



Sunday 25th December 2022

**Parish Priest:** Fr. Steven Rigo **Assistant Priests:** Fr. Tao Pham & Fr. Martin Tanti

**Parish Pastoral Associates:** Sandy Starbuck & Sr. Margaret Sapsford

**The Partnered Parishes of:**

**St. Mary's**

204 Grimshaw St.,  
Greensborough, 3088

**Parish:** 9435 1543 **Presbytery:** 7036 9329

**Email:** [Greensborough@cam.org.au](mailto:Greensborough@cam.org.au)

**Website:** [www.cam1.org.au/greensborough](http://www.cam1.org.au/greensborough)

**Secretaries:** Francesca Olofsson & Sharon Prosser

**Mass Times**

**Tuesday to Friday:** Mass 9.15am

**Saturday:** Vigil Mass 6.30pm

**Sunday:** Mass 8.00am, 10.00am & 5.00pm

**Reconciliation Times**

**Saturday:** 5.45pm-6.15pm before evening Mass

**Parish School Principal**

Mrs. Marisa Matthys **Ph:** 9433 4000 **or Email**  
[principal@smgreensborough.catholic.edu.au](mailto:principal@smgreensborough.catholic.edu.au)

**Sacred Heart & St Peter's**

25 Gipson Street,  
Diamond Creek 3089

**Parish:** 9401 6361

**Email:** [DiamondCreek@cam.org.au](mailto:DiamondCreek@cam.org.au)

**Website:** [www.pol.org.au/diamondcreek](http://www.pol.org.au/diamondcreek)

**Secretary:** Pat Guatta

**Mass Times**

**Wednesday & Friday:** Mass 9.15am

**St Peter's:** 1st & 3rd Saturday 7.15pm

**Sunday:** Mass 9.00am

**Reconciliation Times**

**Friday:** 9.45am to 10.15am

**Parish School Principal**

Mr. Jim O'Sullivan **Ph:** 9438 1590 **or Email**  
[principal@shdiamondcreek.catholic.edu.au](mailto:principal@shdiamondcreek.catholic.edu.au)

**St. Thomas the Apostle**

251 Diamond Creek Road,  
Greensborough Nth 3088

**Parish:** 9434 7373

**Email:** [greensboroughnorth@cam.org.au](mailto:greensboroughnorth@cam.org.au)

**Website:** [www.pol.org.au/greensboroughnorth](http://www.pol.org.au/greensboroughnorth)

**Secretary:** Lisa Leahy

**Mass Times**

**Tuesday & Thursday:** Mass 9.15am

**Saturday:** Vigil Mass 6.00pm

**Sunday:** Mass 10.30am

**Reconciliation Times**

**Saturday:** 9.30am to 10.00am

**Parish School Principal**

Mr David Delaney **Ph:** 9434 4565 **or Email**  
[principal@stgreensboroughnth.catholic.edu.au](mailto:principal@stgreensboroughnth.catholic.edu.au)

**THE CELEBRATION OF MASS IN OUR PARISHES**

**CLOSURE OF PARISH OFFICES OVER JANUARY**

**Sacred Heart:** Will be closed from Tuesday 10th January, reopens Tuesday 24th January 2023.

**St Mary's:** Will be closed on Mondays and Wednesdays during January.

**St Thomas:** Will be closed from Friday 27th January, reopens Tuesday 14th February 2023.

**To contact a Priest while the offices are closed please ring St Mary's Presbytery on 7036 9329 and leave a message and someone will get back to you asap.**



**EMMANUEL: GOD-WITH-US**

<https://www.australiancatholics.com.au/article/scripture-reflections--emmanuel--god-with-us>

**Sacred Heart, St Mary's & St Thomas the Apostle are all members of the Diamond Valley Deanery.**



[www.diamondvalleydeanery.org.au](http://www.diamondvalleydeanery.org.au)

**Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne**

[www.cam.org.au](http://www.cam.org.au)



**Our Partnered Parishes respectfully acknowledge the Wurundjeri people who are the traditional custodians of this land and we pay respect to the Elders past and present.**

## WHAT'S HAPPENING AT ST MARY'S

*Vision Statement "To be a vibrant Christian community engaging with the world"*

**PARISH OFFICE HOURS:** The office will be attended in January on Tuesdays Thursdays and Fridays 10am-4pm.

Thank you



### A Message from our Parish Secretaries

Let us take the opportunity this Christmas to pause and reflect on the important things around us. Look back on the year just gone by and prepare for the year ahead the best we can given the uncertainties around us. We thank you all, our dear parishioners for your support for us during the year. It has been another year of change and challenges. We hope that we have been able to keep you all as informed as possible on things that are happening.

We are grateful for the care and support from our wonderful team here in the Parish Office. And for the continued support from our wonderful Parish Groups and teams who assist us in many ways.

We welcome Sandy Starbuck, our new Pastoral Associate, into our Parish family.

We wish you all a Safe, Happy and Peaceful Christmas. May the love and peace you enjoy and share at Christmas, continue on into the New Year. May your holidays be filled with love and may you all enjoy time with family & friends.

Wishing you health, wealth, and new blessings to count each day in 2023. Looking forward to seeing you all next year.

*From Francesca Olofsson and Sharon Prosser.*



### READING WITH PARISHIONERS PROGRAM

Do you have a weekday morning free? St Mary's School is looking for parishioners who are able to spare 1-2 hours on a weekly basis to listen to children read in the junior school. All volunteers will need a Working with Children's Check. Training will be provided at the beginning of the 2023 school year for any parishioners who would like to be a part of the program. If you're interested please contact Bec Mellerick on 0402064081 or via email [rmellerick@smgreensborough.catholic.edu.au](mailto:rmellerick@smgreensborough.catholic.edu.au)

### SILENCE IN LITURGY

God addresses us through the scriptures. But silence is what helps us discover the meaning and power of these words, letting them 'sink in' and be absorbed into our minds and hearts. In addition to the short periods of silence observed by the Reader after the first and second readings, we will again have a period of silent reflection following the Homily. **The first collection** will be taken up after this period of reflection.

**THANK YOU** to all for your ongoing donations of food, toiletries and money to the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre. Your generosity is greatly appreciated. Donations will still be accepted over the holidays. Always needed are milk, fish (in oil) dried or tinned fruit, sugar, tea, honey, biscuits, detergents. Social Justice Group.

**EXPOSITION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT:** First Friday of month, after 9.15am Mass to 3pm. Spend whatever time you can.

All Welcome.

**WE NEED YOUR HELP.** We have a number of people to whom we take Communion of a Friday morning. Currently we don't have enough Ministers of Communion to the Sick, to meet our needs. If you have time on a Friday morning and would be willing to join the roster, or at least see what you think, please contact Sandy Starbuck, our Pastoral Associate, or the parish office (94351543 or [Greensborough@cam.org.au](mailto:Greensborough@cam.org.au)). Training and support is provided. Hopefully we can have enough Ministers so that each person is only rostered on once a month. Please consider helping.

"As we celebrate  
the birth of our Lord,  
may we share  
with others the love  
He came to bring.



### A Christmas Prayer of Hope and Peace

Father, we pray that you will turn our hearts toward you as Christmas approaches. Let us not get caught up in the hustle and bustle of the season this year and miss the chance to celebrate the gifts of hope, peace, joy and love, that you sent to us on that first Christmas. That first Christmas, you gave us the gift of hope wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. Thank you for your immeasurable gift.

Lord, we ask You to bring us peace.  
Peace in our homes, peace in our churches  
and peace in our hearts, especially when it feels like the world  
all around us spins out of control.

**AID TO THE CHURCH IN NEED AUSTRALIA:** *Aid to the Church in Need* is asking for support to aid our brothers and sisters who are suffering so deeply in Syria and Lebanon through our Christmas appeal *Sharing Hope with Christians in Syria and Lebanon this Christmas*. The support we are pledging to them is very much emergency relief to sustain the Christian population in hope. The projects we are supporting are projects such as medical aid, community help and gifts for children in Lebanon, as well as support for lay faithful and accommodation for families in Syria. It is only with your help that ACN can support Christians in Lebanon and Syria this Christmas!

To watch videos and read stories of the projects we are supporting visit [www.aidtochurch.org/christmas2022](http://www.aidtochurch.org/christmas2022)

## PARTNERED PARISHES NEWS

Dear Parishioners of Sacred Heart, St. Mary's, and St. Thomas,

We anticipated 2022 as a year of relief from COVID lockdowns and restrictions, but it has turned out to be a year of yet more calamitous events. I will just name a few – Russia invades Ukraine, resulting in many deaths on both sides and increasing the already huge number of refugees in the world to over 100 million; tensions have grown with China; Climate Change intensifies with the result of droughts in many places overseas and floods in the Eastern states of Australia and elsewhere; as a result of COVID and the Ukrainian war there have been disruptions in global supply chains of food and fuels; inflation worldwide has returned with abandon; COVID continues to take the lives of great numbers worldwide; people with malicious intent have hacked into the private details of clients of big corporations; people have increasingly used social media to spread misinformation and disinformation, leading to many conspiracy theories that distort truth and facts; the Iranian protests against its theocratic regime and several other protests against what people have deemed oppressive and authoritarian governments. This has certainly been a year of turmoil and calamities, and perhaps a year that beckons us to think and act differently from before. It seems to me that the choice is ours, individually and globally for things to change.

I have recently been reading a book – “The Choice – Even in hell hope *can* flower” by Dr. Edith Eger, a psychologist and survivor of the Holocaust who in the book guides its readers in how they should try and move on after trauma, a stark reality we all have to face in our lives. Painful and traumatic events in our lives reveal to us a yearning for something more and different. In the first chapter of the book she writes about the most common diagnosis among people she treats – it is hunger: “We are hungry. We are hungry for approval, attention, affection. We are hungry for the freedom to embrace life and to really know and be ourselves.” Maybe the events of the last few years and this last year in particular can lead us to consider what we truly hunger for and what changes we need to make in our lives and world that would address our deepest yearnings and hunger.

As I reflect on the first Christmas, I think of the historically transformative event when God immersed himself intimately into the mess of human history because of God's great love for humanity and all created order. It was because God sought to address our great human hunger for the 'more' and for us to find it in him, and for us to participate in furthering God's creative plan for all creation. May we in the coming year be receptive to the ways God seeks to feed us and relieve our hunger for the more.

As we approach the end of 2022, I would like to express my gratitude and my well-wishes to you all, the parishioners of our three partnered parishes. Particularly, I would like to publicly express my gratitude to our Assistant priests – Martin Tanti and Tao Pham. In January we farewelled Dixon George as he accepted an appointment as assistant priest to the combined parishes of Thornbury, East Thornbury and Alphington, and we welcomed Martin Tanti who was parish priest of Collingwood/Clifton Hill, and has been seconded to us by the Salesian order of priests.

I am extremely grateful for the support and dedicated commitment to pastoral work in our parishes by Jacinta Bright and Sr. Margaret Sapsford, our Pastoral Associates. After almost 18 years as our Pastoral Associate at St. Mary's, Jacinta retired in October. I am grateful for the ways I have been able to work very closely with Jacinta over that period of time and for the ways she has assisted us in our efforts in partnering our three parishes. Jacinta continues to work as a spiritual director and counsellor. In a time when there is also a dearth of Pastoral Associates, I am very grateful that we have been able to employ Sandy Starbuck who has now taken on the role of Pastoral Associate and commenced work with us at the end of November.

Sandy comes with 12 years of experience from St. Peter's, Epping and Christ the Light Parish of Doreen, Kinglake, Mernda and Whittlesea and will continue in the role Jacinta has left.

I am particularly grateful to Pat Guatta, Lisa Leahy, Francesca Olofsson and Sharon Prosser, our parish secretaries who are the immediate face and voice of the parish offices and who especially assist me in my administrative responsibilities. We regularly meet as a Parish Team and have refined ways that we work together across our three parishes. Over the past year we have developed more ways we can work together across our three parishes, such as our combined faith Development Team which prepares the schedule of the Sacramental program for our three schools and prepares the Faith Formation evenings for our school parents; our combined Liturgy group which plans the seasons of liturgical celebrations and major feasts, and our Partnered Parishes Plenary Facilitators Committee which explored ways we can implement in our own locality the expressions of parishioners for change in the Church. One of these resulted in the plaques positioned in prominent places on rocks near each of our churches that express our sorrow for the pain of abuse perpetrated by officials of the Church.

## PARTNERED PARISHES NEWS continued

Though online learning has ceased with the easing of COVID restrictions and lockdowns, this past year has been extremely demanding on our schools and teachers as they work to address the aftermath of how these have impacted on students and their parents. The coordination of this for the education and welfare of our children has required a great deal of wise leadership and coordination with staff and parents. I would like to express my deep gratitude to Jim O'Sullivan, David Delaney and Marisa Matthys, our school principals for their professional, calm and dedicated leadership. I value their work because it is together that we lead our parishes in pastoral care, education and spiritual formation, especially of our school communities.

We are also reliant on the many groups and committees with whom we work collaboratively, particularly the Parish Pastoral Councils, Finance Committees, the School Advisory Boards and Parish Education Board. I would like to express my deep gratitude to the many individuals and groups who dedicate so much time and energy to the life of our parishes in liturgy, pastoral care, catechesis, faith formation, fundraising, peer support and ministry and property maintenance and development because they are committed to the enrichment of our communities by what they do. In general I would like to thank everyone's involvement in the life of our parishes because your contribution and participation is what continues to give these communities their great spirit and energy and expresses a welcome to those who come to us with their needs.

Finally, I thank the many parishioners who have showered me with gifts for Christmas; for your thoughtfulness and care of me throughout the year. I pray that each of you may have a joyous, peace-filled celebration of Christmas with your loved ones. May God guard you and keep you safe these holidays, especially as you travel. I pray that you may be revitalized for the coming year and that God blesses you and your loved ones abundantly with all you need throughout 2023 – a new year of new opportunities for growth within ourselves, in our relationships with one another, and with God who continues to make his home among us in the messiness of our lives.



(Parish Priest)



### ST VINCENT DE PAUL CHRISTMAS APPEAL

I write on behalf of the Greensborough Conference of St. Vincent De Paul Society, to sincerely thank the St. Mary's and the St. Thomas Parish Communities for donating so generously to our recent Christmas Appeal.

It is so encouraging and reassuring to know that you our fellow parishioners share the same values as we do in wanting to care for others who live all around us but don't always have the means to access the basic needs we all take for granted. The funds raised will be used to cover these essentials to help our families have a good start to '23.

Your kindness has touched the lives of many, including the members of our Conference.

Wishing your Parish communities all the very best for a Blessed and joyous Christmas and a healthy and safe New Year.

**Maureen Lonsdale, President: Greensborough Conference – St Vincent De Paul Society.**



Dear Parishioners,

As I come to the end of my 1st year allow me to express my sincere thanks and gratitude for your welcome and support. I have enjoyed being part of the many facets of our parishes. I am looking forward to working with you all in 2023.

Have a Merry and Holy Christmas and a safe New Year.

**Fr Martin**

## WHAT'S HAPPENING AT SACRED HEART & ST PETER'S



### SACRED HEART PARISH IS VERY GRATEFUL

- ◆ To our wonderful volunteers for cleaning and preparing the Churches, providing audio visual and music, reading, commentating and Eucharistic Ministers at all Hurstbridge and Diamond Creek Masses. Your contribution around the Parish throughout the year is very much appreciated
- ◆ To everyone who contributes to the parish collections either by envelopes, direct debit, credit card or anonymously.

thank  
you!

**Thank you:** I am writing this note to acknowledge and say a very big Thank You to all the parishioners for the prayers over the past year when I was undergoing chemotherapy for cancer. After being told that the current treatment would have little or no effect to then find that I was, indeed, in remission. I am doing very well and feeling Blessed for all the support and prayers. Maurice & I would like to wish you all the Joy and Blessings of Christmas and good health and peace in 2023.

**Kind regards, Margaret Holland**

**Senior Moments:** Wish everyone a Holy and Happy Christmas.

The 2023 Planning Meeting is Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> February 12pm in Parish Office. New members welcome.



**Thank you** to all parishioners for your support and efforts in 2022. Enjoy a peaceful and safe Christmas.

Best wishes to you and your families. **Regards, Pat**

**Welcome to our visitors during the Christmas season. Your presence in our parish enriches our community.**

**May Christ be born in you and your family this Christmas, bringing the peace, hope and love that only God can give.**

### A Christmas message from Pope Francis speaking in a recent Italian interview.

“Look at the Child; look at the star. One more child is hope.”

“To each of you listening, the Pope concluded, “I would like to ask that the Lord give you the tenderness of a child, that we do not lose human tenderness, that He might help us, and that He might give you the light of the star.”

### **Vatican News 19 December 2022**

Recently these words ‘Blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled.’ (Lk 1:45) led me to pray that God will gift each of us with faith to truly believe the message of the Angel. A ‘Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.’ May you, your family and friends know a joy-filled Christmas.

### **Margaret rsc**

When the song of the angels is stilled  
When the star in the sky is gone  
When the kings and princes are home  
When the shepherds are back with their flock  
The work of Christmas begins:

To find the lost

To heal the broken

To feed the hungry

To release the prisoners

To rebuild nations

To bring peace among brothers and sisters

To make music in the heart

### **Howard Thurman**



**Our prayers have been asked for sick parishioners and friends that they may be healed & comforted during this time:**

Catherine Leonard, Peter Mejak, Joan Moran, Bridie Burke, Mary Rafferty, Thomas Keenan, Mervyn Bourke, Jacob Draper, Vi Hurley, Kevin Hurley

**We pray for those who have died and all those whose Anniversaries occur in the month of December that they may enter Joyfully into God's Kingdom:**

Adam Hibbert, Martin Padget, Eileen Dunn, Kevin Hewitt, Frank Orders, Julian Federico, Brian Bell, Bridgette Tancredi-Roberts, John Elliott, Clara Mercieca, Paul Clements, Bernice Burke.

## WHAT'S HAPPENING AT ST THOMAS

### Rosters for Weekend 31st December & 1st January

#### Saturday 6.00pm

**Reader:** S. McMahon **Commentator:** E. Sacchetta **Eucharistic Ministers:** T. Holland, M. McKenzie, K. Salm

**Set Up:** Volunteer

#### Sunday 10.30am

**Reader:** M. Bates

**Commentator:** T. Williamson

**Eucharistic Ministers:** R. Piccolo, A. Letzia

**Set Up:** C. O'Brien

**Rosters for the remainder of January will be on a volunteer basis , as many of you will be away on holidays.**

**Thank you to everyone for their assistance this year.**

**Our Parish could not operate without the help of our generous Parishioners.**

**I wish you all a wonderful Christmas and New Year with your families and friends.**

*Best wishes Lisa*



**St Thomas prayers are asked for the following Parishioners:**

**Our prayers have been asked for sick parishioners and friends that they may be healed & comforted during this time:**

*Miran Kasalo, John Iacobucci, Andelko Korculanin, Estelle Smooker*

**We pray for those who have died including Julie Mc Kay and all those whose Anniversaries occur in the month of**

**December that they may enter Joyfully into God's Kingdom:**

*Emilia Micomonaco, Adrian DeGier, Doris Morfea, Frank Jordan, John Winter, Arthur Eames, Cass Sheehan,*

*Nancy Marzella, Giovanni Marzella, Leo Glennon, Rose Hegarty Stjepan Kernjak*

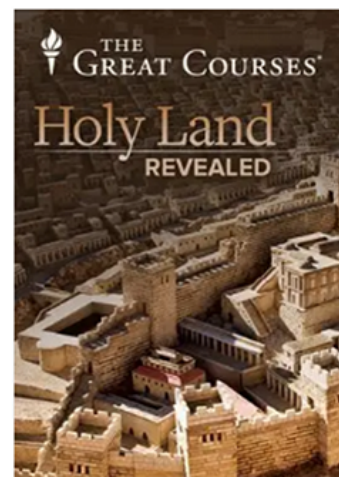
### BIBLE STUDY GROUP

The Monday night bible study group on Zoom will commence "The Holy Land Revealed" video course Mon. 9th January 7.30-9.30pm.

This course covers the ancient history of what many people know as the Holy Land, a geographic area that includes modern Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinian territories. The course also looks at other regions in the ancient Near East, including Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) and Mesopotamia (encompassing modern Iraq and much of Iran).

The timespan we will cover begins with the First Temple period (c. 960 B.C. □ 586 B.C.) and takes us through the Second Temple period, the time of Jesus, and the destruction of the temple (c. 516 B.C. □ A.D. 70) Our historical sources for these periods of ancient history include the Hebrew Bible and related religious works, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the writings of Josephus and Philo, the New Testament, and the Mishnah and Talmud. We will also explore the archaeology of the ancient Near East, which will complement our study of the historical sources by giving us a more complete picture of ancient societies.

If you would like to Zoom in, (no charge), email: [sandraebishop@optusnet.com.au](mailto:sandraebishop@optusnet.com.au)



**ANNOUNCING THE DAMASCUS SPIRITUAL LEADERS PROGRAM!** Part-time in Feb-Nov 2023 - either in person or online - through Heart of Life Centre for Spiritual & Pastoral Formation. This program is designed for people in various positions of leadership, spiritual formation and parish or outreach ministries. It will equip individuals to lead with integrity, vulnerability and resilience, and will focus on the inner spiritual journey in order to create fully-formed leaders who listen, learn and accompany others with strength and sensitivity. 'Damascus' can be studied as a Graduate Certificate in Divinity through the University of Divinity (Yarra Theological Union/ Catholic Theological College), or as an audit student to receive a Certificate in Spiritual Leadership from Heart of Life. Attendance on Monday mornings and some Saturdays. Read more about the program on the [Heart of Life website](http://Heart of Life website) or contact us on (03) 9890 1101. Applications close on 6/1/23.



## Lectionary Art and Reflection by Jenny Close

Joyful peace is the atmosphere of Luke's account of the birth of Jesus. Nonetheless, the peace arises amid the darker realities of life: 'there was no room for them at the inn'. Peace and joy are messages that we badly need today. More than ever we need to know that the light of Christ shines in the darkness and that the light is associated with the vulnerability of new life rather than the power of political might.

# Nativity of the Lord (Christmas) Midnight

25 December

## First Reading Is 9:1-7

*A son is given to us.*

The people that walked in darkness  
has seen a great light;  
on those who live in a land of deep shadow  
a light has shone.  
You have made their gladness greater,  
you have made their joy increase;  
they rejoice in your presence  
as men rejoice at harvest time,  
as men are happy when they are dividing the  
spoils.  
For the yoke that was weighing on him,  
the bar across his shoulders,  
the rod of his oppressor,  
these you break as on the day of Midian.  
For all the footgear of battle,  
every cloak rolled in blood,  
is burnt  
and consumed by fire.  
For there is a child born for us,  
a son given to us  
and dominion is laid on his shoulders;  
and this is the name they give him:  
Wonder-Counsellor, Mighty-God,  
Eternal-Father, Prince-of-Peace.  
Wide is his dominion  
in a peace that has no end,  
for the throne of David  
and for his royal power,  
which he establishes and makes secure  
in justice and integrity.  
From this time onwards and for ever,  
the jealous love of the Lord of hosts  
will do this.

## Responsorial Psalm

**Ps 95:1-3. 11-13 R. Lk 2:11**

**(R.) Today is born our Saviour,  
Christ the Lord.**

1. O sing a new song to the Lord,  
sing to the Lord all the earth.  
O sing to the Lord, bless his name. (R.)
2. Proclaim his help day by day,  
tell among the nations his glory  
and his wonders among all  
the peoples. (R.)
3. Let the heavens rejoice and earth  
be glad,  
let the sea and all within it thunder praise,  
let the land and all it bears rejoice,  
all the trees of the wood shout for joy  
at the presence of the Lord  
for he comes,  
he comes to rule the earth. (R.)
4. With justice he will rule the world,  
he will judge the peoples with  
his truth (R.)

## Second Reading Ti 2:11-14

*God's grace has been revealed to all people.*

God's grace has been revealed, and it has made salvation possible for the whole human race and taught us that what we have to do is to give up everything that does not lead to God, and all our worldly ambitions; we must be self-restrained and live good and religious lives here in this present world, while we are waiting in hope for the blessing which will come with the Appearing of the glory of our great God and saviour Christ Jesus. He sacrificed himself for us in order to set us free from all wickedness and to purify a people so that it could be his very own and would have no ambition except to do good.

## Gospel Acclamation Lk 2:10-11

**Alleluia, alleluia!**

**Good News and great joy to all  
the world:**

**today is born our Saviour, Christ  
the Lord.**

**Alleluia!**

## Gospel Lk 2:1-14

*Today a saviour has been born for you.*

Caesar Augustus issued a decree for a census of the whole world to be taken. This census – the first – took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria, and everyone went to his own town to be registered. So Joseph set out from the town of Nazareth in Galilee and travelled up to Judaea, to the town of David called Bethlehem, since he was of David's House and line, in order to be registered together with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to a son, her first-born. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them at the inn. In the countryside close by there were shepherds who lived in the fields and took it in turns to watch their flocks during the night. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone round them. They were terrified, but the angel said, 'Do not be afraid. Listen, I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people. Today in the town of David a saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. And here is a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.' And suddenly with the angel there was a great throng of the heavenly host, praising God and singing:

'Glory to God in the highest heaven  
and peace to men who enjoy his favour.'

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## Reflection by Fr Michael Tate

The glory of God and profound peace reaching out to embrace the whole of humanity are dynamically related in the baby in the manger. This is the song of the angels, and it is our privilege to join in that song at this Christmas Mass.

Every baby is a promise of a new future which fills one with hope. But *this* baby is unique. *This* Jewish boy baby is the body language of God. *This* baby is the sonburst of God entering our dark world. *This* baby shows us that God is not impossibly remote but, rather, God is as intimately close as a vulnerable infant.

And *this* baby fulfils all the yearning of the human heart. We want to love to the utmost. We want to be loved to the utmost. *This* baby enables both because he is without any finite boundaries or restraints: He is in-finite love reaching out to us.

Can we grasp all this? Probably not. So, like the little lambs nuzzling up to the manger, we just follow some deep intuition which says: 'I must kneel in adoration, it is good to be here.' We could pause for a moment to pray for the resolve to do our bit to echo the angel's message: 'I bring you good news of great joy to be shared by all peoples.'

mtate@bigpond.com