

FIRST READING

A reading from the second book of Samuel
7:1-5,8-12,14,16

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

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

The Word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

R./ For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.

SECOND READING

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans
16:25-27

Glory to him who is able to give you the strength to live according to the Good News I preach, and in which I proclaim Jesus Christ, the revelation of a mystery kept secret for

endless ages, but now so clear that it must be broadcast to pagans everywhere to bring them to the obedience of faith. This is only what scripture has predicted, and it is all part of the way the eternal God wants things to be. He alone is wisdom; give glory therefore to him through Jesus Christ for ever and ever. Amen.

The Word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

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

GOSPEL

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke
1:26-38

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

The Gospel of the Lord.



ST JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH
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Fourth Sunday of Advent – Yr B
23th / 24th December, 2023

Loving Father,
May we welcome Jesus, Your Son
And proclaim the good news of his birth to
all the earth.
That every age will see, Your saving grace
and follow in Your way of love.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.



FOCUS ON THE WORD God's love is faithful! Mary will give birth to a son. **Holy is his name!** Our first reading focuses on the promise made to David – a member of his family would be a great king whose kingdom would last forever. This reading is filled with the fidelity of God: **"I called you....I have always been with you....I promise to be with you forever....He will be like a son to me....I will never take my love away from him."** That promise is fulfilled in the Annunciation.

By the power of the Spirit, Mary will give birth to a child, and "he will be the ruler of the family of David." In both of these readings **we see the power of God at work in human beings – God's faithful love made real in history.**

Pope Francis suggests that sometimes **we need to stop and remind ourselves what matters most.** We should never let our busyness push Jesus away from our minds and hearts and behaviours. 'Consumerism is not found in the manger in Bethlehem', the Pope points out.

Rather, the Pope sees the manger as something which can teach us about the real meaning of Christmas. It shows us, he says, **the importance of closeness, poverty, and concreteness.** By closeness he means the closeness of God with humanity, which should always give us hope and lead us to be close to others. **'The poverty of the manger', he adds, 'shows us where the true riches in life are to be found: not in money and power, but in relationships and persons.'**

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN: The Parish of St John the Baptist, and the Archdiocese of Melbourne are committed to the care, wellbeing and protection of children, young people and vulnerable people in our community. May our message be that child protection and the dignity of every person is the responsibility of every adult. You can find out more about the church's work in this area at: www.catholic.org.au/responseandprevention

FEAST DAYS Tues 26th December St Stephen, the first martyr
Wed 27th Dec St John, apostle, evangelist Thurs 29th Dec The Holy Innocents, martyrs

I have come that you may have life and have it to the full
(John 10:10)

PARISH PRIEST:
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DEACON:
Rev. Peter Stringfellow 9758 1029
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FAITH DEVELOPMENT CO-ORDINATOR
Mary Makarucha 9758 1029
Tuesdays and Wednesdays. 10.00am -2.00pm
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PARISH OFFICE: 9758 1029
Monday 9.45am – 3.45pm
Tuesday to Friday 9.00am –3.00pm
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SCHOOLS:
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St. Joseph's College 9758 2000
Principal: Catherine Livingston
Mater Christi College 9754 6611
Principal: Maria Haggett

MASS TIMES:
Saturday 6:00 pm
Sunday 9:00 am, 11:00 am
Tuesday 7.00pm
Wed & Thurs 9.15 am
Friday 11.00 am

RECONCILIATION: Saturdays 5.15 pm

GLENGOLLAN VILLAGE MASS 1st Friday 2pm
WILLOWBROOK MASS 3rd Thursday 11am

BAPTISMS: Either during a weekend Mass or at 12.30pm on the 2nd Sunday of the month. 6 weeks' notice required. Please refer to our Guidelines for Infant Baptism on our Parish Website.
Contact the Parish Office on: 9758 1029 or via email at: office@stjohnthebaptist.net.au

WEDDINGS:
By appointment, 6 months' notice required. Saturdays or weekdays (not Sundays). Contact the Parish Office: on 9758 1029.

4th Sunday of Advent – Yr B
23rd /24th December, 2023

PRAYING FOR...

All who have died recently:

Those who we remember at this time:

Rosy Harris, Joseph Semenow, Catherine Theobald, Josie Jordan, Patrick Owens, Maria Daraio; Peter South.

The sick:

Eamon Smith, Fame Pelgrim, Elsie Johnson, Peggy Spencer, Ann Good, Ben Mc Laey, Don Roberts, Maureen Wilson, Lucy Denzin, Gabby Sundstrom, Kathryn Kircos, Ruby Samtoy, Barbara Kenny, Anne Jayawardena, Lea Hatley, Patricia Quinn, David Merton, Michael Byrne, Bev McNamara, Anthony McNamara, Victoria Lewis, Nicole Moore, Peter Fairhurst, Hans Whitaker, Edward Osborne.

ROSARY is recited prior to Morning Weekday Mass on Wed, Thurs, Friday, in the Church. All welcome to join in the recitation.

GROUP ROSARY SESSION FOR PEACE
When: First Saturday of the Month at 10.30 am.
Where: 37 Lane Road, FTG. All are welcome.
Contact: Pauline Barlow on 9758 5106.

MOTHERS' PRAYER GROUP has finished for the year. A Merry Christmas to all, and a blessed New Year.

CHARISMATIC PRAYER We will now break until the 6th February, 2024. We wish you all a very Merry Christmas & Happy New Year. See you next year!

FRIENDSHIP GATHERING: is having a break over the holidays. We wish you all a Happy, Holy and Safe Christmas & New Year. Looking forward to more fun times in 2024. Stay tuned for start up date. . .

ARCHBISHOP'S ADVENT APPEAL FOR UKRAINE In response to the continued conflict in Ukraine, Archbishop Peter A Comensoli has launched a special Advent appeal, the proceeds of which will go towards providing aid and practical assistance to those who have been displaced and are without basic supplies, especially as winter approaches.

'There are no winners in war, only families torn apart. Sadly, this is the painful reality facing so many at this time,' Archbishop Comensoli reflected. 'I'm inviting the faithful of Melbourne to offer whatever they can at this time. And I pray that, together, we can be a sign of God's nearness to those who need it most.'

All parishes have been sent cards and envelopes for the Advent Appeal, which we encourage you to distribute to your parishioners throughout the Season of Advent. Donations can be made using the envelopes or QR code.

For more information and resources, please visit <https://melbournecatholic.org/adventappeal>



CHRISTMAS SEASON MASSES

Tuesday – 19th December

Sun 24th December 4th Sunday Advent

9am, 11am

5.30pm Carols **6.00pm Family Mass.**

9.00pm Carols **9.30pm Mass of Christmas**

Sunday 25th December – Christmas Day

9 am Mass and 11 am Mass.

(Note - there will be no weekday Masses from Tue 26th up to and including Fri 29th December)

Sat /Sun 30th /31st December – Holy Family

Mass 6pm Saturday and 9am & 11am Sunday

Monday 1st January 2024 – Mary, Mother of God

10am Mass only.



PARISH OFFICE HOURS THROUGHOUT THE CHRISTMAS / JANUARY HOLIDAYS. The Office



Closes Friday 22nd December 2023

Normal offices hours resume

Tues 9th January 2024.

Please note that as Friday 26th

January is a public holiday, the Parish office will be closed.

Merry Christmas to everyone, see you in the New Year!

THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL FERNTREE GULLY CONFERENCE

The Society of St Vincent de Paul – Ferntree Gully Conference, would like to thank all of our parishioners for your tremendous support for our ongoing work in assisting the disadvantaged in our parish area. Thank you for the donation of giftcards and Christmas items of non-perishable food for distribution to our families. Our appeal continued to raise the awareness of our varied work for those who are experiencing hardship. We are pleased to inform you that all non-perishable food and cash that you donated has been used directly to support the needy this Christmas. Once again we thank Parishioners for their generous donations over the Christmas period. Cash donations and gift cards from: our Primary School totaled: \$1615.00, Parish donations of gift cards totaled \$2,715.00, Parish donations of cash totaled \$1,105.00
Grand Total: \$5,435.00



Our members packed and delivered: 93 hampers with a total cost of \$ 16,600.00. Each hamper contained Christmas non-perishable food, plus two \$50 Woolworths cards; one \$20 Woolworths card; as well as your gift cards for the children in that family.

We sincerely thank Fr Thomas and everyone who supported us in so many ways. We are always delighted to welcome people to join us as we continue to support those in need. May God's Blessings Be upon you and may you be blessed for who you are. – SVDP.

SACRAMENTAL CLASSES 2024 for children who do not attend catholic schools will **begin early February 2024**. If you have children ready to make the sacraments or know of any children who do not attend catholic schools and are interested in celebrating their sacraments, please contact marymakarucha@stjohnthebaptist.net.au or 9758 1029

ARCHBISHOPS CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

Dear friends, we hear these words from the ancient prophet Isaiah (52:7):

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation ...

These are beautiful words—old words, first spoken in old days, yet so sorely needed in our day!

Amid this time of conflict, suffering and exile, Isaiah speaks to us words of peace and the good news about the Prince of Peace.

Our hearts ache for reconciliation of peoples; respect for our shared humanity; care for our crying planet. Our world and its people seem to be groaning and railing against pathways to true peace. Yet we experience the hope of God through simple words of joy, mercy and peace. The shepherds experienced this. So did the Magi. Mary and Joseph knew it intimately. God knew we needed his Son to come amongst us, to show us the way ahead.

As we come to celebrate the Nativity of the Lord this year, might we be attentive to the broken people across the world who are held captive by the tragedy of war and old hatreds. Might we also remember those exiled in other ways—bereft of knowing God; lost and searching for identity and purpose.

We too can be the messengers whose footfalls bring light into the world, announcing mercy, bringing joy, offering Good News. God has come among us, simply, humbly and hopefully in a little child, his Son, our Brother.

May the peace that comes through this child, the Prince of Peace, be with you this Christmas. And with every footstep, may you take His message, and life, out into the world. - Happy Christmas to you all! - **Archbishop Peter Comensoli.**

ROSTERS: Mon 25th Dec to Sun 31st Dec 2023

Flowers	Marg H & Judy G
Linen	Alvie M
Welcomers	6pm: Kathryn C, Myra N 9am Terry S, Johanna C, Thelma B 11am Patrick S & Anna M
Lectors	6pm: Tess D 9am: Terry S 11am: Eduardo M
Gardening	Patrick S & Harry R



...and thank you, from all the Parish Staff