

# Blessed Sacrament Congregation Newsletter

St Francis' Church  
Melbourne



St Peter Julian's Church  
Sydney

December 2023

Volume 11

## It all began in Bethlehem by Tony McSweeney, SSS

Stunning photographs from the Hubble and James Webb telescopes have provoked amazement and wonder worldwide. According to space scientists, we are viewing cosmic events taking place over 13.5 billion years ago when the first galaxies were beginning to form. It is hoped that they will enable us to learn how our own solar system developed and whether there is life on other planets.

In the face of such staggering immensities of time and space, how insignificantly tiny we are! And the Creator of it all? How could our minds ever form the faintest idea of a Being of such grandeur and power? As Paul exclaims, "How rich are the depths of God – how deep his wisdom and knowledge – and how impossible to penetrate his motives or understand his methods! Who could ever know the mind of the Lord?" (Rom 11:33-34)

This month we will see numerous Christmas cribs with the familiar figures of an adolescent girl and her husband gazing lovingly into the eyes of a new-born baby boy lying in a bedding of straw – an animal's feeding box. Yes, the very Creator of the universe is there among us, as a tiny, fragile infant!

From the beginning his powerlessness is emphasized, having to flee a cruel tyrant seeking to kill him lest his own power be threatened. Some early Christian authors saw the swaddling cloths as a hint of what was to come at the end. For, according to Jewish custom, the lambs to be sacrificed in the Temple were bound and their legs were swaddled. "He was wrapped in swaddling clothes," Gregory Nazianzen noted, "then took off the swathing bands of the grave by .. rising again."

Once risen, Jesus inaugurated a new relation to our world in commissioning his disciples to become bearers of his message. Through the gift of his Spirit he would be with them now as an interior companion to encourage and guide them in living and proclaiming his message through the centuries to come until the end of the time. They were to learn from the model of his own earthly life as they sought to make him tangibly present in the world of their time, culture and language.

Once again, God had chosen to work through finite creatures, now his church. Respecting our freedom meant choosing to work with our limitations and resistances, with our stubbornness and half-heartedness, while always renouncing recourse to coercive force.

For over fifty years now our church has been undertaking a major re-set, seeking to free itself from outdated cultural elements and attitudes that have at times obscured, warped or distorted the full embodiment of his message – the marginalising of women, a clericalism that infected ministry with hierarchical class and power, the condoning of colonialism and even slavery... The list could go on.



To see that the work is ongoing it is enough to look at a photograph of a session of the current Synod in Rome. There we see the members, for the first time ever, seated at a series of round tables all on the same level – lay women and men beside priests, bishops and cardinals (and the Pope) without a hint of hierarchical ordering. Moreover, all have the same right to speak and to be heard, as well as to vote.

God invites us at Christmas to ponder prayerfully on the incarnation, on his choice of working within our human vulnerability rather than having recourse to worldly methods of dominance, privilege and exclusion. How might the Synod be a pointer for us disciples of Jesus here in Australia today?

It all began in Bethlehem!



**Global Gifts** Christmas cards are a great way to spread joy and hope this Christmas season and to make a life-changing impact.

[www.globalgifts.org.au](http://www.globalgifts.org.au)

Give a gift card that represents a donation



## Caritas Australia's Gaza Crisis Appeal

The sudden escalation of hostilities in Israel and Gaza since 7 October has seen unimaginable impacts for the people affected by this conflict. The human toll has been devastating with more than 7,000 deaths across Israel and Gaza. Over 5,700 Palestinians have been killed so far, nearly half of them are children, while more than 15,000 people have been injured in Gaza. Over 1.4 million people (60% of the population) have been displaced in Gaza with immediate food, shelter, health, and psychosocial needs. Caritas Australia is working with our partner Catholic Relief Services (CRS), providing emergency shelter for over 1,200 people and cash support to over 7,100 families so far. We are also assisting with household items, including mattresses, blankets and other materials and support for food assistance and water, sanitation and hygiene. Please donate to Caritas Australia's Gaza Crisis Appeal. You can donate online [www.caritas.org.au/gaza](http://www.caritas.org.au/gaza) or phone 1800 024 413

## ST PETER JULIAN'S BOOK STORE

Columban Calendars

(2024) and a beautiful selection of cane calendars (2024), Christmas cards and nativity sets are all now available to purchase. Orders can be done over the phone and sent via post (postage will apply).

**Monday to Friday** 9.30am to 4.30pm **Sunday** 9.00am to 5.00pm

Telephone: (02) 9270 6900

Email: [haymarket@blessedsacrament.com.au](mailto:haymarket@blessedsacrament.com.au)

## Pope Francis' Prayer for Peace

Lord God of peace, hear our prayer!

We have tried so many times and over so many years to resolve our conflicts by our own powers and by the force of our arms. How many moments of hostility and darkness have we experienced; how much blood has been shed; how many lives have been shattered; how many hopes have been buried... But our efforts have been in vain.

Now, Lord, come to our aid! Grant us peace, teach us peace; guide our steps in the way of peace. Open our eyes and our hearts and give us the courage to say: "Never again war!"; "With war everything is lost". Instil in our hearts the courage to take concrete steps to achieve peace.

Lord, God of Abraham, God of the Prophets, God of Love, you created us and you call us to live as brothers and sisters. Give us the strength daily to be instruments of peace; enable us to see everyone who crosses our path as our brother or sister. Make us sensitive to the plea of our citizens who entreat us to turn our weapons of war into implements of peace, our trepidation into confident trust, and our quarrelling into forgiveness.

Keep alive within us the flame of hope, so that with patience and perseverance we may opt for dialogue and reconciliation. In this way may peace triumph at last, and may the words "division", "hatred" and "war" be banished from the heart of every man and woman.

Lord, defuse the violence of our tongues and our hands. Renew our hearts and minds, so that the word which always brings us together will be "sister, and brother", and our way of life will always be that of: Shalom, Peace, Salaam! Amen. (Sourced from [www.majellan.media](http://www.majellan.media))

## The next St Peter Julian's Newsletter will be the February 2024 Edition.

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### Website:

[www.stpeterjuliansydney.com](http://www.stpeterjuliansydney.com)

## CHRISTMAS MASS TIMETABLE

### 4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

**Sunday, 24<sup>th</sup> December**

5.30pm (Vigil)

9:30am (English), 11:00am (Chinese),  
12:30pm (English), 3:30pm (English) 5:00pm (Korean)

### CHRISTMAS EVE

Christmas Carols : 6:30pm

Christmas Vigil Mass : 7:00pm

Christmas Carols : 11:30pm

Midnight Mass : 12:00 midnight

### CHRISTMAS DAY MASSES

**Monday, 25<sup>th</sup> December**

9:30am (English), 11:00am (Chinese),  
12:30pm (English) and 3:30pm (English)

**Tuesday, 26<sup>th</sup> December**

MASS: 12:10pm (only)

**Wednesday, 27<sup>th</sup> December to Friday, 29<sup>th</sup> December**

MASS: 7:30am, 12:10pm and 5:30pm

**Saturday, 30<sup>th</sup> December**

MASS: 12:30pm

### NEW YEAR'S EVE

**Sunday, 31<sup>st</sup> December**

**Holy Family**

5.30pm (Vigil)

9:30am (English), 11:00am (Chinese),  
12:30pm (English), 3:30pm (English) and 5:00pm (Korean)

### NEW YEAR'S DAY

**Monday, 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2024**

**Mary Mother of God**

MASS: 12:10pm and 5:30pm

**For more info, please see our website:**

[www.stpeterjuliansydney.com](http://www.stpeterjuliansydney.com)

and our Facebook page,

or call (02) 9270 6940 (24 hour information line)

## Christmas At The Cathedral 2023

**Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> to Monday, 25<sup>th</sup> December 2023**

We invite the community of Sydney to come together at St Mary's Cathedral during Advent to prepare for the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Festivities begin at 5.30pm with Christmas market stalls, food, fun activities for the kids and live entertainment. For more information, visit our website at [www.christmasatthecathedral.org.au](http://www.christmasatthecathedral.org.au)

## Mass for Expectant Mothers and those Hoping to

**Conceive** All expectant mothers and those hoping to conceive are warmly invited to come to **10:30am Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral on Sunday, 10<sup>th</sup> December**, with an opportunity to receive a special blessing from Bishop Richard Umbers with relics of St. Gerard Majella and St. Gianna Molla. Register at <https://www.trybooking.com/CLMSM>

The Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament is proactively committed to the safety, wellbeing and dignity of all who participate in the life of St Peter Julian's Church.

