



St Bernard's Parish

74 Fryers Rd Belmont 3216 belmont@cam.org.au www.stbernards.org.au

Parish Team

Fr Sang Ho (Parish Priest)

Marina Dias (Admin Officer - Mon, Wed & Fri)

Chrissie Puls (Sacramental Coordinator - Tues)

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24th December 2023

Fourth Sunday of Advent Year B

We wish you a safe, happy and peaceful Christmas.

May this be a time to give thanks for all the gifts of love and service present in our community and in our families.

In this coming year, may we be open to sharing our own special gifts, time and resources for the good of all, particularly those most vulnerable and needy.

May Christmas be a time to allow goodness and love to be born in us.

May the Christ Child awaken hope and a fresh heart in us, so we can see how love really can change the world.

Let us be mindful of all who find this season troubling and lonely.

May the God of Jesus Christ, grant you the peace and happiness born of a compassionate, merciful and generous heart.

St Bernard's Parish team.

Our community prays :

For those who are unwell:

Frances Butler

Marion Andrew

Katherine D'Arcy

George Koch

Jennifer London

Jeanette Freijah

Melissa Bann

Lila Moorfoot

Josephine Mariah

Vanessa Eldridge

Judy Robertson

Colin & Linda Boyd

Lynette Stott

Margaret Walker

Maria Pereira

Gerry O'Donoghue

Brittany Schultz

Rev Alan Ansell

Sofia Solisty

Joan Hepworth

Riley Swander

Andrew Pamvouoglou

Christie Raj

Isobel Symons

David Butler

John Orders

Frank Whyte



Christmas at St Bernard's

4th Sunday of Advent

Sat 23rd Dec 6.00pm

Sun 24th Dec Sun 9.00am **ONLY. NO 10.30am mass**

Christmas Masses

Christmas Eve, Sun 24th Dec 6.00 pm Family mass in the school ground. Bring chairs/rugs

*Children are invited to come dressed as a character from the nativity story.

Christmas Eve, Sun 24th Dec 9.00 pm (Carols 8.15-8.50pm)

Christmas Day, Mon 25th Dec 9.00 am (Carols 8.30am-9am)
(one mass only)

There will be NO WEEKDAY Masses from Tuesday 26th December to Friday 30th December

Saturday 30th December 6.00pm

Sunday 31st December 9.00am and 10.30am

New Year's Day Special Mass

Monday 1st January 12pm



Lifeboat Geelong

Thank you to all those who supported the Lifeboat raffle this year.

Your donations to this worthy cause are much appreciated.

Although no one from St Bernard's Parish won a prize, the Kia Picanto Auto was won by a parishioner from St Thomas Parish, Drysdale

St Bernard's Office Hours over Christmas and New Year

The office will be closed from 5.00pm Friday 22nd December and will reopen at 10.00am Tuesday 2nd January.

Reflection

On this final Sunday of Advent the Church moves our gaze to the Annunciation. The whole scene hinges around one word: 'Yes.' Mary's fiat sets in motion the entire Christian drama.

In recent years successive popes have reminded us that the best devotion to Mary is one that leads us to do what she did: say 'yes' to Jesus. Mary is not a stop on our journey of faith; she is a guidepost that always sends us on to Christ.

Mary does not save us, for we believe she needed to be saved by Christ as well. That's why she could say yes in the first place. Mary recognised the gift and the giver and became the bearer of God for the world.

In this final week of Advent let's keep reminding ourselves of this simple but life-changing fact: *Jesus saves us. Jesus saves us from death. Jesus saves us from living lives devoid of purpose and meaning and Jesus saves us from ourselves.*

We don't save ourselves. We cannot earn salvation by good works or prayers or penance. And, as difficult as it is to hear, we cannot save anyone else. That includes our children, spouse, grandchildren, parents or friends.

Our prayers, good works and faith are the responses we make to the salvation of Christ we claim here and now. And how we live is the way by which those we love will find the gift of God's salvation for themselves.

In the midst of this frantic final week before Christmas when so many other things can distract us from what this grace-filled feast is really all about, let's take a moment to join Mary in accepting into our lives and hearts the greatest of all gifts – our undeserved salvation, Jesus Christ the Lord.

Edited extract Fr Richard Leonard SJ



St Vincent de Paul Christmas Appeal

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the St Vincent de Paul Christmas Appeal. The final total collected was \$10,106.85 Support for this Appeal will benefit recipients, and address poverty and disadvantage in our communities.

Nativity scene echoes beauty of our faith: Pope

Whether simple or elaborate, the same every year or constantly changing, a Nativity scene echoes *'the beauty of our faith'*, Pope Francis has written in the introduction to a new book.

Marking the 800th anniversary of St Francis of Assisi putting together the first Christmas crèche in a cave in Greccio, Italy, the Vatican publishing house compiled texts by Pope Francis about Nativity scenes and asked him to write a special introduction.

A key message of the Nativity scene is that the mystery of Christmas *'loves to hide within what is infinitely small,'* the Pope wrote in *Christmas at the Nativity*.

"Awe and wonder are the two feelings that move everyone, young and old, before the Nativity scene, which is like a living Gospel overflowing from the pages of Holy Scripture," he wrote.

"The Incarnation of Jesus Christ remains the heart of God's revelation, although it is easily forgotten that its unfolding is so unobtrusive, to the point of going unnoticed," the Pope wrote. "Littleness, in fact, is the way to encounter God."

"Safeguarding the spirit of the Nativity scene becomes a healthy immersion in the presence of God manifested in the small, sometimes trivial and repetitive, everyday things," he continued.

"The shepherds in the manger are those who welcome God's surprise and live in wonder at their encounter with him, adoring him: in littleness they recognize the face of God," he said.

"Humanly we are all inclined to seek greatness, but it is a gift to know how to really find it: to know how to find greatness in that smallness that God so loves."

On Christmas night, the angels lead the shepherds to a baby born in a manger – "not a sign of power, self-sufficiency or pride. No. The eternal God is reduced to a helpless, meek, humble human being. God lowered himself so that we could walk with him and so that he could stand beside us, not above and far from us."

Cathnews



The hope of Christmas

Christmas Day is a day of celebration. Of family, of children, of leisure, of freedom from work, of good food and drink. And yet Christmas always seems to come at times of anxiety, of fear, of separation, of hardship. On one Christmas we lived with Covid and the isolation that accompanied it. Bushfires and their threat accompanied another Christmas. The war in Ukraine dominated another. This year Christmas has been overshadowed by the war and the deaths of so many children in Gaza, and by homelessness and financial struggle in Australia. And hanging over all these events is the spectre of climate change.



Yet the story of the first Christmas suggests that anxiety and disturbance are its natural background. Christmas comes naturally as the unexpected warmth of sunshine on a cold and cloudy day. The first Christmas took place in a Judaea that had lost its independence and was effectively under Roman rule. God's promises to be with the people had seemed to come to nothing. People who had led rebellions in the name of God had been ruthlessly suppressed. Hope was in short supply.

To that world Christmas came as unexpectedly and as unnoticed as a candle lit in a desert. In the Christmas stories of Luke and Matthew the circumstances of Jesus' birth and the lives of little people are controlled by the whim of alien power. In Luke's Gospel the census called by the Roman Emperor to tax the population forces Joseph and a heavily pregnant Mary to walk to Bethlehem. There, because of the crowd of travellers in the inns, Mary can find no private space to give birth. She and Joseph need to make do with a stable. find themselves outside in a stable. The birth of Jesus, who fulfills God's promises to the Jewish people takes place in a stable, disclosed only to disreputable shepherds and, in Matthew's Gospel, to foreign visitors.

In Matthew's Gospel the puppet King of Judaea, Herod, hears of Jesus spoken of as a future king and decides to kill him. Joseph and Mary must flee for their lives from Judaea to Egypt, as refugees from tyrants still do.

And yet both in Bethlehem and in Egypt hope steals in imperceptibly as Jesus grows. Mary and Joseph treasure the promises that he will be at the centre of a world-changing future. His survival and the signs associated with his birth strengthen their hope. They celebrate his birth. They are also prepared to find the presence of God in God's apparent absence and the victory of God in Jesus' apparent annihilation. Their hope is thoroughly tested by Jesus' seeming insignificance and by defeat.

Underlying the celebration, the gathering of families, the gratitude for children and the gift giving which animate a secular Christmas is the hope that despite appearances life and goodness will triumph. It hopes that the deaths of so many children in Gaza, the viciousness of wars, the apathy in the face of climate change will not shape the future. Christmas offers us a promise and asks a question of us. A promise that life will come through a birth and a death. And a question whether we shall hang in to give life a chance. *Edited extract Fr Andrew Hamilton SJ*

Reflection

No one predicted the way God would send us a saviour. No one knew the day or the hour of God's coming. No one foresaw that God would be born a homeless person. No one envisaged that the first witnesses to the birth would be illiterate shepherds from nearby fields. While some waited for a mercenary to overthrow the Romans, others held their breath for the procession of a heavenly king. The love of God, however, took flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone and came to us as a poor, defenceless baby.

That's our God, not bound by our precepts or expectations, but honouring the promises made to our ancestors, in the most surprising of ways. And Christmas provides us with the most tender images of our God, One who needs to be nurtured, suckled and held tight.

It's not a bad metaphor for our Christian faith either. If Christmas means anything to us, then it's not just an annual religious outing or something to fill in time on a public holiday. It's a moveable feast which we celebrate every time we do something just, loving or peaceful. That's why we gather here for the Eucharist each week: to be nurtured, fed, suckled and held in God's embrace, if only for a while, so that we find the courage and strength to go out from here, confront the wolves and thieves of our own day, and be in the right place at the right time for God to find us.

As a result of that first Christmas, Christ wants to nurture a people who by their lives will change the world for the better, for all people everywhere. So this Christmas, 'Go tell it on the mountain, over the hill and everywhere. Go tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.'

Edited extract Fr Richards Leonard SJ

We pray for Mohammad

Eleven years on, Mohammad still waits for a visa. The Office of the Immigration Minister, Andrew Giles, has received his application. The immigration lawyers are hopeful, the refugee advocates are hopeful, but perhaps we just need prayer.



For the people of Israel, Palestine, Ukraine & other war torn countries.

May there be peaceful resolutions.

St Bernard's community

CENSUS CARD: Families who are new to our Parish, or parishioners who needs to update any change of contact details or residential address, please call the Parish Office 52 432 739, belmont@cam.org.au or fill in a card from the wall near the Control Booth.

The Geelong Community ...

Holy mass on New year eve & Solemnity of Mother of God: Thank the Almighty God for 2023 and welcome 2024 in the presence of the Lord. Eucharistic adoration starts at **11 pm on 31st December** followed by Holy mass. St. Mary McKillop Church, Bannockburn. All are welcome! Cuppa after mass.

Vinnies NILS offers applicants on a low income **NO INTEREST LOANS**—up to \$1,500.00 for essential goods and services. Visit www.nilsgeelong.com.au



The Wider Community.....

Advent Appeal for Ukraine

Please take a Christmas Blessing from the Archbishop and an envelope from the foyer.



Cartias Gaza Crisis Appeal—to provide urgent humanitarian assistance to the help affected by the conflict. Donate www.caritas.org.au/gaza or 1800 024 413

21-23 Feb Catholic Social Services National Conference

Commons, Commonality, Common Good. More information on tickets, the conference theme, speakers and the program is available at: <https://css.org.au/css-national-conference-2024/>



Mannya Hall Fund raising :

You can make a payment *in person* at the Parish Office or via *direct bank transfer* to **BSB 083347**

ACC#358514559

Reference : **surname & hall.** Please note new account details



'In the spirit of reconciliation, St Bernard's Parish acknowledges the Wadawurrung People, the Traditional Custodians of country and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.'

Mass Times this week

Saturday: **6pm**
Sunday: **9am & 10.30am**
Tue & Fri: **12 noon**
Wed & Thur: **9.30am**

*The **Rosary** is prayed after each weekday Mass*

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament held **First Friday** of each month after 12pm mass

To receive the **bulletin** by **email** please subscribe via the parish website:

<https://stbernards.org.au/>

Contact the Office - 52 432 739 to arrange :

**** Communion at home (Friday am)**

New volunteers welcome to assist with this ministry.

**** To receive an email link to the Passionist Fathers recorded Mass each weekend.**

**** To receive an emailed worksheet for children,** linked to the Sunday readings.

Sunday Mass on Radio :

7.00am Light FM 89.9

10.00am Pulse 94.7 FM (*St Mary's*)

Sunday Mass on TV :

Channel 10 6-6.30am

Channel 31 or 44 11am *St Patrick's Cathedral*

Parish Office hours

Mon: 9am—4pm

Tues: 10am—3pm

Wed: 9am—4pm

Thurs: 10am—1pm

Fri: 9am—4pm

*** St Bernard's Play Group** Every Tuesday of school term 9-10.30am Gold coin donation

*** St Vincent De Paul** Membership enquiries : through Parish Office

*** Men's Group - 2nd Tues** of the month 10.30am Church cafe

*** Charismatic Prayer** meeting will resume in March 2023

*** Ladies Coffee and Chat Group, 3rd Mon** of the month, 10.30am at **FULL Circle**, Belmont opposite Car Wash, cnr Roslyn Rd.

*** Mill Market donation & Book Fair drop off** Recommencement date is *January 20th*



To assist the Manny communities :

direct bank trf to :

BSB : **063 504** acc : **008 005 74**

Ref : **surname & support project**

i.e Hall or education or General needs.

<https://mannyacoffee.or.ug/> Thank you

Readings this week : 2 Samuel 7:1-5. 8-12. 14. 16 ; Ps 88:2-5. 27-29 ; Romans 16:25-27 ; Luke 1:26-38

Next Week's Readings : Sirach 3:2-6. 12-14 or Genesis 15:1-6. 21:1-3 ; Ps 104:1-6.8-9 or Ps 127:1-5 ; Colossians 3:12 -21 or Hebrews 11:8. 11-12. 17-19 ; Luke 2:22-40 or Luke 2:22. 39-40