



25th December 2021

Parish Priest: Fr. Steven Rigo **Assistant Priests:** Fr. Tao Pham & Fr. Dixon George

Parish Pastoral Associates: Jacinta Bright & 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.cam.org.au/greensborough

Secretaries: Francesca Olofsson & Sharon Prosser

Mass Times

Tuesday to Friday: Mass 9.15am

Saturday: Vigil Mass 6.30pm

Sunday: Mass 8.00am, 10.00am & 5.00pm

Reconciliation Times

Saturday: By Appointment only please call the Parish Office

Parish School Principal

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

Sacred Heart

25 Gipson Street,
Diamond Creek 3088

Parish: 9401 6361

Email: DiamondCreek@cam.org.au

Website: www.pol.org.au/diamondcreek

Secretary: Pat Guatta

Mass Times

Wednesday & Friday: Mass 9.15am

Saturday: 1st & 3rd Saturday 7.15pm at

St Peter's

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

THE CELEBRATION OF MASS IN OUR PARISHES

Weekday Masses has resumed in our 3 Parishes.

Sacred Heart: 9.15am Wednesday & Friday. St Mary's: 9.15am Tuesday-Friday. St Thomas: 9.15am Tuesday & Thursday.

Mass is recorded each weekend and uploaded onto our Websites for you to view.

St Mary's: www.cam.1.org.au/greensborough Sacred Heart: www.pol.org.au/diamondcreek

St Thomas: www.pol.org.au/greensboroughnorth

Mass at Home: St Patrick's Cathedral: On Channel 31, 44 on Digital TV, for Sunday Mass at 11.00am

CLOSURE OF OFFICES OVER JANUARY

SACRED HEART: WILL BE CLOSED FROM TUESDAY 11TH JANUARY-REOPENS TUESDAY 25TH JANUARY

ST MARY'S: WILL BE CLOSED FROM MONDAY 3RD JANUARY-REOPENS TUESDAY 18TH JANUARY.

After the 18th January please ring 9435 1543 to ensure someone is there to assist you.

ST THOMAS: WILL BE CLOSED FROM WEDNESDAY 29TH DECEMBER -REOPENS TUESDAY 4TH JANUARY.

To contact a priest while the offices are closed please ring the St Mary's Presbytery on 7036 9329

and leave a message and someone will get back to you asap.

Sacred Heart, St Mary's & St Thomas the Apostle are all members of the Diamond Valley Deanery.



www.diamondvalleydeanery.org.au

Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne

www.cam.org.au



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.

Dear Parishioners of Sacred Heart, Diamond Creek, St. Mary's, Greensborough and St. Thomas, North Greensborough,

I recently listened to an interview on ABC Radio of a remarkable young man by the name of Abbas Nazari discussing his recently published book *"After the Tampa: From Afganistan to New Zealand"*. He was a seven year old boy fleeing the Taliban with his family, when he, with over 430 refugees, were rescued from a sinking boat off the coast of Australia by the cargo ship, Tampa, 20 years ago in 2001. Taken to New Zealand as his new home, his exceptional life journey about surviving, arriving and thriving from being a refugee to a Fulbright scholar in New York is a wonderful story about gratitude, resilience, growth and flourishing. You might like to listen to one of several podcasts of interviews of Nazari. What he said at the end of this particular interview struck me – "Adversity is a GIFT that everyone receives. Opportunity hides behind adversity, and so it can be used to become stronger, wiser and more prepared." The huge adversity for Nazari became the source of wonderful growth as a human being.

I reflected on the relevance of Nazari's story to the common adversity we have faced globally with the COVID Pandemic. Despite all the hardships, deaths as a result of the Coronavirus, the economic chaos and the collapse of businesses and industries, perhaps these past two years have also been for individuals, societies and globally, a time that should afford the opportunity to make changes in our lives and lifestyles. What are the good things we have learnt that we can take into the future, and what are the life-sapping, maybe even destructive behaviours that we need to leave behind? These are some of the thoughts I have as we conclude this year about adversity and opportunity for growth and change.

As we approach the end of 2021, 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 – Dixon George and Tao Pham. I would like to also thank Owen Doyle, our dedicated and locally resident retired priest.

I am extremely grateful for the support and dedicated commitment to pastoral work in our parishes by Jacinta Bright and Sr. Margaret Sapsford, our Pastoral Associates. These last two years have placed considerable demands on our pastoral activities, especially in relation to organising, developing and maintaining extraordinary processes of COVID-safe practices. A team of volunteers has responded to calls for cleaning and sanitising our churches after each ceremony as well as COVID Marshalling as people enter our churches for ceremonies. I am particularly grateful to Pat Guatta, Lisa Leahy, Francesca Olofsson and Sharon Prosser, our parish secretaries who are the immediate face and voice of the parish offices and who especially assist me in my administrative responsibilities. I also thank Denise Chang-Faux, who organised the Trybookings process for our Masses at St. Mary's. They have all worked either at home or in the parish offices when they were able to do so, under very difficult circumstances.

Over the past two years, as we have been restricted to our own homes during the many days of Lockdown, opportunities have presented themselves to work differently and explore innovative ways of being connected. Our Friday Morning Teas across the parishes have enabled people to be connected and socialise with one another online. Two sessions of presentations over Zoom entitled "The Wonders of the Cosmos" led by a parishioner, John O'Connor, a cosmologist, Jacinta and myself have explored the connections and interrelationship between the truths of our Catholic Faith with the new insights gained from the physical and natural sciences. Sunday Masses have been videoed and live-streamed since March 2020 to connect with parishioners in prayer and worship. Faith Formation nights with parents whose children are preparing for the Sacraments have been held using a communications platform - "Zoom" – a word that has taken up an entirely new meaning during the Pandemic. These are just some of the examples of how we have used modern technology to offer opportunities for faith formation and social interaction.

Parishioners have also reached out through phone calls and letter drops to express our parishes' expression of care for each other. I am grateful for the ways they have expressed this outreach.

The year has placed massive demands on our schools to provide online learning. The coordination of this for the education and welfare of our children has required a great deal of wise leadership and coordination with staff and parents. Parents have realised the wonderful work that teachers do as they have more actively participated in the education of their children. I would like to express my deep gratitude to Jim O'Sullivan, David Delaney and Marisa Matthys, our school principals; because it is together that we lead the parishes in pastoral care, education and spiritual formation.

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.

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 abundantly with all you need throughout 2022 – 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.



(Parish Priest)



MESSAGE FROM FR TAO PHAM

My dear Parishioners of St Mary's, St Peter's, Sacred Heart's and St Thomas the Apostle Parishes, Perhaps many in our Parishes would be surprised not to see me in the special liturgical celebrations of this Christmas Season?

Maybe some of you have heard about my sickness due to Covid 19.

I was hospitalized in ICU (Intensive Care Unit) last Friday morning with heavy Covid-19. I was hospitalized in critical condition - the Covid virus has entered and infected my lungs and internal organs.

From last Friday morning 17th December 2021, I must use oxygen ventilator/life-support to Yesterday evening (Monday 20th December 2021). 3 days and nights I was numb in ICU bed.

Last night (Monday 20th December 2021) the doctors asked me to stop using oxygen ventilator and I am back to practice to breathe normally.

At 11:20 pm last night (Monday 20th December 2021) the doctors made a decision to move me to a new Isolation Area which is called Covid Station which is located on 8th Floor of St Vincent's hospital, Melbourne.

There are 12 Covid patients like me in this new Ward.

Maybe I must be here to treat Covid problems during the Christmas Season.

At the moment I am getting better a little bit and I am out off the critical condition and try to eat, to walk again and try go to toilet and have a shower by myself.

For me, I try my best to gain my health again because I know that all you in Australia and many people around the world are praying fervently for me to gain my life.

With my faith and absolute trust in God's mercy, I trust God to restore me soon to return to serve you in the Parishes.

Thanks to your prayers, I'm sure God will do what I ask for!

Due to my health condition now I cannot phone you and to write long essays to tell you all details. I just let you know that I have received a lot of greetings and messages for all of you during these days.

I am very sorry NOT to Reply to everyone of you.

Please kindly forgive my shortcomings at this time!

I am very appreciate that many of you wishing me the best and I am always in your thoughts, and in your prayers. Many of you wish me to be recovered as soon as possible and go home this time.

I am isolated in this Area I can't see you face to face and can't communicate by voice with you, however I have a lot of time to think about each and everyone of you.

I mise every one and each of you very much!

In this hard condition I will pray for you and your family more and more.

May the Infant Jesus, Our Lord will bless all and everyone in our Parishes in the Christmas Season and New Year ahead.

May The Lord bless all of you and give you a Wonderful, Merry Christmas and Joyful, Happy and Peaceful New Year!

Fr Tao Pham

From the Isolated Unit -

St Vincent's hospital Melbourne.



MESSAGE FROM FR DIXON GEORGE

Let me begin this year my Christmas message with a beautiful story from the 2019 Christmas homily of Pope Francis. At the birth of Jesus the shepherds hurried to the stable with different gifts. Each brought what he had; some brought the fruits of their labour, others some precious item. But as they were all presenting their gifts, there was one shepherd who had nothing to give. He was extremely poor; he had no gift to present. As the others were competing to offer their gifts, he stood apart, embarrassed. At a certain point, Saint Joseph and Our Lady found it hard to receive all those gifts, especially Mary, who had to hold the baby. Seeing the shepherd with empty hands, she asked him to draw near, and she placed the baby Jesus in his arms. That shepherd, in accepting him, became aware of having received what he did not deserve, of holding in his arms the greatest gift of all time. He looked at his hands, those hands that seemed to him always empty. They had become the cradle of God. He felt himself loved and, overcoming his embarrassment, began to show Jesus to the others, for he could not keep for himself the Gift of gifts.

The Christmas Story reminds us that, whatever others may think of us, each of us is of value to God. God loves us for who we are. God values us whether we are young or old, rich or poor, famous or unheard, believers or atheists. God loves us individually, regardless of whether we are able-bodied or disabled, popular or rejected, healthy or addicted.

As Saint John Henry Newman prayed, "May each Christmas, as it comes, find us more and more like Him, who at this time became a little child for our sake, more simpleminded, more humble, more holy, more affectionate, more resigned, more happy, more full of God. May it be a time for innocence, and purity, and gentleness, and mildness, and contentment, and peace."

The Bible recounts how a star appeared in the sky, its light guiding the shepherds and wise men to the scene of Jesus's birth. Let the light of Christmas – the spirit of selflessness, love and above all hope – guide us in the times ahead.

I Wish each one of you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New year.

Dixon George Kuriappilly IV Dei



ST VINCENT DE PAUL DIAMOND CREEK CONFERENCE

The St Vincent DePaul Diamond Creek Conference sincerely thank the Sacred Heart Parishioners for their generous donations to the Christmas appeal. The conference distributed food and gift vouchers to disadvantaged families in our area. This put smiles on people's faces and we received many compliments. ***Thanks again for all the support from the Diamond Creek Conference.***

THANK YOU TO THE SACRED HEART COMMUNITY: from the Thomas and McAllister families for your prayers, support and kind messages after the recent passing of my daughter Christine McAllister. ***Peg Thomas***

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE AT ST THOMAS PARISH

I wish to thank everyone at St Thomas as our Parish would not survive without the help of many.

I would like to thank those involved in the Liturgy team who prepare for our Masses.

Our teams of volunteers who arrive at Mass to Setup, Eucharist Ministers, Commentators and Readers and Counters

Our Church cleaning team who arrived on Tuesday to clean the Church for this weekend.

Those who visit our nursing homes, Aurrum, Leith Park and Bupa.

Sue for once again taking care of the Catechetics class, and sacraments.

There are also people behind the scenes who deliver Newsletters to those who don't have the internet,

take communion to those while we have been in lockdown.

Andrew for looking after the Parish grounds and our Finance team.

Thank you also to Fr Steven, Fr Tao and Fr Dixon as we get through another year.

A special thank you to Pat, Francesca, Sharon the other secretaries in our Parishes as we work together to get the job done.

A thank you also to Jacinta and Sr Margaret.

We have had a really hard past couple of years and I look forwards to seeing more of us gathering together to celebrate in 2022.

Thank you Lisa

thank you

Sacred Heart Parish community is very grateful:

-to our wonderful volunteers for preparing and cleaning the Churches, reading, providing music, Eucharistic Ministers at all Hurstbridge and Diamond Creek Masses, our counting teams, and everyone on the weekly rosters. Your contribution around the Parish throughout the year is very much appreciated

-to everyone who contributes to the parish collections either by envelopes, direct debit, credit card or anonymously.



*When the song of the angels is stilled
When the star in the sky is gone
When the kings and princes are home
When the shepherds are back with their flock
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost
To heal the broken
To feed the hungry
To release the prisoners
To rebuild nations
To bring peace among brothers and sisters
To make music in the heart
Howard Thurman*

Thank you to all parishioners for your community spirit, support and efforts in a difficult and challenging 2021. Enjoy a peaceful and safe Christmas.

Best wishes to you and your families. Regards, Pat

As we think Christmas, may the holy family of Bethlehem come into our thoughts. There may we experience the loving gaze of the Christ Child waiting to bless us and our families.

Remembering you in prayer with gratitude for your ongoing support and kindness,
Margaret Sapsford rsc

Christmas Message 2021

Greetings everyone!

Clearly this has been another year of struggle for so many. Our on again - off again lockdowns have taken a toll. Yet, in all that difficulty, we can see the Spirit at work. Many employees who have had to work from home have found more flexible working arrangements to be immensely beneficial to their home/life balance. That's not to say that parents of school aged children and under, haven't struggled trying to balance caring for children and completing their work. I know many parents work until late at night, once the children are in bed, to meet the demands of their employed work roles – and they are exhausted.

However what I think has happened is that more than ever people have come to reorganize priorities because what was seen as important prior to COVID is no longer high on the list. Instead, time for leisure, family and rest have become our more conscious desires. This is the Spirit raising up for us what we have covered over, with excess – long work hours, material possessions, trying to please and trying to control ... all those things that we think will make us happy or secure. To be forced to relinquish those things that we thought were important opens us up to a space when we can experience peace, which is what God desires for us. This life passes and at the end of our times, we might imagine what we have appreciated more – financial success, possessions, status – or relationships.

We have also become aware of how some people have experienced greater isolation and loneliness and increased anxiety, during COVID. This includes those people who for their, or your own, reason have not been vaccinated. We are called to be healing and reconciling followers of Christ. Hence when we create division with our words and thoughts, rather than creating opportunities for healing in the world, it is very subtle because we can feel justified, but we work against God's desires for Creation. Maybe we can try to reach out and understand each other, even though we have differences. The virus of judgment and rejection and self-righteousness – which can come from either side of an argument, is just as deadly, in that when we sow seeds of division we can kill a person's spirit and we can become a divisive society.

So, with all that, may Christ's birth bring hope and peace and joy. May his humanity inspire ours; may it permeate our very beings and our greater society with compassion and love.

Thank you for all the love and support you have given me over the year.

May your Christmas be grace-filled.

Jacinta

Joy^{to the}
World

PPC Christmas Message

it is with great honor that I share a Christmas message on behalf of the St Mary's PPC to our parish community. Firstly, we would like to say thankyou to Fr Steve and Jacinta, Francesca and Sharon for their wonderful work throughout 2021 amidst an ever changing landscape. Personally, I would also like to say thankyou to the members of the PPC for their commitment and dedication this year. As the PPC we have worked respectfully and faithfully throughout 2021, sharing prayer, faith and reflection. Our work for 2022 will focus on how we are being called as parish leaders to respond practically with the restructuring of parishes as asked by the by the Archdiocese with a focus on our mission. Last week we came together for a meal to celebrate Christmas and reflect upon what it means to be Catholic in 2021, with a focus on our Mission. It was heartening to hear, through discussion, that as a group we share the Gospel values of faith, hope, service, a sense of community and love for others. As I listened to the members of this group speak, it made me think deeply about what it means to be Catholic at Christmas time. If we look to the secular world it is easy to get caught up in the stress and hype that comes with the busyness of Christmas. However, if we reflect upon the thoughts of our PPC, Christmas is about relationships, connection and love. As we think about Jesus' birth he came from humble beginnings, born in a stable, with the love of God and the love of his parents. As people we know that true love is about welcome acceptance, commitment and forgiveness. So as you come together this Christmas season with your family and friends, we wish you well as you look for love and Christ in your Christmas. May this time be one of peace, love and joy.

Merry Christmas to all.

We wish you all a Christmas of renewed peace and happiness.

Elizabeth Whiting

Chair St Mary's Parish Pastoral Council

A Message from the Parish Office at St Mary's: A Message from our Parish Secretaries

As we approach this Festive Season we stop to reflect on the year of 2021—a year that continued to bring challenges to us all. Another year that none of us will ever forget. Continued lockdowns with glimpses of hope and freedom—appreciating times with family and friends—being able to work from the office and meet up with our St. Mary's family.

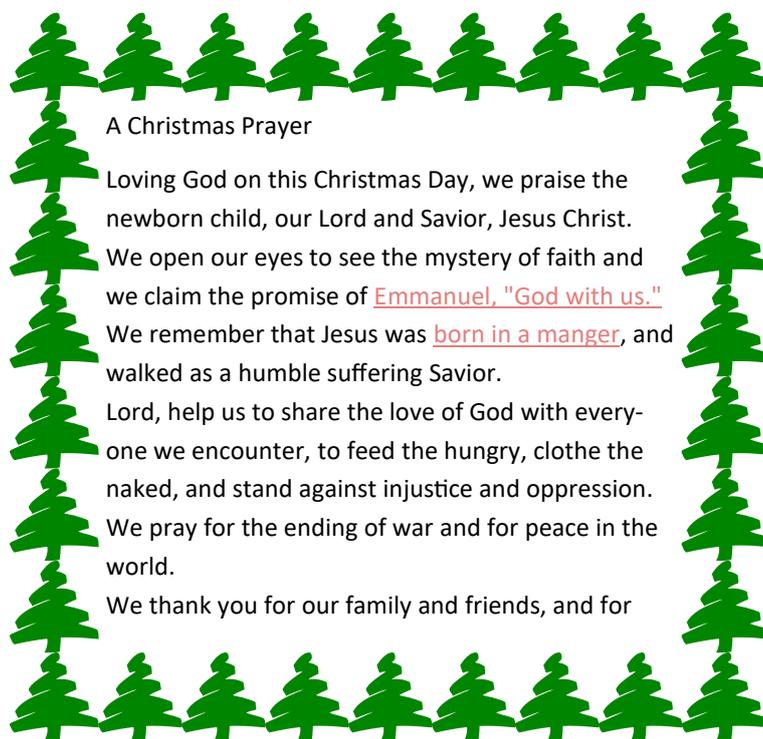
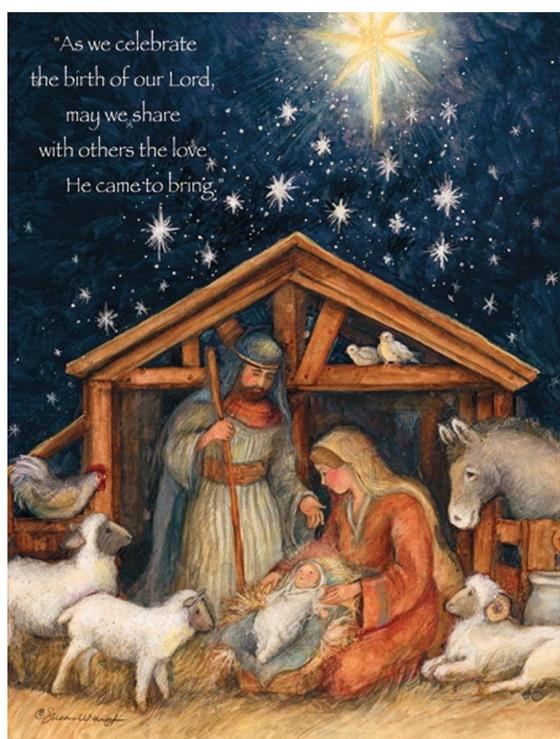
We thank you all, our dear parishioners for your support for us during the year. We hope that we have been able to keep you all as informed as possible on things that are happening.

We are grateful for the care and support from our wonderful team here in the Parish Office. And for the continued support and help from our wonderful Parish Groups.

We wish you all a Safe, Happy and Peaceful Christmas. May the love and peace you enjoy and share at Christmas, continue on into the New Year. May your holidays be filled with love and may you all enjoy time with family & friends.

Looking forward to seeing you all in 2022.

From Francesca Olofsson and Sharon Prosser



ANNIVERSARIES FOR ST MARY'S

Margaret Elliott, Juanita Noblejas-Pena, Mary Kate Kennedy, Emma Pini, Julie Pitts, Arthur George Webster, John Coffey, Christopher Nolan, Bonifacio Nakpil Jr., Mary Fricker, Henry Lewis, Arthur Maxwell, William Seymon, Adam Bacash, Marguerita Theresa Walsh, Gertrude Ryan, Ethel Corfield, Lorna Schulze, Barbra Osborne, Patrick Neeson, Tom Keely, Min Toohey, K.C. Peter, May Teycheney, Phyllis Forssman, Alfred George Smith, Tom Villanti, Francis Rudolph, Robert Searle, Rose & William Butler; Dorothy, Aliee, William Hearne; Keith, Duncan, Georgina & Anita Phillips, Fr. Flynn SSS, Tony Bedford, Ronald Lewis, Albert Bean, Monty Tyrrel, Harry Paul, Mrs. Horton, Edna & Sharon Bedford, Leo O'Meara, Liz Kavanagh, Delphine Fernandes, William John O'Reily, Jack Greugan, Roderick Gates, Alan Thornely, Charlotte Murphy, Mona Coleman, Connie White, John Glennon, Sylvia Bartlett, Joao Baronet, Bill O'Toole, Barry Munari, Ulrich Gomes, Raffaele Di Domenica, Bernie Malone, Rose Taormina, Johanna Ormant, David Philp, Gus Hardy, Les Caldwell, Kevin Allsopp, Najeebe Bacash, Wally Bacash, Lucy Nolan, Lyn Nolan, George Hansen, Fr Matt Keaney SJ., Avelino Peralta, Shannon Feehan, Thomas DeSouza, Avelino Peralita, Renato Peralta, Angelo DeCarli, Ivy Newcombe, Ian Touhill, Eugenie Fullarton, Elsie de Graaff, Jack Zoch, Ruby Hains, Joe Soppitt, Nance & Keith Barnett, Jack Sutherland, Fabrizio Ferrusi, Ferdinand Galati, Patrick Keely, Loreto & Gaetano Lancia, Franco Di Edoardo, Natalie Vita, Alan Martin, Emily Bunt, David Sturrock, Mary Boyce, Julia Nelson, Mary Sanco, Rohan Muir, Dora Isany, Jozsef Varga, Giuseppe & Giuseppa Bruno, Filomena, Freda, Albert, Orlando Cartolavo, Carmel & Julia Keely, Dermot & Elizabeth Kavanagh, Arthur Kiernan, Katarina Komor, Nellie Best, Dorothy Pocock, John Molnar

Joy, Love Peace, Rejoice, Christmas

Nativity of the Lord (Christmas) Midnight

25 December

First Reading Is 9:1-7

A son is given to us.

The people that walked in darkness
has seen a great light;
on those who live in a land of deep shadow
a light has shone.
You have made their gladness greater,
you have made their joy increase;
they rejoice in your presence
as men rejoice at harvest time,
as men are happy when they are dividing the
spoils.
For the yoke that was weighing on him,
the bar across his shoulders,
the rod of his oppressor,
these you break as on the day of Midian.
For all the footgear of battle,
every cloak rolled in blood,
is burnt
and consumed by fire.
For there is a child born for us,
a son given to us
and dominion is laid on his shoulders;
and this is the name they give him:
Wonder-Counsellor, Mighty-God,
Eternal-Father, Prince-of-Peace.
Wide is his dominion
in a peace that has no end,
for the throne of David
and for his royal power,
which he establishes and makes secure
in justice and integrity.
From this time onwards and for ever,
the jealous love of the Lord of hosts
will do this.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 95:1-3. 11-13 R. Lk 2:11

*(R.) Today is born our Saviour,
Christ the Lord.*

1. O sing a new song to the Lord,
sing to the Lord all the earth.
O sing to the Lord, bless his name. *(R.)*
2. Proclaim his help day by day,
tell among the nations his glory
and his wonders among all
the peoples. *(R.)*
3. Let the heavens rejoice and earth
be glad,
let the sea and all within it thunder praise,
let the land and all it bears rejoice,
all the trees of the wood shout for joy
at the presence of the Lord
for he comes,
he comes to rule the earth. *(R.)*
4. With justice he will rule the world,
he will judge the peoples with
his truth *(R.)*

Second Reading Ti 2:11-14

God's grace has been revealed to all people.

God's grace has been revealed, and it has made salvation possible for the whole human race and taught us that what we have to do is to give up everything that does not lead to God, and all our worldly ambitions; we must be self-restrained and live good and religious lives here in this present world, while we are waiting in hope for the blessing which will come with the Appearing of the glory of our great God and saviour Christ Jesus. He sacrificed himself for us in order to set us free from all wickedness and to purify a people so that it could be his very own and would have no ambition except to do good.

Gospel Acclamation Lk 2:10-11

Alleluia, alleluia!

*Good News and great joy to all
the world:*

*today is born our Saviour, Christ
the Lord.*

Alleluia!

Gospel Lk 2:1-14

Today a saviour has been born for you.

Caesar Augustus issued a decree for a census of the whole world to be taken. This census – the first – took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria, and everyone went to his own town to be registered. So Joseph set out from the town of Nazareth in Galilee and travelled up to Judaea, to the town of David called Bethlehem, since he was of David's House and line, in order to be registered together with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to a son, her first-born. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them at the inn. In the countryside close by there were shepherds who lived in the fields and took it in turns to watch their flocks during the night. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone round them. They were terrified, but the angel said, 'Do not be afraid. Listen, I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people. Today in the town of David a saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. And here is a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.' And suddenly with the angel there was a great throng of the heavenly host, praising God and singing:

'Glory to God in the highest heaven
and peace to men who enjoy his favour.'

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Reflection by Dianne Bergant CSA

The Gospel situates the birth of Jesus within Roman rule of the first century. Through the Incarnation, the ordinary becomes transparent and reveals the extraordinary; the divine is known in the child. Only those of humble heart experience this wonder. They behold it and they come to embrace it. In fact, it is the nature of this child, born in history, to reverse the orders of power.

God is portrayed as a valiant liberator who champions the cause of justice and who brings a liberation that reverses history and the ways of war, power and oppression. This reversal is made more shocking by the fact that the one who is the mighty warrior and conqueror of the nations is a child. This child is the weak and voiceless one, the one who has neither power nor legal rights. God's reversal of the long-standing realities of this world is accomplished through the apparently insignificant, through the gift of this child who is given to us in the middle of the night.

Something new has happened: the age of God's fulfilment has arrived. The age of grace and fresh hope, made available to all people of good will, is an era of redemptive presence. Now all people can walk in the newness of life and grace. Yet, while this new age has begun, it is not yet fully realised. We live believing in its presence and awaiting its fulfilment. Although we are celebrating Christmas, we still await the final coming of the Lord.