



# Holy Family Parish Northeast Mallee

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*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 21<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 2025: 4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

### *THE HORROR OF BONDI: OUR PRAYERS FOR HEALING AND PEACE*

Last Sunday afternoon we witnessed some terrible scenes on the Bondi beach, when what was meant to be a fun and joyous celebration of the beginning of Hanukkah by the local Jewish community became a massacre. I was with a family for dinner when the news came on. At first it all seemed surreal, but once we realised the stark reality of what was going on we were stunned into silence. So many innocent lives taken, and so many others left wounded and scarred. It was horrible to see what hate can do; and we have to be clear here and name the antisemitism that drove this attack for what it was. The crowd was attacked simply for the very fact of being Jewish. Such hate is truly awful. Imagine if we were attacked simply for being Christians celebrating Christmas? There should be no place for such hate in our hearts. As the news unfolded we were heartened to see some footage of the many heroes emerge; courageous people who stood up to the shooters and tried to disarm them. Sadly we now learn that a number of them did not survive, and yet their selfless courage still stands as a glimmer of light in the midst of the darkness. Speaking of light in darkness, of the many interviews I have seen, one moment stood out. Hanukkah is a festival of light, centred on the lighting of candles over nine days. One of the victims who had been in the thick of the horror was speaking with a journalist. As they were finishing the interview, he held up to the camera his Hannukah candles, with the promise he was going to go home and light them. Hate was not going to win. Light was going to shine through the darkness.

His was a powerful response, and begs the question; how can we also respond as people of faith? Firstly, we need to pray. We should pray for the victims and for all the courageous bystanders and responders who ran towards danger or who were caught up in the horror. We should pray for their families and loved ones and for the whole Jewish community. And we should pray for our nation too, that hate should be erased and that hearts will be healed so that we can live in peace. Our prayer should also lead us to acts of love, to do what we are called to do and be people of peace. A friend of mine is choir director at the Bondi Catholic Parish. He gathered a few friends and went down to the beach on Tuesday night so they could offer what they could; their voices. They found a group of young Jews already praying and keeping Vigil there, and after speaking with the Rabbi, they sang for them. A simple act that lasted no more than ten minutes, but a moving act of unity, compassion and love. We may not live so close to Bondi, but we can offer our own acts of love wherever we are. They may seem tiny, but we can never know their flow on effect. It is also a stark reminder for us of our need for Christ. This broken world needs God's mercy and healing. We heard the story of Joseph's dream today, when the angel of God revealed to Joseph just who Mary's child was to be. He was to be called Jesus, a name which means 'God saves', "because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins." Another interpretation has the name meaning something like a 'cry for help'. Both speak to the truth that Jesus comes to meet us in our brokenness to bring his healing and to make us whole. He comes as Light to drive away darkness. He comes as merciful Saviour to break the shackles of sin and death. And let's not forget that this Mission of Peace meant much suffering for Christ. He was born in poverty, and even from the earliest days he faced rejection and persecution. I think this is important. God does not simply extend mercy and forgiveness from above, he comes to meet us in our brokenness and shares in our suffering. We encounter his mercy as he stands alongside of us. If it was merely from above, we might confuse it for simple tolerance, but because he has suffered alongside of us we know his mercy for what it truly is; deep heart-felt compassion and unconditional love. Let's turn to Christ for him to heal our hearts. Let's follow his example of compassion and share in the hurt of those around us so that we can be living instruments of his Peace. The world needs him, and we are his witnesses. Share the Light!

#### **Parish Contact Details:**

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**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+**

**ANNIVERSARIES OF DEATH**

Maggie Stacey, Brian Hogan, Charlie Taverna, Ada Noble, Troy D'Orsa, Shirley Vains, George Dawes, Molly Curran, Mary Robbins, Robert O'Meara, Patricia Mikes, Geoffery Johnston, Alice Shanahan, Christopher Powell, Jim Romeo, Eileen Watson, Marie Ewart, Alexander Irwin, Catherine Spry, Anthony (Tony) Caruana, George Livingston, Margaret Cleary, Paolo Peluso Nicholas Bruton, Connie Isgro, Monica Livingston, Sr Joan D'Orsa

**SICK LIST**

Shane Ryan, 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 21<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER  
4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

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

**WEEKDAYS IN SWAN HILL**

Tuesday: 5.30pm

**Wed 24<sup>th</sup> Christmas Eve:**

**Sea Lake 4:30pm, Swan Hill 7pm & 9:30pm**

**Thurs 25<sup>th</sup> Christmas Day:**

**Swan Hill 10:30am**

Friday: No Mass

**NEXT WEEKEND 28<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER**

**FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY**

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

**NOTICES**



**REVERSE ADVENT CALENDARS**

Thank you for your beautiful response and generosity, we have been able to donate 63 boxes to Swan Hill, 2 boxes to Sea Lake and 5 boxes to families in Kerang. Also a thank you to the wonderful team who helped complete the filling of boxes.

**COLUMBAN CALENDARS & GOD'S WORD**

There are still a few available from the Parish Office & after Masses- Calendars \$10 each, God's Word \$20.



**BISHOP'S CHRISTMAS COLLECTION**

The annual Bishop's Christmas Appeal will be taken up once again as a leaving collection at our Christmas Masses. This collection is taken up across the Diocese and then distributed to various charities both internationally and locally, including Caritas, Catholic Mission, Columban Mission's "Shared Table" project in Peru and the St Vincent de Paul Society, as well as a number of other charities. The total distributed last year was \$49,000.

**FR JAMES SABBATICAL**

**(29<sup>TH</sup> DEC 2025- 2<sup>ND</sup> APRIL 2026)**

I will be heading to Rome after Christmas for 3 months Sabbatical leave, returning just in time for Easter. Ballarat will be organising our priest supplies for the weekends. Fr Matthew Thomas and his assistants in Sunraysia will be covering our school

**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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:Principal@mackillopsh.vic.edu.au)

liturgies and funeral needs during the weekdays. They have also generously committed to offering Masses on Thursday evenings and Friday mornings.

#### **ANOINTING OF THE SICK WHILE I AM AWAY**

*When it comes to asking for the Anointing of the sick, please 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. Please don't delay, or you may miss the opportunity.

#### **YOUR HELP PLEASE- BEDS 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. If we have a few volunteers we can share the load. Please leave a message with the Office so Glenda can coordinate.

#### **RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS**

- ❖ Spend the evening with your family, turn off your devices and play a board game or a family activity .
  - ❖ Think of your own kindness act and do it.
  - ❖ Drop a festive treat into your local police or ambulance station.
- ❖ Say Merry Christmas to someone down the street
  - ❖ Go outside and thank God for nature. Look at the beauty around you. *(Let all your works give you thanks, O Lord. Psalm 145:10)*

#### **NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY BY MARY COLOE PBVM**

##### ***'Joseph, do not be afraid.'***

In this final Sunday before Christmas, the readings take us back into Jesus' origins in Israel. Paul reminds the Romans of Israel's long time of living with hope in God's promises. Over the past three weeks we have heard in the First Readings from the prophet Isaiah's catalogue of these promises: *'In the days to come the mountain of the Temple of the Lord shall tower above the other mountains... All the nations will stream to it.'* (1st Sunday of Advent); *'A shoot springs from the stock of Jesse, and a branch thrusts from his roots; on him the spirit of the Lord rests.'* (2nd Sunday) *'The wilderness and dry-lands exult; let the wasteland rejoice and bloom. Look your God is coming.'* (3rd Sunday) *'The Lord will give you a sign. The young woman is with child and will soon give birth to a son.'* (Today – 4th Sunday).

Paul proclaims to the community in Rome that these promises have now been fulfilled – that Jesus is the one from the stock of Jesse, the one on whom the Spirit rests, and that Paul is the one sent to proclaim this good news to all the nations. Paul speaks of Jesus as a son of David, and son of God. For many years, we have so emphasised Jesus as the son of God that we overlooked that he was also the son and child of Judaism. For both Paul and Matthew Judaism is a great gift of God to humanity and through the Jewish people God's blessing is to reach out to all the nations. God's covenant with Judaism has never been revoked, even though we consider Jesus as the fullness of God's revelation. In a few days' time we will celebrate the birth of a Jewish child, born of Jewish parents, and through this child God comes to us.

The birth of Jesus in Luke's Gospel focuses on Mary; in Matthew's Gospel the focus is on Joseph. It is through Joseph that Jesus comes into the House of David. It is Joseph who receives an annunciation that the child has been conceived through the power of the Holy Spirit. In Israel's past history there was a Joseph, famous for his coat of many colours, who had strange dreams, who looked after his family, and even went down into Egypt, which is where Joseph will later take Mary and Jesus. In the story of that Joseph, Matthew has found a model for how to present Mary's husband. This is typical of Jewish methods of teaching. Here again we have Matthew shaping the birth narrative to bring out the connection between the story of Jesus and the story of Israel. Remember, Matthew is writing for a community who have come to faith in Jesus through Judaism, so they would know the biblical stories of Joseph and make the connection. The quotation from Isaiah makes this even more explicit – Jesus is Emmanuel, God-with-us, and he is the one to fulfil Israel's longings.

Jesus begins his life as do many children, in the midst of anxiety, hope and much that is unknown. The future lies hidden from Joseph, as the future of any child lies hidden from its parents. Joseph trusts this future into God's hands. Perhaps this is the image we adults need at Christmas. When we look at the crib scenes of the child resting peacefully in a manger, or the arms of Mary, dare we believe that even as adults we can rest as peacefully in the arms of God? Adult and child are one in this divine birth of Emmanuel, God-with-us.

#### **READINGS NEXT WEEK**

##### **FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY**

First Reading: Sirach 3:2-6. 12-14

Second Reading: Colossians 3:12-21

Gospel: Matthew 2:13-15. 19-23

**FIRST READING** *Isaiah 7:10-14*

*A reading from the prophet Isaiah*

*The virgin will conceive.*

The Lord spoke to Ahaz and said, 'Ask the Lord your God for a sign for yourself coming either from the depths of Sheol or from the heights above.' 'No', Ahaz answered 'I will not put the Lord to the test.'

Then Isaiah said:

'Listen now, House of David:

are you not satisfied with trying the patience of men without trying the patience of my God, too?

The Lord himself, therefore, will give you a sign.

It is this: the maiden is with child

and will soon give birth to a son

whom she will call Immanuel,

a name which means "God-is-with-us".'

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

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM** *Ps 23:1-6. R. see vv 7. 10*

**(R.) Let the Lord enter; he is king of glory.**

The Lord's is the earth and its fullness,  
the world and all its peoples.

It is he who set it on the seas;  
on the waters he made it firm.

Who shall climb the mountain of the Lord?

Who shall stand in his holy place?

The man with clean hands and pure heart,  
who desires not worthless things.

He shall receive blessings from the Lord  
and reward from the God who saves him.

Such are the men who seek him,  
seek the face of the God of Jacob. **(R.)**

**SECOND READING** *Romans 1:1-7*

*A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans*

*Jesus Christ, a descendant of David, is the Son of God.*

From Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus who has been called to be an apostle and specially chosen to preach the Good News that God promised long ago through his prophets in the scriptures.

This news is about the Son of God, who, according to the human nature he took, was a descendant of David: it is about Jesus Christ our Lord who, in the order of the spirit, the spirit of holiness that was in him, was proclaimed Son of God in all his power through his resurrection from the

dead. Through him we received grace and our apostolic mission to preach the obedience of faith to all pagan nations in honour of his name. You are one of these nations, and by his call belong to Jesus Christ. To you all, then, who are God's beloved in Rome, called to be saints, may God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ send grace and peace.

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

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION** *Matthew 1:23*

Alleluia, alleluia!

A virgin will give birth to a son;

his name will be Emmanuel: God is with us.

Alleluia!

**GOSPEL** *Matthew 1:18-24*

*A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew*

*Jesus was born of Mary, the betrothed of Joseph, a son of David.*

This is how Jesus Christ came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a man of honour and wanting to spare her publicity, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins.' Now all this took place to fulfil the words spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son

and they will call him Emmanuel,

a name which means 'God-is-with-us'. When Joseph woke up he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do: he took his wife to his home.

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

