

Welcome to the community of the Catholic Parish of St John 23rd Glenwood-Stanhope Gardens where the love of Christ is shining in so many ways.

PARISH MISSION *The Parish of St John XXIII is a faith community with the Eucharist as its heart. Inspired by John XXIII's prophetic opening of the windows of the Church, we welcome the fresh air of the Holy Spirit, inviting every person to share in the responsibility of enriching the life and faith of our community by sharing their gifts and*

PARISH OFFICE

Office Hours
Tue - Fri 8.30 - 4.00pm
Office Contacts
☎(02) 8883 5981
⚲ 160 Perfection Avenue, Stanhope Gardens NSW 2768
✉ PO Box 23, Stanhope Gardens, NSW 2768

CLERGY

Parish Priest: Fr Jolly Chacko
jolly@john23rd.org.au
0417 541 637 (*emergency only*)
Asst Priest:
Fr Bartholomew Chukwu
chukwu@john23rd.org.au

STAFF

Secretary: Tanya Gatt
secretary@john23rd.org.au
Finance: Renuka Soosaipillai
accounts@john23rd.org.au
Sacramental Coordinator:
Helen Zammit
sacramental@john23rd.org.au

OTHER CONTACTS

Parish Council:

Maintenance issues: David Gorkic
maintenance@john23rd.org.au
Columbarium queries:
columbarium@john23rd.org.au

OUR PARISH SCHOOLS

AMBROSE EARLY LEARNING

⚲ 160 Perfection Ave Stanhope Gardens
☎ (02) 9852 0585
celcstanhope@parra.catholic.edu.au
www.celcstanhope.catholic.edu.au

HOLY CROSS PRIMARY

⚲ 49 Meurants Lane, Glenwood, NSW
Principal: Attila Lendvai
☎ (02) 8664 7100
holycross@parra.catholic.edu.au
www.hcglenwood.catholic.edu.au

ST JOHN XXIII CATHOLIC COLLEGE

⚲ 160 Perfection Ave Stanhope Gardens
Principal: Frank Chiment
☎ (02) 9852 0500
stjohn23stanhope@parra.catholic.edu.au
www.stjohn23stanhope.catholic.edu.au

GOSPEL REFLECTION

Advent, Coming or Drawing near, is a somewhat quirky liturgical season. It embraces the Lord's historic first coming in time (his birth) and his awaited second coming (his return) at the end of time, but between these is a pivot with John the Baptist preparing people for the Lord's entering into his public ministry. Advent in effect presents these arrivals in reverse order: it opens by concluding the eschatological themes that had already emerged in the Lectionary as Ordinary Time's unfolding of the Lord's public ministry draws to an end; then John the Baptist prepares the way for the approaching Christ; then we turn to Christ's conception as we begin to prepare for the annual celebration of the great feast of his Incarnation, his birth. Thus as we switch from Matthew's gospel to Mark's, we hear again the command to "Stay awake" that we last heard three Sundays ago (Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time, A) and are reminded of the need to be ready for Christ's return as prefigured in the gospel parables on the next two Sundays. But since Mark does not cover the Lord's birth in any way after next Sunday, when we turn to the beginning of Mark for his coverage of John the Baptist, we will not read Mark again until the feast of the Baptism of the Lord.

As just mentioned above, today's gospel passage picks up the tone that first appeared three Sundays ago, and so we are warned no few than four times to stay awake since we know not when the master will come back. We are the servants entrusted with the household. This pericope is either a fusion of different sayings, or it has lost something in translation; it is inconceivable that anyone going abroad should tell the doorkeeper to stay awake. For one thing, the poor creature would go mad covering the long period required for such an absence, from which the master could return not only on any day, but at any time of the day; yet all the time cues are related to the night. The language points more to the context of a householder going out for the evening, thus expecting to be absent only relatively briefly, returning that same night. Secondly, it would be odd to expect the servants to have many jobs to do throughout the night, and it is only the doorkeeper who is told to stay awake. No, we seem to have at least two scenarios blended: one of the householder going abroad and leaving the servants to do the work entrusted to them (cf. the gospel parable last Sunday), and the other of the doorkeeper being warned to keep alert for the householders immanent return. Common to both is the advice to be dutifully attentive to the tasks at hand. This is echoed in the second reading (1 Cor 1:3-9), addressed to people awaiting the Lord's return. The theme of our being left and God's returning arise early in the first reading (Isa 63:16-17, 64:1,3-8), but it does so in a manner that can be read as a petition to God to send his Christ. Indeed, it is here that we find the reference "No ear has heard, no eye has seen", a possible source of 1 John 1:1 where it is upended to become "what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes". It also refers to God's having hidden his visage, which prompts the choice of Psalm 80(79) with the response, "let us see your face", which more literally translates as "shine your face [upon us]". Either way, however, works with the response's ending, "and we shall be saved" using the verb save (yasha') from which the name "Jesus" derives.

MASS TIMES

Mon	8:30am
Tues-Fri	9:15am
Sat	9.00am, 6pm Vigil
Sun	7:30am 9am 10:30am 6pm
2nd Sat	7:30pm Indonesian Mass

DEVOTION AND PRAYERS

Tues	7:00pm Rosary | novena prayers (*Church*)
1st Tues	7.30pm Novena Mass *Our Lady of Perpetual Help*
1st Fri	7:30pm Novena Mass *Sacred Heart of Jesus*
Thurs	7:00pm Lectio Divina
Fri	6.30pm *Christ Catholic Community Prayer Group (office)* Pauline Camilleri 0407 417039

EXPOSITION + BENEDICTION

1st Fri	after 9.15am, 7.30pm
Wed	8:00pm Holy Hour

SACRAMENTS

Reconciliation *After the weekday masses*
Sat after 9am mass to 10.30am
5:15 - 5:45pm before the Vigil Mass or upon request
Baptism *by appointment*
Sun 12pm Baptism

SPECIAL BLESSINGS

Blessings during masses
1st Sun Birthday celebrants
3rd Sun Wedding anniversary

HOMEBOUND?

Homebound and would like to receive Holy Communion please contact the parish office or text message to Rose Franco on 0401 387427
Or if you would like a visit from the Vincentians, please contact the Parish Office or share the relevant contact details with us.

COELIACS

Please inform the acolyte before mass if you are gluten intolerant so that you may still receive communion with a low gluten host.

JOIN & BE PART OF OUR COMMUNITY

Welcome pack at the church foyer or scan

Be part of our mailing list,
Communications@john23rd.org.au

Bishop's Good Works Appeal - Help a young mother break the cycle of violence and homelessness.

This Christmas, embrace the spirit of the Nativity story. Let the birth of our Saviour, Jesus, inspire us to reach out to those in need - especially vulnerable homeless women and children.
Your tax-deductible gift this Christmas can provide young mothers and their children with secure shelter, nourishing food, and the support they need to build a strong family life and a hopeful future.
Please give generously at parracatholic.org/appeal or scan the QR code.
Thank you for your generosity, Christian kindness and compassion.

Entrance Antiphon

To you, I lift up my soul, O my God. In you, I have trusted; let me not be put to shame. Nor let my enemies exult over me; and let none who hope in you be put to shame.

First Reading — *Isaiah 63:16-17; 64:1,3-8*

Oh that you would tear the heavens apart and come down.

You, Lord, yourself are our Father, Our Redeemer is your ancient name. Why, Lord, leave us to stray from your ways and harden our hearts against fearing you? Return, for the sake of your servants, the tribes of your inheritance. Oh, that you would tear the heavens open and come down - at your Presence the mountains would melt. No ear has heard, no eye has seen any god but you act like this for those who trust him. You guide those who act with integrity and keep your ways in mind. You were angry when we were sinners; we had long been rebels against you. We were all like men unclean, all that integrity of ours is like filthy clothing. We have all withered like leaves and our sins blew us away like the wind. No one invoked your name or roused himself to catch hold of you. For you hid your face from us and gave us up to the power of our sins. And yet, Lord, you are our Father; we the clay, you the potter, we are all the work of your hand.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

Responsorial Psalm — *Ps 79:2-3, 15-16, 18-1*

R. Lord, make us turn to you, let us see your face and we shall be saved.

O shepherd of Israel, hear us, shine forth from your cherubim throne. O Lord, rouse up your might, O Lord, come to our help. **R.**

God of hosts, turn again, we implore, look down from heaven and see, Visit this vine and protect it, the vine your right hand has planted. **R.**

May your hand be on the man you have chosen, the man you have given your strength. And we shall never forsake you again: give us life that we may call upon your name. **R.**

Second Reading — *1 Corinthians 1:3-9*

The revelation we looked for, Christ Jesus our Lord.

May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ send you grace and peace.

I never stop thanking God for all the graces you have received through Jesus Christ. I thank him that you have been enriched in so many ways, especially in your teachers and preachers; the witness to Christ has indeed been strong among you so that you will not be without any of the gifts of the Spirit while you are waiting for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed; and he will keep you steady and without blame until the last day, the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, because God by calling you has joined you to his Son, Jesus Christ; and God is faithful.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

Gospel Acclamation — *Ps 84:8*

Alleluia, alleluia!

Lord, show us your mercy and love, and grant us your salvation.

Alleluia!

Gospel — *Mark 13:33-37*

Stay awake! You never know when the Lord will come.

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Be on your guard, stay awake, because you never know when the time will come. It is like a man travelling abroad: he has gone from home, and left his servants in charge, each with his own task; and he has told the doorkeeper to stay awake. So stay awake, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming, evening, midnight, cockcrow, dawn; if he comes unexpectedly, he must not find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake!'

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ**

Communion Antiphon

The Lord will bestow his bounty, and our earth shall yield its increase.



Hall | Office Project

Prayer

Almighty God, we thank you for your many blessings to our parish and to each of us.
We pray for your guidance and wisdom as we progress with the construction of our Parish Hall/Office. May your Holy spirit be with all our Engineers, architects, builders and all involved in this project. Protect them from harm and grant them skill and diligence. May this hall be a place of unity, fellowship and faith formation for our community, a space where we can grow in faith and serve others. Bless all our sponsors, donors and each of us who contribute in our own humble ways and means. Whatever we do, may we do it for your glory.
St. Joseph, the patron of families and workers, **Pray for us**
St. John XX111, Patron of our parish, **Pray for us**
St. Vincent Ferrer, Patron of all builders, **Pray for us**

How to contribute

Be part of that good news. Let us be generous, cheerful and rejoice in the goodness of the Lord. For your donations:

- Dedicated "Tap & go" machines at both entrances
- Bank transfer
  Account name - Glenwood Stanhope Gardens St John 23rd Parish
  BSB 067 950 **A/C** 100002469
  Reference - BD (your name)
- **BPOINT** – For credit card donation visit https://www.bpoint.com.au/pay/StJohnXXIIIPGSG
- can QR Code

Thank you for your support.
Parish fund raising, finance, Building committees and Fr. Jolly

SBS SECURE BUILDING SOLUTIONS

WEEKLY UPDATE REPORT
5 October to 10 October

Milestone Summary
✓Contract Award 6/07/26
✓ Building Permit Issued 22/07/26
✓ Commencement On Site 10/08/26
☺ Practical completion 5/02/27

Completed Items this period

- Install Agg line and Waterproof – RW3
- Back fill – RW3
- Formwork and steel reinforcement - Columns
- Pour Columns & BW1 core fill – 02/10 (Pending weather)
- Block Delivery

Activities being completed this week onsite

- Install Stage 1 Scaffold
- Install formwork GF Slab
- Reinforcement steel delivery
- Electrical service pathways
- Hydraulic & drainage rough-in
- Start GF Slab reinforcement







Congratulations to Fr Jeff Hood, Fr Luke Huynh and Fr Paul Tran, newly ordained on 25 November in a moving liturgy at St Patrick's Cathedral, Parramatta.

Praying together

When we come together in prayer, our faith is strengthened and our community grows closer. Join us **every Tuesday at 7:00 PM** *at SJ23rd Parish Church, as we pray the rosary and novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help. This is an opportunity to deepen your faith and open your heart to the presence of the Holy Spirit.*

ROSARY STATUE FAMILY ROSTER					
NOV	**3**	**10**	**17**	**24**	
	Bamouti	*Tina B.*	*Meena B*	Jacob	
DEC	**1**	**8**	**15**	**22**	**29**
	Shalini	Paguinto	D'Cunha	Fernandes	Fernandes
JAN	**5**	**12**	**19**	**26**	
	Available	*Available*	*Available*	Cayas	
FEB	**2**	**9**	**16**	**23**	
	Tangunan	Jacob	*Available*	*Available*	



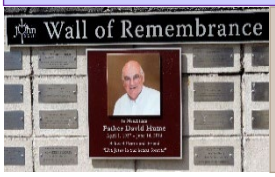
"A family that prays together, stays together"

If you want to be included in the roster for the Rosary statue, please contact: Techie Sarlabus *techie.sarlabus@gmail.com* or Melva Paguinto *emcipi85@yahoo.com.au*

COLUMBARIUM

Considering purchasing a niche? Spaces are still available. These are open to parishioners, families, friends & our neighbouring parishes.
Please contact the Parish Office.





MEMORIAL WALL

Devoted to the memory of our deceased family and friends, especially if they are buried overseas. For any enquiries, please email *columbarium@john23rd.org.au*
The plaques cost $600.00

Special Intentions

Names published with permission

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen

Born to eternal life

Vivian Reyes Crescini, Cleotilde Rivera Baltazar, Zahru Galdes, Adriano Adriano, Ofelia T. Calicdan

Remembrances:

Pancy Lobo

Death Anniversary:

Josephine Apap, Alfredo Pangilinan Sr

Sick

Lord Jesus, heal me. Heal in me whatever You see needs healing. Heal me of whatever might separate me from You. Heal my memory, heal my heart, heal my emotions, heal my spirit, heal my body, heal my soul. Lay Your hands now gently upon me and heal me through Your love for me. Amen.

Brian McCunnie, John Tipton, Natasha Leitao, Brendan Prideaux, Myrna Manalili, Isagani Ocampo, Raymond Lanzona, Carlo Bueno Margaret Harrison, Marcelino Matteazi, Troy James, Lucas Colleta Perla Magculang, Mary Phillips, Elizabeth Langley, Charlie Busuttil Bev Osborn, Barbara Thompson, Manuel Sarris, Jonathan Gemin Rosie Carbonel, Cindy Dadivas, Cathie Christie, Joshua McCarroll Dr Bronwyn Andrews, Florentina Elisura, Victor Pons, Bev Lewis, Elsie Knapp, Fausto Bayot, Zoey Illic, Mary Bormate, Ryan Dixon Elizabeth Candame, Dudley Francis, Jude Newnes, Renado Naldo Mr Thomas, Josie Lewis, Hilary Regan, Zena Samar, Louise Smith Carlo Dominic Benesa, Gerald Simbulan, Rosanna John Pellissery Christina Properzi, Marilyn Nalapo, Imelda Vinluan, Peter McArdle, Ksenija Bosnic, Lenka Olivier Talija, Jerwin McCarron, Helen West Carrie Conolly, Emma Matoza, Maria Romeo, Babies w/ Blister disease

Thanksgiving

If you or a family member is homebound and would want to receive communion in your home please contact the parish office.

Diocesan News



WYD27 Songwriting Competition: Submissions close 16 December

Young people of the Diocese of Parramatta, we want your original song to inspire our pilgrims on their journey to World Youth Day! Open to individuals or groups aged 16–35. All musical genres welcome. Find out more and submit your song via our WYD27 website: parrawyd.org

GARAGE SALE

THANK YOU TO ALL PARISHIONERS WHO SUPPORTED THE GARAGE SALE. ALL DONATIONS MADE WILL GO TO THE CHURCH HALL PROJECT.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU GOES TO ST VINCENT GROUP FOR ORGANIZING AND SUPPORTING THE SALE



Diocesan News









DIOCESE of PARRAMATTA

Community Events

As a vibrant community of St John XXIII Parish, we invite our various cultural groups and ministries to take part in our parish life by hosting a Saturday Vigil or Sunday morning mini event after our Mass celebrations. These gatherings are a wonderful way to share your culture, connect and strengthen our sense of family and belonging within the parish.

We encourage everyone to come along, participate and support these community-led activities. We also welcome suggestions for future events, fundraising ideas, or any offers of help — your creativity and support are always appreciated and play an important part in making our parish life joyful and thriving!

Building our community
TOGETHER
Please contact either
Nanette - 0404 **465600**
Techie - 0438 201436

November is traditionally a month of remembrance and prayer for our dearly departed. Throughout November, a **Book of Remembrance** is usually placed near the sanctuary, allowing parishioners to write the names of their departed loved ones. These names are remembered in the prayers of our parish community as we entrust our dearly departed to God's loving mercy and eternal peace.

November Calendar		
MON	**30**	*Saint Andrew (F)* 8:30am - Mass
December		
TUES	**1**	9:15am - Mass 7:00pm - Rosary Prayer 7:30pm - Novena Mass *Our Lady of Perpetual Help*
WED	**2**	9:15am - Mass 8:00pm - Holy Hour
THURS	**3**	*Saint Francis Xavier (M)* 9:15am - Mass
FRI	**4**	9:15am - Mass 7:30pm - Novena Mass *Sacred Heart of Jesus*
SAT	**5**	9:00am - Mass 6:00pm - Mass
SUN	**6**	7.30am 9:00am 10:30am masses 6:00pm - Mass



Be Part of Our Parish Christmas Nativity Play

As we approach the festive season, we're thrilled to continue our cherished Christmas tradition. This year promises to be even more memorable, with plenty of opportunities for children and families to get involved and share in the joy of the occasion.

Calling All Children – Join Our Nativity Play

Preparations for our Christmas Nativity Play are now underway, and we are excited to invite all children aged 5 and above to take part in this special tradition within our parish. The Nativity Play is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the birth of Jesus through story, song and fellowship, and is a highlight of our festive celebrations.

Everyone is welcome to join our Nativity Play. Kids can take on roles such as angels, shepherds, wise men, narrators, choir singers, and more. No experience is needed—just come ready to participate and have fun. We're excited to see our children light up the stage and share the Christmas story with the community. Parents are also invited to help out with the production.

How to Get Involved

Please get in touch with **Helen Festejo** by messaging **0401 671 665**.



This Christmas we are planning Gingerbread House decorating for the children in our parish, on Sunday 6 December after 1030am Mass.

We kindly request you register by Sunday 29 November so that we can order enough gingerbread houses for everyone wanting to join.
https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/9H3686G

Building Our Community Together

FIRST COLLECTION supports the priests and deacons of the Diocese.
SECOND COLLECTION provides for the running costs of our church, ministry expenses.

We have a Planned Giving Program. We encourage parishioners to register for direct debit or credit card deductions as alternative to an envelope system via the following methods:

- direct debit arrangements to your nominated bank account or credit card
- Regular bank transfers set up at your end to the parish bank account

Account name - Glenwood Stanhope Gardens St John 23rd Parish
BSB - 067 950 A/C - 100002469 Reference: PG (your initial and family name)

- Donating through cash or using the "Tap & go" machines which are available by the entrances.

Please contact the parish office to update us with your preferred planned giving option
02 8883 5981 accounts@john23rd.org.au
Support can be provided via the Registration forms which are available at the church foyer or from the website or scanning the QR Code

Pastoral Ministries

The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others. Mahatma Gandhi

We are in need of volunteers to assist in the different pastoral ministries in our Parish.

SRE Teachers

If you could spare an hour during weekdays to spread God's word teaching the scriptures to children, WE NEED YOU. We currently have 4 public primary schools and a high school in our parish where we hold scripture classes during school hours for 30 minutes during Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. For more information, please call Asoki 0430 020265 or Renuka 0414 795814. Training and resources will be provided.

CLEANERS AND GARDENERS

As we give our heartfelt thanks to the wonderful volunteers who faithfully keep our church clean, our gardens green, & our surroundings welcoming, we also invite others to join this valued ministry. A few more helping hands would make a great difference in caring for our shared spiritual home. If you are able to assist, please contact Tanya at the parish office.

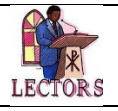
CAKE ANGELS

If anyone is interested in being involved in and take leadership of this fun-loving dynamic group, please contact Tanya at the parish office or Techie at 0438 201436.

LITURGICAL MINISTRY

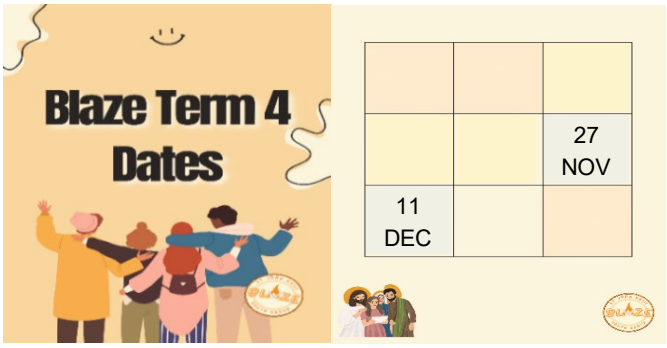
"*The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest.*" Luke 10:

The St. John XXIII Parish Liturgy Team warmly invites parishioners to serve and contribute in the following ministries below. Please contact Parish Office if you are interested or for additional information.

	**Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion** Assist in the distribution of Holy Communion during liturgies and bring Communion to the sick and homebound. Open to men and women aged 18 and above.
	**Ministers of the Word** Proclaim the Scriptures and offer commentary during liturgies. Open to men and women aged 18 and above.
	**Junior Servers** Assist the Celebrant, Deacons, and Acolytes during liturgical celebrations. Open to boys and girls aged 10 and above who have received First Holy Communion (Confirmation preferred)
	Tech Ministry Support and coordinate technical aspects of the liturgy, including sound systems and projection. Open to men and women aged 18 and above. No prior experience is required.
	Ushers & Greeters Greet and assist parishioners, helping to create a warm and welcoming environment. Open to men, women, and children aged 12 and above.

YOUTH | YOUNG ADULT GROUPS

BLAZE YOUTH Year 7 to 12 **WHEN:** 7:00 - 9:00pm **WHERE:** St John XXIII College (C Block Bell space) **For any queries:** ✉ blaze@john23rd.org.au or 🌐 @blazeyouthsj23 on Insta|FB Ellena 📱 0478 685 191	**IGNITE YOUNG ADULTS** 18 - 35 years of age **WHEN:** First Sundays each month 7:00 - 9:30pm **WHERE:** St John XXIII Staffroom **For any queries:** ✉ Ignite.stjohn23@gmail.com 🌐 @ignite_sj23 on Insta|FB
YFC *(Youth for Christ)* Australia - Dominic Lim 📱 0468 826253 International - Ronan Limguangco 📱 0478 629629	**CRL** *(Community of the Risen Lord)* Rojith de Silva 📱 0405 9563210 Nimeshi Fernando 📱 0417 101009



FLOWERS FOR THE CHURCH

If you would like to make flower donations for the church altar, please contact: James David on 0413 787596



YOUNG AT HEART SENIORS CLUB

Contact either:
Frank Coleiro - 0459 504625
Trevor Coutinho - 0407 150399

Vinnies
join in the good works
Please contact:
Debra Pitre - 0412 570 333

We're excited to invite you all to our Living in Christ Youth Retreat, hosted in collaboration with Mary Immaculate Youth!

Join us for a day away from the busyness of everyday life as we come together to deepen our faith, grow in our relationship with Christ and build friendships with other young people.

The day will include prayer, reflection, talks, small group activities, games and plenty of time to connect with God and one another. ❤️

✨ RETREAT DETAILS ✨
🗓️ Saturday 12 December 2026 ⏰ 9AM – 3PM
📍 Franciscan Shrine of the Holy Innocents, Kellyville
💲 $25 per person (food provided!)
👥 Open to young people in Years 6–12.
📝 HOW TO REGISTER

Registration form using the link below or by scanning the QR code
🔗 https://forms.gle/USzkgsBvjL5p9CGY9
God Bless, Blaze Youth





A Friendly Reminder to Our Parish Community

We kindly ask all parishioners to help care for our church by tidying up after Mass. Simple gestures such as disposing of rubbish properly and returning items like bulletins (if not taking them home) make a meaningful difference. Together, let us keep our church clean, welcoming, and ready for all who enter.

Thank you for your care and consideration in looking after our shared spiritual home.

A WALK THROUGH THE SEASONS OF THE CHURCH

Every year, the world begins again on 1 January. The Church begins differently. Her year does not begin with fireworks. It begins with a candle in the dark. It does not end with a countdown. It ends with a King on a throne. This is the liturgical year: the Church's way of making time holy, by walking us through the whole life of Jesus, year after year, until Christ is formed in us.

Advent: The Season of Waiting

The liturgical year ends on the 34th Sunday in Ordinary Time, the Solemnity of Christ the Universal King. The following Sunday, the Church begins again with the First Sunday of Advent. Advent means - coming. We wait for three comings of Christ: His coming in Bethlehem, His coming in glory at the end of time, and His coming now, daily, into our hearts and homes. The vestment is purple which signifies penance, preparation, and royalty. The Gloria is omitted. The heart is made ready. On the Third Sunday, we celebrate Gaudete Sunday. Gaudete in Latin means "Rejoice"! We are halfway through our waiting, and joy breaks through. The priest may put on rose vestments - a softening of purple, a dawn before sunrise. The Church whispers: Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice.

The final stretch, 17 to 24 December, is the most intense. Each evening, the Church sings the great "O Antiphons, O Wisdom, O Adonai, O Root of Jesse, O Key of David, O Radiant Dawn, O King of Nations, O Emmanuel". The Preface changes. We move from the general expectation of Advent to the immediate expectation of the Birth. The Virgin is about to give birth. The Lord is close.

Christmas: God Emptied Himself.

Christmas does not begin on the morning of 25 December. It begins the night before, with the Vigil Mass on 24 December. Like Mary and Joseph, we keep watch. In the Creed, all kneel at the words, "and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate". Because Christmas is too great for one day, the Church gives it an Octave - eight days celebrated as one single feast, from 25 December to 1 January. The Gloria is sung. Within that Octave, we meet the companions of the Child: St Stephen (26 December), the first martyr; St John (27 December), the beloved disciple; the Holy Innocents (28 December), the children who died for Christ. The Octave closes on 1 January with the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, the World Day of Peace. Then comes the Epiphany - Christ manifested to the nations - and finally the Baptism of the Lord, which concludes the Christmas season. In this season we normally celebrate two Sundays after Christmas Day: the Holy Family and the Baptism of the Lord. The colour is white and gold: joy, purity, glory. God has become man.

Lent: The Season of Spiritual Stock-taking and "Metanoia".

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday. Ashes are placed on our foreheads: Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return. For forty days, recalling Jesus' forty days in the desert, we fast, pray, and give alms. The Alleluia is silenced so that it may sing more loudly at Easter. The liturgy is solemn, and musical instruments are used in moderation, to reflect the spirit of the season. The vestment is again purple. But on the Fourth Sunday, Laetare Sunday, the Church allows rose as in Gaudete in Advent. Laetare means "Rejoice" Like a mother, she consoles us in the middle of our penance: Easter is near. Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday. Jesus enters Jerusalem as King, welcomed with palms, and in the same Mass we hear His Passion. Glory and suffering are held together. The climax is the "Sacred Triduum" - not three separate celebrations, but one continuous liturgy from Thursday evening to Sunday night:

Holy Thursday celebrates the Last Supper, the institution of the Eucharist and the Priesthood, and the washing of feet. The Mass ends in silence; the altar is stripped. Good Friday has no Mass. It is the only day Mass is never celebrated. In the service, the Sacred Consecrated Sacred Species on Maundy Thursday is distributed to the faithful and the sick. We celebrate the Passion, venerate the Cross, and stand at the foot of Calvary as Jesus dies. The vestment is red. Holy Saturday brings the Easter Vigil, the mother of all vigils: fire in the darkness, the Exsultet, seven readings of salvation history, baptisms, and the Great Alleluia. Christ is Risen.

Easter: Alleluia! The Lord is Truly Risen

From Easter Sunday to Pentecost is fifty days - one great, unbroken Sunday. We are Easter people. There are seven Sundays of Easter. The Second is Divine Mercy Sunday. On the fortieth day we celebrate the Ascension - in Australia, transferred to the Seventh Sunday of Easter. On the fiftieth day, Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descends in tongues of fire and the Church is born. Easter ends. The readings are taken from the New Testament always. The colour is white and gold, except Pentecost, which is red - the fire of the Spirit. Immediately after Pentecost come three great solemnities: The Most Holy Trinity, Corpus Christi - the Body and Blood of Christ, and the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Then we return to Ordinary Time.

Ordinary Time: The Long Green Season

There are 34 Sundays in total, divided into two parts: from the Baptism of the Lord to Ash Wednesday, and from Pentecost to Christ the King. Ordinary here does not mean dull. It comes from "ordinal" which means counted. These are the counted Sundays of the year. The liturgical colour is green: life, growth, and hope. Here, week by week, we walk with Jesus through His teaching, His miracles, His parables. This is where most of Christian life happens - not in the great feasts, but in faithful, daily growth.

How We Read the Bible: The Cycle

On Sundays, the Church uses a three-year cycle: A, B, C.

Year A proclaims Matthew. Year B proclaims Mark - with John chapter 6, the Bread of Life, in the heart of the year. Year C proclaims Luke. John is reserved for Lent, Easter, and great feasts in every year. The method is deliberate. The First Reading from the Old Testament is chosen to echo the Gospel. The Responsorial Psalm answers that First Reading. The Second Reading
is semi-continuous, we read through the letters of St Paul, week after week, independent of the Gospel.

You can know the year by simple division: divide the calendar year by three. If the remainder is one, it is Year A; if two, Year B; if zero, Year C. The year 2026, for example, is Year A. On weekdays, the Church uses a two-year cycle: Cycle I and Cycle II. Cycle I is used in odd years; Cycle II in even years. The Gospel remains the same each year, so that we walk through the Gospels in order, while the First Reading alternates. In two years, we cover almost the whole Bible. The Ordo and Lectionary will always tell you which cycle you are in.

Holy Days, Feasts of the Lord, Feasts of Mary

In the Australian Church, there are two Holy Days of Obligation besides Sundays: Christmas Day (25 December) and the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (15 August). Other great solemnities, such as Epiphany, Ascension, and All Saints, are celebrated in Australia but are transferred to a Sunday or are not of obligation. The Feasts of the Lord mark the mysteries of Christ Himself: His Baptism, Transfiguration, Exaltation of the Cross, Corpus Christi, Sacred Heart, Holy Family, Presentation, and Christ the King.

The Feasts of Mary mark the Mother who carried Him: Mary, Mother of God (1 January), Annunciation (25 March), Visitation (31 May), Assumption (15 August), Nativity (8 September), Our Lady of the Rosary (7 October), Immaculate Conception (8 December), and in Australia especially, Our Lady Help of Christians (24 May), Patroness of this country.

The Gift of Time

Advent waits. Christmas adores. Lent repents. Easter rejoices. Ordinary Time grows. The Church does not give us seasons to fill our calendar. She gives us seasons to form our hearts. This is the year of the Church: not our year, but His.

Fr Bart

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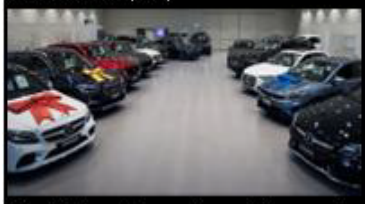
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