



# Holy Family Parish Northeast Mallee

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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 7<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2025: 2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT

### *"A SHOOT SPRINGS FROM THE STOCK OF JESSE"*

Firstly, a bit of background to the book of Isaiah. It covers the period of the conquest and collapse of the Kingdom of Israel at the hands of the Babylonians. Jerusalem is ruined and its walls torn down. The people are driven from their land; taken as captives into exile and dispersed among far off lands. They are absolutely decimated. The line of Davidic Kings they had trusted in for strength and protection have utterly failed them; the last of them, King Zedekiah, has watched his own sons executed before he is blinded and led into captivity. Once proud and mighty, the Tree of Jesse has been cut down right to the root. Picture it as a pathetic looking stump in the midst of a scene of destruction and death... it would seem all hope is lost...



And now we have the scene properly set, we are actually ready for Isaiah's prophecy. 'A Shoot springs from the Stock of Jesse, a scion thrusts from his roots...' In the midst of all this darkness and despair, a new hope arises, a tiny little green shoot ready to bud. A descendent of David is born, and He will be filled with the Spirit's Power. When everything has been destruction, war, injustice... He will bring truth, justice and everlasting Peace. Don't you just love the imagery

Isaiah uses? *"the lion will lay down with the lamb"*... this new Peace will be something much greater than just the patching up of differences or reconciliation between friends. No, it is something much, much deeper, reaching right down into our nature and transforming us from within. It is a complete restoration to the Peace God had originally planned for us, a total re-creation. We creatures and children of our Creator were not made to be enemies. It is only sin that has made things so. This new Son of David is going to restore us into that true and deep Peace for which we were created; there will be no room for enmity or conflict; the wolf is at peace with the lamb, the cub with the calf, the infant child with the snake... that last image is a striking one isn't it? The child dances over the snakes' lair and reaches their hand down into the hole without any fear or hurt. I've heard it said that a fear of snakes is one of the very few truly instinctual reactions that all humans share. We learn to be afraid of dogs and other beasts who may harm us, but the fear of snakes is imbedded deep within and does not need to be taught. That is a powerful image then isn't it? Even our deepest fears and hurts are touched and healed by this new era of Peace. Our very deepest wounds are soothed and we are made whole again. Of course, the image of the serpent also reminds us of the story of the Fall- that story is now reversed. Sin no longer has any power over us. This new Son of David will break its power and smash its chains. All we will know is his perfect Peace.

It is a powerful message of hope isn't it? Jesus is that new branch. His birth is the beginning of this new era of peace. But just as it takes time for a branch to grow to full maturity, so too it will take time for his work of restoration to be fully realised. But just as the small shoot brings hope for new life, so too we can already see so many signs of the work he has already done, the Peace he has already won for us. Advent is a time for us to renew our hope in the even greater works of healing and restoration he is still to complete. Come Lord Jesus, Come Emmanuel! Come into our hearts, come into our world, heal us and fill us with your Peace!

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

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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+**

Pat Egan

**ANNIVERSARIES OF DEATH**

Des McDonald, Josie Caccavello, Bernie Ryan  
Mary Kelly, Luigi Fedele, Desmond Jones  
Reginald Byrne, Eliza Driscoll, Tony Campinelli  
Thomas Irwin, James Stewart, Lawrence Turner  
Tom Murphy, Caterina Bonanno, Norma Ryan  
Frank Raudino, Anthony Hooper, Faye Nolan  
Mary Elliott, Giovanni Russo  
Vince Pellegrino, Vera Schlitz, Jack Cook

**SICK LIST**

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

**THIS WEEKEND 7<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER  
2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

Saturday 6pm Swan Hill

**Sea Lake 8.30am CANCELLED**

Sunday 10:30am Swan Hill

**Sunday 5pm Nandaly (Special for end of year)**

**WEEKDAYS IN SWAN HILL**

Monday: 10:30am Funeral Shane O'Loughlan  
**6pm MASS Feast Immaculate Conception**

Tuesday: 10.30am

Wednesday: 10.30am

Thurs: Confessions 5pm, Mass 5.30pm, Adoration

Friday: 10.30am

Saturday: 10am Confessions, 10:30am Mass

**NEXT WEEKEND 14<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER  
3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

Saturday 6pm Swan Hill

Sunday 8.30am Quambatook

Sunday 10:30am Swan Hill

**Sunday 3pm Sea Lake (Graduation Mass)**

**NOTICES**

**SUNDAY CUPPA AFTER MASS**

This Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> December there will be an extra special Christmas Morning Tea after the 10.30am Mass in Swan Hill to celebrate another year coming to a close. A SMALL PLATE to share would be appreciated. All welcome



**REVERSE ADVENT CALENDARS**

Thank you for the beautiful response so far. Empty Reverse Advent Calendars are still available from the parish office or after Masses this weekend. Return date is next weekend (14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> Dec) when we will deliver them to A Good Kitchen/St Vinnies for Christmas. A suggestion list of items to go in the boxes is available. 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. These can be left at the Parish Office Tuesdays or Fridays between 10.30 and 2pm.



**CHRISTMAS MASS TIMES 2025**

**Christmas Eve (Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup>)**

4:30pm Sea Lake

7pm Swan Hill (With Nativity Play)

9:30pm Swan Hill

**Christmas Day (Thursday 25<sup>th</sup>)**

Quambatook 8:30am

Swan Hill 10:30am

**COLUMBAN CALENDARS & GOD'S WORD 2026**

Are available from the Parish Office & after Masses- Calendars are \$10 each and God's Words \$20. Also, Religious Christmas Cards, \$10 per pack.

**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)

## PRE-MARRIAGE CATECHESIS DAY

Next Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> December we will be hosting a Pre-Marriage Catechesis for some of our young adults in the Parish. It will be run by Dr Gerard O'Shea. If you are engaged or are also considering sacramental marriage sometime in the near future, perhaps you may like to join for the afternoon as well? If so, just see Fr James. Prayers for our young people would also be greatly appreciated.

## FR JAMES SABBATICAL LEAVE

A few months ago I gave notice of my upcoming Sabbatical leave; it seemed so far away then but is now very almost here! If you missed the initial announcement; I will be heading to Rome after Christmas for 3 months, 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.

I am very grateful to my brother priests and am conscious of the extra burden this 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. *If I could just make one suggestion then; 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.

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.

## GOSPEL REFLECTION BY GREG SUNTER

When John the Baptist performed baptism it was for the forgiveness of sin. The baptism he gave was a community that is the case today. John had two key words that he is recorded as preaching: repent and prepare. His call for repentance was a call to turn away from sin; a call to have a change of heart; a call to turn one's life around and make a fresh start. His call for preparation is in the long line of prophets that includes the great prophet Isaiah from whom we take today's first reading. All of the prophets urged the people towards hope in the future. Isaiah and others spoke specifically of a person – a Messiah – who would bring that hope to reality. But the tradition demanded a readiness for the Messiah and that was the call to preparation that John the Baptist echoed at the beginning of the public life of Jesus. John's taunting of the Pharisees and Sadducees is an indication of this need for preparation and readiness. He accuses them of being too confident of their own rightness. He demands proof from them of their honest repentance: 'but if you are repentant, produce the appropriate fruit'. Rather, he suspects that they think that salvation is assured for them by virtue of being a Jew, a son of Abraham. He warns them that an axe hangs poised to cut down any part of the Jewish tradition that is failing to produce good fruit. This is a theme that is picked up later by Jesus himself; you can't be complacent about your own position; you have to welcome the new truth revealed by Jesus and give yourself wholeheartedly to God.

## LIVING THE GOSPEL – PREPARE YE!

John the Baptist's call to 'Prepare the way of the Lord' is a summary of the purpose of the season of Advent. Every year, as we celebrate the Nativity, we celebrate once again the presence of God in our world. God became incarnate in the world through Jesus but also always was and continues to be incarnate in the world through each person. If we are to accept this reality and live it out, we need to remind ourselves this Advent to prepare the way for the Lord to be present in and through us every day of our lives.

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## RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS

- ❖ Smile and say hello to everyone you meet today.
- ❖ Check in on your neighbours
- ❖ Say a Hail Mary to our Blessed Mother
- ❖ Leave your coin in the shopping trolley for the next shopper
- ❖ Who can you cheer up today (*The Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces. Isaiah 25:8*)

**FIRST READING** *Isaiah 11:1-10*

*A reading from the prophet Isaiah*

*He judges the poor with justice.*

A shoot springs from the stock of Jesse, a scion thrusts from his roots: on him the spirit of the Lord rests, a spirit of wisdom and insight, a spirit of counsel and power, a spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

(The fear of the Lord is his breath.)

He does not judge by appearances, he gives no verdict on hearsay, but judges the wretched with integrity, and with equity gives a verdict for the poor of the land.

His word is a rod that strikes the ruthless, his sentences bring death to the wicked.

Integrity is the loincloth round his waist, faithfulness the belt about his hips.

The wolf lives with the lamb, the panther lies down with the kid, calf and lion cub feed together with a little boy to lead them. The cow and the bear make friends, their young lie down together. The lion eats straw like the ox.

The infant plays over the cobra's hole; into the viper's lair the young child puts his hand.

They do no hurt, no harm, on all my holy mountain, for the country is filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters swell the sea.

That day, the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples. It will be sought out by the nations and its home will be glorious.

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

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM** Ps 71:1-2. 7-8. 12-13. 17. R. cf. v.7

**(R.) Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever.**

O God, give your judgement to the king,  
to a king's son your justice,  
that he may judge your people in justice  
and your poor in right judgement.

In his days justice shall flourish  
and peace till the moon fails.

He shall rule from sea to sea,  
from the Great River to the earth's bounds.

For he shall save the poor when they cry  
and the needy who are helpless.

He will have pity on the weak  
and save the lives of the poor.

May his name be blessed for ever  
and endure like the sun.

Every tribe shall be blessed in him,  
all nations bless his name. **(R.)**

**SECOND READING** *Romans 15:4-9*

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

*Christ, the hope of all people.*

Everything that was written long ago in the scriptures was meant to teach us something about hope from the examples scripture gives of how people who did not give up were helped by God. And may he who helps us when we refuse to give up, help you all to be tolerant with each other, following the example of Christ Jesus, so that united in mind and voice you may give glory to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It can only be to God's glory, then, for you to treat each other in the same friendly way as Christ treated you. The reason Christ became the servant of circumcised Jews was not only so that God could faithfully carry out the promises made to the patriarchs, it was also to get the pagans to give glory to God for his mercy, as scripture says in one place: For this I shall praise you among the pagans and sing your name.

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** *Matthew 3:1-12*

*A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew*  
*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.*

In due course John the Baptist appeared; he preached in the wilderness of Judaea and this was his message: 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.' This was the man the prophet Isaiah spoke of when he said:

A voice cries in the wilderness:

*Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight.*

This man John wore a garment made of camel-hair with a leather belt round his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem and all Judaea and the whole Jordan district made their way to him, and as they were baptised by him in the river Jordan they confessed their sins. But when he saw a number of Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism he said to them, 'Brood of vipers, who warned you to fly from the retribution that is coming? But if you are repentant, produce the appropriate fruit, and do not presume to tell yourselves, "We have Abraham for our father," because, I tell you, God can raise children for Abraham from these stones. Even now the axe is laid to the roots of the trees, so that any tree which fails to produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown on the fire. I baptise you in water for repentance, but the one who follows me is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to carry his sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fan is in his hand; he will clear his threshing-floor and gather his wheat into the barn; but the chaff he will burn in a fire that will never go out.'

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