



Sunday 24th December 2023

Parish Priest: Fr. Steven Rigo **Assistant Priest:** Fr. Martin Tanti & Fr Ananda Maddineni MSFS

Parish Pastoral Associates: Sandy Starbuck & Sr. Margaret Sapsford

The Partnered Parishes of:

St. Mary's

204 Grimshaw St.,
Greensborough, 3088

Parish: 9435 1543 **Presbytery:** 7036 9329

Email: Greensborough@cam.org.au

Website: www.cam1.org.au/greensborough

Secretaries: Tanya O'Meara & Lisa Leahy

Mass Times

Tuesday to Friday: Mass 9.15am

Saturday: Vigil Mass 6.30pm

Sunday: Mass 8.00am, 10.00am & 5.00pm

Reconciliation Times

Saturday: 5.45pm-6.15pm before evening
Mass

Parish School Principal

Mrs. Marisa Matthys **Ph:** 9433 4000 **or Email**
principal@smgreensborough.catholic.edu.au

Sacred Heart & St Peter's

25 Gipson Street,
Diamond Creek 3089

Parish: 9401 6361

Email: DiamondCreek@cam.org.au

Website: www.pol.org.au/diamondcreek

Secretary: Pat Guatta

Mass Times

Wednesday & Friday: Mass 9.15am

St Peter's: 1st & 3rd Saturday 7.15pm

Sunday: Mass 9.00am

Reconciliation Times

Friday: 9.45am to 10.15am

Parish School Principal

Mr. Jim O'Sullivan **Ph:** 9438 1590 **or Email**
principal@shdiamondcreek.catholic.edu.au

St. Thomas the Apostle

251 Diamond Creek Road,
Greensborough Nth 3088

Parish: 9434 7373

Email: greensboroughnorth@cam.org.au

Website: www.pol.org.au/greensboroughnorth

Secretary: Lisa Leahy

Mass Times

Tuesday & Thursday: Mass 9.15am

Saturday: Vigil Mass 6.00pm

Sunday: Mass 10.30am

Reconciliation Times

Saturday: 9.30am to 10.00am

Parish School Principal

Mr David Delaney **Ph:** 9434 4565 **or Email**
principal@stgreensboroughnth.catholic.edu.au

Please send any bulletin contributions to greensboroughnorth@cam.org.au by 12noon Wednesday to ensure inclusion in the weekend bulletin. Thank you

PARISH OFFICE HOURS

Sacred Heart: Will be closed from Tuesday 16th January - reopens Tuesday 23rd January.

St Mary's: Will be closed from Wednesday 27th December - reopens Wednesday 3rd January.

St Thomas: Will be closed from Wednesday 27th January - reopens Tuesday 2nd January.

Will be closed from Tuesday 30th January - reopens Tuesday 13th February.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION



Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord, your grace into our hearts, that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ your Son was made known by the message of an Angel, may by his Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of his Resurrection.

Fourth Sunday of Advent, Year B.

24h December 2023.

<https://www.australiancatholics.com.au/reflection-4-advent-year-b>

Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne

www.cam.org.au

St Mary's Facebook page

facebook.com/stmarysgreensborough/



Our Partnered Parishes respectfully acknowledge the Wurundjeri people who are the traditional custodians of this land and we pay respect to the Elders past and present.

PARTNERED PARISHES NEWS

FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT

In the Gospel this week, we meet the angel Gabriel, who has been sent by God to reveal a wondrous blessing that will be bestowed on Mary – that she will be the mother of Jesus, the Son of God. Gabriel is the bearer of hope for the world, a divine messenger who tells Mary that God, through the birth of His Son, will become human and enter our world as our Saviour. Everything changes after Jesus' death and the resurrection for those who embrace the gift of faith. There is a pathway to the Kingdom, on earth and after death. A simple young woman surrendered herself to God's call and showed us how to live, in faith, hope and love of God and others.

"For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O LORD, from my youth." (Psalm 75:1)

MESSAGE FROM SANDY STARBUCK-PASTORAL ASSOCIATE

Dear Parishioners

"...in a time lacking in truth and certainty and filled with anguish and despair, no woman should be shamefaced in an attempting to give back to the world, through her work, a portion of its heart." (Louise Bogan) Over 20 years ago I received a book from my sister in America entitled, *"Simple Abundance – A Daybook of Comfort and Joy"* (Sarah Ban Breathnach). I haven't looked at the book for a number of years and I only have it in my office because I brought some books in to donate to our library. Having been encouraged to write a Christmas message to the community I opened the book for inspiration! Low and behold, I opened to September 6 – titled *"Working from the Heart."* This defines my pastoral ministry – to work from my heart.

"Work is love made visible." – Kahlil Gibran. This has been my prayer throughout this year, to be that loving presence of Christ to all I meet and most especially, those who call me to come to them with the Good News of Jesus present to them in service.

My work became my response to knowing Jesus, my daily practice of worship. He has been with me all my life and I can appreciate that may sound simplistic, but I have known of the presence of Christ in my life, as my friend since I was very young girl. How do I know this? I learned to recognize him through the actions of others, the love and kindness shared with me, the many people who took my hand walked with me, forming me, giving me language to express my love of Jesus, confidence to share that love and the certainty that I am where He has led me.

Fr Steven's homily for this past Sunday's Gospel, reminds us that John the Baptist "did not identify himself with the religious authority...he identifies himself by his relationship with God" specifically by his relationship with Jesus. This relationship defines John, not as the long-awaited Messiah, but as a witness to what a relationship with Christ will bring into our lives, into our world, the light that only shines brightly through love of Christ. Let us help each other for the times the light in our hearts is but a mere flicker by burning brightly reflecting the love our God for each of us.

So here I am...a year into my journey here to see the many ways the Good News is put in action, how to hear the love of Christ being spoken and importantly, how to *listen* with a compassionate heart, for the unspoken which comes from the essence of the human person. None of which would be possible if not for your efforts in making me welcomed in all areas of Parish life. You have invited me into your groups to learn how God's Spirit is at work there and shared the history and the experiences which reflect **"Work is love made visible!"** Thank you for your patience and your support which has strengthened me in times of doubt. I look forward to 2024 with excited anticipation as we continue our missionary journey in being a messenger of hope for all God's people.

Wishing you a very Blessed Christmas and may your love of Jesus be reflected in your laughter, your smile, your joy and love throughout the Christmas Season.

God bless!!

Sandy Starbuck, Pastoral Associate



CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM FR STEVEN RIGO

Dear Parishioners of Sacred Heart, St. Mary's, and St. Thomas,

As we come to the end of 2023 we look back at a year of a global burgeoning economic hardship, violent conflicts whereby innocent people are dying in wars being waged, and natural disasters, some of which are as a result of climate change. This has certainly been a year of turmoil and calamities, and perhaps a year that beckons us to think and act differently from before. It seems to me that the choice is ours, individually and globally for things to change.

I have for many years been an avid viewer of the late night showing of ABC's "The Drum", only to discover a few days ago that last Friday's episode (15th December) was to be the last. It is a terrible shame because it offered a platform for honest and various opinions from experts and commentators across diverse fields of current social importance. It has been one source of learning for me for a number of years. I was fascinated that this final episode revolved around "HOPE". In her opening remarks, the host, Julia Baird said "As we near the end of a year marked by economic hardship and global conflict, we focus on hope." The first topic of discussion for the panel was "How they find hope and what it looks like." Ms. Baird quoted a Harvard University study which concluded that "those who hold onto hope were far better off; they were less depressed and anxious and less likely to have chronic illness and were more likely to have a longer life." She then interviewed Andrew Weir, a public servant and author who writes about 'solutions', who stated that "Hope is about imagining a better world and then taking action to do it. It's a belief that action takes us to somewhere better. The future we have today is not a given...we are in control of our actions...if we take action today, our future will be a bit better..." The conversation then moved to each of the panelists being asked how they found hope. If you have a chance, I encourage you to watch the last episode of "The Drum" on ABC iView. For me, the topic reinforced our theme for Advent this year – "Messengers of Hope" – that's what we are called to be, especially in these times. Maybe the events of this last year can lead us to consider what we truly hunger for, what should cause us anger and a desire to make this world a better place than what it is, and how we can be Messengers of Hope in the world we touch.

As I reflect on the first Christmas, I think of the historically transformative event when God immersed himself intimately into the mess of human history because of God's great love for humanity and all created order. It was because God sought to address what was wrong and unjust in the world and for us to find in him a vision for a more harmonious future that is consistent with God's dream for us, and for us to participate in furthering God's creative plan for all creation. May we in the coming year be receptive to the ways God seeks to engage us to be bearers of hope through action.

As we approach the end of 2023, I would like to express my gratitude and my well-wishes to you all, the parishioners of our three partnered parishes. Particularly, I would like to publicly express my gratitude to our Assistant priests – Martin Tanti and Ananda Maddineni. In January we all experienced the sadness of the untimely death of Tao Pham as he was preparing to visit his family in Vietnam. The celebrations of his funeral Mass at St. Thomas' then in the Vietnamese community church in Keysborough and finally in his own home town in Vietnam were beautiful testaments of how much loved he was. It was shortly after Tao's funeral that we were offered Ananda on a temporary basis. He has had an extensive ministry in the Caribbean, United States, Indonesia and India and he has fitted in well among us, we learning from him, and I am sure, he learning from us.

I am extremely grateful for the support and dedicated commitment to pastoral work in our parishes by Sandy Starbuck and Sr. Margaret Sapsford, our Pastoral Associates. Sandy comes with 12 years of experience from St. Peter's, Epping and Christ the Light Parish of Doreen, Kinglake, Mernda and Whittlesea. She has taken on her role with enthusiasm and has established herself by connecting with our school and the various groups in our parish. Margaret Sapsford had hip surgery in August after a long time struggling to get around, but she has also had a bit of a relapse that has kept her away from the parish for several months. We hope to see her back early in the new year.

I am particularly grateful to Pat Guatta, Lisa Leahy and more recently, Tanya O'Meara, our parish secretaries who are the immediate face and voice of the parish offices and who especially assist me in my administrative responsibilities. We regularly meet as a Parish Team and have refined ways that we work together across our three parishes. Sadly, Tanya is resigning as she is taking on full-time care of her father at home. I am grateful for the way Tanya has fitted-in and taken on her role working with Lisa in our parish office. We will now advertise a position for another secretary to start early in the new year.

Over the past year we have developed more ways we can work together across our three parishes, such as our combined Faith Development Team which prepares the schedule of the Sacramental program for our three schools and prepares the Faith Formation evenings for our school parents; our combined Liturgy group which plans the seasons of liturgical celebrations and major feasts, and our Partnered Parishes Plenary Facilitators Committee which explored ways we can implement in our own locality the expressions of parishioners for change in the Church. I am grateful for the enthusiasm they bring to as they assist us to express our faith in life.

I would also like to express my deep gratitude to Jim O'Sullivan, David Delaney and Marisa Matthys, our school principals for their professional, calm and dedicated leadership as well as to all our school staff. I value their work because it is together that we lead our parishes in pastoral care, education and spiritual formation, especially of our school communities and particularly our children. It is with sadness that I have to say that David is retiring after his Long Service Leave and Jim has been asked to temporarily be the Principal of St. Pius, West Heidelberg. In the meantime St. Thomas will be led by the current Acting Principal, Joanne Nolen and Gina Murphy will take on the role of being Acting Principal at Sacred Heart until the positions of Principal will be advertised at these two schools.

We are also reliant on the many groups and committees with whom we work collaboratively, particularly the Parish Pastoral Councils, Finance Committees, the School Advisory Boards and Parish Education Board. I would like to express my deep gratitude to the many individuals and groups who dedicate so much time and energy to the life of our parishes in liturgy, pastoral care, catechesis, faith formation, fundraising, peer support and ministry and property maintenance and development because they are committed to the enrichment of our communities by what they do. In general I would like to thank everyone's involvement in the life of our parishes because your contribution and participation is what continues to give these communities their great spirit and energy and expresses a welcome to those who come to us with their needs.

This year I also celebrated 40 years of ordination to the priesthood and I want to express my deep gratitude to those who organised its celebration beginning with the 10.00 am Mass on August 20th at St. Mary's. The speeches given by parishioners were truly humbling and its celebration with you reinforces for me why I remain a priest – I am grateful for your support of me. The collected gifts for me will assist me, hopefully in 2025 to do a sabbatical.

Finally, I thank the many parishioners who have showered me with gifts for Christmas; for your thoughtfulness and care of me throughout the year. I pray that each of you may have a joyous, peace-filled celebration of Christmas with your loved ones. May God guard you and keep you safe these holidays, especially as you travel. I pray that you may be revitalized for the coming year and that God blesses you and your loved ones abundantly with all you need throughout 2024 – a new year of new opportunities for growth within ourselves, in our relationships with one another, and with God who continues to make his home among us in the messiness of our lives and can enable us to be a people of hope in a troubled world.



(Parish Priest)

ADVENT CHRISTMAS TIMETABLE 2023

Masses for Christmas

Sacred Heart	Christmas Eve	5:00 pm
	Christmas Day	9:00 am
St Mary's	Christmas Eve	<i>no 5:00 pm Mass</i> Carols 5:30 pm, Mass 6:00 pm Carols 9:00 pm, Mass 9:30 pm
	Christmas Day	8:00 am and 10:00 am <i>no 5:00 pm Mass</i>
	St Thomas	Christmas Eve
	Christmas Day	10:30 am

The story read at our Family Christmas Masses is called "Saint Francis and the Nativity"
by Myrna A Strasser and illustrated by Fausto Bianchi Copyright©2010 by Myrna A Strasser
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<https://books.google.com.au/>

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT SACRED HEART & ST PETER'S



PARISH OFFICE HOURS: *Tuesday & Thursday 10.00am-1.00pm, Wednesday & Friday 8.30am-2.30pm.*

Please send bulletin contributions by 12.00pm on Wednesday. Thank you

The Office will be closed from Tuesday 16th January - reopens Tuesday 23rd January.

Thank you to Steve, Martin and Ananda, to all parishioners for your attendance and loyal support at Sacred Heart and St Peter's Masses, to Marg Farrell and members of the Parish Pastoral Council, Baptism and Liturgy Teams. To Frank Ledita and our wonderful volunteers who clean and prepare the Churches, read, commentate, Eucharistic Ministers, provide audio visual, music, gardening, painting or maintenance at Hurstbridge and Diamond Creek your commitment is very much appreciated. Thanks to Lisa for producing the combined parishes weekly newsletter.

Thank you also to everyone for your financial support for our Priests and parish expenses.

Enjoy a happy and peaceful Christmas Season and a safe and healthy New Year.

Regards, Pat Guatta



SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION for children in Grade Three and over, unable to attend a Catholic school, will begin in the Sacred Heart Church, at 25 Gipson Street Diamond Creek, on **Monday February 5th 2024 at 4.00pm**. Enrolments are taken during this first class of the year. If an older child is not yet baptised, support is also available. For any more details contact the Parish office: 9401 6361 or email: diamondcreek@cam.org.au

SENIOR MOMENTS: Wishing everyone a Holy, Safe and Happy Christmas.

2024 Planning Meeting Wednesday 7th February 12pm in Parish Centre. New members welcome.

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL: Suggestion box in church or email: ppcdiamondcreek@gmail.com

HALL HIRE: Sacred Heart Hall is for hire. For all enquiries regarding cost and terms and conditions contact Alison Pieper on 0417571535 or alisonpieper52@gmail.com

ROSTERS:

Cleaning: Week 26th December B. & P. O'Regan

Sunday 31st December Sacred Heart 9am

Reader, Commentator and Eucharistic Ministers: Volunteers please

For weeks now, my days have been blessed with kindness. There have been exercises, reading and walking as I try to heal following surgery. While I can't join you for the celebration of Christmas, know that I have deeply appreciated your prayerful support and interest. May many Christmas blessings await you in this reflection.

Margaret rsc

"If we want it to be Christmas, the Birth of Jesus and of peace, let us look to Bethlehem and contemplate the face of the Child who is born for us! And in that small and innocent face, let us see the faces of all those children who, everywhere in the world, long for peace.

Pope Francis Christmas Message 2022

Our prayers have been asked for sick parishioners and friends that they may be healed & comforted during this time:

Antonietta Nesci, Grace Wein, Chris Padget, Pam Collins, Katie Pittle, Catherine Leonard, Peter Mejak, Joan Moran, Bridie Burke, Thomas Keenan, Mervyn Bourke, Jacob Draper, Kath Rickard

We pray for those who have died and all those whose Anniversaries occur in the month of December that they may enter joyfully into God's Kingdom:

Adam Hibbert, Martin Padget, Eileen Dunn, Frank Orders, Julian Federico, Brian Bell, John Elliott, Clara Mercieca, Paul Clements, Bernice Burke, Rose Hegarty.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT ST MARY'S

Vision Statement "To be a vibrant Christian community engaging with the world"

PARISH OFFICE HOURS: Tuesdays 10am-4pm, Wednesdays 8am-12noon, Thursdays 10am-4pm.

Please send any bulletin contributions directly to greensboroughnorth@cam.org.au or greensborough@cam.org.au by 12noon Wednesday to ensure inclusion in the weekend combined bulletin. Thank you

The office will be closed from Wednesday 27th December - reopens Wednesday 3rd January.

Thank you to all of our volunteers that help with the smooth running of our Parishes.

Tanya and I have been with you for the past 6 months, we are still getting to know many of the parishioners.

Thank you to everyone for making us feel so welcome.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Take care



CHURCH SECURITY : Group members and parishioners are reminded to check that ALL doors of the church and gathering space are securely locked and all lights are off when you leave after evening Masses and meetings. Thank you.

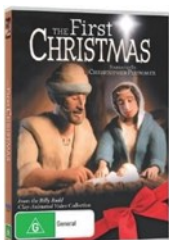
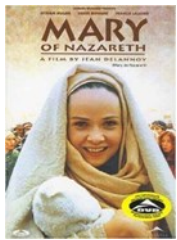
HOLY ROSARY is recited every Thursday morning after 9.15am Mass.

THE PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY: The prayer shawl ministry meets in the Gathering Space 10am - 12pm on Mondays.

Enquiries: Maureen Leahy—0407 687 517; Anne Fleming— 0409 234 326 .

Be informed, inspired and entertained

Books of the Week



For those who still use them, the Library holds a substantial collection of DVDs, including some for children. Mary of Nazareth is a particularly well-made film which provides entertainment and inspiration for the Christmas season.

Children 3-11 years would enjoy The First Christmas, an animated movie.

Online access to the catalogue is available at: cloud.collectorz.com/247780



St Mary's Parish Library

PLEASE PRAY FOR

Baptisms:

Our prayers have been asked for sick parishioners & friends that they may be healed & comforted during this time:

Peter Mejak, Barbara Fernandez, Christos Pittas, Jocelyn Tibayan, Margaret Schreenan , Olivia MacDonald, Helen Quigley, Lorraine Alexander, Harley McAleer, Pat Milczakowsky, Rosie Bray, Lois Jones, Peter Miles, Leon Gray, Amparp Sarmiento, Mick O'Meara.

Recently Deceased:

We Pray for those whose Anniversaries occur this week, may they enter joyfully into God's Kingdom:

Stefan & John Dancek, Mary Ashby, Irene Barker, Noel Dragwidge, Ken Walters, Hugh McCloskey, John Beck, Hubert Fernandes, Ana Paula Fernandes, Shannon Feehan, Saundary Fernando, Fredrick Willox, Joan Davis, Frank Pedretti, Robert Weekes, Baby Max Webster, Marilu Espacio, Albert D'Souza, Bernard Evans, Mary Puckeridge, Thomas Donahoo, Marie Greer, Colin Shewan, Tony Senive, Annette Augusta Pacey, Malcolm Evans, Robert Briscuso, Joseph Burkett, Margery Anderson, Pamela Miranda, Josephine Cannizzo, Eva David, Andrew Campbell, G. Bruce Rohead, Kevin Evans, Molly Barry, Noeline Caspersz, Aileen Fregon, Felix Castillo, Peter Schulze, Ernest Bolger, Rose Fagan, Rita Gambian, Peter Schulze, Mark James Pollock, S Mayerczak, Mary Diggle, Nora Winifred Allsopp, Annita Carafa, Margarita Pitcher

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT ST THOMAS



PARISH OFFICE HOURS: Tuesday & Friday: 8.00am-4.00pm Wednesdays 12.30pm,-4.00pm
Thursdays 8.00am-11.30am (**Wednesday 8.00am-12.00pm & Thursday 12.00-3.00pm St Mary's**)
Please send bulletin contributions by 12.00pm on Wednesday. Thank you

The office will be closed from Wednesday 27th December - reopens Wednesday 3rd January.

The office will be closed from Tuesday 30th January - reopens Tuesday 13th February.

Thank you to all of our volunteers that help with the smooth running of our Parishes.
For the past six months I have also been working at St Mary's Parish, so my time is divided on some of my regular days.
Thank you for continued financial support of our Church and our Priests.
Thank you to Fr Steven, Fr Martin and Fr Ananda for your support of both our parishioners and myself.
Also a special thank you to Pat, Sandy and Tanya, as you make coming to work enjoyable.
Wishing everyone a wonderful Christmas and New Year.
Take care
Lisa



Roster for Weekend 30th & 31st December

Saturday 6.00pm

Readers: S. McMahon **Commentator:** E. Sacchetta **Eucharistic Ministers:** M. Bedford, S. Bishop, T. Holland

Set Up: C. Leahy

Sunday 10.30am

Reader: S. Millar **Commentator:** L. Hobson **Eucharistic Ministers:** A. Letzia, A. Kerr, C. O'Brien

Set Up: M. Bates

St Thomas prayers are asked for the following Parishioners:

Our prayers have been asked for sick parishioners and friends that they may be healed & comforted during this time:

Miran Kasalo, Peter Kernjak, John Geretschlager

We pray for those who have died recently including Fr. Gerry Dowling and all those whose Anniversaries occur in the month of December that they may enter Joyfully into God's Kingdom:

Emilia Micomonaco, Adrian DeGier, Doris Morfea, Frank Jordan, John Winter, Arthur Eames, Cass Sheehan, Nancy Marzella, Giovanni Marzella, Leo Glennon, Stjepan Kernjak

FAITH FORMATION-Lifelong & Ongoing

Formation will be offered to the members who serve our Partnered Parishes in volunteer ministers as **Readers of the Word/Lecterns, Special Eucharist Ministers, taking Communion to the Sick** and **welcoming and preparing families bringing their children for Baptism**. Don't miss out! Mark your calendars now with the date for your group's formation! (formation for each Ministry is different and offers particular opportunities for prayer and reflections for that particular Ministry* – if you serve on more than one ministry group, we hope you will be available to attend the session relevant for your groups

Saturday 3rd February 2024 – Readers of the Word/Lecterns Ministry Group

Saturday 10th February 2024 – Baptism Ministry Group

Saturday 17th February 2024 – Communion to the Sick Ministry Group

Saturday 24th February 2024 – Special Eucharist Ministers Group

All sessions will be held from 10.00am – 1.00pm (morning tea provided)

The venue for all 4 sessions will be The Gathering Space of St Mary's Church

Please RSVP your group contact person or your Parish Office



Lectionary Art and Reflection by Jenny

In last week's gospel, John used 'light' as a divine attribute; but in Luke's Annunciation 'the power of the Most High' covered Mary 'with its shadow'.

In Luke's Annunciation, Mary is somewhere between the light and the shadow. Here the shadow has a protective, nurturing quality. Here too opposites are reconciled in God (flesh and spirit, light and shadow) 'for nothing is impossible to God'.



Fourth Sunday of Advent, Year B

24 December 2023

First Reading 2 Sm 7:1-5, 8-12, 14, 16

The kingdom of David will be established for ever in the sight of the Lord.

Once David had settled into his house and the Lord had given him rest from all the enemies surrounding him, the king said to the prophet Nathan, 'Look, I am living in a house of cedar while the ark of God dwells in a tent'. Nathan said to the king, 'Go and do all that is in your mind, for the Lord is with you.'

But that very night the word of the Lord came to Nathan:

'Go and tell my servant David, "Thus the Lord speaks: Are you the man to build me a house to dwell in? I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be leader of my people Israel; I have been with you on all your expeditions; I have cut off all your enemies before you. I will give you fame as great as the fame of the greatest on earth. I will provide a place for my people Israel; I will plant them there and they shall dwell in that place and never be disturbed again; nor shall the wicked continue to oppress them as they did, in the days when I appointed judges over my people Israel; I will give them rest from all their enemies. The Lord will make you great; the Lord will make you a House. And when your days are ended and you are laid to rest with your ancestors, I will preserve the offspring of your body after you and make his sovereignty secure. I will be a father to him and he a son to me. Your House and your sovereignty will always stand secure before me and your throne be established for ever."

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 88:2-5, 27, 29. R. see v.2

(R.) For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.

- I will sing for ever of your love, O Lord; through all ages my mouth will proclaim your truth.
Of this I am sure, that your love lasts for ever,
that your truth is firmly established as the heavens. (R.)
- 'I have made a covenant with my chosen one;
I have sworn to David my servant:
I will establish your dynasty for ever
and set up your throne through all ages.' (R.)
- He will say to me: 'You are my father, my God, the rock who saves me.'
I will keep my love for him always;
or him my covenant shall endure. (R.)

Second Reading Rom 16:25-27

The mystery kept secret for endless ages is now revealed.

Glory to him who is able to give you the strength to live according to the Good News I preach, and in which I proclaim Jesus Christ, the revelation of a mystery kept secret for endless ages, but now so clear that it must be broadcast to pagans everywhere to bring them to the obedience of faith. This is only what scripture has predicted, and it is all part of the way the eternal God wants things to be. He alone is wisdom; give glory therefore to him through Jesus Christ for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Acclamation Lk 1:38

Alleluia, alleluia!

*I am the servant of the Lord:
may his will for me be done.
Alleluia!*

Gospel Lk 1:26-38

You will conceive and bear a son.

The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. He went in and said to her, 'Rejoice, so highly favoured! The Lord is with you.' She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, 'Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'But how can this come about, since I am a virgin?' 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you' the angel answered 'and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. Know this too: your kinswoman Elizabeth has, in her old age, herself conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God.' 'I am the handmaid of the Lord,' said Mary 'let what you have said be done to me.' And the angel left her.

The psalm responses are from the English Translation of the Lectionary for the Mass ©1981 International Committee on English in the Liturgy Inc. (ICEL). All rights reserved. The psalm texts, from *The Psalms, A New Translation*, ©1963 by The Grail, England and used by permission of the publishers. The scriptural quotations are taken from the Jerusalem Bible, published and copyright 1966, 1967 and 1968 by Darton Longman and Todd Ltd and Doubleday & Co Inc, and used by permission of the publishers.
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Reflection by Fr Michael Tate

St Luke's account of the Annunciation draws on the Jewish tradition describing creation: 'There was darkness over the deep and God's Spirit hovered over the water. God said: "Let there be light", and there was light.' (Genesis 1:2-3) St Luke depicts Mary hearing in the depths of her soul: 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow.'

The Holy Spirit hovers over this young Jewish woman so that the most stupendously creative act in human history can take place. With her consent, God assumes human nature to be gradually enfleshed, embodied, in Mary's womb.

A naturally bewildered young woman was able to respond to God's will because she understood the imagery and the symbolism of the Genesis Story. We, in turn, need to read the Gospels in all their Jewishness so that we can understand when God's Holy Spirit hovers over our lives, asking us to fulfil some particular role in the Divine Plan.

We could pause for a moment to ask whether *now* is the time for a Marian response: 'Be it done unto me according to your word.'

mtate@bigpond.com