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THE HOPE OF CHRISTMAS

Christmas offers us a promise of life will come through, and asks us if we shall hang in to give life a chance.

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

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

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

In Matthew's Gospel the puppet King of Judaea, Herod, hears of Jesus spoken of as a future king and decides to kill him. Joseph and Mary must flee for their lives from Judaea to Egypt, as refugees from tyrants still do. And yet both in Bethlehem and in Egypt hope steals in imperceptibly as Jesus grows. Mary and Joseph treasure the promises that he will be at the centre of a world-changing future. His survival and the signs associated with his birth strengthen their hope. They celebrate his birth. They are also prepared to find the presence of God in God's apparent absence and the victory of God in Jesus' apparent annihilation. Their hope is thoroughly tested by Jesus' seeming insignificance and by defeat.

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

By Fr Andrew Hamilton SJ, editorial consultant at Jesuit Communications
<https://www.pray.com.au/the-hope-of-christmas/>

OLOL PARISH MINISTRIES & COORDINATORS

Liturgy: Y. Fenech & S. Sta. Maria
 Baptism Prep: R. Vail & M. Mardy
 Sacramental Prep: M. Alphonso, M. Mardy, A. Tilley
 Children Liturgy: M. Alphonso
 Eucharistic Ministers: E. Kinnear
 Proclaimers: Y. Fenech
 Prayer & Friendship Group: Y. Fenech (Wed)
 Safeguarding: M. Anderson
 Care & Support Group: A. Tilley

Home Visits & Holy Com.: A. Tilley
 Liturgy Rosters: D. Lim
 Our Lady of Fatima Visit: V. Measki
 Narthex Coord. & Altar Linen: B. Pascoe
 Counting & Banking: B. Dempsey
 Parish Choirs: M. Dennis /Fons; S. Fernandes; Praeven; Galangs
 Craft Grp: B. Pascoe & M. McKiterick (Thurs)
 SVDP Society: For Help Call 1300 305 330

Altar Servers: S. Rajan
 Piety Stall: M. Lisle
 Library: A. Tilley
 Cuppa: B. Pascoe & M. McKiterick
 Art, Garden & Environment: V. Measki
 Event Management: W. Singh
 Parish Website & PowerPoint: D. Lim & A. Sujeev
 Maintenance: P. Lynch
 Mowing Roster: P. Lynch



HOLY MASS

Weekend

- Saturday: 9am Morning Mass; 6pm Vigil Mass
- Sunday: 8am, 10am & 5pm

Weekday

- Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday: 9am (Benediction & Adoration on First Friday at 8:30am)
- Tuesday: 7:30pm (Adoration, Divine Mercy Novena & Benediction at 6:30pm)

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and Rosary: 30 minutes before weekday Masses

SACRAMENTS

- Baptism** 2nd Sunday of every month, 11:15am (2 months advance notice)
- Baptism Preparation** 2nd Thursday of every month, 7:30pm.
- Reconciliation** Tuesday: 6:30pm & Saturday: 9:30am and 5:30pm
- Marriage** Minimum 6 months advance notice is required
- Sacramental Preparation:** Call the Parish Office

PRESBYTERY

- Parish Priest: **Fr. Sabu Thomas Adimakiyil VC**
- Secretary: **Millicent Cabisidan (Peachy)**
- Bookkeeper: **Emalyn Rivera**

OFFICE HOURS

- Wednesday & Thursday 9am - 3pm
- Friday 9am - 12pm

OLOL PRIMARY SCHOOL

- Principal: Ross Williams Tel: (03) 9729 3411

PARISH FINANCE COMMITTEE

- Chair: Michael Di Paola

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

- Chair: Michael Dennis

25 Orange Grove, Bayswater, Victoria 3153
 Tel: (03) 9729 2622
 Email: bayswater@cam.org.au
 Website: www.ololbayswater.org.au

VISION

Our parish be a faith-filled, caring and sharing community that will actively embrace multiculturalism and team building reaching out to joyfully demonstrate God's love to the wider society.

MISSION

That our parish hold spiritual and social programmes to cater to all levels and interests of parishioners, drawing in toddlers, youth, elderly, and new families into the orbit of the parish.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.'





FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

24 DECEMBER 2023

'We aim a Safe and Inclusive Parish'

YEAR B / 2



NEXT WEEK'S READINGS

1st Reading: Sirach 3:2-6. 12-14
2nd Reading: Colossians 3:12-21
Gospel: Luke 2:22-40

RESPONSE

For ever I will sing
the goodness of the
Lord.

ACCLAMATION

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

A DWELING PLACE FOR GOD

King David wanted to build a fine temple in which God would dwell among the people. But God did not choose a building made of stones and mortar for a dwelling place but the womb of the virgin Mary. God continues to dwell among us in Mary's son, Jesus Christ, whose body is the Church.

Let us pray for a deepening of faith this Christmas that we, like Mary, may continue to give Christ to the world.

Source: Excerpted from St Paul Sunday Missal Complete Edition © 2012. Image from <http://cursillo.asn.au>



LITURGY OF THE WORD

Entrance Antiphon

Drop down dew from above, you heavens,
and let the clouds rain down the Just One;
let the earth be opened and bring forth a Saviour.

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

A reading from the second book of Samuel.

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."
The word of the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm

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.

Glory to him who is able to give you the strength to live according to the Good News I preach, and in which I proclaim Jesus Christ, the revelation of a mystery kept secret for endless ages, but now so clear that it must be broadcast to pagans everywhere to bring them to the obedience of faith. This is only what scripture has predicted, and it is all part of the way the eternal God wants things to be. He alone is wisdom; give glory therefore to him through Jesus Christ for ever and ever. Amen.

The word of the Lord.

Gospel: Luke 1:26-38

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

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

The Gospel of the Lord.

Communion Antiphon

Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son; and his name will be called Emmanuel.



POPE: 'AT CHRISTMAS LET US THINK ABOUT THE HOLY LAND'

Meeting a group of actors performing a Living Nativity Scene at the Roman Basilica of St. Mary Major, Pope Francis again turns his thoughts to the war ravaging the Holy Land. He reiterated his closeness to all the people suffering the ongoing war between Hamas and Israel and called on Christians to turn their thoughts and prayers this Christmas to the Holy Land.

"We know the situation, caused by the war, the consequence of a conflict that has lasted for decades," he said, remarking that for Palestinians living in Bethlehem too this Christmas will be marked by suffering and grieving, with no pilgrims and celebrations. "We don't want to leave them alone", said Pope Francis, urging for prayers and tangible support.

Full report at www.vaticannews.va

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM FR SABU

Dear Parishioners,
Wishing everyone the gift of love, peace, and happiness this Christmas.

As the year 2023 is about to end, I would like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to all of you for your prayers, love, commitment, and support which you have shown me from the time I became your Parish Priest.

I am in awe of the wonderful works of the office staff, Finance Committee, Parish Pastoral Council, the people in different Parish Ministries, the Coordinators and volunteers who have been very generous with their time, talent and commitment to our Parish Community. A big THANK YOU to all from the bottom of my heart.

I hope and pray the blessings of Christmas fills every corner of your heart and home with joy and peace now and always especially throughout the New Year. God bless you all.

FEASTS OF THE WEEK

- 25 December - The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas Day) - Holy Day of Obligation
- 26 December - St Stephen, the first martyr
- 27 December - St John, apostle, evangelist
- 28 December - The Holy Innocents, martyrs
- 31 December - The Holy Family

CHRISTMAS OFFERING AND THANKSGIVING ENVELOPES ARE AVAILABLE IN THE NARTHEX

ADVENT APPEAL FOR UKRAINE BY THE ARCHBISHOP

Please support Archbishop Comensoli's
ADVENT APPEAL FOR UKRAINE.
Appeal envelopes are available in the Narthex.

FLOWERS FOR CHRISTMAS

We are now accepting donations of flowers or money for flowers for Christmas. Please forward your donation to Veronika Measki or to Fr. Sabu. Thank you.

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE FOLLOWING AND THEIR FAMILIES:

- ANNIVERSARY: Charles Frost, Harry Bruce, Nelly Ales, Joan Maureen Heenan, Michael Kent, Mary Mortiz, John Kirk.
- SICK: Peter Lisle, Wendy Markby, Fiona Scudds, Mary McKiterick.

ARCHBISHOP PETER COMENSOLI'S CHRISTMAS MESSAGE 2023

Dear friends, we hear these words from the ancient prophet Isaiah (52:7): How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation ...

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

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

Our hearts ache for reconciliation of peoples; respect for our shared humanity; care for our crying planet. Our world and its people seem to be groaning and railing against pathways to true peace.

Yet we experience the hope of God through simple words of joy, mercy and peace.

The shepherds experienced this. So did the Magi. Mary and Joseph knew it intimately. God knew we needed his Son to come amongst us, to show us the way ahead.

As we come to celebrate the Nativity of the Lord this year, might we be attentive to the broken people across the world who are held captive by the tragedy of war and old hatreds.

Might we also remember those exiled in other ways—bereft of knowing God; lost and searching for identity and purpose.

We too can be the messengers whose footfalls bring light into the world, announcing mercy, bringing joy, offering Good News.

God has come among us, simply, humbly and hopefully in a little child, his Son, our Brother.

May the peace that comes through this child, the Prince of Peace, be with you this Christmas. And with every footstep, may you take His message, and life, out into the world.

Happy Christmas to you all!

You can watch Archbishop video message at CAM YouTube channel.

CHRISTMAS 2023 & NEW YEAR 2024 MASSES AND SERVICES

24 December Sunday	• Mass at 8am and 10am. • No 5pm Mass • Family Mass at 6pm • Christmas Vigil Mass at 8pm • Midnight Mass (12:00)
25 December Monday	• Christmas Day Mass at 10am (no other Masses)
31 December Sunday	• Regular Sunday Mass, 8am, 10am, 5pm • Year end/New Year Prayers at 11:00pm • New year's Night Mass at 12:00am
1 January 2024 Monday	• New Year's Day Mass at 9am (no other Masses)

CHRISTMAS TREES

A Joyful 'toon by Mike Waters

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

- ROMANS 15:13 NIV