

Monty & Eltham

The Catholic Parishes of St Francis Xavier & Our Lady Help of Christians



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.

The third Sunday of Advent in 2022 will be on Sunday, December 11th. There is so much comfort to be found in the practice of pausing to read, pray, and reflect over the course of the Advent season in which believers eagerly anticipate the celebration of Christ's birth. Don't forget to pick up the Gospel of Matthew, and have a read - like a small novel, from start to finish. The third Sunday of Advent gives us the opportunity to prepare in our hearts a sense of anticipation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus as well as for his promised second coming.

The third Sunday of Advent we are invited to reflect on the **joy** we have access to because of our faith in Jesus. One of the defining characteristics of Christ-followers is their *joyful demeanor*. Let's not allow the struggles of this year steal from the **great joy** we have because of Jesus.

Philippians 4:4-5 says, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near."

Over this Advent, would you pray that the *joy of the Lord* would be evident in your heart and home? May God's spirit transform the days leading up to Christmas into a time of holy anticipation; preparing our hearts, as we joyfully await the chance to celebrate the arrival of our king.

The word "Advent" comes from the Latin word *adventus*, which means "coming." Advent in the 4th and 5th century was a time of preparation for the baptism of new Christians. Christians would

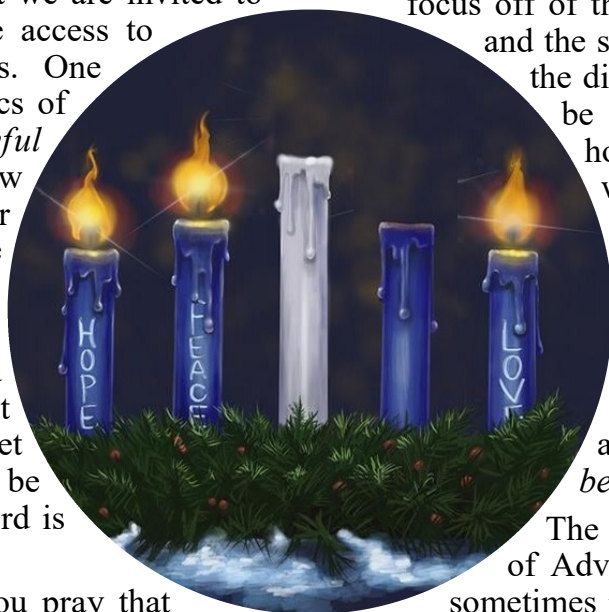
spend 40 days in prayer and fasting to prepare for the celebration that accompanied the baptism of new believers.

Over time, advent was connected to the coming of Christ. Originally, Christians used this term to reference Christ's second coming, but by the Middle Ages, Advent was connected to Christ's first coming that we celebrate at Christmas. Today, we celebrate Advent over the four weeks leading up to Christmas each year.

Advent season is an invitation to set your mind off the stresses of the year. We can take our focus off of the crazy hustle of the season and the sadness that could accompany the different ways some of us may be choosing to observe the holiday season this year. Even when things feel chaotic we can find peace in Jesus. Advent is a chance to focus our thoughts on the gift God has given us in his son Jesus who stepped down from heaven and took the form of a man *so that we might believe*.

The tradition for the third Sunday of Advent includes lighting a third, sometimes pink, candle that is a symbol of **joy**. This third Sunday of Advent we read, pray, and reflect on the joy that God's plan gives us (foretold by the prophets and fulfilled by the life and death of Christ), and we meditate on the promise of Christ's coming glory-filled return.

The third Sunday of Advent is traditionally called Gaudete Sunday. Gaudete is the Latin word for **rejoice**, and this Sunday is the time for us to rejoice because Jesus came and died so that we may live forever with him!



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

OUR PEOPLE & OUR CONTACT DETAILS



Parish Priest

Michael Sierakowski - Moderator

michael.sierakowski@cam.org.au

Parish Office

86 Mayona Road

9435 4742

Tue - Fri 9am-3pm

montmorency@cam.org.au

Kate Kogler:

Parish Secretary

eltham@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: Philip Cachia: 9435 8474

principal@sfxmontmorency.catholic.edu.au

www.sfxmontmorency.catholic.edu.au

Holy Trinity Primary School

Principal: Vince Bumpstead: 9431 0888

principal@htelthamnth.catholic.edu.au

www.htelthamnth.catholic.edu.au

Our Lady Help of Christians Primary School

Principal: Patrick Green: 9439 7824

school@olhceltham.catholic.edu.au

www.olhceltham.catholic.edu.au

RECONCILIATION

available upon request

please call the Parish Office 9435 4742

Collections: 20 & 27 November 2022

	OLHC	SFX
Thanksgiving	\$462.00	\$1,155.00
Presbytery	\$506.95	\$1,001.60

Stewardship Offering

Month	OLHC	SFX	Total
September	\$6,357.04	\$10,491.00	\$16,848.04
October	\$6,404.35	\$11,334.50	\$17,738.85
November	\$6,056.61	\$9,156.00	\$15,212.61

Monty & Eltham Calendar of Events

Saturday 10: Collection - Melbourne Overseas Mission

12:00pm Baptism: Thomas Montmorency

6:00pm Mass Montmorency

Sunday 11: Collection - Melbourne Overseas Mission

8:30am Mass Montmorency

10:00am Mass Eltham

12:00pm Baptism: Elle Eltham

Monday 12

6:00pm HT Grade 6 Graduation Holy Trinity

Tuesday 13

9:30am Mass Montmorency

7:30pm Small Church Community Montmorency

Wednesday 14

6:30am Meditation Montmorency

9:30am Liturgy of the Word with Communion Eltham

10:30am ASRC Food Collection Montmorency

11:00am Funeral: Lewis Derrico Montmorency

6:00pm OLHC Grade 6 Graduation Eltham

Thursday 15

9:30am Liturgy of the Word with Communion Montmorency

Friday 16

9:30am Mass & OLHC Whole School Mass Eltham

Saturday 17

12:00pm Baptism: Arley & August Montmorency

6:00pm Mass Montmorency

Sunday 18

8:30am Mass Montmorency

10:00am Mass Eltham

12:00pm Baptism: Zoe Eltham

Tuesday 20

9:30am Mass Montmorency

Wednesday 21

6:30am Meditation Montmorency

9:30am Liturgy of the Word with Communion Eltham

10:30am ASRC Food Collection Montmorency

7:30pm Small Church Community Montmorency

Thursday 22

9:30am Liturgy of the Word with Communion Montmorency

Friday 23

9:30am Mass Eltham

Saturday 24 - Christmas Eve

6:00pm Christmas Eve Outdoor Mass Holy Trinity

8:00pm Christmas Eve Mass Eltham

10:00pm Christmas Eve Mass Montmorency

Sunday 25 - Christmas Day

8:30am Christmas Day Mass Montmorency

10:00am Christmas Day Mass Eltham

Tuesday 27

9:30am Mass Montmorency

Wednesday 28

6:30am Meditation Montmorency

9:30am Liturgy of the Word with Communion Eltham

10:30am ASRC Food Collection Montmorency

**Support
Montmorency Parish
by giving with CDFpay**

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Eltham Parish
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Simply scan the QR code with your mobile phone and in a few easy steps you can quickly and securely give to your parish.



Advent Reflection / The sound of silence

The noise and the clamour for our attention is relentless in the modern world; it is only in the still, small voice of calm and the sound of a gently breeze that we will hear God speaking to us / **by Teresa White**

Advent encourages us to await the coming of God with quiet minds and open hearts. Rabindranath Tagore puts it this way:

Have you not heard his silent steps?

He comes, comes, ever comes.

Every moment and every age,
ever day and every night
he comes, comes, ever comes.

As, on our smartphones, we tune in to the social media, countless voices clamour for our immediate attention. So we'll only hear those silent steps if we enter the quiet zone ... To do this awakens in us the capacity to hear God's voice, which is not loud - often no more than a whisper. But the truth of that whisper becomes clear when our hearts are touched by what we hear, and we are changed by it. If we are attuned to God's

voice, to God's silence, the desire for conversion will take root in us.

Many episodes in Scripture evoke the quiet, meditative atmosphere that is integral to the spirit of Advent. The story of the call of the prophet Samuel is a good example (Samuel 3:1-

21). It was in the quiet of evening that God

called him; he was in the Temple, the place of God's

presence, and we are told that the light burning

before the Ark of the Covenant had not yet been extinguished. If it is true, as Wolfhart Pannenberg once said, that "religions die when their lights fail", perhaps there is a hint here that the light of faith was growing dim among God's people in those days, and

that Samuel was living in a spiritually sterile time: the Word of God was rarely heard, and few had eyes to see God's action in their lives.

With Eli's encouragement, Samuel did listen to God, and for the rest of his life he never allowed the Divine Word to fall to the ground without bearing fruit.

Christians call Isaiah "the prophet of Advent", and in one of the most beautiful readings of this period he tells the people that God is asking them to prepare "in the wilderness" a way for the Lord (Isaiah 40:1-11). It is there, in the quiet, that God will speak to the heart of Jerusalem. Action will follow - the filling in of valleys, the flattening of mountains - but first comes

the consolation, heard in the silence of the wild places.

A further example: in the First Book of Kings (19:9-14), Elijah, fleeing for his life, is spending the night in a cave on Mount Horeb, and it is in this desolate place that he has his never-to-be-forgotten encounter with God. Told by God to get up and leave the cave, he stands on the mountain, and there he witnesses God's immense power, in wind, earthquake and fire. But there was so much noise and commotion that he could not hear God's voice. It was at the sound of a gently breeze that he covered his head, knowing that God was present, speaking to him in the still, small voice of calm.

"If today you hear God's voice, harden not your hearts" (Pslam 95:8).

Sister Teresa White belongs to the Faithful Companions of Jesus. A former teacher, she spent many years in the ministry of spirituality at Katherine House, a retreat and conference centre run by her congregation in Salford.



SVDP Montmorency Christmas Appeal 2022 - Tax Receipts

Thank you to all parishioners who have donated to our appeal this year. Receipts and/or letters have been issued for parishioners who donated by cheque, cash or credit card. Those who donated online should have their receipts at the time of making their donation. Please contact Mike if you have any queries re your receipts.

Should you wish to help make Christmas just that little more enjoyable for people less fortunate, you can still donate in one of the following ways:

How to donate to the SVDP Christmas Appeal

Envelopes: SVDP envelopes are available at SFX in church pews or at the tables at the entrance doors or at the Presbytery/Church office. You are welcome to leave your donations and/or envelopes in the SVDP Donation boxes on the tables near the entrances to the church, at the Parish Office, give to a SVDP member or to Mike on 0417 221 245. Receipts can be issued by simply completing name and address on the envelope.

On Line: vinnies.org.au - in terms of directing funds back to the Montmorency or Eltham Conferences, we request that you state **Montmorency** or **Eltham** in the "Comments/Conference Name box" which is just after the postal address box.

By Phone: by calling [13 18 12](tel:131812) and again stating your donation is for the **Montmorency** or **Eltham** conference.

Direct Credit: BSB 063-000, Account 1060 7556 with a reference W22 and Montmorency 916. In this way moneys will be credited to the Montmorency Conference account and stay within our community.

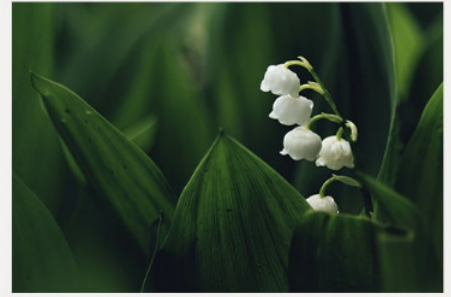
If you are donating online, by phone or direct credit could you please send an email to msaid@netspace.net.au with your full name and address, amount and date of deposit so that the conference can acknowledge your generosity and ensure these monies are allocated to the Montmorency or Eltham Conferences.

Assistance is always promptly available to the community by contacting 1800 305 330 between 10am and 3pm weekdays.

Collection of quality household goods/furniture can be arranged by calling 1800 621 349.



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works



GRATEFULNESS

An Attitude of Gratitude

Father Richard Rohr reminds us that when we receive everything as a gift, we can live gratefully, allowing the energies of life and love to flow through us to the benefit of the whole.

In Philippians 4:6–7, Paul sums up an entire theology of prayer practice in very concise form: “Pray with gratitude, and the peace of Christ, which is bigger than knowledge or understanding [*that is, making distinctions—Richard*], will guard both your mind and your heart in Christ Jesus.” Only a pre-existent *attitude of gratitude*, a deliberate choice of love over fear, a desire to be positive instead of negative, will allow us to live in the spacious place Paul describes as “the peace of Christ.”

It is important that we ask, seek, and knock to keep ourselves in right relationship with Life Itself. Life is a gift, totally given to us without cost, every day of it, and every part of it. A daily and chosen attitude of gratitude will keep our hands open to expect that life, allow that life, and receive that life at ever-deeper levels of satisfaction—but never to think we deserve it. Those who live with such open and humble hands receive life’s “gifts, full measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over into their lap” (Luke 6:38). In my experience, if we are not radically grateful every day, resentment always takes over. Moreover, to ask for “our daily bread” is to recognize that it is already being given. Not to ask is to take our own efforts, needs, and goals—and our selves—far too seriously. Consider if that is not true in your own life.

All the truly great persons I have ever met are characterized by what I would call radical humility and gratitude. They are deeply convinced that they are drawing from another source; they are instruments. Their genius is not their own; it is borrowed. We are moons, not suns, except in our ability to pass on the light. Our life is not our own; yet, at some level, enlightened people know that their life has been given to them as a sacred trust. They live in gratitude and confidence, and they try to let the flow continue through them. They know that “love is repaid by love alone,” as both St. Francis of Assisi and St. Thérèse of Lisieux have said.

In the end, it is not our own doing, or grace would not be grace. It is God’s gift, not a reward for work well done. It is nothing for us to be boastful about. We are God’s work of art, created in Christ Jesus. All we can do is be what God’s Spirit makes us to be, and be thankful to God for the riches God has bestowed on us. Humility, gratitude, and loving service to others are probably the most appropriate responses we can make.

Take, Thank, Break, Give - Thanksgiving Day (United States)

The greatest gift one can give is thanksgiving. In giving gifts, we give what we can spare, but in giving thanks we give ourselves. —Brother David Steindl-Rast, *Gratefulness, the Heart of Prayer*

Father Richard shares how the sacred ritual of the Eucharist participates in the flow of gratitude and generosity:

At his Last Supper, Jesus gave us an action, a mime, a sacred, communal ritual that would summarize his core and lasting message for the world—one to keep repeating until his return. It’s significant that the meal and the metaphor are based in physicality; the incarnation continued in the elements of the universe. Good stuff, and yet it has always been a scandal to overly spiritual people, starting at the very beginning: “This is intolerable language. How could anyone accept it?” (see John 6:60).

The Eucharist, which means “thanksgiving,” has four main aspects. In our conscious participation, we become more like the one we follow:

First, we take our whole lives in our hands, as Jesus did. In very physical and scandalously incarnational language, table bread is daringly called “my body” and wine is called “my blood.” We are saying a radical “yes” to both the physical universe itself and the bloody suffering of our own lives and all the world.

Second, we thank God (*eucharisteo* in Greek), who is the Origin of all that life and who allows and uses even death. We are making a choice for gratitude, abundance, and appreciation for Another, which has the power to radically de-center us. Our lives and deaths are pure gift, and must be given away in trust, just as they were given to us as gift.

Third, we break it. We allow our lives to be broken and given away. We don’t need to protect them. The sharing of the small self will be the discovery of the True Self in God. “Unless the single grain of wheat dies, it remains just a grain of wheat” (John 12:24); the crushed grain becomes the broken bread, the whole and newly connected “Body of Christ.”

Finally, we chew on this mystery! This truth is known by participation and practice, not by more thinking or discussing. “Take this,” “eat and drink this”—not alone, but together, “until I return.” There we have the heart of the message, a “new covenant” of indwelling love that is not grounded in worthiness in any form, but merely in a willingness to participate and trust. Our drinking and eating are our agreement to “do what I can to make up in my own body all that still has to be undergone by Christ for the sake of his body the church” (see Colossians 1:24). Eucharist is a risky and demanding act of radical gratitude for, solidarity with, and responsibility to the work of God—much more than a reward for good behavior or any “prize for the perfect,” as Pope Francis says.



THE FUTURE OF CHRISTIANITY

Returning to Our Roots

During The Future of Christianity online summit, Father Richard spoke about discovering wisdom for Christianity's future through the inspiration of those who led courageous lives in Christianity's past:

One of the things that the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) taught us in the religious orders, and this was certainly from the Holy Spirit, is that we were each to go back to our founders and say, “What did Catherine McAuley found the Sisters of Mercy for? What did Francis form the Franciscans for? What did Ignatius do with the Jesuits?” . . .

So as much as we experienced a renewal in scripture [in Vatican II, asking] “What did Jesus really teach?,” we were simultaneously doing the same thing—in our case with Francis of Assisi. We're an alternative orthodoxy. We're quite eager to remain in the Catholic or universal church, but some of the things it does are not very universal, not very Catholic at all! And that has shaken us to our foundations. So it did for me, too. We were founded by a prophet, Francis, who wasn't the usual pious saint, but he didn't accuse the system of being inferior. He just went out and did it better. That's still one of our CAC principles: “The best criticism of the bad is the practice of the better.”

I was in Rome a couple of months ago, as some of you know, to visit the Holy Father [Pope Francis]. We took a little side trip to the church of Saint John Lateran; that's where the pope lived in the thirteenth century. St. Peter's wasn't built yet. Out in the courtyard, there's this marvelous, rather large set of statues, and it's Francis in the thirteenth century approaching this top-heavy Roman church. He's smiling, and his hand is raised in blessing, but it's also raised in confrontation. That's the history we've all been dealing with. How do we return to our sources, and discover that almost all our sources were critical of [their current] Roman Catholicism? . . .

It was such good news! That all the legalism and ritualism I had been taught really weren't Franciscan at all. For example, I know you, even at the Center, call me “Father Richard,” but Francis didn't want us to be fathers. He rejected any title of domination over another person. We were all to be called brothers, in Latin *fratres*, or friars in English. So we were friars, not monks. Our job was not to be priests, but to live among the people as brothers. Wouldn't you know it, as soon as Francis dies, they're laying hands on us, and we're getting happily ordained as priests. Even when I was ordained in 1970, I didn't fully know that history. I'm not saying those people weren't sincere. Many of them are holier than I am. But it wasn't Franciscanism.

A Healthy Church Needs a Healthy Planet

Historian and writer Diana Butler Bass reflects on a church on Tangier Island in the Chesapeake Bay, and the implications of its future in this time of climate crisis:

As I have ruminated on Tangier Island, I realize that far too many religious leaders are asking the wrong question. The future of Christianity matters little if there are no human beings, whether we extinct ourselves through war or environmental disaster. We can fix our denominations, bring new members to church, write the best theologies ever—and none of it will matter one whit if we are all dead. The question—“What is the future of Christianity?”—must be held in relation to other questions. Right now, the most significant of those questions is: “*What is the future of humankind?*”

That is the existential question of our time. All other questions pale by comparison and distract us from hearing the voices of God, the earth, and other creatures with the kind of rigor and compassion necessary for the living of these particular days. To me, the question about the future of Christianity has become: “What must Christians do to serve all creation when the island itself is in danger of sinking?” [1]

Theologian Sallie McFague (1933–2019) was inspired by Isaiah's prophetic vision of new heavens and earth—and what it requires of us:

The world we want, that we ache for, is a world where children get to grow up and live to old age, where people have food and houses and enjoyable work, where animals and plants and human beings live together on the earth in harmony, where none “shall hurt or destroy” [Isaiah 65:25]. This is our dream, our deepest desire, the image we cannot let go of. This vision of the good life makes us unwilling to settle for the unjust, unsustainable, and indeed cruel and horrendous world we have. . . .

Isaiah's hymn to a new creation and Jesus' parables of the reign of God touch this deepest desire in each of us for a different, better world. It would be a world in which human dignity and the integrity of creation are central, a world in which the intrinsic value of all human beings and of the creation itself is recognized and appreciated. . . . Do we have any hope for a different, better world? Given the situation we face at the beginning of the twenty-first century of war, violence, AIDS, capitalist greed, and now the specter of global warming, it seems absurd to even bother with such a question. And yet we read in the Isaiah passage [65:17–25] that in the midst of painting this wonderful picture of life beyond our wildest dreams, God says, “Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear.” “*While they are yet speaking*”—we have only to ask for God to answer! But we must ask with our whole being; a better world must become our deepest desire. And this means, of course, we must *work at it*; we must give our whole selves to it.

Roster for THIS WEEKEND: 10/11 Dec 2022	
Boyd, Mary	PRYR
Dhanasen Family	PRSE
Dunell, Linda	E10:00
Furtado, Lorraine	C10:00
Haines, Geoff	E10:00
Haines, Jan-Marie	E10:00
Hall, Vali	ASE
Hannon, Genni	ASRC
Hannon, Kevin	ASRC
Kenny, Michael	W6:00
Kulkens, Mark	W6:00
Milwain, Gianna	ASE
Reardon, Kathy	E10:00
Reardon, Peter	E10:00
Scully, Greg	R10:00
Sullivan, Frances	W8:30
Turnbull, Mark	H10:00
Turnbull, Pauline	H10:00
Wood, Marie	W8:30
Roster for NEXT WEEKEND: 17/18 Dec 2022	
Armstrong, Miranda	H10:00
Costanzo, Brenda	W8:30
Cotter, Anne	W8:30
Donnellan, Denice	E10:00
Dopheide, Marlis	H10:00
Frediani, Gabriella	ASE
Goss, Marion	E10:00
Haines, Geoff	C10:00
Haines, Jan-Marie	E10:00
Iliffe, Yvonne	E10:00
Kotz, Sharron	E10:00
Leahy Family	PRSE
Maynes, Phil	W6:00
McEwen, Christopher	R10:00
Nolan, Kathleen	PRYR
Rodriguez, Carlos	W6:00
Said, Mike & Marie	ASRC

ASE = Altar Society @ Eltham; C10:00 = Commentator @ 10am Mass
E10:00 = Euch. Minister @ 10am Mass; H10:00 = Hospitality 10am Mass
PRSE = Pilgrim Rosary Statue @ Eltham;
W8:30 = Minister of the Word @ 8:30am Mass;
W6:00 = Minister of the Word @ 6pm Mass;
R10:00 = Reader @ 10am Mass



Congratulations to all who celebrate their sacraments this weekend:

Saturday 10 December

St Francis Xavier, 12:00pm

Thomas Douglas Beattie

Baptism

Sunday 11 December

Our Lady Help of Christians, 12:00pm

Elle Audrey Gow

Baptism

Calling for more volunteers to be Eucharistic Ministers!

We need more people to serve as Eucharistic Ministers at OLHC as we only have a small pool to work with at the moment.

So, if you would like to be part of this important ministry to help us out, please contact me on 0432 391 105.

You will receive the necessary training so that you will feel comfortable in the role.

Please consider being a part of the celebration of the Eucharist in this special way.

Kathleen

Volunteers Needed for Christmas Masses

Please contact

Kathleen Nolan 0432 391 105; or

Patsy Skipper 0429 439 675

if you are able to help with any of the following:

- Reader/Commentator
- Eucharistic Minister
- Setup/Cleanup; etc



at any of our Christmas Masses:

Christmas Eve:

6pm

Holy Trinity Primary School

8pm

OLHC Eltham Church

10pm

SFX Montmorency Church

Christmas Day:

8:30am

SFX Montmorency Church

10am

OLHC Eltham Church



Thank you to the kind people who have recently donated some splendid books. They are in line to be catalogued ASAP. However, the library is up to Dolly's Wax and there is definitely no more room in the inn!

Blessings, Trish

PS Whoever has Bishop Geoffrey Robinson's book: *Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church*, please return ASAP.





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

Montmorency

For the recently deceased:

Lewis Derrico

For those in need of healing, remembering especially:

Tony Belfiore, Rita Bevanda, Kim Brisbane, Debbie Edgley (nee Vanderwert), Alana Foulds Bob Fraser, Melanie Lam, Lita Lee, Frances McDonald, Cindy Morrissey, Andrew Pighin, Aguatha Spina, Melina Tenaglia

Eltham

For the recently deceased:

Jacobus Zylstra
brother of Franz Zylstra

For those in need of healing, remembering especially:

Violetta, Jade McAlear, Fiona Rogers, Rosemary Scully, Ian Sturman, James Sutton, Sarah Thompson

To include an anniversary please contact Parish Office
9435 4742 or eltham@cam.org.au.

We are here for you

If you would like Communion at home, or if you are unable to get to Mass and would like a lift, there is a small Pastoral Team who are here to assist you.

Maybe you are unwell or lonely and would appreciate a visit from someone from the Parish, please be in touch with us.

Contact Patsy: 0429 439 675 or
Kate at the Parish Office: 9435 4742.

If you would like to **join** this small team to assist with Pastoral care of those in need, you would be most welcome.

You may also like to consider helping out with Liturgy of the Word in the Church at 9.30am on Wednesday mornings at Eltham or Thursday mornings at Montmorency.

We would love to hear from you.



Christmas Mass Timetable



Christmas Eve (Sat 24 Dec)

6pm Holy Trinity Primary School
8pm OLHC Eltham Church
10pm SFX Montmorency Church

Christmas Day (Sun 25 Dec)

8:30am SFX Montmorency Church
10am OLHC Eltham Church



**Prayers of the Faithful for 11 December 2022
Third Sunday of Advent**

Leader: God our Father, we offer these prayers for the Church and the World.

We pray for the Church: which is called to put on the garment of humility and to prepare the ways of the Lord in manifesting his love. **Let us pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer.**

We pray for the people of the world who are in drought affected areas, where famine and poverty are rife. **Let us pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer.**

We pray for the people of Iran who suffer under the current regime, especially those young women who are sacrificing their lives to fight for freedom in their country. **Let us pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer.**

We pray for the many carers in our community, those working in hospitals and mental health facilities, and those caring for the elderly or infirm within their homes. **Let us pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer.**

We pray for the communities of Our Lady Help of Christians and St Francis Xavier: that the parish we are forming will be a witness to the joy and the simplicity of the gospel message to spread the good news of our faith. **Let us pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who are suffering mental or physical illness that they will receive the medical care and the community support they need. **Let us pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who have died recently, especially *Lewis Derrico & Jacobus Zylstra*, and for those whose anniversaries occur at this time. May they rest in the peace and love of Christ. **Let us pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader: Loving Father, listen to our prayers and grant that we will always trust in your love and mercy. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen

Gospel: Matthew 11:2-11

John in his prison had heard what Christ was doing and he sent his disciples to ask him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or have we got to wait for someone else?' Jesus answered, 'Go back and tell John what you hear and see; the blind see again, and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised to life and the Good News is proclaimed to the poor; and happy is the man who does not lose faith in me.'

As the messengers were leaving, Jesus began to talk to the people about John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swaying in the breeze? No? Then what did you go out to see? A man wearing fine clothes? Oh no, those who wear fine clothes are to be found in palaces. Then what did you go out for? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and much more than a prophet: he is the one of whom scripture says: Look, I am going to send my messenger before you; he will prepare your way before you. I tell you solemnly, of all the children born of women, a greater than John the Baptist has never been seen; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he is.'

Reflection:

The outspoken Baptist who called the Pharisees and Sadducees a "brood of vipers" and who (as we learn later) dares to confront Herod about his illicit marriage now appears as a doubly shadowy figure. First, he has faded from public view. Imprisoned and silenced, he is dependent on his disciples. Second, what he has heard about Jesus has infected him with doubt. The one whom he had announced as "more powerful than I am" hadn't instigated, as he had foreshadowed, "the retribution that is coming".

He is perplexed. Jesus was not the kind of messiah he was expecting. In reply Jesus draws on prophets like Isaiah to show that his works and words do fulfil the promises of the messianic era. In effect he implies that the Baptist had allowed himself to be held captive by too narrow and apocalyptic a view. Nonetheless he goes on to praise John as not just a prophet, but his herald, and indeed (in a later verse) as the long-expected Elijah.

For all his greatness, however, he belongs to a past dispensation, for the "least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he is". This is a bitter-sweet episode. It both exalts and humbles the Baptist and leaves him in Herod's hands. At the same time it validates Jesus' identity as the promised messiah, and it challenges the baptised to realise their dignity as members of the kingdom of God.

Like last Sunday's gospel, this passage is charged with energy and interest. Well proclaimed, it should hold the assembly's attention from start to finish.

Break Open the Word 2022

Vinnies Eltham

Christmas Time and again we request your help. As we no longer tag our Christmas Tree, a basket is available at the back of the Church, or goods may be left at the Piety Stall. Many of our clients are awaiting permanent housing, so cooking facilities are limited. Eltham Vinnies are grateful for the ongoing support we receive & wish all a safe & Holy Christmas, & Happy & Safe 2023!

Items needed:

Christmas Cake/Pudding
Pasta/Pasta Sauce
Biscuits, Sweet/Savoury
Breakfast Cereal
Milk, Long Life (full cream)

Custard
Fruit Mince Pies
Tinned Fruit
Soft Drinks

Shortbread
Chocolate
Tinned Ham/Fish
Coffee/Hot Chocolate
Toiletries (men's/women's)

(Please no alcohol, or children's toys, books or games)

Spoiler Alert: On Tuesday afternoon this week I have an appointment with the Archbishop in his office - actually, this will be my second major personal time spent with Peter Comensoli since he took over the top job from Archbishop Denis Hart. The main reason for my visitation is to present the Archbishop with our Parish Documentation on our possible amalgamation - 'Trinity Parish', the Catholic Communities of Our Lady Help of Christians - ELTHAM and St. Francis Xavier - MONTMORENCY.

Who knows what else might be discussed!

