



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 Joseph's Nandaly, S's Peter & Paul Quambatook & St Mary's Swan Hill as well as the Lake Boga Families & Faith Group



SUNDAY 14TH DECEMBER 2025:

3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT- GAUDETE SUNDAY

***FR JAMES SABBATICAL LEAVE
(29TH DEC 2025- 2ND APRIL 2026)***

I will be heading to Rome after Christmas for 3 months Sabbatical leave, returning just in time for Easter. A Sabbatical is basically a time of renewal, firmly rooted in the Biblical ideas of the Sabbath rest and the jubilee year. Every priest can ask for Sabbatical leave after 10 years. We are given leave from our usual responsibilities for a time of prayer, study and pilgrimage. I will be undertaking mine at the *Institute of Continuing Theological Education*, run by the Americans in Rome. It will include studies in Scripture, history & Theology, as well as tours/pilgrimages to many important religious sites (including a week of retreat in Assisi). With a bit of luck I might even get to meet the Pope- fingers crossed!

I am very grateful to Bishop Paul for granting me this leave- I honestly do feel the deep need for it. I am also very grateful to the Diocese for sponsoring me and organising for your pastoral care while I am away. Ballarat will be organising our priest supplies for the weekends. Fr Denis Ryan will cover me for the first two weekends in January, then Fr Eugene McKinnon for the next few after that. Fr Matthew Thomas and his assistants in Sunraysia will be covering our school liturgies and funeral needs during the weekdays. They have also generously committed to offering Masses on Thursday evenings and Friday mornings, although this may vary from week to week according to other commitments such as funerals and school liturgies.

I am very grateful to my brother priests and am conscious of the extra burden my absence places on them. They are going to do the best they can, but the reality is there won't be a priest as readily available as is usual. I am also very grateful for the encouragement and support I have already received from many of you here in the Parish. I am conscious that my leave will mean extra work & sacrifices for many of you, and yet you are precisely the ones who are most excited for me. Thank you for your care and generosity.

PROVISIONS FOR THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK

If I could just make one suggestion; when it comes to asking for the Anointing of the sick, don't delay or put this off! Please get in early and leave a request with the Parish Office. That way our visiting priests can come as soon as they arrive in town. You can expect a priest to be here overnight on Saturdays, (they will likely head home Sunday lunchtime if there is nothing scheduled), and overnight most Thursdays. Once again, please don't delay asking for the Anointing of the sick. Get in early! And don't be afraid to suggest the same to family and friends who may not realise that I am away.

FINALLY, YOUR HELP PLEASE- A LITTLE WASHING AND CLEANING

We also ask for some volunteers to help with washing and changing the bed linen and towels, and perhaps doing a quick clean in the presbytery for our visiting priests while I am away. The idea would be to take the sheets away Tuesday and bring them back Friday to remake the beds (i.e when Glenda is in the office). If we have a few volunteers we can share the load. Please leave a message with the Office so Glenda can coordinate. And lastly, I am sure you will, but please make sure our visiting priests are welcomed. Don't be afraid to ask them out for a meal or coffee!

Parish Contact Details:

Po Box 71 Swan Hill, Vic 3585

Phone: 03 5032 4144

northeastmallee@ballarat.catholic.org.au

Website: northeastmallee.org.au

Office Hrs: Tues, Wed and Fri 10:30 -1:30

Parish Priest

Fr James Kerr

Parish Office:

Glenda Klabbers & Mary Kennedy

Child Protection Officers:

Tony & Joelle Whiting

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+

Ellie Ryan,
Frank Connellan
Beryl Barry, Mary Kelly
Pat Egan

ANNIVERSARIES OF DEATH

Joy Ugbejie, Michael Farrell, Fr Gerald Payne
Lucy Johnston, Eileen White, Mary Guy
River Purtill, Gordon Moar, Abby & Bronte Foott
Glenys Power, Christine Britton, Connie Taverna
Monica Brady, Jack Barry, Graham Gaylard
Maggie Stacey, Brian Hogan

SICK LIST

Pat Jeans, Carmel Ryan,
Pat Croft, Yvonne Richardson, Jayden Williams,
Margaret Foott, Jarrod Crimmins, Michael Bourke,
Jack Donohue, Jude Lewis, Bridget Phyland,
Peter Amezdroz, Ken Duryea, Helen Duryea

THIS WEEKEND 14TH DECEMBER

3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Saturday 6pm Swan Hill
Sunday 10:30am Swan Hill

Sunday 3pm Sea Lake (Graduation Mass)

WEEKDAYS IN SWAN HILL

Tuesday: 11.30am St Mary's Swan Hill Final Mass

1.30pm Funeral Prayers Beryl Barry

Wed: 11am Funeral Mass for Frank Connellan

2pm Funeral Mass for Mary Kelly

Thurs: 1pm Funeral Mass for Pat Egan

(No Evening Mass or Confessions)

Friday: 10.30am

Saturday: **10am Confessions**, 10:30am Mass

NEXT WEEKEND 21ST DECEMBER

4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Saturday 6pm Swan Hill
Sunday 8.30am Culgoa
Sunday 10:30am Swan Hill

NOTICES

CONGRATULATIONS ON ANOTHER SCHOOL YEAR!
Many of our senior students have already finished for the year, and this coming week will see the rest of our staff and students finish up another School Year. Well done, and special congratulations to our graduates!



REVERSE ADVENT CALENDARS

Thank you for the beautiful response so far. If you haven't returned your box **could you please return them by this Monday** as we will deliver them to A Good Kitchen/St Vinnies for Christmas. Donations of items or money from anyone who would like to help but not fill a box are most welcome as we can make up boxes to be donated.



CHRISTMAS MASS TIMES 2025

Christmas Eve (Wednesday 24th)

4:30pm Sea Lake

7pm Swan Hill *(With Nativity Play)*

9:30pm Swan Hill

Christmas Day (Thursday 25th)

Swan Hill 10:30am

** Please note the change- there will no longer be a Christmas Day Mass in Quambatook*

CHILDREN'S NATIVITY PLAY

Will take place once again before the beginning of the 7pm Christmas Eve Mass, Swan Hill. If you would like your child to be part of it, please contact us and we can put you in touch with our coordinator Natasha Gerakis from St Mary's Swan Hill.

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

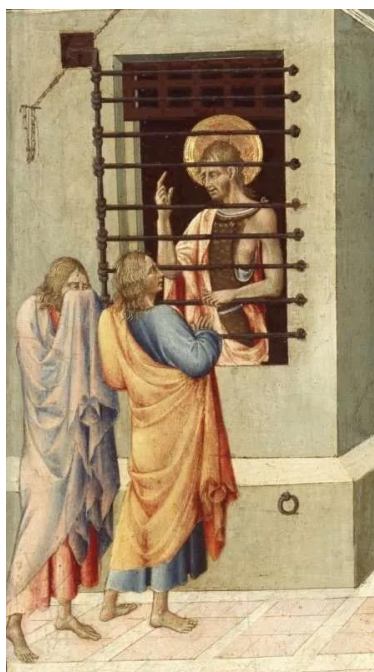
COLUMBAN CALENDARS & GOD'S WORD 2026

Are available from the Parish Office & after Masses-
Calendars are \$10 each and God's Words \$20.

RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS

- ❖ Stop and compliment someone when you're out.
- ❖ Make a card for an elderly neighbour.
- ❖ Think about Mary, the mother of Jesus. Tell her what is in your heart.
- ❖ Take a warm meal to someone who is hungry.
- ❖ Remind someone who is sad that God loves them
"Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God."

Isaiah 40:1



NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY

BY MARY COLOE PBVM

'Are you the one ... or must we wait?'

This year I moved into a newly renovated house and so had the joy of trying to establish a garden, of growing vegetables, and watching some of the more mature fruit trees change with the seasons. At present I see the figs and the pears beginning to take their shapes, even though they are a long way from ripe. Not only am I watching, but the birds too are periodically 'testing' this fruit – 'Is it ready yet'. The reading from James uses similar agricultural images to speak of the expectation that God is coming to us. In the early church this expectation was the certain sense that Jesus was soon to return to them in glory. We have lost this sense of urgency, but perhaps each Christmas we can enter into something of this expectation. If you are in a family, you can see the growing excitement of children as the decorations are put up and the tree is assembled. As children feel the excitement about presents and

celebrating Christmas, can we adults look deeper and share something of this excitement for GOD IS ALWAYS COMING. Of course to notice this we will need to take some time out from the busy-ness of our lives and just for five or ten minutes enter into stillness and discover there the One who is always coming to us. As James says, 'Do not lose heart, for the Lord's coming will be soon.' As soon as we can stop and welcome God.

John is now in prison and wonders about the things he hears of Jesus. John had proclaimed that the reign of God was close; now, he wonders, could it be possible that this miracle worker from Nazareth is the one Israel has been waiting for; could it be that he is the Messiah? Jesus answers John's question by pointing to his actions as sure signs that the reign of God has arrived – the blind see, the lame walk. These demonstrate that the power of God is at work. Jesus then makes a contrast between the dramatic presence of John and the 'least in the kingdom'. John stood out from the crowd in his attire, his strange way of life and in his powerful message. John is praised by Jesus as the greatest of the prophets and yet for all his greatness John had not perceived the reign of God in Jesus, he'd missed the signs. This is why the 'least in the kingdom' can be called greater than John. Those within the horizon of God's reign see and experience what John could only long for.

We belong to the group of those called 'the least'. We are living after the death and resurrection of Jesus and have this advantage over John. The reign of God has begun, the Spirit has been given, and we are now participants in God's reign. However, like John we can miss the miracle of God's presence. The signs are more delicate in our time, and in the busyness of our lives we may not even notice them. Like the people mentioned in the gospel, we may need to step aside, to 'go out into the wilderness' in order to see. Here, the message of the first reading offers great hope, for the wilderness will not be barren; risking quiet time alone will be fruitful. Advent invites us to be more perceptive, and to take time out to see the presence of God with us. The psalm today says, 'Look! Your God is coming to save you.' Look within your own life, your family, your workplace, your neighbourhood and recognise the sure signs of God's presence.

© Mary Coloe

READINGS NEXT WEEK:

4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT YR A

First Reading: Isaiah 7:10-14

Second Reading: Romans 1:1-7

Gospel: Matthew 1:18-24

FIRST READING *Isaiah 35:1-6, 10*

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

God himself will come and save us.

Let the wilderness and the dry-lands exult,

let the wasteland rejoice and bloom,

let it bring forth flowers like the jonquil,

let it rejoice and sing for joy.

The glory of Lebanon is bestowed on it,

the splendour of Carmel and Sharon;

they shall see the glory of the Lord,

the splendour of our God.

Strengthen all weary hands,

steady all trembling knees

and say to all faint hearts,

'Courage! Do not be afraid.

'Look, your God is coming,

vengeance is coming,

the retribution of God;

he is coming to save you.'

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,

the ears of the deaf unsealed,

then the lame shall leap like a deer

and the tongues of the dumb sing for joy,

for those the Lord has ransomed shall return.

They will come to Zion shouting for joy,

everlasting joy on their faces;

joy and gladness will go with them

and sorrow and lament be ended.

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

RESPONSORIAL PSALM *Ps 145:6-10. R. see Is 35:4*

(R.) Lord, come and save us.

It is the Lord who keeps faith for ever,

who is just to those who are oppressed.

It is he who gives bread to the hungry,

the Lord, who sets prisoners free.

It is the Lord who gives sight to the blind,

who raises up those who are bowed down,

the Lord, who protects the stranger

and upholds the widow and orphan.

It is the Lord who loves the just

but thwarts the path of the wicked.

The Lord will reign for ever,

Zion's God, from age to age. **(R.)**

SECOND READING *James 5:7-10*

A reading from the letter of St James

You also must be patient; do not lose heart, the Lord's coming will be soon.

Be patient, brothers, until the Lord's coming. Think of a farmer: how patiently he waits for the precious fruit of the ground until it has had the autumn rains and the spring rains!

You too have to be patient; do not lose heart, because the Lord's coming will be soon. Do not make complaints against one another, brothers, so as not to be brought to judgement yourselves; the Judge is already to be seen waiting at the gates. For your example, brothers, in submitting with patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. The Word of the Lord. *ALL: Thanks be to God.*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *Isaiah 61:1 (Lk 4:18)*

Alleluia, alleluia!

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me;

he sent me to bring Good News to the poor. Alleluia!

GOSPEL *Matthew 11:2-11*

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

Are you the one who is to come, or must we wait for someone else?

John in his prison had heard what Christ was doing and he sent his disciples to ask him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or have we got to wait for someone else?' Jesus answered, 'Go back and tell John what you hear and see; the blind see again, and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised to life and the Good News is proclaimed to the poor; and happy is the man who does not lose faith in me.'

As the messengers were leaving, Jesus began to talk to the people about John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swaying in the breeze? No? Then what did you go out to see? A man wearing fine clothes? Oh no, those who wear fine clothes are to be found in palaces. Then what did you go out for? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and much more than a prophet: he is the one of whom scripture says: Look, I am going to send my messenger before you; he will prepare your way before you. I tell you solemnly, of all the children born of women, a greater than John the Baptist has never been seen; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he is.'

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