



We acknowledge the Wurundjeri people who are the traditional custodians of this land and pay respect to the elders past, present and emerging of the Kulin Nation.

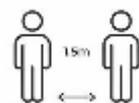
A COVIDsafe Summer - Christmas Masses

Such great news after our Victorian lockdown and severe restrictions on movement of people in society. On Tuesday 8th December at 12.00pm the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne issued its 23rd Update on General Liturgical Guidelines - following on from the State Government of Victoria latest health directives now available to our population from midnight Sunday 6th December.

The Key points for our Communities of Eltham & Montmorency are:



- Please carry an appropriate **face covering** at all times - and use it when necessary;
- Please **socially distance 1.5m** (families not included) for appropriate spacing;
- Please **record your presence** via: QR Code on your phone, or on paper, this is essential for Record Keeping and if necessary, tracing and numbers;
- Please use **Hand Sanitiser** provided or other personal appropriate cleaning agent.



Please note that Density Regulations allow for **160 people** in the Churches of St. Francis Xavier and Our Lady Help of Christians.

So many emotions are being experienced by people as we move forward together (primarily - relief & joy, but with some apprehension). Please note that we are trying our best to achieve a 'Covid Normal' way of celebrating as a wonderful & strong Catholic community. Please be careful, and importantly respectful, of people around you - naturally to help them be safe too and supported by your love and concern at this strange time! Everyone is welcome and everyone has an opinion on how to be Safe and Celebrate at this time, so please watch out for each other.

Christmas Masses Timetable



OLHC Eltham - all services in church

Christmas Eve, 24 December:

5pm Family Mass & **8pm** Traditional Mass

Christmas Day, 25 December: 10am Mass

SFX Montmorency

Christmas Eve, 24 December:

6pm Outdoor Family Mass - Holy Trinity School Grounds

10pm Traditional Mass - in SFX Church

Christmas Day, 25 December:

8:30am Mass - in SFX Church

This parish has a commitment to ensuring the safety of children and vulnerable people in our community.

For more information visit pol.org.au/eltham or pol.org.au/montmorency.

We support the recommendations of the Royal Commission into institutional abuse and pray for all the survivors.



PARISH TEAM & INFORMATION



Let us pray for all those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith ...

OUR PEOPLE & OUR CONTACT DETAILS



Parish Priests

Terry Kean - Pastor in Solidum

terry.kean@cam.org.au

Michael Sierakowski - Moderator

michael.sierakowski@cam.org.au

Barry Caldwell

Parish Office

86 Mayona Road

9435 2178

Mon - Fri 9am-3pm

montmorency@cam.org.au

Kate Kogler:

Parish Secretary

eltham@cam.org.au

Gina Ang:

Pastoral Worker &

Caring Group Co-Ord—**Eltham**

gina.ang@cam.org.au

Peter Williams:

Child Safety Officer

SFX&OLHC.ChildSafety@cam.org.au

Website:

www.pol.org.au/montmorency

www.pol.org.au/eltham

(pol stands for Parish OnLine)

Facebook:

St Francis Xavier Parish Montmorency

Monty & Eltham Newsletter & Facebook items:

eltham@cam.org.au

Schools

St Francis Xavier Primary School

Principal: Mr Philip Cachia: 9435 8474

principal@sfxmontmorency.catholic.edu.au

www.sfxmontmorency.catholic.edu.au

Holy Trinity Primary School

Principal: Mr Vince Bumpstead: 9431 0888

principal@htelthamnth.catholic.edu.au

www.htelthamnth.catholic.edu.au

Our Lady Help of Christians Primary School

Principal: Mr Chris Ray: 9439 7824

school@olhceltham.catholic.edu.au

www.olhceltham.catholic.edu.au



For Sale:
White desk &
bookcase
in good condition

\$50 ono

Please contact
Parish Office 9435 2178

Montmorency

For the recently deceased:

Faye Bowkett

For those whose anniversaries are at this time:

Leo Fell

For those in need of healing, remembering especially:

Baby Kylie, Sriyani Algama, Nikki Attwood, Robert Baker, Justine Best, Fr Glen Bourke, Ray Bowman, Kristina Brazaitis, Renee Eastwood, Debbie Edgley, Julian Forrester, Gennie Hannon, Samuel Hauser (Kyabram), Val Hayes, Colleen Hussin, Jim Hussin, Tania Inserra, Tina Inserra, Adrian Jones, Angus Kossatz, Kate Lagerewskij, Erin McLindon, Hasti Momeni, Therese Moore, Patricia Mulholland, Montagna Mustica, Graham Neal, Geoffrey Nyssen, Mercy Ocon, Ron Pfeil, Susan Phelan, Andrew Pighin, Anthony Salvatore, Mary Salvatore, Sr Amor Samonte RGS (Philippines), Maria Schroeders, Jeanette Steward, John Tobin, Aldo Viapiana, Sheryn Zurzolo.

Eltham

For the recently deceased:

Barry Scully, Wanda Nowak

For those whose anniversaries are at this time:

For those in need of healing, remembering especially:

Ray Bowman, Kate Boyce, Andrew & Lucinda Collier, Eileen Culbertson, Jon D'Cruz, Ruth Decker, Dennis Goddard, Luke Hawthorne-Smith, Jack Issai, Diana Jackson, Jeanette Jenkins, Maureen Jenkins, Julie Jones, Baby Finley McPartlin, Simone Owen, Kath Wheelahan.

To include an anniversary please contact Parish House

9435 2178 or eltham@cam.org.au.

That Catholic Shop, www.thatcatholicshop.com, is an exciting development for *Aid to the Church in Need* in Australia. Every purchase you make goes to support our work to keep the faith alive in those places where it is most at risk. This year do some of your Christmas shopping with us and bring the faith into homes and hearts.



RECONCILIATION

available upon request

please call the Parish Office 9435 2178

Collections last weekend: 6 Dec 2020

Community	Thanksgiving	Presbytery
Eltham	\$520.00	\$371.00
Montmorency	\$1,693.00	\$677.70

Please note the above figures are monies banked & do not include visa/mastercard or direct debits.
Thank you so much for your contributions.

CDFPay: (alternate thanksgiving options)
Montmorency - <https://bit.ly/CDFPayMontmorency>
Eltham - <https://bit.ly/CDFPayEltham>



Please help our parish continue our important pastoral activities.
You can give an offering online today with CDFpay.

Find our parish by visiting:
<https://bit.ly/CDFPayEltham> <https://bit.ly/CDFPayMontmorency>

Homily

What if Father Christmas and John the Baptist were to meet in Were Street, Montmorency or Main Road, Eltham? And a crowd had gathered around to meet them and we were there?

Father Christmas would be all dressed in red and carrying a sack on his shoulders. He would probably be giving out lollies to the children and with a merry 'ho ho ho' voice asking them what they wanted for Christmas. John the Baptist would look a pretty odd character, in very strange clothes and he would probably be handing out posters with the words, 'prepare the way of the Lord.'

What if John the Baptist asked Father Christmas, 'why are you here'? How would Father Christmas answer? Maybe words like:

"I'm here because this is a time for us to be generous, for us to celebrate our families and friends. It has been such a difficult year for so many people because of the Covid 19 pandemic and we all need to gather again and enjoy the company of one another.

You see my story and tradition dates back a long time, when St Nicholas brought presents to the children who no longer had a father to look after them. I first came from a fishing village in Turkey where so many fishermen drowned at sea because of heavy storms. I am here for the children today, but also with a message of time to celebrate for us all."

Then Father Christmas would ask John the Baptist, 'and why are you here?'

What would John the Baptist answer? Maybe words like:

"Father Christmas you are so right. You and I want to cheer up the hearts of people everywhere and you are such a gift of good will to us all. I'm here however to remind people to think about why we are celebrating Christmas.

I first came from the river Jordan where I baptised people with water, the waters of repentance and I spoke of the one coming after me, who would be the light of the world. Christmas is about remembering and celebrating the birth of the Christ-child who would be this light of the world.

In all the celebrations of this time I ask people to remember the person we celebrate. And when I hand out posters with the words, 'prepare the way of the Lord,' I am asking people, including the children, to open their hearts to the one who is to come again and again into our midst in the person of Jesus in our lives.

I see lots of gatherings where people gather for end of year, for the prospect of holidays and I see much money spent on food and drink and presents for Christmas. And it's not that I am against this, for we do need to find ways to lift our spirit in this year of Covid 19.

And I am aware that Christmas is a feast of the Christian tradition and there are so many people who belong to other faith traditions. I realise too that Christmas is not a religious occasion for so many people for whatever reason.

Yet for those of us who believe in the person of Jesus Christ, this is a time to remember the first Christmas when Jesus was born into our world. It's a time for remembering that we are called to continue his life in our world today. To be like Jesus we are to ask how we can be light for our world. How can we reach out to people who are suffering? How will our kindness, our compassion help someone along the road? This is a time for reconciling if we have differences, a time for giving not taking."

And when John the Baptist had finished what he had wanted to say, surely they would both smile and encourage each other, even if they still cannot hug in these Covid 19 times. But they would look at us and ask us, 'How will you live Christmas this year?'

Terry

Live-Stream Masses

Mass will be live streamed from OLHC Church this Sunday at 10am. This Third Sunday of Advent - REJOICE! We light our rose-coloured candle and are reminded what we are preparing for, the joyful occasion of the birth of Jesus... the Son of God who came to live among us as one of us and who continues to break into our lives at any moment... let us have eyes to see and ears to hear...

We leave the steps below in case you still require them to help stay connected:

1. Go to www.google.com, type: olhc sfx youtube (click search)
2. OLHC SFX YouTube will appear (click on it)
3. You will see the thumbnail of Masses already streamed
4. You will see somewhere on the screen 'subscribe' (red box) (click it)
5. Then click on any of the Masses or watch the live-streaming of Mass of the day

Patsy & Team (0429 439 675)



Advent 2020: 'Wellsprings of Silence' - When Silence Speaks **By Donna Orsuto**

I wrote this reflection on silence in August, perched above the Coliseum on the Caelian Hill in Rome, where The Lay Centre is located. It is in this place that the Passionist founder, St. Paul of the Cross, established one of his communities.

It is in this place that I spent the spring lockdown with several other scholars of The Lay Centre, who were unable to return to their home countries. During those months, often intensely busy with teaching my Gregorian University classes online and with administrative responsibilities at The Lay Centre, I also discovered the richness of the silence that this place offers. I think I can glimpse something of what St. Paul of the Cross had in mind when he came to the Caelian Hill in the 18th century.

In a letter to Father Fulgenzio Pastorelli, dated Dec. 16, 1747, St. Paul of the Cross describes the Caelian Hill as "one of the most solitary places in Rome, a place of great silence and recollection, a little less than a mountain, fresh air, a garden with water, it is an excellent place, I do not think I could find anything better in Rome, fresh air, beautiful" (Letter II, 127-128). He always sought such "retreat" spaces for his communities because he was convinced that the best way to share with others the good news of Jesus Christ crucified and risen was to prepare oneself through periods of solitude and silence.

I have lived in this place for the past 12 years, but it took a pandemic to help me to enter more deeply into the silence that St. Paul of the Cross writes about. I have come to realize that it is a silence that calls for attentiveness to God and to others, especially for those who are suffering, those who are sharing in the cross of Christ.

In many of his letters to laity, St. Paul of the Cross encourages women and men of various walks of life to cultivate "interior silence" and to become "friends of silence." A recurring theme in his letters is the invitation to wait in "silence and hope," which echoes Isaiah 30:15: "In quietness and trust will be your strength." Especially in times of trouble and tribulation, he encourages others to live in the "silence of faith and love."

Many people have experienced unspeakable suffering in these past months. I think, for example, of the elderly — and not so elderly — who caught COVID-19 and who suffered or died alone, without the consolation of their loved ones nearby. I think of grandchildren who wondered why they could no longer see and be with their grandparents. I think of friends who lost loved ones and who could not express their grief to their families and friends. I think of those who are no longer employed and who worry about how they will put the next meal on the table for their families. I think of refugees who, after a harrowing journey that lasted many months and even years, finally found themselves in a safe place only to experience the pandemic. I think of the poor and homeless who often had nowhere to go during this crisis.

The pandemic continues now, even as we begin Advent, and all over the world people continue to suffer.

In the face of such suffering, certainly we can — and must do what we can — to concretely show our solidarity. At the same time, I find that sometimes words seem hollow in these situations. What you and I can do though is stand together with those who suffer, in "the silence of faith and of love," recognizing that really in quietness and trust will be our strength.

Pope Francis was gifted a few years ago with a contemporary icon of Our Lady of Silence, which has been placed in the Apostolic Palace. What is stunning is how her eyes lock with yours. Her right index finger rests vertically over her lips and her left hand encourages us to stop and be still (see image in photo gallery below). Some say that Pope Francis is devoted to Our Lady of Silence because her gesture encourages people to be careful with their words. I suspect it goes much deeper because Pope Francis knows the power of silent intercessory prayer as demonstrated on March 27, with his "Urbi et Orbi" blessing and prayer during the pandemic. Take a few moments to relive this unforgettable moment and join us in silent prayer for those who still suffer in various parts of the world.

To conclude, you may wish to take some time to listen to this Italian hymn that extols the Mother of God as a "cathedral of silence." Together, let us thank her for accompanying us during this challenging time, as we journey towards the feast of Christ's birth.

Christmas Pamphlets 2020

Christmas is just around the corner. Over the past few weeks we have drawn parishioner's attention to the Advent pamphlets as part of our preparation for Christmas. This week the Montmorency conference of St Vincent de Paul (SVDP) highlight a further selection of small booklets which may be of interest. Below are some titles of booklets which may be of interest to parishioners and their families to help in their preparation for Christmas. Here are just a few of the new titles:

- *These Twelve Days Of Christmas*
- *Meaningful Christmas Giving*
- *Christmas Traditions – Why We Do What We Do*
- *What Can I Give for Christmas*
- *Christmas Novena*

Please feel free to browse these and other related booklets together with the many other topics of interest. They are located in the racks on the pillar in the front porch (between the two entrance doors in the foyer) opposite the morning tea table. We hope you enjoy the selection.

A gold coin donation in either of the St Vincent de Paul boxes at the front or side entrance to the church will help defray costs.

Are you interested in becoming a volunteer with St Vincent de Paul through our conference, perhaps at our Vinnies shop in Briar Hill, or in some other administrative capacity? If so please contact Mike on 0417 221 245 or the Parish Office



Help is Required (SFX & OLHC)

To make these Covid Christmas Masses special

VOLUNTEERS ARE REQUIRED AND ESSENTIAL
for a wonderful celebration of Christmas at Eltham and Montmorency 2020
WE ARE LOOKING FOR YOUR HELP

Readers / Musicians / Sacristans / Eucharistic Ministers / Roadies - setup outdoor!
Special Ministers / Covid Coordinators / Clean up afterwards people!

Over the past week - we have had two liturgy meetings, Eltham & Monty specialists have shared their interest and expertise in these areas - and now that we know from Government & Church just what is required and possible in this year... away we go!

At **Eltham** all Christmas Masses are inside the Church and subject to the 160 people Covid Maximum rule!

COORDINATING all 3 Masses: Gina Ang - 0423 947 858 (please contact her directly)

The music ministry teams are already set to go!

At **Montmorency**:

6pm Out Door Mass at Holy Trinity School - Top Oval (800 people limit)

COORDINATOR: MARK O'DOWD - 0409 516 911; Music: Susan Agius - 0409 807 101

10pm Mass - SFX, Church (160 people Limit)

Coordinator: MARY DEAN - 0419 970 814; Music: Anita Plant

8:30AM - SFX, Church. (160 people Limit)

COORDINATOR: JOSSIE FRENCH : 0439 943 885; Music: Lita Lee

AFTER these FANTASTIC MEETINGS TO SET A WAY FOWARD - YOUR HELP is APPRECIATED and important for these wonderful community celebrations. THANK YOU

Please note:

Rehearsal Music Meetings for the outside Christmas Mass at HT:

Friday 18 December, 1pm to 3pm - in SFX Church

Monday 21 December, 7pm to 9pm - in SFX Church

Please contact Susan - 0409 807 101

SVDP Christmas Appeal 2020 & Christmas Cards/Calendars

With Covid restrictions now substantially eased and more parishioners can come to Mass, the Montmorency Conference wish to thank all parishioners who have supported our Christmas Appeal.

Envelopes are still available in the SFX church pews or you can donate [online https://bit.ly/2JAsUaz](https://bit.ly/2JAsUaz). If you choose to donate online, **please ensure you nominate Montmorency or Eltham in the Comments/Conference box to ensure your donation stays local.** It would also be appreciated if you email msaid@netspace.net.au so that our conference can acknowledge your generosity.

This year's Christmas Appeal theme '*A Christmas Like No Other*' focuses on the ongoing impact that COVID-19 is having on Australian families who may have previously never needed assistance. As the long-term repercussions of the pandemic come to light, we expect the pressure on individuals and families to worsen and more people than ever will turn to Vinnies to help get them through these difficult periods both now and in 2021.

Christmas is such a magical time, but for quite a number of people in our local community, Christmas doesn't mean magic, it means hunger, hardship and stress. The Montmorency Conference will be providing hampers to the families based on the needs of each family, hoping to be able to brighten their Christmas day. This is only possible because of the very generous support of families from our parishes, St Francis Xavier's, Holy Trinity and Catholic Ladies' College.

We thank everybody for their continued support of our work and wish all parishioners and their families every blessing and happiness for Christmas and a very happy and safe New Year.

Montmorency Conference:

SVDP Charity Christmas cards

We have sold 205 packets of cards this year and have only 35 packets left so this will be the last weekend. Monty SVDP members will be selling cards outside each Mass. This year the cards are in packs of 5 rather than 8 as in previous years. With just 5 cards per pack we have reduced the cost to \$2.50 per packet. This is slightly cheaper per card than last year but all we wish is to do is to cover our costs and offer cards about the real meaning of Christmas.

Eltham Conference:

Christmas Cards and Columban Calendars are NOW available after Mass at

Our Lady Help of Christians - please visit the St Vincent de Paul shop

or see one of the SVdP members for more information.



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

Rosters - 19 & 20 December

<i>Montmorency</i>	
McKinna, Jane	PRYR
O'Connor, Pat	GRDN
Sullivan, Michael	CLNR
Watson, Denis	CLNR
<i>Eltham</i>	
Frediani, Gabriella	Altar Society
Leahy Family	Pilgrim Rosary Statue

Monty & Eltham Calendar of Events

Saturday 12th

10:00am Baptism: Imogen	Montmorency
11:00am Baptism: Griffin	Eltham
6:00pm Mass (160 people)	Montmorency

Sunday 13th

Special Collection: Melbourne Overseas Mission

8:30am Mass (160 people)	Montmorency
10:00am Mass (160 people) (live-stream https://bit.ly/2ZNZxxaE)	Eltham
11:00am Baptism: Peter	Montmorency
1:00pm Baptism: Timothy	Montmorency
2:00pm Baptism: Elena	Eltham

Tuesday 15th

9:30am Mass (160 people)	Montmorency
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Wednesday 16th

9:30am Mass (160 people)	Eltham
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Thursday 17th

9:30am Mass (160 people)	Montmorency
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Friday 18th

9:30am Mass (160 people)	Eltham
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Saturday 19th

10:00am Baptism: Matilda	Montmorency
11:00am Baptism: Abigail	Eltham
6:00pm Mass (160 people)	Montmorency

Sunday 20th

8:30am Mass (160 people) (live-stream https://bit.ly/2ZNZxxaE)	Montmorency
10:00am Mass (160 people)	Eltham
11:00am Baptism: Theodore	Montmorency
12:00pm Baptism: Charli	Eltham
1:00pm Baptism: Sonny	Montmorency
2:00pm Baptism: Sofia	Eltham

Tuesday 22nd

9:30am Mass (160 people)	Montmorency
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Wednesday 23rd

9:30am Mass (160 people)	Eltham
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Mass attendance numbers are correct at the time of publishing, and subject to change as per Covid regulations. Please call the Parish Office 9435 2178 for any clarification.

Advent Reflections:

From hearing to listening

Sometimes we hear sounds, words, music, but do not really listen, and so we miss the message. Is this what T.S. Eliot meant when he said that we “had the experience but missed the meaning”? Hearing can be passive, but listening is always active, dynamic. Waking in the quiet of night, it can happen that a word, a sound, heard but barely registered during the day, comes to mind, unbidden. It is then that hearing deepens into listening. Listening means taking seriously what we hear, taking it to heart - being attentive, responding, perhaps taking action. Advent is a good time to ask God to sharpen our ability to hear, to help us hush the interior babble that keeps us from really listening.

Anthony de Mello SJ gives a telling example of how our preoccupations can distract us from the act of listening: “Think of yourself in a concert hall,” he says, “listening to the strains of the sweetest music, when you suddenly remember that you forgot to lock your car. You are anxious about your car, yet you feel you cannot walk out of the concert hall, and you cannot enjoy the music.” You may say that this is an extreme example - I have to admit that, in such a situation, all other things being equal, I myself would be up and out of that concert hall in a flash! - but I believe de Mello is making a valid point. In the course of an average day, we hear countless things, but so often find ourselves unable to really listen.

Think about it... Have you ever heard the readings at Mass and afterwards wondered what they were all about? Yes, you heard, but you were not really listening... Have you ever heard someone talking, someone you knew well, and later realised you had failed to catch the anxiety, the note of urgency in their voice, in their words? You heard, but you were not really listening... Have you ever heard the early morning local news on the radio, telling of a devastating road accident in which many people were seriously injured, and your first thought was not the tragic loss of life, but how this misfortune might affect your journey to work that day? You heard, but you were not really listening... Have you ever walked in the countryside, your mind so taken up with routine concerns that you were barely conscious of the birdsong, the sound of running water or the rush of the wind in the trees? You heard, but you were not really listening...

During these weeks of Advent, perhaps, like some of the people listening to John the Baptist, we will find ourselves asking a genuine listener's question: “What must we do to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord?” On a personal level, we may find a way to pour oil on the troubled waters of a tense and fractured relationship; to ask pardon of someone hurt by a broken promise; to soften the hard-heartedness that makes it so difficult for us to offer or receive forgiveness after a quarrel. Perhaps there are injustices on a wider scale, at home or further afield, on which we should take some action. Would now be a good time to make a stand for what is right? We live in an age of increasing ecological awareness, and we recognise that our planet has suffered serious damage, caused by human exploitation of the good things of Creation. Do we need to extend our concern for the oppressed and the vulnerable and include the Earth itself? Should care of the Earth assume a more important part in our thinking and action this Advent? **Sr Teresa White**



Prayers of the Faithful for 13 December 2020 Third Sunday of Advent

Celebrant: As a community of faith joined to the Universal Church we pray for our world and ourselves.

For the Church - that we will respond to the call to bring good news to the oppressed, bind up the broken-hearted, proclaim liberty to captives and release to the prisoners.

Lord, hear us. Lord, hear our prayer.

For world leaders - that they will accept their responsibility to see that the poor and vulnerable are cared for, that wealth is justly distributed, and that a compassionate and thorough response is made to the pandemic.

Lord, hear us. Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for the communities of St Francis Xavier & Our Lady Help of Christians - may we like John the Baptist proclaim the good news of the kingdom faithfully.

Lord, hear us. Lord, hear our prayer.

For all who cannot find God - that the lights, hymns, and warm greetings of this season may be a doorway to finding God in all things and recognising that God is with us.

Lord, hear us. Lord, hear our prayer.

For a joyful spirit - that as we recognise the gift of our relationships and the many blessings that God has given us, our hearts may be grateful, and our spirits filled with joy.

Lord, hear us. Lord, hear our prayer.

May the victims of war - trapped in its violence, or struggling in refugee camps - mindful particularly of the people of South Sudan, Syria and Iraq, Yemen and Tigray, be delivered from present evil.

Lord, hear us. Lord, hear our prayer.

For the sick - may they know the healing touch of God.

Lord, hear us. Lord, hear our prayer.

For those who have died recently, Faye Bowkett, Wanda Nowak and Barry Scully, and those whose anniversaries occur at this time, including Leo Fell, may they know the joy of the risen Christ.

Lord, hear us. Lord, hear our prayer.

Celebrant: Father, you are our help at all times of the day, and all the days of our lives. Hear our prayers, and call us to live in your grace more fully. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.



https://drive.google.com/file/d/1fT_UbWwlWdrEtHBER-dk8e396xAseV3f/view

Arise!

PROCLAIM THE PROMISE!

The 2021 Virtual Conference for Catholic Parishes & Schools

Wednesday 3 March - Friday 5 March 2021

A unique encounter for religious educators,
teachers, catechists and music and youth ministers.

Acclaimed International & Australian Speakers & Presenters

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

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.



Reflection

Because Mark's account of the preaching of John the Baptist is quite short (we heard all of it last Sunday), today we have an extract from the gospel of John to fill the gap. John devotes much more space in his gospel to the role of the Baptist, partly at least to dispel any lingering misunderstanding about him. John the Baptist was not the Messiah but a witness to the Messiah.

The gospel reading is a combination of two passages from the first chapter of John. The first consists of three verses taken from the profound poetic meditation that opens the gospel (John 1:1-18). The Prologue interweaves reflection on the eternal-Word-made-flesh with comment on the Baptist: "He was not he light, but only a witness to speak for the light".

The second comes from the narrative that follows. John goes to great lengths to insist on the Baptist's subordinate status. Time and again he has the Baptist voice his own denials; he is neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the prophet. The question that the priests and Levites put to John - "Who are you?" - will become a recurring theme of the gospel in relation to Jesus. Where does he come from, and who is he? The answer to this is at last spelt out explicitly twenty chapters later, at the original end of the gospel (John 20:31).

Break Open the Word 2021

Baptisms

This weekend we welcome to:

Montmorency Parish Community on Saturday at 10am:

Imogen Rae McAllister, daughter of Brett & Emma

Eltham Parish Community on Saturday at 11am:

Griffin Murphy Scannell, son of Ryan & Kate

Montmorency Parish Community on Sunday at 11am:

Peter Joseph Hemphill, son of Rick & Carmelin

Montmorency Parish Community on Sunday at 1pm:

Timothy Francis Dalglish, son of Michael & Jessica

and

Eltham Parish Community on Sunday at 2pm:

Elena Lorrae Scaglione, daughter of Nathan & Melanie

We pray for *Imogen, Griffin, Peter, Timothy & Elena*,
their parents & Godparents.

May God keep them always in His love.

