

Parish of South Yarra

Advent Calendar 2018

With Sunday reflections from members of our parish



We Wait in Joyful Hope.

*Advent is an open invitation
to make a new start in our personal spiritual journey.*

First Sunday of Advent Reflections

Gospel: Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

On the first Sunday of Advent each year the gospel reading begins with a portent of danger in the days to come. This year this passage comes from near the end of Luke's gospel during Jesus' last days in Jerusalem and marks the conclusion of a lengthy dialogue in which Jesus predicts the destruction of the Temple, warns about the persecution and tribulations to follow, and identifies the signs that will signal the coming of the Son of Man in glory. Luke overlaid his narrative with extensive allusions to Old Testament traditions, His approach serves both to reinforce these old traditions and to introduce Jesus as the fulfilment of these traditions.

Luke uses what was then the normal language of calamity and cataclysm (as for example in Isaiah 13) to describe the collapse of political stability and the natural disasters expected as part of the final end. ("There will be signs etc.") The image of the Son of Man (Dn 7:1-14) coming in power and great glory is in all three Synoptic gospels, but only Luke tells his disciples that instead of being fearful, they are to look up in anticipation, for what is coming is their liberation or redemption. For him these cosmic images suggest something very positive, namely, the beginning of a new creation: the beginning of the new heaven and the new earth, proclaimed by Isaiah (Is 65:17).

Luke presents Jesus as the Lord, the Son of the Most High (1:32), the fulfilment of God's Covenant as foretold and foreshadowed in the Old Testament, and now offered to all mankind regardless of background as the universal saviour.

We hear Jesus speak to his disciples about the need for vigilance and prayer as they wait for the coming of the Son of Man. Luke warns against activities and attitudes that de-sensitize the heart or the human spirit: carousing, drunkenness and undue worry. This initial Advent gospel story calls on us to do two things: to be realistic about how the world is going and at the same time not to lose hope in the future. As we say in our Profession of Faith (Nicene Creed), Christ will come again in glory.

Note: It is important to remember that Jesus was living and speaking in the year 33, but that the readers of Luke were living and listening to the words of Jesus about the year 85. Many things had happened between the years 33 and 85, for instance: the destruction of Jerusalem (year 70), persecutions and wars everywhere, some natural disasters. Jesus' discourse announces these events as taking place in the future. But the community sees these things as in the past, as already having taken place.

-Paul Mulqueen

| Dates | Scripture Readings | Liturgical / Parish Events |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Sunday 2 December | Jeremiah 33:14-16 1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2 Luke 21:25-28, 34-36 | First Sunday of Advent Children's Liturgy, 10:30 am mass, St Jo's Parish Conversation on the Plenary Council |
| Monday 3 December | Isaiah 2:1-5 Matthew 16:15-20 | Memorial: St Francis Xavier, <i>Priest</i> |
| Tuesday 4 December | Isaiah 11:1-10 Luke 10:21-24 | Memorial: St John Damascene, <i>Priest and Doctor of the Church</i> |
| Wednesday 5 December | Isaiah 25:6-10a Matthew 15:29-37 | Volunteers Thank You Night 6 to 8:30 pm, Parish Archive Room |
| Thursday 6 December | Isaiah 26:1-6 Matthew 7:21, 24-27 | Memorial: St Nicholas, <i>Bishop</i> |
| Friday 7 December | Isaiah 29:17-24 Matthew 9:27-31 | Memorial: St Ambrose, <i>Bishop and Doctor of the Church</i> |
| Saturday 8 December | Genesis 3:9-15, 20 Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12 Luke 1:26-38 | Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Mary |

The days leading up to Christmas can be a very busy period. There are lots of preparations that need to be made ahead of the festivities, such as buying gifts for loved ones and planning Christmas lunch or dinner with family and friends. This is an important part of the Christmas season – being able to spend it with loved ones and showing our love through the giving of gifts. However, it is important not to let the activities associated with Christmas distract us from its true meaning – being the birth of Christ, God's only Son who died on the Cross and rose from the dead for our sins.

While we do not know the day or the hour, Jesus reminds us that his Second coming - on this day, our life as we are now living it will bear the judgment of Christ. It is therefore important that we use the Advent season to reflect on how we are living and ask ourselves whether or not we are doing everything within our power to prepare for the Second Coming - will we be terrified or will we rejoice in the approaching salvation. While Christmas is an important time to get together with family and friends, amidst all of the hustle and bustle that is life, we need to constantly remind ourselves why we celebrate the birth of Christ. Let us always keep a watchful eye, praying that when the time comes, we are not caught by surprise so that we are able to stand confident before the Son of Man.

-Victoria Ngomba

Second Sunday of Advent Reflections

Gospel: Luke 3:1-6

"A voice cries in the wilderness: Prepare the way for the Lord." (Luke 3:4)

Advent is such a happy time. It's the end of the year, everyone is busy winding up the year's actions and activities, getting ready for Christmas, and holidays and activities with family and friends. Sometimes, however, that Advent/Christmas joy can turn into times of pressure, tensions, frustration and pain.

In the midst of all this rush and tear, then, today's readings invite us into a different space. In today's Gospel, the great precursor of the Lord, John the Baptist appears. Each year we hear about his appearance to the people in the Jordan region. In the time-honoured tradition of the great prophets he appears "in the wilderness," then, moving through the Jordan district, he calls people to a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins and, importantly, to a change of heart, a change of life. For Luke, John is "a voice that cries in the wilderness", calling the people to the most important of all tasks: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."

John's call is to us too. Can we go into the wilderness of our own hearts and listen to what God is calling us to do? What kinds of "wilderness" blocks my heart, my attitudes, my actions, my relationships? Might my "wilderness" be a block in an important relationship? Perhaps it is an attitude of selfishness, or possessiveness. Maybe it is a tiredness with life that needs a new way of seeing God present in and around us.

Advent is a precious time to prepare a way for the Lord to come to us yet again this Christmas.

In the midst of all the bustle, John's words invite me to be quiet for a little while, to hear God's invitation to smooth out the rough parts of my life and to make straight his paths within me.

-Di Brebner

| Dates | Scripture Readings | Liturgical / Parish Events |
|---------------------------------|---|--|
| Sunday 9 December | Bar 5:1-9 Phil 1:4-6, 8-11 Luke 3:1-6 | Second Sunday of Advent Children's Mass, 10:30 am mass, St Jo's |
| Monday 10 December | Isaiah 35:1-10 Luke 5:17-26 | |
| Tuesday 11 December | Isaiah 40:1-11 Matthew 18:12-14 | Memorial: St Damasus I, Pope |
| Wednesday 12 December | Isaiah 40:25-31 Matthew 11:28-30 | Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe |
| Thursday 13 December | Isaiah 41:13-20 Matthew 11:11-15 | Memorial: St Lucy, <i>Virgin, martyr</i> |
| Friday 14 December | Isaiah 48:17-19 Matthew 11:16-19 | Memorial: St John of the Cross, <i>Priest and Doctor of the Church</i> Meditation Group Year-end celebration |
| Saturday 15 December | Sir 48:1-4, 9-11 Matthew 17:9a, 10-13 | |

December is one month of the year many of us look forward to, and rightfully so. It's a period of celebration and quality time with friends and family. It's an opportunity to wind down and reflect on the year that's gone by. It is a season that invites us to put any unpleasantness of the year behind us and truly revel in wrapping up the year on a joyful and positive note. December, the season of Advent, is also a time of spiritual preparation. As the gospel today reminds us, it's a time of preparation for the arrival of the Lord.

In the gospel, we find John the Baptist inspiring us and challenging us at the same time. He tells us that we will be saved from the valleys, mountains, crooked roads and rough ways we have encountered or will face in our lives. For that to happen, all we need to do, is to present a straight path for the Lord to walk through to us. On the outset, that seems like a challenging task. Even if our lives had started off with a straight path, in our travel through it, we could have faced many diversions and obstacles that may have altered that path. Making it straight now, may not seem that easy. But as is so often the case with challenging tasks, all one has to do, is make a start, and the task become less daunting.

Just as life presents us with diversions and obstacles, it will also present us with ample opportunities to make this start. As I journey through this period of Advent and prepare to celebrate the arrival of Jesus, I will be looking out for these opportunities in my life to make straight my own path to God. I ask God for the wisdom to recognize these opportunities when they arise. I look forward to planting these seeds of change in my life and opening up the wilderness of my heart to the Lord. I invite you to do the same.

-Lisa Raj

Third Sunday of Advent Reflections

Gospel: Luke 3:10-18

“What must we do?”

The question indicates the willingness of the questioners to submit to John’s instructions. Perhaps the questioners are ready for a change of their way of life.

Surprisingly, John does not direct any such change or sacrifices or ascetic practices. His calls for something much more radical: compassion and care for the less privileged brothers and sisters.

John challenged his enquirers in a most profound way. He wanted his listeners to undergo the conversion of the mind and the heart not a remarkable transformations of their physical lives. He knew that this will be difficult and so he announced the Good News. *“Someone more powerful”* will come and help you with your conversion by *“baptising you with the Holy Spirit and fire”*

John did not propose a different path of life for his listeners. He did not call the people to leave their professions, families, to go to the desert and follow his way. He did not encourage soldiers to become pacifists or tax officers to give up their work.

John tells us that conversion is not about changing the environment, the workplace, the job, but rather it is about integrity and transparency that comes from within oneself. He told everyone to stay with his or her job but to think differently about it.

John makes it clear that “sins” are not the result of a profession but rather of how the profession is fulfilled. If justice and mercy guide the profession, the profession will not be sinful.

This is a big question for us today as there is no profession, religious or secular, of which this sort of question should not be asked about. This is a question to which the answer needs to start with the examination of one’s conscience.

John says *“exact no more than your rate”* In other words, do not use your privileged position or opportunity to exploit your brother and sister. Do not grow rich on someone else’s pain.

-Andrew Balcerzak

| Dates | Scripture Readings | Liturgical / Parish Events |
|---------------------------------|---|--|
| Sunday 16 December | Zep 3:14-18 Phil 4:4-7 Luke 3:10-18 | Third Sunday of Advent Talk by Sr. Mary Coloe PVBM on The Christmas Story According to St. Luke's Gospel <i>after the 10:30 am mass</i> |
| Monday 17 December | Gen 49:2, 8-10 Matthew 1:1-17 | |
| Tuesday 18 December | Jer 23:5-8 Matthew 1:18-25 | |
| Wednesday 19 December | Jdg 13:2-7, 24-25a Luke 1:2-25 | |
| Thursday 20 December | Isaiah 7:10-14 Luke 1:26-38 | |
| Friday 21 December | Song 2:8-14 Luke 1:39-45 | Memorial: St. Peter Canisius, <i>Priest and Doctor of the Church</i> |
| Saturday 22 December | 1 Sm 1:24-28 Luke 1:46-56 | |

The third Sunday of the Advent is called 'Gaudete Sunday', or Sunday of Rejoice. It is a period of expectation, given the announcement of the 'Good News' of the One who is to come, by John the Baptist. His announcement causes excitement and brings people looking for answers. When he is asked by different groups of people: 'What must we do, then?'. The crowd, the tax collectors and the soldiers come to John the Baptist, and he gave them three different answers: "Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same" to the crowd; "Don't collect any more than you are required to" to the tax collectors; "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely—be content with your pay" to the soldiers. Although these are examples specific to these three groups, in a broader context this can be interpreted as John the Baptist showing us that everyone has unique gifts to give, and unique needs based on where we are in our lives. We must change our lives in different ways in preparation for the coming of Jesus.

And as he shows people this wisdom and sensible teaching to each individual, people start to wonder if he was the Messiah himself. And he tells people that he is not. John the Baptist is not the Messiah, but his precursor who prepares our hearts to the coming of the Messiah. The baptism he gives with water is for the remission of sins, but the one more powerful than him, who is to come, will baptise people with Holy Spirit and fire. That fire purifies what is good and destroys what is evil. It is a sign of God's power and God's loving presence.

"What must we do, then?" It is a question we might well ask ourselves as we prepare for the coming of Jesus this Christmas. It is a call for a change in behavior.

-Rafael Menezes

Fourth Sunday of Advent Reflections

Gospel: Luke 1:39-45

One can only imagine the thoughts and feelings of the young woman, Mary, as she travelled to the hill town in Judaea, as described in the story by Luke, to meet her cousin Elizabeth. She'd heard that her cousin had become pregnant – quite a surprise considering her advanced age. But Mary had a surprise of her own. We are told that she herself had recently become pregnant through the intervention of the 'Holy Spirit' and was to bear a child who would be called 'the Son of God'.

The story recounts too that Elizabeth greeted Mary by calling out that she was the most blessed of all and that the child she was to be bear was most blessed. Elizabeth exclaimed that the child she herself was to bear 'leapt in her womb in gladness', recognising that it was the 'Lord's mother' who had come to visit. These are indeed mysteries to ponder.

Whether we interpret the words of Luke's story literally or not, what are the essential truths that the story can hold for us today, 20 centuries later?

Each year in the religious Christian tradition, we celebrate the Advent, or coming, of the birth of Jesus. Each year it's easy to get bogged down in the practicalities associated with Christmas, important though they might be. But can we find and hold fast to a deeper meaning in the story that could inspire and sustain us in these uncertain times? Can we deal with the fearfulness and risk of change that confront us, much as Mary and Elizabeth had to in their day? Can we truly share, as they did, our expectations, hopes and joy at the prospect of the birth of Jesus?

As we prepare to celebrate his birth this Christmas let us listen to the message Jesus brought. Let our hearts and minds leap in gladness to his words of love, hope, peace and optimism. Let them become real to us and help us to renew and strengthen the way we live our lives, with and for each other.

-Anne Semple

| Dates | Scripture Readings | Liturgical / Parish Events |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| Sunday 23 December | Mi 5:1-4a Heb 10:5-10 Luke 1:39-45 | Fourth Sunday of Advent |
| Monday 24 December | 2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12,14a, 16 Luke 1:67-79 | Christmas Eve masses -St Joseph's Family mass: 6:00 pm Night Mass: 9:00 pm with Carols @ 8:30pm |

The gospel on the fourth Sunday of Advent showed us how Jesus could bring joy into our lives and to others.

Jesus is always with us and we carry Him in our hearts and in our thoughts. We carry with us the love and the peace that He promised his disciples. May the gospel inspire and remind us of who we are as Christians, and that we carry the love of Jesus as a source of joy for ourselves and for those around us.

Mary brought Jesus to Elizabeth and just like her, may we carry Jesus in our hearts and in our actions to spread His love and to bring joy to others. We can go out in loving service for others and experience the love of Jesus leaping up in our hearts and to those whom we come in contact with.

Have we been able to provide joy to someone lately by showing them Jesus through our loving actions? Do we know someone who we think needs to experience God's love? Have we gone out of our way for them? Sometimes, a simple "Hi" goes a long way and can bring joy and love to someone.

Elizabeth and her unborn child leaped with joy the moment they felt the presence of Jesus through Mary. Just like Elizabeth, may we recognise Jesus through the love of others and may we also learn to feel His presence from the people we meet. God sends people into our lives to shower us with His love.

Have we been able to recognise the love of Jesus through others and through these experiences? Have we taken these people for granted? Have we taken time to reflect, to appreciate, to rejoice, and to thank God for the people bearing the love of Jesus for us?

As we approach Christmas and feel joyful to celebrate the birth of Jesus, may we also receive joy as we welcome Jesus in our daily lives through others. Let us also remember to share this joy to others and to become carriers of Jesus so that they may feel the love and the happiness He promised for us. We bring Jesus to everyone we meet and everyone we meet brings Jesus to us.

-Francis Tan-Gaute

About the writers of reflection:

Paul Mulqueen is a Eucharistic minister at St Thomas Aquinas Church and a member of the Parish Finance Committee. **Victoria Ngomba** belongs to our Parish Young Adults Ministry (YAM) and is a member of St. Joseph's Sunset Choir. **Di Brebner** is a long-standing active member of our Parish. Among her many roles in the parish include, Alfred hospital Liaison, chair of the Liturgy Committee, member of SJOS Committee, the Parish Pastoral Council, Choir and the RCIA Team. **Lisa Raj** is a member of YAM. She also regularly brings Holy Communion to the housebound. **Andrew Balcerzak** is Lector and sacristan at St Thomas Aquinas Church. **Rafael Menezes** belongs to our Parish Young Adults Ministry (YAM). He recently took on the role of leading the St Joseph's Sunset Choir that sings at our Saturday vigil masses. **Anne Semple** serves our parish community in many ways. Among her many roles and commitments, include, lector, Eucharistic Minister, sacristan and member of the Liturgy committee. Anne also coordinates and prepares the liturgical roster. **Francis Tan-Gaute** belongs to our Parish Young Adults Ministry (YAM), prepares the mass PowerPoint for the Saturday vigil mass, and serves as lector at the 6pm Saturday mass.

CHRISTMAS TIMETABLE

24 December - CHRISTMAS EVE: St Joseph's Church:

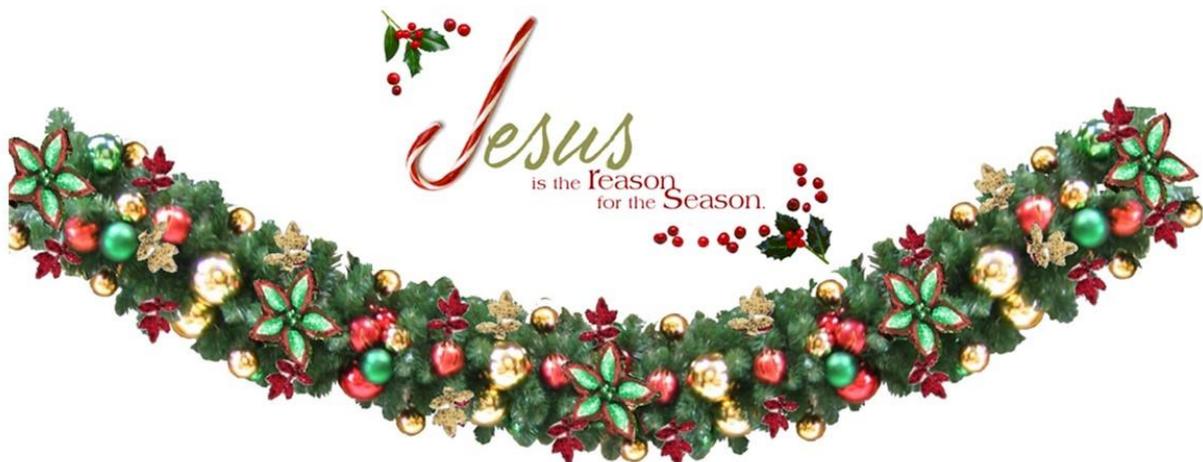
6.00pm **Family Mass**
(Children may dress as angels or shepherds)

8.30 pm **Carols**

9.00 pm **Night Mass followed by supper**
(Please bring a plate)

25 December - CHRISTMAS MORNING:

9.00 am Mass **St Thomas Aquinas' Church**
10.30 am Mass **St Joseph's Church**



Christmas Bucket List

1. ~~Buy~~ ^{Be} Presents

2. Wrap ~~Gifts~~ someone in a hug

3. Send ~~Gifts~~ Love

4. ^{Donate} ~~Shop For~~ Food

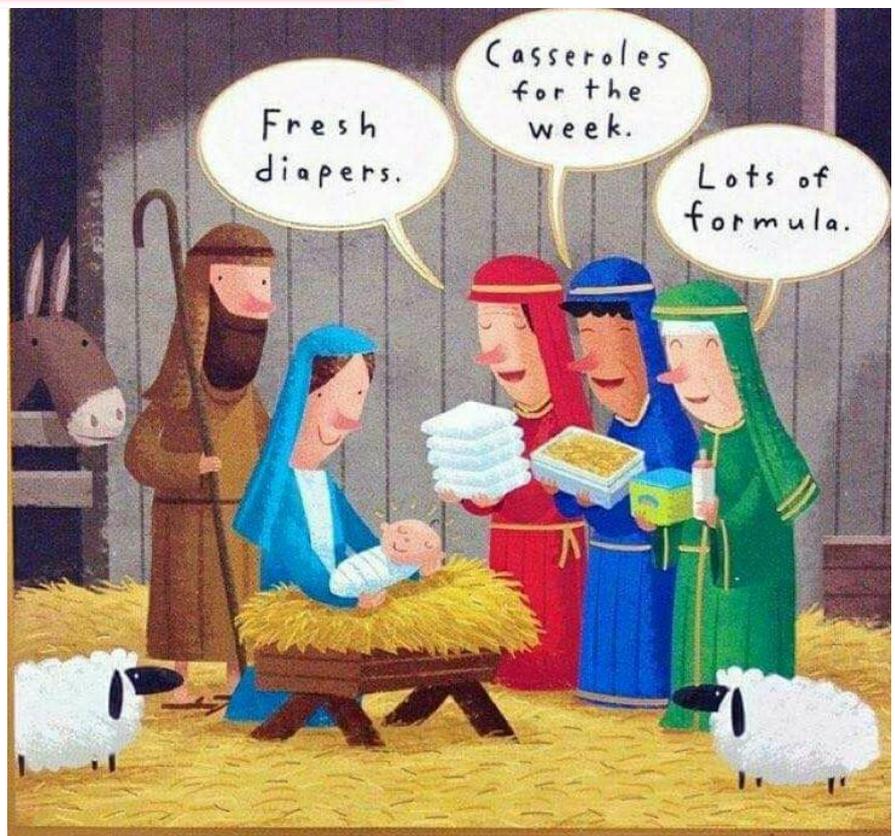
5. Make ~~Cookies~~ Memories

6. ^{Be} ~~See~~ The Lights



Something you might consider...

On a lighter note...



After the Three Wise Men left, the Three Wiser Women arrived.



parishofsouthyarra