



**St John
Vianney**
Parish Morisset



THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT YEAR B 17 DECEMBER 2023

In today's Gospel, John the Baptist invites the people to make a peaceful world of harmony and sharing. He told them to be honest and fair and also satisfied with what they have.

In a world of nuclear warheads, we need peace and harmony. In a world where politics, power and position seem to rule, we need to be honest and fair and willing to share. And, instead of being driven by greed and an unending quest for "more," we need to be happy with what we have

Without the witness of Christians, the face of Christ, already blurred, will continue to fade from our world. The task is not for the individual Christian only, but for the Christian community as a whole. It is easier to witness to Christ as a member of a supportive community



We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, the Awabakal People who, long before us lived, loved, educated and raised their children on this Country. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and we recognise the young people who are our future. We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in our communities. We respect their deep physical and spiritual connections to Country through their stories, traditions and living cultures.

PARISH LEADERSHIP TEAM: Uta France
John France

PRIEST SUPERVISOR: Fr Joseph Figuardo
SACRAMENTAL PRIEST: Fr John Purnell

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL: Juliet Hutchins
Mal Melvey
Pam Melvey
Kerry Lendon
Rod Hay

PARISH SECRETARY: Rosanna Suckling

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Morisset Parish Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/stjvparish>
Morisset Parish Instagram : https://www.instagram.com/stjvparish_morisset/
Morisset Parish Bulletin Items: morparish@mn.catholic.org.au
(Please submit all Bulletin Notice requests to the parish office by 2pm Wednesdays)

Email the Parish Office to Subscribe for an Electronic Bulletin .

UPCOMING WORSHIP TIMES :

Saturday	16th December 5pm Family Mass—Morisset
Sunday	17th December 9.30am Mass—Morisset
Saturday	23rd December 5pm Mass—Cooranbong
Sunday	24th December 9.30am Mass—Morisset
Sunday	24th December 6pm Christmas Eve Mass Morisset Showground
Monday	25th December 9.30am Christmas Day Mass Morisset Church
Saturday	30th December 5pm Mass—Cooranbong
Sunday	31st December 9.30am Mass—Morisset
Saturday	6th January 5pm —Morisset
Sunday	7th January 9.30am Morisset
Saturday	13th January 5pm Mass—Cooranbong
Sunday	14th January 9.30am Mass—Morisset

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Reflection for Third Sunday of Advent Year B — 17th December 2023

Today—the third Sunday of Advent—is traditionally known as Gaudete Sunday, from the Latin word for ‘rejoice’. The joy and happiness in the Lord that we celebrate today is symbolized by lighting a rose candle on the Advent Lantern Stand. Joy should be the normal experience of the Christian, but there are some who unfortunately do not have that experience.

There is much wisdom in God’s Word today, as we learn to think and act in alignment with God’s plan, rather than in blind pursuit of personal security, prosperity, and wellbeing. Isaiah challenges us, using poetic metaphors, to change and for conversion. ‘Let every valley be filled in, and every mountain and hill be laid low.’

Martin Luther King Jr used the words of Isaiah in his famous ‘*I Have a Dream*’ speech. He was in line with the prophetic tradition in calling for the dismantling of systemic racial injustice, and the creation of an inclusive society.

In today’s Gospel, John the Baptist invites the people to make a peaceful world of harmony and sharing. He told them to be honest and fair and satisfied with what they have. The end of the year 2023, is very quickly coming to a close, and Christmas is just around the corner. As we approach Christmas, we have lots of hopes and expectations. The coming of Christ at Christmas means that Christians are called to make a difference in our world. We are invited to look forward to the coming of Jesus in a special and intimate way, into our hearts and into our families.

Our lives are filled with contradictions, as we try both to celebrate the season and to be patient as Christmas approaches. Understandably, we can be overwhelmed by the degree of violence that many are forced to tolerate across the world. Jesus reminds us that to live as Christians we need to depend on each other for support, hospitality, and kindness. He challenges us to stick together.

Pope Francis has been leading the whole Church in this direction and many find it a bumpy road. It is a direction away from clericalism to service, from self-reference to openness, from splendour to simplicity, from triumphalism to humility, from a siege mentality to engagement, from safeguarding our privileges, to learning to be vulnerable in order to convey God’s compassion, to those who are on the edges of society and Church.

So let us pray today for the courage, to carry out the Lord’s instructions, to the best of our ability. -John France.

Farewell Fr Priyantha

Fr Priyantha Fernando, who has been helping us in our parish over the last year, has been appointed as Assistant Priest, assisting Fr George Anthicad in the six parishes of the Maitland area, effective 31 January 2024 until further notice. As soon as Fr Priyantha’s final weekend with us is confirmed, a ‘Cuppa’ to say farewell will be held after Mass.

Office Closed

The Parish Office will be closed between Christmas and the New Year. (23rd December-1st January)-The Office will reopen Tuesday 2nd January 2024

Although the Parish Office will be closed, the Parish Phone will be diverted, and all calls will be answered.

No Liturgies-School Holidays

There will be no Tuesday Liturgy of the Word during the School Holidays. Liturgy will recommence on Tuesday 30th January.

Christmas Reconciliation

On Thursday Evening 21st December at 7pm, the Parish will have the opportunity to participate with Fr John Purnell and Fr Priyantha Fernando, in a Christmas Liturgy of Reconciliation in the Morisset Church.

The primary function of any Christian Community is to be a group of people who accept others and help others accept themselves. The Christian church is called by God to be a community in which mutual acceptance and forgiveness is a reality.

Christmas

As you are probably aware Christmas Eve 2023 is on Sunday 24th December.

Mass Times 23/24/25. December

Saturday 23rd December Vigil Mass 5pm Cooranbong. Church
Sunday 24th December Mass 9.30am Morisset. Church.

Sunday 24th (Christmas Eve) Mass 6pm Morisset Showground.
Monday 25th (Christmas Day) Mass 9.30am. Morisset Church.

Fr Priyantha Fernando will be with us at Morisset 23/24/25 December.

Christmas Eve Seating at the Morisset Showground

Some seating will be available, but to ensure that you have a seat, it would be advisable that you bring your own.

CHRISTMAS EVE WORKING BEE

Thank you to everyone who volunteered to help set up the Morisset Showground for our Christmas Eve Mass. A working bee to help arrange the chairs and stage etc will be held on Sunday 24th December at 12 midday.

People involved in the Liturgical Ministries at Christmas will be contacted shortly. Fr Priyantha Fernando will be with us at Morisset 23/24/25 December.

Cooranbong Cemetery- Response from Council.

As mentioned last week/end, our private Cooranbong cemetery has evolved into a public thoroughfare to the Cooranbong Sporting Complex.

Council was approached four months ago, to see if it would consider making a southern pedestrian access to the new Sporting Complex, outside of the Church/Cemetery boundary off Babers Rd.

After four months, the response from Council was, that it would be reviewing the matter in the coming six weeks.

Well surprise, surprise! Council has excelled! It has responded to our request before Christmas! Although the response is very disappointing!

Included for your information is an extract from rather long Lake Macs response to the request.

Good afternoon,

Thank you for your request in relation to installing a footpath off Babers Road to Cooranbong Park, Cooranbong.

Although Babers Road is included in the Cooranbong PPN assessments, against other priority networks throughout the city, it has been identified that it is unlikely to be included in Council's four-year Delivery Program for some time.

No road projects are identified along this section of Babers Road in Council's four-year Delivery Program.

Kind regards

Ella MacGregor

Some Points to Ponder.

Traditions have always been an important dimension of celebrating faith. Each age is a time of special grace, including our age of high technology.

Did you Know?

Church.- The first Christian communities were called gatherings or assemblies (in Greek, *ekklesia*). So, a church was a gathering of those who were baptised. The Church is the whole body of Christians who follow Jesus in the way they live, worship, and express their faith. The building where Christians gather to worship is also called a church.

Ciborium- In the liturgy it is the vessel in which the small hosts of Blessed Sacrament, are kept for Holy Communion.

Christmas- (Old English-*Christes mæsse*, the Mass of Christ) The feast that celebrates the birth of Jesus. The Christian Church placed the feast on 25th December, a date chosen to replace the pagan feast of the Roman sun god, Sol Invictus.

FAITH MATTERS: Staying awake to the murmuration of hope

During the first week of Advent in this liturgical cycle scripture encourages us to stay awake and to be alert to everything in the present and into the future. It is also the week that places an emphasis on hope with the lighting of the prophecy candle to remind us that God will fulfil his promise through the birth of Jesus.

ROSEMARY MCALLISTER PUBLISHED DECEMBER 05, 2023

For most people, at this time of the year, they experience great anticipation and joy knowing their families and friends will come together to celebrate Christmas. But the reality is for many people this is not the most hope filled time of the year, as individuals and families can suffer both financially and emotionally.

Having recently been in conversations about missionary discipleship, I was struck by a story of the American circus Barnum & Bailey, who a number of years ago, was home to several Catholics. They saw this as an opportunity to not only share their circus trained skills but also provide pastoral care to those who remain on the fringes of society. They would transform one of the trailers into a sacred space for their circus family when there was no local church service to attend while travelling. Another story was of a school principal who financially supported one of his students when the single mother of eight could not afford to raise the child. Yet another story of a journey with a RCIA candidate, meeting when and where they are in life and allowing them to be ready in their own time, instead of following a weekly timetable program.

Staying awake to being missionary does not exist only within the confines of a church setting. Being missionary can involve having a listening ear so situations and stories can be shared, being patient, letting the waiting car into the traffic line, offering someone a car park, inviting in a stranger to share a meal, paying for someone's coffee, reaching out to your neighbours or someone you have lost contact with or saying hello to someone you don't know.

These acts then become the ordinary, not the extraordinary patterns in society. Working side by side will emerge to bring forth a hope filled world.

Recently I have come to learn more about the phenomenon of murmuration. The term refers to a special kind of flock of birds, commonly the starling and is named after the sound of a low murmur it makes from thousands of wingbeats and soft flight calls. Perhaps murmuration is a metaphor for our future journey as we can learn a lot from how they exist. They are uniquely attuned to weather patterns and thermals; this protects them and prepares them as they come to roost for the night. The

swirling together in this skydance protects them from predators and they never collide even in the darkened sky. They are interconnected with other natural systems such as crystals forming, avalanches, metals becoming magnetised and liquids turning into gasses. Each starling is connected to every other starling. There is a space between every bird no matter how much they swarm. Scientists maintain that they keep track of seven bird neighbours and continue to adjust. They do not devolve into chaos because they all ride the thermals together and are attuned to the direction, even as it keeps changing and they find their resting place to sleep, together.

Murmuration offers us an image of staying awake and being alert to each other. Hundreds of starlings fly together in an amazing, whirling wingbeat in spectacular balletic sky dance. They are intimately connected and change at a moment's notice, totally coordinated that involves those in the front and those at the back. Ruben A. Alez wrote, "Hope is hearing the melody of the future; faith is dancing to it today."

As we travel through Advent to Christmas and beyond, we can learn much from the starlings, to work together and care for one another. When we can stay awake, acknowledge, and see others around us the scales of justice can start to be balanced so all can feel valued, dignity and worth.

Joan Chittister writes, "The real gift of Christmas, for which Advent is the process, is learning to hum hope and learning to dance the divine."

Bringing our Year to the Child Jesus

If you are like me, the sight of Advent wreaths and Christmas trees, lights, and nativity scenes, as well as the sounds of Christmas carols begin to fill you with a sense of hope and joy.

BISHOP MICHAEL KENNEDY PUBLISHED DECEMBER 02, 2023

While Christmas may not be our holiest day of the year, it is often our most joyful. For the birth of the child Jesus – the Son of God born in human flesh – expresses most tenderly the love that God has for us, his closeness to us, and his desire that we draw closer to him and to one another.

Read the full story at: <https://mnnews.today/aurora/december-2023/57704-bringing-our-year-to-the-child-jesus/>

Christmas 2023: God is with us

"May our contemplation of the Christ child this Christmas fill our hearts and souls with hope, peace and joy because we know that God is with us. God bless you all and Happy Christmas."

Listen to Bishop Michael Kennedy's Christmas message in the video at: <https://youtu.be/jnZ6A-35mcl?si=lwDN1Q0lIfgk4SqQ>

Voice of the Spirit

To access the latest Catholic Charismatic Renewal Newsletter, visit: www.mn.catholic.org.au/media/6739/novvos2023e.pdf

There are also two events to Save the Date for. CCR Leadership Day – Saturday 3 February 2024 and CCR NSW Conference – 7 to 8 September 2024.

2024 – Lenten Reflection – Transformation through Revelation

During the season of Lent, we are called to look deeply at the human condition, just as Jesus, the Son of God, experienced. We are reminded during this time of hardship, suffering, and ultimately dying that we must stretch ourselves. We must pray and fast from whatever is taking hold of the fullness of life. This time calls for personal reflection and encourages us to look out with missionary eyes to intentionally give to those in need.

To access our Diocesan Resource, Transformation Through Revelation, please visit <https://www.mn.catholic.org.au/media/6680/0003733-dio-2024-lenten-program-06.pdf>

SUPPORTING THE CLERGY / 1st Collection

If you would like to make contributions to support the Clergy / 1st Collection please do so at Mass in the BLUE bucket or electronically using the Online Payments button on the Parish Website Home page, Diocese App, Bank Account Name: CCF BSB: 062815 No: 00328161 Ref: 5016 1st Collection or set up a direct debit contact the parish office for this option.

SUPPORTING OUR PARISH / 2nd Collection

If you would like to make contributions to support our Parish please do so at Mass via the RED bucket or deposit directly into the Parish Account our details are: Account Name: CCF BSB:062815 Account Number: 00328161 one of the following Payment References are required by CCF for all deposits: 5004 or 5004 + SURNAME or 5004 + PG + your Giver Number, or 5004 + PG + SURNAME, or you can use the Online Payments button on the Parish Website Home page or the Diocese App. If you are considering taking up **planned giving** you may like to know that **a percentage of the contributions are tax deductible**. If you would like to know more or set up planned giving please contact the Parish Office.

WEEKEND ROSTERS			
		<u>THIS WEEK</u>	<u>NEXT WEEK</u>
<u>PRESIDERS</u>	5PM 9.30AM	Mass Mass	Mass Mass
<u>PROCLAIMERS:</u>	5PM 9.30AM	P Robertson M Shamley	L Hutchinson P Melvey
<u>PSALMIST:</u>	5PM 9.30AM	M Lawrence J Vipan	K Lendon J France
<u>GIFTS</u>	5PM 9.30AM	A Dussin K Lendon H White M Fowler	P Herbert H White J Vipan K Amon
<u>SERVERS</u>	5PM 9.30AM	J Lawandos C Lawandos V Paulo C Lawandos	M Melvey F Dyson J Lawandos R Lawandos
<u>Av</u>	5PM 9.30AM	U France M Foo	D Peterson T Alexander
<u>WELCOMERS</u>	5PM 9.30AM	M Melvey P Melvey A Walker G Walker	P Melvey A Dussin K Lendon
<u>CHURCH CLEANING</u>	COOR MOR	XXXX D Whitten	K Lendon T Alexander P Herbert

Our Parish supports The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle in its zero-tolerance approach to abuse. Every one of us must each day commit ourselves individually and collectively to safeguard each child and every vulnerable person to whom we minister and interact with. If you have any concerns for a child or vulnerable adult please contact the Office of Safeguarding P:02 4979 1390 or email: childprotection@mn.catholic.org.au, or visit their website for further information www.officeofsafeguarding.org.au.

UPCOMING FEAST DAYS MEMORIALS AND SOLEMNITIES

THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD VIGIL (S) - 24TH DEC
THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD DAY (S) - 25TH DEC
SAINT STEPHEN (F) - 26TH DEC
SAINT JOHN (F) - 27TH DEC
THE HOLY INNOCENTS (F) - 28TH DEC
THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY, AND JOSEPH (F) - 31ST DEC
SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD (S) - 1ST JAN
SAINTS BASIL THE GREAT & GREGORY NAZIANZEN (M) - 2ND JAN
THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD— 7TH JAN
THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD (F) - 8TH JAN

Please pray for all those who are sick: in hospital or at home, especially those living with a life threatening disease:

Annette Boyd, Mary Monaghan, Clare Wallington, Donna Hazzard, Pam Mullaly, Mary Johnson, Tintumol Thomas, Les Findley, Peter Martyn, Bernadette Martin, Joan Gillett, Bruce Gillett.



Please pray for those who have been called to eternal life may they always be in our prayers.

Recently Deceased: Curtis Williams

Prayer Requests for the Bulletin

If you would like the parish to pray for a family member who is sick, recently deceased or you would like remembered please call or email the parish office or complete a prayer card for each person and place in the mail box near the parish office door. Cards are available at the back of the church and at the Parish Office.

All prayer requests require permission from a family member or the person. Due to Australian privacy laws.

An Act of Spiritual Communion

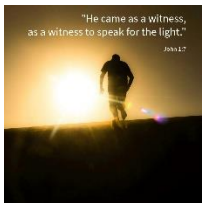
My Jesus,
I believe that You
are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.
I love You above all things,
and I desire to receive You into my soul.
Since I cannot at this moment
receive You sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart.
I embrace You as if You were already there and unite
myself wholly to You.
Never permit me to be separated from You.
Amen.



Live stream Mass every Sunday at 9.30am at www.mn.catholic.org.au/places/live-stream



We are committed to the
**NATIONAL CATHOLIC
SAFEGUARDING STANDARDS**



SUNDAY PRAYER SERVICE

Third Sunday of Advent Year B

Sunday 17 Dec 2023

The Introductory Rites

Acknowledgement of Country

We Acknowledge the Traditional Custodians who have walked upon and cared for this land for thousands of years. We acknowledge the continued deep spiritual attachment and relationship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to this country and commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of reconciliation. We especially acknowledge the Awabakal and Darkinjung peoples who were the original custodians of the land this parish sits on.

Gathering

The Lectionary/Roman Missal or a Bible may be placed on a table together with a candle and a cross.

Sign of the Cross

Leader:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All:

Amen.

Greeting

Leader:

Blessed be Jesus Christ
who will come again in glory.

All:

Blessed be God forever.

Introductory Remarks

Leader (in these or similar words):

Friends in Christ,
although we cannot celebrate the Eucharist this day,
we gather in God's name
for when two or more come together
God is always with us.
In union with the whole Church,
we await the coming of the Lord.

Opening Rite

LITANY OF PRAISE

Leader:

God's kindness brings hope to the world.
To prepare ourselves to hear his Word
let us praise the Lord Jesus Christ.

A brief period of silence follows.

Leader:

Lord Jesus, you bring good news to the poor: Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to
those in prison: Christ, have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you are the one heralded by John the Baptist: Lord,
have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader:

May almighty God have mercy on us,
forgive us our sins,
and bring us to everlasting life.

All:

Amen.

Opening Prayer

Leader:

Let us pray.

All pause for silent prayer.

God of all ages,
with joy and gladness
we await the coming of our Saviour, Jesus.
Give us courage and strength
so that we may share with others
the Good News of your kingdom.
We ask this through Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
for ever and ever.

All:

Amen.

The Liturgy of the Word

First Reading

Isaiah 61:1-2. 10-11

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

I exult for joy in the Lord.

The spirit of the Lord has been given to me,
for the Lord has anointed me.
He has sent me to bring good news to the poor,
to bind up hearts that are broken;
to proclaim liberty to captives,
freedom to those in prison;
to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord.
'I exult for joy in the Lord,
my soul rejoices in my God,
for he has clothed me in the garments of salvation,
he has wrapped me in the cloak of integrity,
like a bridegroom wearing his wreath,
like a bride adorned in her jewels.
'For as the earth makes fresh things grow,
as a garden makes seeds spring up,
so will the Lord make both integrity and praise
spring up in the sight of the nations.'

To indicate the end of the reading, the reader acclaims:

The word of the Lord.

All reply:

Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

Lk 1:46-50. 53-54. R. Is 61:10

(R.) My soul rejoices in my God.

1. My soul glorifies the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.
He looks on his servant in her nothingness;
henceforth all ages will call me blessed. (R.)
2. The Almighty works marvels for me.
Holy his name!
His mercy is from age to age,
on those who fear him. (R.)
3. He fills the starving with good things,
sends the rich away empty.
He protects Israel, his servant,
remembering his mercy. (R.)

Second Reading

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians

May you all be kept blameless, spirit, soul and body, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Be happy at all times; pray constantly; and for all things give thanks to God, because this is what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus.

Never try to suppress the Spirit or treat the gift of prophecy with contempt; think before you do anything – hold on to what is good and avoid every form of evil.

May the God of peace make you perfect and holy; and may you all be kept safe and blameless, spirit, soul and body, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. God has called you and he will not fail you.

To indicate the end of the reading, the reader acclaims:

The word of the Lord.

All reply:

Thanks be to God.

Gospel

Reader:

From the holy Gospel according to John.

All:

Glory to you, O Lord.

John 1:6-8. 19-28

There stands among you, unknown to you, the one who is coming after me.

A man came, sent by God.

His name was John.

He came as a witness,

as a witness to speak for the light,

so that everyone might believe through him.

He was not the light,

only a witness to speak for the light.

This is how John appeared as a witness. When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' he not only declared, but he declared quite openly, 'I am not the Christ.' 'Well then,' they asked, 'are you Elijah?' 'I am not,' he said. 'Are you the Prophet?' He answered, 'No.' So they said to him, 'Who are you? We must take back an answer to those who sent us. What have you to say about yourself?' So John said, 'I am, as Isaiah prophesied:

a voice that cries in the wilderness:

Make a straight way for the Lord.'

Now these men had been sent by the Pharisees, and they put this further question to him, 'Why are you baptising if you are not the Christ, and not Elijah, and not the prophet?' John replied, 'I baptise with water; but there stands among you – unknown to you – the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo his sandal-strap.' This happened at Bethany, on the far side of the Jordan, where John was baptising.

Reader:

The Gospel of the Lord.

All:

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

All are seated.

Reflection on the Word

Q. How is this week's gospel similar to / different from last week's account (Mk 1:1-8)?

Q. Why do you think we have two accounts of the same event in the liturgy on consecutive weeks?

Q. Is there someone you know who witnesses to their faith through their actions? How do they do it?

Q. Are there forms of witnessing to faith that 'turn you off'?

Q. How can you effectively witness to your faith?

Profession of Faith

Leader:

In union with the whole Church

let us profess our faith.

All:

I believe in God,

the Father almighty,

Creator of heaven and earth,

and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,

At the words that follow, up to and including the Virgin Mary, all bow.

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,

born of the Virgin Mary,

suffered under Pontius Pilate,

was crucified, died and was buried;

he descended into hell;

on the third day he rose again from the dead;

he ascended into heaven,

and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;

from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

the holy catholic Church,

the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body,

and life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers of the Faithful

Leader: Dear friends, as witnesses to the light of Christ, we bring our prayers before the Lord.

Reader: That the Holy Church will be eager, watching and ready for Christ's coming.

In your mercy:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That the people of our land, and all nations will be guided in true peace.

In your mercy:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That those suffering from evil thoughts may find peace in the light of Christ.

In your mercy:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That in this Advent time, our community may be filled with prayer as we reflect on the coming of Christ.

In your mercy:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That all the sick and housebound will find strength and healing in the Lord, especially those who we know and love.

In your mercy:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That all who have died may come to everlasting life with Christ, especially those who we knew and love.

In your mercy:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: Lord God, the coming of your Son is near. Hear our prayers, and guide us in faith as we wait in joyful hope. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Leader:

At the Saviour's command
and formed by divine teaching,
we dare to say:

All:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.**

The Concluding Rite Blessing

Leader:

May the Lord be with us, and protect us now and for ever.

All make the sign of the cross during the blessing.

All:

Amen.

Dismissal

Leader:

Let us go in the peace to love and serve the Lord.

All:

Thanks be to God.

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LITURGY MATTERS: The Holy Family - Refugees and Immigrants

This Advent and Christmas season let us open our eyes to recognise Jesus in all of the faces that we see. That includes the stranger, the refugee, the immigrant. As Pope Francis has recently affirmed that "every human being, Christian, Jewish, Muslim, of any people or religion, every human being is sacred, is precious in the eyes of God, and has the right to live in peace." [CNA Nov 23]. So, what does this have to do with this Advent season? How can you bring light and life? Let me offer some thoughts for your reflection.

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The scripture story about the journey that Joseph and Mary made to Bethlehem and the birth of Jesus is proclaimed at Christmas. However, the escape to Egypt by Mary and Joseph is not often, if ever, an aspect of the Christmas story that we hear. It is an important one for us to reflect upon, especially at this time of year.

As we read in the Gospel of Matthew 2:13-15, after the visit from the Wise Men, we hear about the Holy Family's fearful escape to Egypt. Herod wanted to kill the child Jesus, and, in Matthew 2:16-18, we see a violent massacre of infant boys. This story creates an unsettling image and feeling. It is intended to unsettle us today.

Bethlehem had become unsafe for this family, just as many places in the world today have also become unsafe for many families. As people leave these unsafe places, looking for refuge and security, it is up to the rest of the world, that includes us, to take notice and act in a way that acknowledges their dignity as human beings, and make decisions that bring light and life. The Holy Family found refuge, security, and peace in Egypt. How are we being called to make our global home a safe place for all?

Rather than safety, displaced people are more likely to find themselves victims of severe exploitation. They are vulnerable and don't know how to or can't advocate for themselves. As two millennia have passed, and refugee crises persist worldwide, it is crucial that we, the disciples of Jesus, see displaced people – those who migrate, flee, and seek refuge across borders – as made in the likeness and image of God. These crises are still an ongoing blight on humanity. According to the [UNCHR Global Trends](#) (correct as of June 2023) there were over 108 million people in this situation around the world, with an ever-increasing number daily. Out of those statistics nearly [50 million](#), a quarter of which are children, are victims of modern slavery. An additional [25 million](#) are victims of trafficking.

The daily news is a barrage of hate, destruction, unforgiveness, retribution, misuse and abuse of power awash with the impact that those actions have on the powerless, the least of God's people. There is much that we can do from our place of privilege. Christmas is a time to show our love for our family and friends and celebrate the ultimate gift and birth of our saviour, Jesus Christ. We invite people into our homes, beautifully set the table and share a meal. Many of us may have refugees in our own family history or know friends or neighbours that have come from various unsafe and dangerous situations.

The Catholic Church has a strong commitment to eradicating modern slavery, a stance grounded in Catholic Social Teaching. "At its heart the call to eradicate modern slavery and human trafficking is a call to make a choice for respecting the intrinsic and inalienable dignity of every human person" (Archbishop Fisher, 2018). We also acknowledge the impact that commercial activities, including our own, can have on vulnerable people through the practice of modern slavery. A missionary church has a responsibility to take practical action to manage these risks, create change and to ultimately eradicate modern slavery. We all share in that responsibility.

Unbeknownst to most of us, the liturgical calendar already provides us with an opportunity to engage our hearts and minds with the issue of modern slavery and human trafficking. On February 8 each year the church marks the feast of St Josephine Bakhita, the Patron Saint of Victims of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery. The feast exists in the calendar as an optional memorial which every community can choose to celebrate at Mass and in an endless variety of other ways.

The Feast of Josephine Bakhita provides our whole community - parishes, schools, homes and other groups - with a wonderful

opportunity to reach out and connect with the wider Catholic community who have a strong commitment to social justice, specifically modern slavery and human trafficking. The feast provides an opportunity for relevant and meaningful formation and prayer. The International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking also falls on 8 February. It too focuses on St Josephine Bakhita, highlighting the circumstances of violence and injustice affecting millions of voiceless people.

To that end the Diocesan Liturgy Council established a Working Party to study the issue of Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking and produce a range of resources for [parishes](#), [schools](#), [homes and community groups](#).

It is hoped that the experience of prayer focused on current issues will help to form more deeply in the hearts and minds of the community, an appreciation of the integral link between prayer and Christian life and action. The following resources are a first step as we look forward to the journey ahead. These are critical issues for a church that exists for mission. They also provide an opportunity to learn more about St Josephine and her story.

About Josephine, Pope Francis says:

'(The Church) is charged with showing to all the path to conversion, which enables us to change the way we see our neighbours, to recognise in every other person a brother or sister in our human family, and to acknowledge his or her intrinsic dignity in truth and freedom. This can be clearly seen from the story of Josephine Bakhita, the saint originally from the Darfur region in Sudan who was kidnapped by slave-traffickers and sold to brutal masters when she was nine years old. Subsequently – as a result of painful experiences – she became a “free daughter of God” thanks to her faith, lived in religious consecration and in service to others, especially the most lowly and helpless. This saint, who lived at the turn of the twentieth century, is even today an exemplary witness of hope for the many victims of slavery; she can support the efforts of all those committed to fighting against this “open wound on the body of contemporary society, a scourge upon the body of Christ” (10 April 2014)

We are a missionary Church and Bishop Michael is calling us all to take up our call to mission and evangelisation with renewed energy and commitment. While the Feast of Josephine Bakhita provides us with a focus for this, it is important to remember that Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking isn't seasonal. As we journey through this Christmas season of giving, let's start making purchases that make a difference in more than one person's life. You might like to consider giving a gift that gives twice.

You can start by choosing to shop ethically and charitably. The following 10 websites offer a different way of shopping or making a donation that will make a difference.

- That Catholic Shop - The proceeds of every purchase at *That Catholic Shop* help Christians who are suffering, oppressed or persecuted. [That Catholic Shop - Home](#)
- For Dignity - Provide hope, dignity and freedom to women affected by exploitation. [Ethical & Sustainable Gifts in Australia | Women Gifts Online – For Dignity](#)
- Catholic Mission - By purchasing a Life-Giving Gift this Christmas, you are making a lasting impact for

children, families and communities in most need. [All \(catholicmission.org.au\)](#)

- St Columban's Missionary Society - Provides comfort to the lonely, hope to the despairing, and assistance to those facing challenging circumstances. [Shop Catholic Products & Gifts Online | St Columbans](#)
- UNHCR The UN Refugee for Australia - Advocate and fundraise for refugee protection, emergency aid, and long-term support and solutions, helping the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) reach millions of vulnerable people each year. [Refugee Charity Christmas Gifts | Australia for UNHCR - UNHCR \(unrefugees.org.au\)](#)
- Caritas Australia Mission - The Catholic Church's international aid and development agency in Australia. They are committed to working alongside the most vulnerable and addressing the imbalance of power by including the people affected in the decisions impacting their lives. [Creating a Resilient Future | Caritas Australia](#)
- The Fair Trader - They are proud members of the [Fair Trade Association of Australia and New Zealand](#). They stock products made by organisations with transparent and deeply held ethical values with goals of poverty alleviation and empowerment. [Ethical and Fair Trade Gifts Australia – The Fair Trader \(thefairtraderstore.com.au\)](#)
- Uplift Fair Trade - Uplifting disadvantaged artisans through trade, creating dignity and hope. Focusing on giving sustainable livelihoods to people with a disability, women's empowerment groups, women living in slums, people who have come out of trafficking. [Fair Trade Ethical Christmas Gifts and Products | Uplift Fair Trade](#)
- The Leprosy Mission Shop Australia - strives to eliminate the stigma and discrimination that is associated with leprosy. [Shop - The Leprosy Mission Australia – The Leprosy Mission Shop](#)
- Refugee Hub: CatholicCare Social Services, Diocese of Maitland – Newcastle - Support people from refugee, asylum-seeker, and vulnerable migrant backgrounds to settle into life in Australia. They welcome people from all social, ethnic and religious backgrounds. [Refugee Hub - CatholicCare Social Services Hunter-Manning](#)

So, over to you. Those who are involved in parishes and schools might consider asking the community to respond through prayer and action, particularly on 8 February 2024.

There are many Holy families – Jews, Muslims, Christians, Palestinians, Ukrainians, Russians, Africans, Afghanis, Syrians, Myanmarese, sadly the list goes on. The arrival of Jesus as a vulnerable baby reminds us that this is a moment of solidarity with all people, especially those that find themselves in unsafe positions in our world.

Let me leave you with the words of St Josephine:

"The best thing for us is not what we consider best, but what the Lord wants of us...we must love everyone...we must be compassionate!"