



FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT YEAR B 24 DECEMBER 2023

As we prepare for the of the birth of Christ, todays readings remind us first of all that God's ways are not the ways of the world.

When people ask if we're ready for Christmas, they probably mean whether we have all the presents bought and wrapped, and all the decorations up. Often striving to get those things done, can lead us to neglect the need to prepare our hearts for the real meaning of the feast — the presence of Christ in our midst and in us.

May our response be the same as Mary's, so that the purpose of our lives could also be fulfilled. Mary's 'Yes' changed the world, and changed the lives of all of us , one way or another.

By our saying 'Yes' to Jesus, through us, he will be born, or re-born in others.



We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, the Awabakal People who, long before us lived, loved, educated and raised their children on this Country. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and we recognise the young people who are our future. We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in our communities. We respect their deep physical and spiritual connections to Country through their stories, traditions and living cultures.

- PARISH LEADERSHIP TEAM:** Uta France
John France
- PRIEST SUPERVISOR:** Fr Joseph Figuardo
SACRAMENTAL PRIEST: Fr John Purnell
- PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL:** Juliet Hutchins
Mal Melvey
Pam Melvey
Kerry Lendon
Rod Hay
- PARISH SECRETARY:** Rosanna Suckling

OFFICE: 60 Yambo Street, Morisset, PO Box 87, Ph: 02 4973.6859
Office Hours: 9.00 am to 2.00pm—Monday to Friday (except public holidays)
(We ask that you make an appointment to come to the office)
Morisset Parish Office email: morparish@mn.catholic.org.au
Morisset Parish Web site: www.vianneymorisset.org
Morisset Parish Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/stjvparish>
Morisset Parish Instagram : https://www.instagram.com/stjvparish_morisset/
Morisset Parish Bulletin Items: morparish@mn.catholic.org.au
(Please submit all Bulletin Notice requests to the parish office by 2pm Wednesdays)

Email the Parish Office to Subscribe for an Electronic Bulletin .

UPCOMING WORSHIP TIMES :

- | | |
|----------|--|
| Saturday | 23rd December 5pm
Mass—Cooranbong |
| Sunday | 24th December 9.30am
Mass—Morisset |
| Sunday | 24th December 6pm
Christmas Eve Mass
Morisset Showground |
| Monday | 25th December 9.30am
Christmas Day Mass
Morisset Church |
| Saturday | 30th December 5pm
Mass—Cooranbong |
| Sunday | 31st December 9.30am
Mass—Morisset |
| Saturday | 6th January 5pm
Family Mass—Morisset |
| Sunday | 7th January 9.30am
Mass—Morisset |
| Saturday | 13th January 5pm
Mass—Cooranbong |
| Sunday | 14th January 9.30am
Mass—Morisset |
| Saturday | 20th January 5pm
Family Mass—Morisset |
| Sunday | 21st January 9.30am
Mass—Morisset |

Welcome

Welcome to all the visitors to our Parish of St John Vianney during the summer holiday season.

The Parish of St John Vianney Morisset, was officially formed in 1947, however our Mass center of St Patrick and St Brigid at Cooranbong, dates to the 1860's. The present Cooranbong Church celebrated its centenary in August 2006, and 150 years of Catholic presence in the area was celebrated in 2011.

It is documented that Saint Mary McKillop visited Cooranbong where she had a convent school. Up until 1966 St John Vianney Parish was part of the Diocese of Sydney, but now it is part of the Diocese of Maitland / Newcastle, with Bishop Michael Kennedy as Bishop.

The 9.30am Mass at Morisset is recorded each Sunday and uploaded to the Parish Website and Facebook later in the day, internet allowing. This allows people in nursing facilities and those away from the parish for whatever reason, to keep 'in touch' with the parish.

Reflection for Fourth Sunday of Advent Year B — 24th December 2023

We have reached the final Sunday in the season of Advent – a time of preparing ourselves to recognise and celebrate Christ's presence in the world, both historically and in an ongoing, timeless way. This week's gospel account of the Annunciation is an ideal culmination to this season as we recall Mary's emphatic 'Yes' to all that was being asked of her. At the end of the Advent season of reflection and preparation to recognise Christ's presence in the world and in our lives, what better response could there be than to simply say, 'Yes'?

In a world that is driven by selfishness and the drive to push one's self ahead of others, Mary's selfless act stands as a challenge to our modern society. Even in her own time, Mary's decision must have been an enormously difficult one – one that had the potential to bring great shame on herself and Joseph. Yet, her decision is made swiftly and in faith. She trusts God absolutely and gives her life over into God's hands. That is perhaps the supreme act of faith; to say 'Yes' to God so completely that you are prepared to hand over direction and control of your own life.

Few of us tend to be visited by angels who lay out God's plan for us as clearly as Gabriel did for Mary. For most of us, it is a challenge to discern God's desire for us; to realise what it is that we are called to do and then give ourselves fully to that call. In the hustle and bustle of life, it is difficult to hear anything that God may be trying to ask of us. Perhaps the example of Mary's 'Yes' is a reminder to be still enough to hear the question in the first place!

Scriptural context:

Throughout the gospel of Luke, great importance is placed on the people in society who were regarded as the 'lesser ones'. The mission of Jesus, as described in Luke's gospel, is directed towards those who were unimportant in the eyes of society. In first century society, women were regarded as much less in status than men. So it is significant that the first revelation of Jesus is made to a woman, Mary. The angel Gabriel announces that Mary has won God's favour. For a woman to win God's favour would have been unimaginable to many Jews at the time, yet, through this woman God was revealed in human form.

Have you thought? What about Joseph?:

Luke's account of the Annunciation (and indeed much of the infancy narrative) focuses its attention on Mary. But what of Joseph? How does he react to the news that his betrothed wife is pregnant? By Jewish Law and tradition, Mary could well have been stoned to death if Joseph had denounced her. Even if Joseph allowed people to think that he was the father of her

child, this would have caused an enormous scandal – a breach of the sanctity of the betrothal vow. However, foreshadowing the compassion of Jesus himself, Joseph acts purely out of compassion and continues with his marriage to Mary.

Different View – Virgin births:

Some critics of Christian tradition argue that the account of the virgin conception and birth of Jesus is merely a literary device used to give status to Jesus' birth. At the time, it was not an uncommon device to accord a significant figure a heroic or even virginal birth. In Greek, Egyptian and even Roman legend, several characters are credited with virgin births. Some authors point to the fact that it is only the gospels of Matthew and Luke and none of the earlier writings that portray Mary as a virgin. The argument suggests that assigning Jesus a virgin birth was an attempt to place Jesus alongside other historical and legendary figures as a person of great status.

Questions for Us Today:

Q. How do you think Mary's family and friends may have reacted to her news?

Q. To what aspects of your life do you need to say 'Yes'?

Q. In what way, or in what direction, are you called by God?
(Adapted from Greg Sunter) Dan Joyce

Fifth Sunday Advance Notice

The month of December 2023 has five Sundays. This means that on the 5th Sunday weekend, the Vigil Mass (Saturday 30th December) will be celebrated at Cooranbong 5pm.

Fr John Purnell will be with us on that weekend.

Some Points to Ponder.

Traditions have always been an important dimension of celebrating faith. Each age is a time of special grace, including our age of high technology.

Did you Know?

Preface.

(Latin *praefatio*, a saying beforehand.) The prayer of praise and thanksgiving that introduces the Eucharistic prayer at Mass. It ends with the acclamation, Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might. The preface often recalls the feast being celebrated or the liturgical season of the year and so acts as an introduction to the Eucharistic Prayer

Oral Traditions

(Latin *tradere*, hand on) Stories of the culture of a society passed on by word of mouth from one generation to the next. A lot of what God reveals to people has been handed on by word of mouth. Some of this oral tradition has also been written down. See Matthew 15:2-6; Thessalonians 2:15.

Thankyou

A heart felt thank you to the parish and parish community for all your prayers and support for Clare during her illness, it is much appreciated by us, Margaret and Clare.

Farewell Fr Priyantha

Fr Priyantha Fernando, who has been helping us in our parish over the last year, has been appointed as Assistant Priest, assisting Fr George Anthicad in the six parishes of the Maitland area, effective 31 January 2024 until further notice. As soon as Fr Priyantha's final weekend with us is confirmed, a 'Cuppa' to say farewell will be held after Mass.

No Liturgies-School Holidays

There will be no Tuesday Liturgy of the Word during the School Holidays. Liturgy will recommence on Tuesday 30th January.

Office Closed

The Parish Office will be closed between Christmas and the New Year. (23rd December-1st January)-The Office will reopen Tuesday 2nd January 2024

Although the Parish Office will be closed, the Parish Phone will be diverted, and all calls will be answered.

Christmas

As you are probably aware Christmas Eve 2023 is on Sunday 24th December.

Mass Times 23/24/25. December

Saturday 23rd December Vigil Mass 5pm Cooranbong. Church

Sunday 24th December Mass 9.30am Morisset. Church.

Sunday 24th (Christmas Eve) Mass 6pm Morisset Showground.

Monday 25th (Christmas Day) Mass 9.30am. Morisset Church.

Fr Priyantha Fernando will be with us at Morisset 23/24/25 December.

Christmas Eve Seating at the Morisset Showground

Some seating will be available, but to ensure that you have a seat, it would be advisable that you bring your own.

CHRISTMAS EVE WORKING BEE

Thank you to everyone who volunteered to help set up the Morisset Showground for our Christmas Eve Mass. A working bee to help arrange the chairs and stage etc will be held on Sunday 24th December at 12 midday.

People involved in the Liturgical Ministries at Christmas will be contacted shortly. Fr Priyantha Fernando will be with us at Morisset 23/24/25 December.

Bringing our Year to the Child Jesus

If you are like me, the sight of Advent wreaths and Christmas trees, lights, and nativity scenes, as well as the sounds of Christmas carols begin to fill you with a sense of hope and joy.

BISHOP MICHAEL KENNEDY PUBLISHED DECEMBER 02, 2023

While Christmas may not be our holiest day of the year, it is often our most joyful. For the birth of the child Jesus – the Son of God born in human flesh – expresses most tenderly the love that God has for us, his closeness to us, and his desire that we draw closer to him and to one another.

Christmas and the child Jesus do indeed draw us closer together around him. It seems to be the time of year that we most desire to be together, and so we come together in these Christmas weeks for all manner of gatherings as workmates, as friends, as neighbours, and as family.

Christmas also seems to be the time in which we reflect upon the year that has just been and the year that is about to begin. There is something more profound happening here than Christmas merely coinciding with the New Year period. Rather, I encourage us all to more consciously bring our year that has just been to our Lord Jesus, to present it to him with all its joys and challenges, to reflect in his light on how we have fared in our choices and actions, and to seek his guidance, grace, and blessing upon our lives and plans for the year ahead.

As I reflect on the past 12 months to bring them to the Lord, I would like to share four things with you.

First, personally it was a big year for me as God's changing plans for me unfolded in my move from Armidale to Maitland-Newcastle. This came as a surprise to me, but it gave me the opportunity to renew my trust in God and my commitment to serve. I reflect with gratitude on the warm welcome, open hearts, and human kindness that I have received here from so many people both within and outside the Church.

Second, at a local level I am reminded of the deep sorrow that

gripped our community earlier this year after the Hunter bus tragedy. The loss of precious life shook many of us to the core as we mourned together. But we also prayed together and supported one another through this profound grief. In that time of darkness, we witnessed the grace of God and the best of human nature.

Third, the most significant event of the year at a national level was probably the Voice referendum. Whilst both the result and the tone of some of the campaigning may have been disappointing to some, I think the whole process highlighted a couple of things on which we as a nation should be proud and can build for the future: Australians are greatly concerned for wanting better lives and outcomes for our indigenous people, and it is possible for good people to reach different conclusions about the best way to achieve desired goals and outcomes, in which case listening to each other is crucial.

Fourth, at a global level, we were shocked and horrified by the Hamas attack on Israel, reminding us of the hatred that can be stirred up in human hearts and, as a result, just how precarious peace can be. Our thoughts continue to be with those living in the midst of the ongoing conflict in Gaza, as well as those in Ukraine. In the face of such violence, we are called to be instruments of peace, to pray earnestly, and to strive for understanding. For those with eyes to see, these events also brought about many acts of solidarity and kindness.

So, this Christmas we bring to the Lord a year of both darkness and light, sorrow and joy, grief and hope. I'm sure your own life too which you bring to the Lord reflects this same interplay of good and evil in some way, as does mine. Our world and each of our lives need the faith, hope, and love of God who in the Child Jesus brings us together. I wish you a truly joyful Christmas and blessed new year.

Christmas 2023: God is with us

"May our contemplation of the Christ child this Christmas fill our hearts and souls with hope, peace and joy because we know that God is with us. God bless you all and Happy Christmas."

Listen to Bishop Michael Kennedy's Christmas message in the video at: <https://youtu.be/jnZ6A-35mcl?si=lwDN1Q0lIFgk4SqQ>

Voice of the Spirit

To access the latest Catholic Charismatic Renewal Newsletter, visit: www.mn.catholic.org.au/media/6739/novvos2023e.pdf

There are also two events to Save the Date for. CCR Leadership Day – Saturday 3 February 2024 and CCR NSW Conference – 7 to 8 September 2024.

2024 – Lenten Reflection – Transformation through Revelation

During the season of Lent, we are called to look deeply at the human condition, just as Jesus, the Son of God, experienced. We are reminded during this time of hardship, suffering, and ultimately dying that we must stretch ourselves. We must pray and fast from whatever is taking hold of the fullness of life. This time calls for personal reflection and encourages us to look out with missionary eyes to intentionally give to those in need.

To access our Diocesan Resource, Transformation Through Revelation, please visit <https://www.mn.catholic.org.au/media/6680/0003733-dio-2024-lenten-program-06.pdf>

Aurora

The December edition of the Aurora is available to read online at: <https://mnnews.today/aurora/december-2023/>

SUPPORTING THE CLERGY / 1st Collection

If you would like to make contributions to support the Clergy / 1st Collection please do so at Mass in the BLUE bucket or electronically using the Online Payments button on the Parish Website Home page, Diocese App, Bank Account Name: CCF BSB: 062815 No: 00328161 Ref: 5016 1st Collection or set up a direct debit contact the parish office for this option.

SUPPORTING OUR PARISH / 2nd Collection

If you would like to make contributions to support our Parish please do so at Mass via the RED bucket or deposit directly into the Parish Account our details are: Account Name: CCF BSB:062815 Account Number: 00328161 one of the following Payment References are required by CCF for all deposits: 5004 or 5004 + SURNAME or 5004 + PG + your Giver Number, or 5004 + PG + SURNAME, or you can use the Online Payments button on the Parish Website Home page or the Diocese App. If you are considering taking up **planned giving** you may like to know that **a percentage of the contributions are tax deductible**. If you would like to know more or set up planned giving please contact the Parish Office.

UPCOMING FEAST DAYS MEMORIALS AND SOLEMNITIES

- THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD VIGIL (S) - 24TH DEC
- THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD DAY (S) - 25TH DEC
- SAINT STEPHEN (F) - 26TH DEC
- SAINT JOHN (F) - 27TH DEC
- THE HOLY INNOCENTS (F) - 28TH DEC
- THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY, AND JOSEPH (F) - 31ST DEC
- SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD (S) - 1ST JAN
- SAINTS BASIL THE GREAT & GREGORY NAZIANZEN (M) - 2ND JAN
- THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD— 7TH JAN
- THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD (F) - 8TH JAN

Please pray for all those who are sick: in hospital or at home, especially those living with a life threatening disease:

Annette Boyd, Mary Monaghan, Clare Wallington, Donna Hazzard, Pam Mullaly, Mary Johnson, Tintumol Thomas, Les Findley, Peter Martyn, Bernadette Martin, Joan Gillett, Bruce Gillett.



Please pray for those who have been called to eternal life may they always be in our prayers.

Recently Deceased: Curtis Williams

WEEKEND ROSTERS			
		<u>THIS WEEK</u>	<u>NEXT WEEK</u>
<u>PRESIDERS</u>	5PM 9.30AM	Mass Mass	Mass Mass
<u>PROCLAIMERS:</u>	5PM 9.30AM	L Hutchinson P Melvey	D Peterson P Melvey
<u>PSALMIST:</u>	5PM 9.30AM	K Lendon J France	P Melvey K Lendon
<u>GIFTS</u>	5PM 9.30AM	P Herbert H White J Vipan K Amon	G Hutchinson L Hutchinson A Dussin D Whittem
<u>SERVERS</u>	5PM 9.30AM	M Melvey F Dyson J Lawandos R Lawandos	M Melvey V Paulo C Lawandos
<u>AV</u>	5PM 9.30AM	D Peterson T Alexander	J Vipan J France
<u>WELCOMERS</u>	5PM 9.30AM	P Melvey A Dussin K Lendon	H White M Melvey A Dussin
<u>CHURCH CLEANING</u>	COOR MOR	K Lendon T Alexander P Herbert	J Scully B Hutcheson

Prayer Requests for the Bulletin

If you would like the parish to pray for a family member who is sick, recently deceased or you would like remembered please call or email the parish office or complete a prayer card for each person and place in the mail box near the parish office door. Cards are available at the back of the church and at the Parish Office.

All prayer requests require permission from a family member or the person. Due to Australian privacy laws.

An Act of Spiritual Communion

My Jesus,
I believe that You
are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.
I love You above all things,
and I desire to receive You into my soul.
Since I cannot at this moment
receive You sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart.
I embrace You as if You were already there and unite
myself wholly to You.
Never permit me to be separated from You.
Amen.



Our Parish supports The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle in its zero-tolerance approach to abuse. Every one of us must each day commit ourselves individually and collectively to safeguard each child and every vulnerable person to whom we minister and interact with. If you have any concerns for a child or vulnerable adult please contact the Office of Safeguarding P:02 4979 1390 or email: childprotection@mn.catholic.org.au, or visit their website for further information www.officeofsafeguarding.org.au.

Live stream Mass every Sunday at 9.30am at www.mn.catholic.org.au/places/live-stream





SUNDAY PRAYER SERVICE

Fourth Sunday of Advent Year B

Sunday 24 Dec 2023

The Introductory Rites

Acknowledgement of Country

We Acknowledge the Traditional Custodians who have walked upon and cared for this land for thousands of years. We acknowledge the continued deep spiritual attachment and relationship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to this country and commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of reconciliation. We especially acknowledge the Awabakal and Darkinjung peoples who were the original custodians of the land this parish sits on.

Gathering

The Lectionary/Roman Missal or a Bible may be placed on a table together with a candle and a cross.

Sign of the Cross

Leader:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All:

Amen.

Greeting

Leader:

Blessed be Jesus Christ
who will come again in glory.

All:

Blessed be God forever.

Introductory Remarks

Leader (in these or similar words):

Friends in Christ,
although we cannot celebrate the Eucharist this day,
we gather in God's name
for when two or more come together
God is always with us.
In union with the whole Church,
we await the coming of the Lord.

Opening Rite

LITANY OF PRAISE

Leader:

God's kindness brings hope to the world.
To prepare ourselves to hear his Word
let us praise the Lord Jesus Christ.

A brief period of silence follows.

Leader:

Lord Jesus, you come to heal us and bring us strength: Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you are the Son of God and Son of Mary: Christ, have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you come to reconcile us with your Father and with one another: Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader:

May almighty God have mercy on us,

forgive us our sins,
and bring us to everlasting life.

All:

Amen.

Opening Prayer

Leader:

Let us pray.

All pause for silent prayer.

Heavenly Father,
the world awaits the coming of the Christ-child,
the hope of all ages, the promised one.
Make us ready to receive him
so that the light of Christ may live in our hearts
and shine in the world.

We ask this through Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
for ever and ever.

All:

Amen.

The Liturgy of the Word

First Reading

2 Samuel 7:1-5. 8-12. 14. 16

A reading from the second book of Samuel

The kingdom of David will be established for ever in the sight of the Lord.

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 me. Your House and your sovereignty will always stand secure before me and your throne be established for ever.'"

To indicate the end of the reading, the reader acclaims:
The word of the Lord.

All reply:

Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 88:2-5. 27. 29. R. see v.2

(R.) For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.

1. I will sing for ever of your love, O Lord;

through all ages my mouth will proclaim your truth.
Of this I am sure, that your love lasts for ever,
that your truth is firmly established as the heavens. (R.)

2. 'I have made a covenant with my chosen one;
I have sworn to David my servant:
I will establish your dynasty for ever
and set up your throne through all ages.' (R.)
3. He will say to me: 'You are my father,
my God, the rock who saves me.'
I will keep my love for him always;
for him my covenant shall endure. (R.)

Second Reading

Romans 16:25-27

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans

The mystery kept secret for endless ages is now revealed.

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.

To indicate the end of the reading, the reader acclaims:

The word of the Lord.

All reply:

Thanks be to God.

Gospel

Reader:

From the holy Gospel according to Luke.

All:

Glory to you, O Lord.

You will conceive and bear a son.

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.

Reader:

The Gospel of the Lord.

All:

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

All are seated.

Reflection on the Word

Q. What was Mary's initial reaction to the appearance of the angel?

Q. Why do you think Mary accepted God's will so readily?

Q. Who do you know who has tried to live their life in response to God?

Q. In what ways does God communicate a call or challenge to people today?

Profession of Faith

Leader:

In union with the whole Church
let us profess our faith.

All:

**I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,**

At the words that follow, up to and including the Virgin Mary, all bow.

**who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of the Faithful

Leader: Dear friends, like Mary ever-virgin let us open our hearts to the Lord in prayer.

Reader: That the Holy Church may be obedient to the Father by trusting in God's promise of salvation.

In your glory:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That like the Virgin Mary, we may have the grace of certain trust in the Lord.

In your glory:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That conflict and war will be silenced and people of all nations may live securely in God.

In your glory:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That we will generously support the St Vincent de Paul Society and other agencies which reach out the hand of Christ to the homeless and those who are struggling.

In your glory:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That, as we anticipate the birth of Jesus, the Prince-of-Peace, we will see a move from violence to peace in all parts of the world.

In your glory:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That families, whether separated or together for Christmas, will strengthen their love for one another in the spirit of the Holy Family.

In your glory:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That our parish community will honour Mary as the most blessed Mother of Christ.

In your glory:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That all the sick who call upon your name may be given life and healing, especially those who we know and love.

In your glory:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That those who have died may share in the eternal life fulfilled by Christ Jesus.

In your glory:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: Loving God, through the Virgin Mary we know that nothing is impossible to you. Hear our prayers, and help us to be more like Christ's blessed mother as we serve you with confidence and faith. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Leader:

At the Saviour's command and formed by divine teaching, we dare to say:

All:

Our Father, who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy name;

thy kingdom come,

thy will be done

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,

and forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us;

and lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,

now and forever. Amen.

The Concluding Rite

Blessing

Leader:

May the Lord be with us, and protect us now and for ever.

All make the sign of the cross during the blessing.

All:

Amen.

Dismissal

Leader:

Let us go in the peace to love and serve the Lord.

All:

Thanks be to God.

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Riding the wave of mental health

Every life lost to suicide is a tragedy and the impact on family, friends and the community is profound. Luke Conners knows this pain all too well and is now leading the charge for change.

KELLIE O'SULLIVAN PUBLISHED DECEMBER 02, 2023

Talk2mebro was created by Kristy Hajjar and Jack Brown after they lost their loved one to mental illness. Luke had also been impacted by this same death when another of his mates took his own life in 2018.

"The losses hit me hard and I knew something had to be done," Luke said.

Luke then joined the Talk2mebro movement, with the goal to reduce the number of suicides in Australia.

Through early intervention, Talk2mebro aims to create societal change by reducing the stigma around mental health challenges; it encourages men and women to feel more comfortable talking about their hardships.

By engaging the expertise of psychologists and counsellors, Jack and his friends have created programs which empower men to take control of their mental health and wellbeing.

Kristy, Luke and Jack travel to schools, workplaces, and communities across Australia to facilitate: workshops, mental health first aid sessions, retreats and a unique Talk2mebro program to help encourage people to support each other on an emotional level.

The team recently spoke to Warners Bay parishioners about the initiative and ways they can identify, discuss and empower people in their lives that may be struggling.

“The cornerstone of the Church is about supporting one another and working together to help those who may be fighting a battle, no matter the circumstances,” said Father Greg Barker, Parish Priest of Boolaroo, Warners Bay and Booragul.

“No human was intended to walk alone, and it’s through work like Talk2mebro that we see the significance and necessity in opening up on more personal emotional issues and having real conversations about them... especially when things aren’t going well.”

The Talk2mebro group also hosts free community beach sessions every second Friday at Dixon Park (men) and Merewether (women), which includes: breath work, a swim, chat, ice-bath, and a free coffee.

“It isn’t just for men, it’s for everyone. We want to create a shared space where people can feel safe, vulnerable, and unashamedly themselves. We need to bring awareness to the conversations around mental health, for men and women,” Luke said.

Luke Lord, regular Talk2mebro participant-turned-facilitator, credits the group for reigniting his passion for helping people after he was forced to close his gym at the start of 2023.

“Talk2mebro is forming such a strong community. Seeing people in that community feel they can be vulnerable, guys opening up and other guys listening and being that ear for people, that’s what I love and it lights me up,” Mr Lord said.

Since 2018, Talk2mebro has spoken to 55,000 people face-to-face, interacted with more than two million people on social media and provided a holistic approach to mental health and wellbeing.

While the impact of organisations like Talk2mebro is clear, there are still roadblocks across Australia for those who need access to support services.

Psychologist Kelly Pavan is the Counselling and Clinical Services Manager at The Rosewood Centre. She believes accessibility, affordability, and stigma around mental health are key barriers for people struggling to receive the help they might need.

“One of the key reasons is that good longer term quality mental health care is expensive. Cuts to Medicare subsidised therapy during a cost-of living crisis (which subsidises only around half the cost of a session, and now the number of sessions available have been halved), has made therapy inaccessible to the people who need it the most,” Kelly said.

“Across the sector we often see funding loaded towards early intervention services, which is incredibly valuable because prevention is obviously better than cure. However, we would really like to see additional funding and support directed at the pointy end of the risk spectrum- where people are not at risk enough to be in hospital, but too much risk for early intervention or mild-moderate services.”

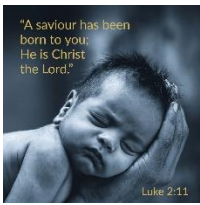
Reflecting on the significance of the Talk2mebro beach sessions, Luke had some reassuring advice for anyone experiencing mental health challenges.

“Like the waves in the ocean - the ups and the downs - you can be in a down, but you’ll come out the other side. Through work and getting support and reaching out, the lows become easier and easier.”

Talk2mebro runs free community sessions every second Friday. For more information visit www.talk2mebro.org.au

For more information on the Rosewood Centre visit rosewoodcentre.com.au or call 1800 613 155.

If you or someone you know needs support, contact Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Beyond Blue on 1300 22 46 36.



SUNDAY PRAYER SERVICE

The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas) Day

Monday 25 Dec 2023

The Introductory Rites

Acknowledgement of Country

We Acknowledge the Traditional Custodians who have walked upon and cared for this land for thousands of years. We acknowledge the continued deep spiritual attachment and relationship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to this country and commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of reconciliation. We especially acknowledge the Awabakal and Darkinjung peoples who were the original custodians of the land this parish sits on.

Gathering

The Lectionary/Roman Missal or a Bible may be placed on a table together with a candle and a cross.

Sign of the Cross

Leader:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All:

Amen.

Greeting

Leader:

Blessed be Jesus Christ
the Word made flesh
who is proclaimed among the nations.

All:

Blessed be God forever.

Introductory Remarks

Leader (in these or similar words):

Friends in Christ,
although we cannot celebrate the Eucharist this day,
we gather in God's name
for when two or more come together
God is always with us.
We worship in union with the whole Church
rejoicing at the birth of the Saviour.

Opening Rite

LITANY OF PRAISE

Leader:

God's kindness brings hope to the world.
To prepare ourselves to hear his Word
let us praise the Lord Jesus Christ.

A brief period of silence follows.

Leader:

Lord Jesus, your light brings us faith and hope: Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you are the word made flesh who dwells amongst
us: Christ, have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you are the splendour of the Father: Lord, have
mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader:

May almighty God have mercy on us,
forgive us our sins,

and bring us to everlasting life.

All:

Amen.

Opening Prayer

Leader:

Let us pray.

All pause for silent prayer.

Eternal God,
today we have seen your glory
for Jesus Christ is born.
Emmanuel, God with us,
may your light shine on us
for your coming brings hope to the world.
We make this prayer through the Holy Spirit
in Jesus' name.

All:

Amen.

The Liturgy of the Word

First Reading

Isaiah 52:7-10

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

*All the ends of the earth shall see the saving power of
our God.*

How beautiful on the mountains,
are the feet of one who brings good news,
who heralds peace, brings happiness,
proclaims salvation,
and tells Zion,
'Your God is king!'

Listen! Your watchmen raise their voices,
they shout for joy together,
for they see the Lord face to face,
as he returns to Zion.

Break into shouts of joy together,
you ruins of Jerusalem;
for the Lord is consoling his people,
redeeming Jerusalem.

The Lord bares his holy arm
in the sight of all the nations,
and all the ends of the earth shall see
the salvation of our God.

To indicate the end of the reading, the reader acclaims:

The word of the Lord.

All reply:

Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 97:1-6. R. v.3

**(R.) All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of
God.**

1. Sing a new song to the Lord
for he has worked wonders.
His right hand and his holy arm
have brought salvation. (R.)
2. The Lord has made known his salvation;
has shown his justice to the nations.
He has remembered his truth and love
for the house of Israel. (R.)
3. All the ends of the earth have seen
the salvation of our God.
Shout to the Lord all the earth,
ring out your joy. (R.)

4. Sing psalms to the Lord with the harp,
with the sound of music.
With trumpets and the sound of the horn
acclaim the King, the Lord. (R.)

Second Reading

Hebrews 1:1-6

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews

In our own time, God speaks to us through his Son.

At various times in the past and in various different ways, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; but in our own time, the last days, he has spoken to us through his Son, the Son that he has appointed to inherit everything and through whom he made everything there is. He is the radiant light of God's glory and the perfect copy of his nature, sustaining the universe by his powerful command; and now that he has destroyed the defilement of sin, he has gone to take his place in heaven at the right hand of divine Majesty. So he is now as far above the angels as the title which he has inherited is higher than their own name. God has never said to any angel: You are my Son, today I have become your father, or: I will be a father to him and he a son to me. Again, when he brings the First-born into the world, he says: Let all the angels of God worship him.

To indicate the end of the reading, the reader acclaims:

The word of the Lord.

All reply:

Thanks be to God.

Gospel

Reader:

From the holy Gospel according to John.

All:

Glory to you, O Lord.

John 1:1-5. 9-14

The Word of God became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw his glory.

In the beginning was the Word:
the Word was with God
and the Word was God.
He was with God in the beginning.
Through him all things came to be,
not one thing had its being but through him.
All that came to be had life in him
and that life was the light of men,
a light that shines in the dark,
a light that darkness could not overpower.
The Word was the true light
that enlightens all men;
and he was coming into the world.
He was in the world
that had its being through him,
and the world did not know him.
He came to his own domain
and his own people did not accept him.
But to all who did accept him
he gave power to become children of God,
to all who believe in the name of him
who was born not out of human stock
or urge of the flesh
or will of man
but of God himself.
The Word was made flesh,
he lived among us.
And we saw his glory,
the glory that is his as the only Son of the Father,

full of grace and truth.

Reader:

The Gospel of the Lord.

All:

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

All are seated.

Reflection on the Word

A short period of reflection may be observed.

Profession of Faith

Leader:

In union with the whole Church
let us profess our faith.

All:

**I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,**

*At the words that follow, up to and including the Virgin
Mary, all bow.*

**who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of the Faithful

Leader: Dear friends, today a holy light has shone upon the earth. Let us bring our prayers before God the Father of all humanity.

Reader: That through the birth of God's Son, the Holy Church of God will ever acclaim God's presence among all people.

In your glory:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That the holy child of Bethlehem will draw us out of darkness, and into the light of God.

In your glory:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That those separated from loved ones this Christmas will find assurance in the love of God's family.

In your glory:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That as our community celebrates the birth of our Saviour, we will bring about peace on earth and good will for all.

In your glory:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That through the Virgin's Son, all the sick will be given renewed life, especially those who we know and love.

In your glory:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That all who have died may ever share in the eternal light of Christ, especially those who were members of our community and families.

In your glory:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: Lord God, all the ends of the earth have seen your saving power. Hear our prayers this Christmas day as we joyfully proclaim the glory of your infant Son on earth. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Leader:

At the Saviour's command and formed by divine teaching, we dare to say:

All:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.**

The Concluding Rite Blessing

Leader:

May the God of glory fill our hearts with peace and joy, now and for ever.

All make the sign of the cross during the blessing.

All:

Amen.

Dismissal

Leader:

Let us go in peace.

All:

Thanks be to God.

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Compassion in crisis

Travelling by train from Newcastle to Kings Cross in the late 1980s, Sister Annie Laurie was unaware of the extent of the journey she was commencing.

LIZ BAKER PUBLISHED DECEMBER 02, 2023

She spent her first week simply walking the streets of the Cross, talking to people about their needs and fears.

"I didn't wear a habit, actually I didn't even wear a cross. I felt I probably looked like a farmer's daughter, I certainly didn't fit in, but I sat on the beautiful fountain at the Cross and different people just started talking to me," she said.

"I walked the streets, went into bars and discovered another world really. I thought I knew a bit, but quickly realised I knew nothing. It was enlightening."

Those six nights were all Sister Annie needed. She quickly saw first-hand there was no place to stay for people suffering from AIDS when they left hospital. They were either too sick to return to their families or had been ostracised by society, some hounded by media due to the stigmas of the time.

Sister Annie's discovery in that first week began a decade long ministry supporting AIDS sufferers by establishing a home for the sick and dying. Above all, the home would offer dignity.

"People said to me, we don't know how to keep our people safe and that's what MacKillop House became – a safe place where people were able to live with their fears of dying and feel protected," she said.

Sister Annie came back to Newcastle and said to her order, the Sisters of St Joseph Lochinvar, "We need to do something, we can do this and make a difference."

"I asked for a house and a couple of nuns. They looked at me – probably thought how on earth are some nuns going to help the AIDS crisis," she laughed.

It was this support from the Sisters and a "great element of naivety", combined with Sister Annie's drive to make a difference that sparked the establishment of MacKillop House in Carrington in 1989.

"We really believed in it. It had to be done."

Months of education, training, partnering with local health units, government organisations and other religious orders was required to set up the team with the skills and resources needed.

Sister Annie's background working as a nurse, combined with her work in death and bereavement pastoral care served her well.

"My nursing training taught me about care of the whole being and perhaps it was there I learned not to be afraid of the pain of the suffering. That doesn't mean I don't feel the pain, you just do it and live with the realities every day," she said.

"When others stand by, I can't imagine not doing it. I worked in death and dying for 38 years in the end, but it became a lifestyle to respond to a need. I found a privilege in that."

At its peak in the early 1990s, about 1,000 Australians died from AIDS each year.

Sister Annie said while the numbers were substantial, it was the loss of a friend or family member that made people think differently.

"That's when we saw a change in attitudes," she recalled.

Criticised by a frightened and anxious community, there was little acceptance of the people MacKillop House helped and the work that was being done.

"For me, I can't see the difference between you and I if we had AIDS – it really doesn't matter. We all have a need and we all have to care for one another," Sister Annie said.

"When you're sick you are in a very needy place and so vulnerable. In the 90s, as soon as you were diagnosed with AIDS you knew you were going to die. Many people were very sick but also completely ostracised."

"In many ways I suppose we cared for the churched and the unchurched in the community," Sister Annie reflected.

The work was truly living the charism of the Sisters of St Joseph - 'Never see a need without doing something about it'.

The Sisters and their community partners supported hundreds of people and their families.

"I can remember after we first opened – we heard about a man and his partner living in the bush. We decided to visit him and encourage him to come down to MacKillop House," she said.

"We went for a long drive and we spoke to them. They travelled down with us and he died at MacKillop House. It sounds strange but we took energy from that. They could have been alone in Woop Woop without support if it weren't for MacKillop House."

Sister Annie said tragically many people suffering from AIDS died a horrible death but MacKillop House staff tried to keep them comfortable and give them dignity in their last days.

A decade later, in the year 2000, some of the fear had subsided and needs were changing.

Sister Annie closed her eyes and paused.

"It was difficult closing MacKillop House. There had been a great need but AIDS became HIV and people were living with it. Government funding changed and so we made the decision to close MacKillop House," she said.

"I think back to all the people who did this work together decades ago. It was a team of passionate people who wanted to make a difference and they did."

"The impacts were felt not only in our community but across the world. During this time so many of our most creative, artistic people were lost. They were amazing people and our world has suffered from this loss."

Despite the closure of MacKillop House, a legacy of advocating for others was not lost. Sister Annie is now 75 and as decades have passed she feels our communities can still learn more about acceptance and how to love others.

"During my work with AIDS I really tried to learn not to judge and remind myself that I didn't have to know everything. People think that knowing everything is power but actually, it is a respect and honour of others' story that is essential. We must accept each other to live our best lives. The people I worked with in the 90s taught me that, as well as to laugh and to cry. Don't be afraid to simply ask – what can we do to help you?"