



Holy Family Parish Northeast Mallee

northeastmallee@ballarat.catholic.org.au 03 50324144

Website: northeastmallee.org.au

Incorporating the Communities of St Mary's Sea Lake, Sacred Heart Culgoa, St Michael's Lalbert, St Joseph's Nandaly, S's Peter & Paul Quambatook & St Mary's Swan Hill as well as the Lake Boga Families & Faith Group



10TH DECEMBER 2023: 2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

MAKING STRAIGHT HIS WAYS

The old Temple in Jerusalem had gates that faced East, towards the rising Sun. This was a symbol of hope and waiting; as the Sun rose in the East, so too would God come to his People. After all, that is direction the People themselves had come from, out of the wilderness, over the Jordan and through the hill country of Judah to God's 'holy mountain'. Invading armies came from the North, the South and the West, but for God's salvation the people looked East. But remember what I just said, East was looking towards the hills. There were no straight paths in that direction, no wide valleys. You couldn't see very far at all, and no-one could move very quickly through those lands. With that in mind, you can begin to understand the powerful imagery of the prophecy of Isaiah, taken up again by John the Baptist, 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths!' If God is to come, his way must be cleared of all blockages and obstacles... hence the call to



repentance and faith. John calls us to remove from our heart any obstacle that stands in God's way, so that he may come and fill us with his comfort and consolation. When we speak of Advent as a time of preparation, this is what we mean — preparing our hearts to receive the Lord anew. Now fasting and prayer are great ways to do this, and so if you can keep this time as a quasi-Lent, then good on you! But let's be honest, for a lot of us, this is a time of parties and catch-ups and special events... realistically fasting is going to be pretty difficult and finding extra time for

prayer even harder. So, without losing sight of the prayer, perhaps we are better to focus on other, more manageable, means of preparing our hearts. Almsgiving is a powerful way, and there are so many ways we can do this during this time. We can support one of the many Charity drives, or reach out to a neighbour or friend who is isolated or in need. Forgiveness and Reconciliation is another, and particularly important with so many family and community events coming up. And what about experiencing God's mercy in the Sacrament of Reconciliation? In Confession we can remove the mask we put up and stand entirely open to God's love. And what about the simple gift of sharing the joy we have in Christ? Each of us, in our unique way, have a special ability to lift the hearts of those around us. Share the joy!

POINTING AHEAD TO CHRIST

And speaking of the unique role each of us can play, I've also been meaning to share this little reflection on our recent Confirmation Program. One thing that really stood out for me was how so many of the children involved looked up to their grandparents, or even great-parents, as special witnesses of faith. Some chose their grandparent as sponsor or took their name in Confirmation. You could also see that grandparents were often the most important guest invited along, and their gifts the most treasured. And it wasn't just limited to grandparents— aunts and uncles, and great-aunts and great-uncles and family friends all had their special role to play as well. I very rarely see a child involved who doesn't have some special witness to faith in their lives. You are those special witnesses. Please know the example you set is so powerful and so important. Parents can't do it on their own. They need your support, your invitation, your guidance and encouragement. So keep up the good work!

Parish Contact Details:

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Office Hrs: Tues, Wed and Fri 10:30 -2:30

Parish Priest

Fr James Kerr

Parish Office:

Glenda Klabbers & Mary Kennedy

Child Protection Officers:

Damian and Karen Kelly

Child Safe Church

Here in the Parish of Holy Family North East Mallee we follow the Child Safe Standards outlined by the Victorian Government and we also implement procedures and standards as directed by the Ballarat Diocesan Office.



**PLEASE KEEP IN YOUR PRAYERS
RECENT DEATHS**

Stethen Scala (son of Margaret)
Ann Poelsma (late of Shepparton)

ANNIVERSARIES OF DEATH

Giovanni Russo (1 yr), Eliza Driscoll, Tony Campanelli,
Thomas Irwin, James Stewart, Tom Murphy,
Caterina Bonanno, Norma Ryan, Frank Raudino,
Anthony Hooper, Faye Nolan, Mary Elliott,
Vince Pellegrino, Vera Schlitz, Jack Cook
Michael Farrell, Fr Gerald Payne, Lucy Johnston
Eileen White, River Purtill, Gordon Moar
Abby & Bronte Foott,
Glenys Power, Christine Britton

SICK LIST

Yvonne Richardson, Paul Donohue,
Jayden Williams, Margaret Foott,
Jarrod Crimmins, Michael Bourke, Jack Donohue,
Jude Lewis, Susan, Yvonne Annan,
Bridget Phyland, Carmel Ryan,

THIS WEEKEND (9TH/10TH DEC)

2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Saturday: 6:00pm Swan Hill

Sunday: 8.30am Balranald

Sunday 9:30am Lay Lead Quambatook

Sunday: 10:30am Swan Hill

Sunday 4:30pm Sea Lake Graduation Mass

WEEKDAYS IN SWAN HILL

Tuesday 5.30pm

Wednesday 11am St Mary's End of Year Mass

2pm Burial Ann Poelsma Balranald

Thurs: Confessions 5pm, Mass 5:30pm, Adoration

Friday: 11am Adoration, 11.30am Mass

NEXT WEEKEND (16TH/17TH DEC)

3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Saturday 6:00pm Swan Hill

Sunday 8.30am Culgoa

Sunday 10:30am Swan Hill

Sunday 5pm Tooleybuc

NOTICES



CHRISTMAS MASS TIMES

Christmas Eve is a Sunday this year, which will make things a bit of fun! Our schedule for the Fourth Sunday of Advent and Christmas Period will be:

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Saturday 23rd 6pm Swan Hill

Sunday 24th 8:30am Quambatook

Christmas Eve: Sunday 24th Dec

4pm Sea Lake

6pm Swan Hill (with Nativity Play)

8pm Swan Hill

Christmas Day: Monday 25th Dec

10:30am Swan Hill

Feast Holy Family: 30th & 31st Dec

Sat 6pm Swan Hill

Sun 10:30am Swan Hill

New Years Day: Mary Mother of God

10am Monday 1st Jan

SACRAMENTS OF HEALING FOR ADVENT:

ANOINTING OF THE SICK & RECONCILIATION

To help us prepare for Christmas, we will offer special Masses with the Anointing of the Sick and extra times for Reconciliation.

Anointing Masses

Tuesday 19th Dec 5:30pm

Wednesday 20th Dec 10am

Additional Times for Reconciliation

Thursday 21st Dec 6-7pm

Friday 22nd Dec 10:30-11:30am, 5-6pm

Saturday 23rd 10:30am-11:30am, 5-6pm

PRAYERS FOR CAY TRINH

Please pray for Seminarian Cay Trinh who will be ordained as a Deacon next Saturday 16th in Ballarat. May God bless him in his call to serve the people of our Diocese of Ballarat.

Our Parish Schools

St Mary's Primary School Sea Lake

Principal: Kate Nunn

47 Hannon Street, Sea Lake

Ph: 03 5070 1272

Principal@smsealake.catholic.edu.au

St Mary's Primary School Swan Hill

Principal: Kate Quin

2 Murlong St Swan Hill

Ph. 03 5033 2541

principal@smswanhill.catholic.edu.au

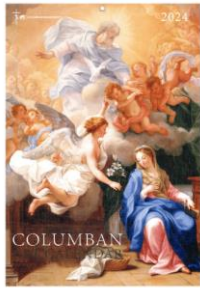
St Mary MacKillop College

Principal: Michelle Haeusler

53 McCrae Street, Swan Hill

Ph: 5032 9771

Principal@mackillopsh.vic.edu.au



**NOW AVAILABLE: *COLUMBAN CALENDARS,
GOD'S WORD & CHRISTMAS CARDS***

Religious Christmas Cards @ \$10 pk

Columban Calendars @\$10 each

Gods Word 2024 \$20 each

All available from the office.

REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR

Thank you to all who took a box last weekend. We still have a few boxes left. Donations of individual goods are also most welcome.

A Reverse Advent Calendar begins as an empty box. Each day during December you place one item into the box. Your filled Reverse Advent Calendar is returned to the parish office by **Sunday 17th Dec** ready for it to be distributed through A Good Kitchen and St Vincent de Paul.

Some of the suggested items for the box are canned fruit, canned vegetables, canned tuna, baked beans, soups, long life milk, juice, coffee, tea and milo, spreads such as vegemite, peanut butter or jam. Rice, pasta and noodles, cereal, muesli bars, toiletries, Christmas treat food. Regular everyday items.

HAVE YOU THOUGHT?

Why would John have gone out into the wilderness to conduct his ministry?

What do you think people found attractive about John's baptism of forgiveness?

Why is the first sentence of the passage significant, given it is the very first sentence of Mark?

What would followers of John have thought about his prediction of someone coming after him?

How can we continue to prepare the way for the Lord?

When did you have to consciously prepare yourself for something you were about to do?

RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS FOR ADVENT

- ❖ Leave a kind note for someone you love.
- ❖ Leave a treat for the postman /delivery driver.
- ❖ Give someone a coupon for a hug.
- ❖ Hold a door open for somebody.
- ❖ Pay for someone's coffee.

BACKGROUND ON THE GOSPEL

Today's Gospel is taken from the beginning of Mark. Unlike Luke and Matthew, Mark does not include any details of Jesus' birth. Instead Mark begins with the appearance of John the Baptist in the desert. On this the Second Sunday of Advent, we are invited to reflect upon the role of John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Jesus and the salvation that he would bring to us.

Mark's description of the appearance of John the Baptist highlights John's continuity with the Jewish prophetic tradition. Mark combines quotations from the Old Testament books of Malachi, Isaiah, and Exodus. Mark's description of John as an ascetic, living in the desert, clothed in camel hair, and eating locusts and wild honey, is reminiscent of the description of the prophet Elijah found in Second Kings. The people of Judea and Jerusalem flock to him, listening to his message of repentance and forgiveness; they also come to him to be baptized. Mark's Gospel is clear, however, that John the Baptist's role is only to prepare the way for another who will come, one who is greater than John.

Many scholars believe that the Gospels reflect the tension that likely existed between followers of John the Baptist and disciples of Jesus. Each of the four Evangelists report on John's preaching and baptizing, and they each emphasize the importance of Jesus' baptism by John. The four Gospels also explain that John was sent to preach in preparation for another. In the Gospel of Luke, the question is raised as to whether John the Baptist was himself the Messiah. Just as in today's Gospel, however, John speaks quite explicitly that the Messiah was to come after him.

In today's Gospel we hear John the Baptist contrast his baptism of repentance with the baptism that Jesus will inaugurate. John says that he has baptized with water, but that the one who is to come will baptize with the Holy Spirit. John's baptism was not yet a Christian baptism, but a preparation for the Sacrament of Baptism through which sins are forgiven and the gift of the Holy Spirit is received.

John the Baptist is presented to us as a model during Advent. We, too, are called upon to prepare a way for the Lord. Like John the Baptist, we are messengers in service to one who is greater than we are. Our Baptism commissions us to call others to life as disciples of Jesus. © Loyola Press



FIRST READING *Isaiah 40:1-5. 9-11*

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

Prepare the way for the Lord.

‘Console my people, console them’
says your God.

‘Speak to the heart of Jerusalem and call to her
that her time of service is ended,
that her sin is atoned for,
that she has received from the hand of the Lord
double punishment for all her crimes.’

A voice cries, ‘Prepare in the wilderness
a way for the Lord.

Make a straight highway for our God across the desert.

Let every valley be filled in,
every mountain and hill be laid low,
let every cliff become a plain,
and the ridges a valley;

then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed
and all mankind shall see it;

for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.’

Go up on a high mountain,

joyful messenger to Zion.

Shout with a loud voice,

joyful messenger to Jerusalem.

Shout without fear,

say to the towns of Judah,

‘Here is your God.’

Here is the Lord coming with power,
his arm subduing all things to him.

The prize of his victory is with him,
his trophies all go before him.

He is like a shepherd feeding his flock,

gathering lambs in his arms,

holding them against his breast

and leading to their rest the mother ewes.

The Word of the Lord. ALL: Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM *Ps 84:9-14. R. v.8*

(R.) Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.

I will hear what the Lord God has to say,
a voice that speaks of peace,
peace for his people.

His help is near for those who fear him
and his glory will dwell in our land.

Mercy and faithfulness have met;
justice and peace have embraced.

Faithfulness shall spring from the earth
and justice look down from heaven.

The Lord will make us prosper
and our earth shall yield its fruit.

Justice shall march before him

and peace shall follow his steps. **(R.)**

SECOND READING *2 Peter 3:8-14*

A reading from the second letter of St Peter

We wait for new heavens and a new earth.

There is one thing, my friends, that you must never forget:
that with the Lord, ‘a day’ can mean a thousand years, and a
thousand years is like a day. The Lord is not being slow to
carry out his promises, as anybody else might be called slow;
but he is being patient with you all, wanting nobody to be lost
and everybody to be brought to change his ways. The Day of
the Lord will come like a thief, and then with a roar the sky
will vanish, the elements will catch fire and fall apart, the
earth and all that it contains will be burnt up.

Since everything is coming to an end like this, you should be
living holy and saintly lives while you wait and long for the
Day of God to come, when the sky will dissolve in flames and
the elements melt in the heat. What we are waiting for is
what he promised: the new heavens and new earth, the place
where righteousness will be at home. So then, my friends,
while you are waiting, do your best to live lives without spot
or stain so that he will find you at peace.

The Word of the Lord. ALL: Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *Luke 3:4. 6*

Alleluia, alleluia!

Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths:
all people shall see the salvation of God. Alleluia!

GOSPEL *Mark 1:1-8*

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark

Make straight the paths of the Lord.

The beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son
of God. It is written in the book of the prophet Isaiah:

Look, I am going to send my messenger before you;

he will prepare your way.

A voice cries in the wilderness:

Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight,
and so it was that John the Baptist appeared in the
wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the
forgiveness of sins. All Judaea and all the people of Jerusalem
made their way to him, and as they were baptised by him in
the river Jordan they confessed their sins. John wore a
garment of camel-skin, and he lived on locusts and wild
honey. In the course of his preaching he said, ‘Someone is
following me, someone who is more powerful than I am, and
I am not fit to kneel down and undo the strap of his sandals. I
have baptised you with water, but he will baptise you with
the Holy Spirit.’

The Gospel of the Lord.

ALL: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

READINGS NEXT WEEK:

3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

First Reading: Isaiah 61:1-2. 10-11

Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Gospel: John 1:6-8. 19-28