday:** 9:00am, 10.30am (Italian),

**Weekdays: Mon, Wed, Thurs, Fri:** 10.00 am.

**CONFESSIONS:** Saturdays - 11am and 6.45pm

## JOKE OF THE WEEK

Look what happens when you cut down too many trees! 😊



## THANKSGIVING – DIRECT DEPOSIT BANK DETAILS

BSB: 083-347

Account Number: 67541 0884

Account Name: St Paul's Catholic Church.

Credit Card payments:

<https://bit.ly/CDFpayCoburg>

**LAST WEEK'S OFFERING**

**\$995.00**

**Works done recently: Presbytery roof: \$40,000**

**Painting of presbytery inside: \$12,400**

**Thanks for your support in these challenging times.**

## A LETTER FROM ARCHBISHOP PETER COMENSOLI

Dear Bishops, Fathers and Deacons,

My prayerful greetings to you in this Season of Advent, and on this joyful day of ordinations to the priesthood. Please keep Jude, Simeon, James and Jude Thaddeus in your prayers.

**You may have seen a bill**, quietly tabled by the State Government last week, called the **Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Bill 2020**.

<https://content.legislation.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/bills/591143bi1.pdf>  
<https://content.legislation.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/bills/591143exi1.pdf>  
With scant consultation over the past twelve months, and little discussion in recent weeks, the bill was tabled without religious communities having the opportunity to see exactly what was being proposed, and to be frank, it raises serious concerns and questions.

**The basic problem** is not the announced intention, which appears to be about preventing harmful and coercive practices that would damage human dignity. This I would support. The problem however, is the content of the bill itself and its explanatory memorandum (links above), which looks like a dramatic over-reach of the state into the contexts of prayer, conversion, pastoral conversation, spiritual accompaniment, family life and the freedom of individuals to change and to seek advice and direction of their own choosing to make their own decisions.

Since the bill was made public I have given some time to reading and understanding it, and have sought a range of advice. While more consideration will need to be given to it, I have to be clear with you that I oppose this bill as it currently stands. It is expected that the bill will be St Patrick's Centre, PO Box 146, East Melbourne VIC 8002 Australia Tel: +61 3 9926 5612 Email: [archbishop@cam.org.au](mailto:archbishop@cam.org.au) debated and brought to pass in the lower house as early as next week, and brought back to the upper house early next year.

**Can you please make your own people aware of the bill** and its possible implications, and encourage them to phone their local Member of Parliament to express their view. Because the bill has not been widely publicised, many parents and families, clergy and people of faith are currently unaware of the contents of this proposed legislation, which might have a chilling effect on the ability of Victorian people of faith to express a view, share their faith, or talk about biblical teaching without fear of state interference.

In fact, **the ultimate outcome of this bill may not actually be to protect anyone who is vulnerable, but to silence people of faith from expressing their view.**

If outstanding questions can be answered comprehensively, and time given to public debate and discussion, it is possible such concerns could be resolved, but in the meanwhile I will give some public attention to this issue, alongside other faith leaders. Attached to this letter is a set of unresolved questions legislators in Victoria ought to be able to answer. You may wish to use these as discussion points with your people, and as points they might raise in their conversations with local Members. I am pleased for you to circulate this letter and pray we can find a fair and equitable approach to this issue, strangely appearing just weeks before the celebration of Christmas. Yours fraternally in Christ Jesus,

## WE PRAY FOR

**NEWLY BAPTISED:** Atticus Jaxon Broadbent

We pray for those in our local community who are **sick** and vulnerable: may they see in us the followers of a God who heals and serves.

**Let us pray for those who have died recently**, Benito Salnitro, Francesca Palmieri (Funeral Mass, Wed., 11.15am), and those whose anniversaries we remember at this time, Rosa Franco, Rocco Cuzzuppi (First month Mass, Monday at 7pm), that they may enter the peace of God.

## STEWARDSHIP

**“Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” - 1 THESSALONIANS 5:16 -18**

This scripture reading sums up Stewardship. “Rejoice always” means place your trust in God; He will provide all that you need. “Pray constantly” means prayer should be a running conversation with God throughout the whole day, every day. “Give thanks in all circumstances” means even in bad situations, thank God. Suffering a little bit helps build empathy for others in similar situations.

## REFLECTION: Mirroring Mary

**He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent away empty. Luke 1:53**

After Mary's world was upended by the announcement of an angel, she set out in haste to visit Elizabeth. Once there, Mary takes in her cousin's blessing and utters the words we've come to know as the Magnificat. In this powerful psalm of thanksgiving, Mary says both “yes” and “no.”

Affirming her initial assent to Gabriel's question, Mary says “yes” to the wonders that God is working, “yes” to the Holy One doing amazing things in her, “yes” to God's loving care for the lowly and those who hunger.

From the perspective of a heart that mirrors God's justice, inclusion and tenderness for the poor and vulnerable, Mary says “no” to riches hoarded and not shared with those in need, “no” to the arrogant and those who abuse their power.

To what in our world today are you saying “yes” or saying “no”?  
Sr. Chris Koellhoffer, I.H.M.

## PRAYER OF THE WEEK

That we realize suffering is a gift and helps us build empathy for others.

## CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE:

**Confessions:** 21st & 23rd after the 10am mass.

**Christmas Eve Masses:** 6pm and 10pm.

**Christmas Day Masses:** Midnight, 9am and 10.30am(Italian).

**NB. This year due to Covid-19, the parish has added an extra mass at 10pm to give the possibility of more availability for people to attend the Christmas Mass, as the parish has to observe the one square meter social distance, in church. Only 120 people are allowed to attend at each mass. So, one needs to book to attend mass on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. To avoid disappointment, please, call on 9354 1564 and leave a clear message.**

(cont., from page 2)

## Unresolved questions regarding the Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Bill 2020:

- **On what basis** can the government propose legislation that directly impacts on ‘conversion’ (a normal and everyday practice for Christians and others) or prayer?
- **The bill imposes restrictions** on what people can and cannot say to one another, even if they are adults of a shared cultural or religious identity. How is this not harmful to free speech in a liberal democracy?
- In the **Catholic context**, we value chastity for everyone, and we invite some to celibacy. The bill is so broad and vague in its definitions that in both categories people could now be criminally liable for showing restraint and self-control in their relationships and sexuality. Is this really the intent of the government?
- **Christian leaders** are expected to model good behaviour and leadership in their religious context of the people they teach, form, and serve. Will encouraging self-restraint among those leaders and staff now be a criminal offence?
- **If a married adult** is struggling with their sexuality and asks a priest to pray for them and bless them so they can keep sexual expression to their marriage, are they now performing a ‘change or suppression practice’?
- **The Bible calls for conversion** and for sexual abstinence on occasion, as well as restriction of sexual activity to marriage only. Will showing someone the relevant passages in the bible now be a ‘change or suppression practice’?
- **A pre-pubescent child requests** hormonal treatment and preparations for gender-reassignment surgery, but their parents, who know and love that child with great care and devotion, encourage he or she to ‘wait’ and be patient, and see how they feel after a few years of maturity and growth. Are those parents now embarking on a ‘change or suppression practice’?
- **Sexual identity** is one of a number of ways for a person to understand and explain their personal identity, which is often complex and changes over time. For people of faith, their religious identity is far more important. For those wishing to curtail their sexual behaviour in line with their religious identity as a priority, and they seek counselling and pastoral help to achieve this, how are they not conducting a ‘change or suppression practice’ according to the bill?
- **Catholic schools in Melbourne** and elsewhere have strict and robust policies to protect individuals in situations in which a student identifies as transgender. This bill interrupts policies of safety and empowerment by forcing restrictions on what can and cannot be encouraged in normal pastoral practice. How can we be asked to support a bill that might cause further harm to children facing gender dysphoria who, according to science and therapeutic experience need less pressure, more time and space, and room to develop through adolescence as they shape their identity? They need support, not a forced lockdown into their identity at some fixed point of time.
- **Pressures to enact hormonal treatment** and surgery in adolescence can cause long-term harm that is regretted in later life. Forcing parents and carers from being able to offer children alternative options for their care and wellbeing is irresponsible.

ARCHBISHOP PETER COMENSOLI

**“Melbourne Overseas Missions Annual Appeal – This weekend, 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> December 2020”** Thank you for your support which has, over the years, made it possible to fund many projects for disadvantaged people in Papua New Guinea, Peru, West Africa, Pakistan, Palestine and the many Islands in the Pacific. Some \$200,000 has been provided in clean water, health, education and improved living stands to people who would not otherwise have had this opportunity over the last year. This is especially in the areas of MOM activity, where the effect of the pandemic has been devastating. *Please visit <https://mom.org.au> for more information or to donate.* Envelopes can be found as you enter the church. Thank you.

COME LORD JESUS; COME LORD JESUS;  
COME LORD JESUS; COME AND BE BORN IN OUR  
HEARTS. 1

COME, O PRINCE OF PEACE; COME,  
O PRINCE OF PEACE;  
COME, O PRINCE OF PEACE;  
COME AND BE BORN IN OUR HEARTS.

OUR HEARTS ARE OPEN; OUR HEARTS ARE OPEN;  
OUR HEARTS ARE OPEN; COME AND BE BORN IN  
OUR HEARTS.

COME EMMANUEL; COME EMMANUEL;  
COME EMMANUEL;  
COME AND BE BORN IN OUR HEARTS.

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**ONE BREAD, ONE BODY; ONE LORD OF ALL,  
ONE CUP OF BLESSING WHICH WE BLESS. 2  
AND WE, THOUGH MANY, THROUGHOUT THE EARTH,  
WE ARE ONE BODY IN THIS ONE LORD.**

GENTILE OR JEW, SERVANT OR FREE,  
WOMAN OR MAN, NO MORE.

MANY THE GIFTS, MANY THE WORKS,  
ONE IN THE LORD OF ALL.

GRAIN FOR THE FIELDS, SCATTERED AND GROWN,  
GATHERED TO ONE, FOR ALL.

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MY SOUL PROCLAIMS THE LORD MY GOD, 3  
MY SPIRIT SINGS IN PRAISE.  
HE LOOKS ON ME; HE LIFTS ME UP,  
AND GLADNESS FILLS MY DAYS.

ALL NATIONS NOW WILL SHARE MY JOY,  
GREAT GIFTS GOD HAS OUTPOURED.  
THE LITTLE ONES HE HAS MADE GREAT,  
I WILL MAGNIFY THE LORD.

GOD'S MERCY IS FOREVER MORE,  
GOD'S NAME I PRAISE AGAIN.  
GOD'S STRONG RIGHT ARM PUTS DOWN THE  
PROUD,  
AND RAISES LOWLY ONES.

GOD FILLS THE HUNGRY WITH GOOD THINGS,  
THE RICH ARE SENT AWAY.  
THE PROMISE MADE TO ABRAHAM  
IS FILLED TO ENDLESS DAYS.

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YOU ARE SALT FOR THE EARTH, O PEOPLE;  
SALT FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD! 4  
SHARE THE FLAVOUR OF LIFE, O PEOPLE;  
LIFE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD!

**BRING FORTH THE KINGDOM OF MERCY,  
BRING FORTH THE KINGDOM OF PEACE;  
BRING FORTH THE KINGDOM OF JUSTICE,  
BRING FORTH THE CITY OF GOD!**

YOU ARE A LIGHT ON THE HILL, O PEOPLE;  
LIGHT FOR THE CITY OF GOD!  
SHINE SO HOLY AND BRIGHT, O PEOPLE;  
SHINE FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD!

WE ARE A BLEST AND A PILGRIM PEOPLE;  
BOUND FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD!  
LOVE OUR JOURNEY AND LOVE OUR HOMELAND;  
LOVE IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD!



**This Sunday, called Gaudete (Latin for “rejoice”), marks the halfway point of Advent. The rose candle is lit, and the second reading begins, “Rejoice always!” The rose colour of the priest’s vestments, today, symbolize the meaning of rejoicing.**

A PRAYER FOR THE  
**Third Sunday of Advent**

Joy-filled Giver of Life,  
let the anticipation of your birth  
fill us with overflowing joy.  
May our excitement and anticipation  
be a sign to the world  
that you are always near.  
Amen.

