



City Pastoral REGION

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF MAITLAND-NEWCASTLE

Inner Newcastle Parish: Sacred Heart Cathedral, Newcastle West; St Joseph's Church, The Junction; St Mary, Star of the Sea Church, Newcastle; Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, Tighes Hill; St Laurence O'Toole Church, Broadmeadow. **Mayfield Parish:** Christ the King, Mayfield West. **Stockton Parish:** St Peter-in-Chains, Stockton.

SUNDAY 25 DECEMBER 2022

THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD, YEAR A

Our Clergy

Fr John Lovell
Fr Paul Chackanikunnel

Regional Office—St Benedict's Centre

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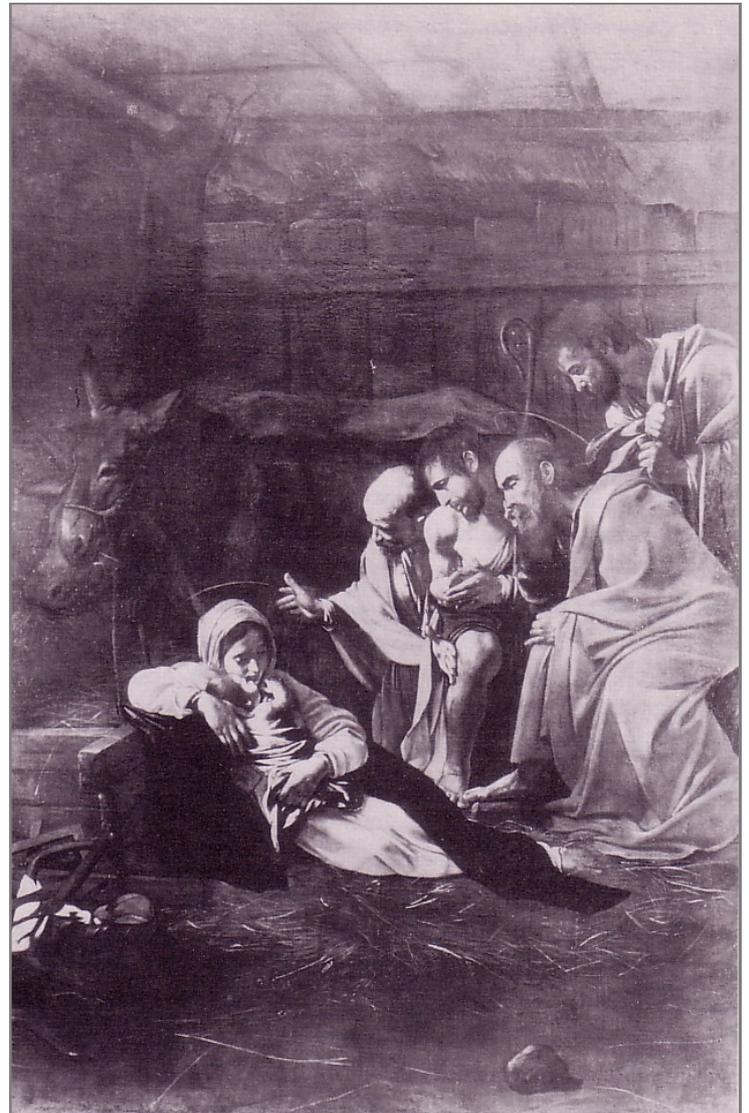
Our Staff

Margaret Cox (*Reception & Administration*)
Monday, Tuesday, Friday
Anne Warren (*Business Manager Finance*)
Tuesday and Thursday
Dr Anne Millard (*Music, Liturgy, Sacraments, Bulletin*)

Other Contacts

Lingard Hospital Team: Contact the Parish Office
Mercy Pastoral Team: Sr Patricia Whitten rsm
0429 923254
St Joseph's Pastoral Team: Contact the Parish Office

Parish Bulletin: Prayer requests and items for the Bulletin should be received at the Parish Office by 5pm on Wednesdays.



Our Parishes incorporate suburbs located on the traditional country of the Awabakal and Worimi peoples. We acknowledge their cultural heritage, beliefs and continuing relationship with the land, pay respect to their Elders past and present, and commit ourselves to work together for reconciliation and justice.

THE PARISH DIARY...(for the week ahead)

The Octave of the Nativity of the Lord, Year A

Monday—26th December

Feast of St Stephen

8:15am Mass @ The Cathedral

Tuesday—27th December

Feast of St John

8:15am Mass @ The Cathedral

8:30am Mass @ Stockton

Wednesday—28th December

Feast of The Holy Innocents

8:15am Mass @ The Cathedral

9:00am Mass @ Mayfield West

Thursday—29th December

8:15am Mass @ The Cathedral

8:30am Mass @ Stockton

Friday—30th December

Feast of The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph

9:50am Rosary for Ukraine @ The Junction

10:15am Mass @ St Joseph's

11:00am Exposition, Adoration & Reconciliation @
The Cathedral (until 12pm)

12:05pm Mass @ The Cathedral

Saturday—31st December

9:15am Mass @ The Cathedral, followed by the
Novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help
(followed by Reconciliation)** Cancelled

5:30pm Mass @ The Cathedral

5:30pm Mass @ The Junction

6:00pm Mass @ Mayfield West

Sunday—1st January

Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God, Year A

7:30am Mass @ St Mary's

8:00am Mass @ Tighes Hill

9:00am Mass @ Stockton

9:30am Mass @ The Cathedral *

11:00am Mass @ The Junction (*Italian*)

11:30am Mass @ The Cathedral (*Polish*)

5:00pm Mass @ The Cathedral

5:00pm Taize Service @ Tighes Hill

6:00pm Mass @ Mayfield West (*Vietnamese*)

* Livestreamed on the Cathedral's YouTube channel—
www.youtube.com/c/SacredHeartCathedralHamilton
and on the Diocese website

FROM THE MODERATOR

Dear friends in Christ,

As we approach the end of another year, we look back with gratitude for the many blessings we have received (eg babies born, couples marrying, new people being received into the Church, successes in exams, sports and so forth). We also grieve at the various things that have not gone so well over this time; for instance: some of us will have suffered the loss of loved ones, experienced a serious health issue (as we keep in mind COVID is still in our midst), are grieving for those who have been severely affected by floods across Eastern Australia, or are struggling to make sense of the terrible conflict between Russia and Ukraine. We also feel the loss of being without a Bishop, over 12 months after the death of Bishop Bill, and so anxiously await the appointment of a new prelate to our Diocese.



Through all this we are kept strong by our faith as we celebrate the wonderful miracle of the birth of Jesus, the Son of God. In a world of constant change and uncertainty, He is the one constant who keeps us united in hope and in love. So, let's celebrate this great feast of Christmas with joy and thanksgiving, while also sparing a thought and a prayer for those less fortunate than ourselves, who for whatever reason are not able to share in our spirit of joy at this time.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank our Parish Office staff, and so many teams and volunteers in our pastoral region who have contributed their time and talents to supporting our parish administration, liturgies and outreach programs in various ways over the past year. In particular, I am thinking of our MCs, sacristans, musicians and singers, lectors, servers, hospital and home visitation teams, those who take up and count our Mass collections, members of our Finance & Pastoral Councils, our Catholic Schools' staff, those who are undergoing formation to become our new Bereavement Team, our supply priests and countless others.

Finally, may I wish you and all your families a very blessed and happy Christmas, and a safe and prosperous New Year.

Love, Fr John

BEQUESTS

To help our Catholic Pastoral Region of Parishes continue its important mission of proclaiming the Good News of Jesus, you might consider including us in your Will. You would just need to specify which parish or parishes you would like to help with your bequest. Thank you!

NEXT WEEK'S READINGS:

Num 6:22-27

Gal 4:4-7

Lk 2:16-21

REFLECTION

by Richard Leonard

A pentecostal friend of mine tells the story of leaving church one Christmas morning as the preacher was standing at the door, greeting everyone and shaking hands. He grabbed my friend by the hand and pulled him aside. The pastor said to him, 'You need to join the Army of the Lord!' To which my friend replied, 'I'm already in the Army of the Lord, pastor.' The pastor looked amazed and said, 'How come I don't see you here at church then, except at Christmas and Easter?' My friend whispered back, 'Because I'm in the secret service.'

If you are like my friend and find yourself in the 'secret service', you're in good company at Christmas time. The first hearers of the Christmas story were not much into church-going either. Shepherds in first century Palestine had to watch their flocks around the clock for fear of thieves and wolves. This didn't leave much time for temple attendance. They prayed where they were, as they were. These shepherds, however, were in the right place at the right time to hear the first Christmas message. Maybe they had the right disposition too.

Sometimes, publicly religious people can sound as though they know the mind of God better than God does! It's a trap we need to avoid and Christmas helps us do it. No one predicted the way God would send us a saviour. No one knew the day or the hour of God's coming. No one foresaw that God would be born a homeless person. No one envisaged that the first witnesses to the birth would be illiterate shepherds from nearby fields. While some waited for a mercenary to overthrow the Romans, others held their breath for the procession of a heavenly king. The love of God, however, took flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone and came to us as a poor, defenceless baby.

That's our God, not bound by our precepts or expectations, but honouring the promises made to our ancestors, in the most surprising of ways. And Christmas provides us with the most tender images of our God, One who needs to be nurtured, suckled and held tight.

It's not a bad metaphor for our Christian faith either. If Christmas means anything to us then it's not an annual religious outing or something to fill in time on a public holiday. It's a moveable feast which we celebrate every time we do something just, loving or peaceful. That's why we gather here for the Eucharist each week: to be nurtured, fed, suckled and held in God's embrace, if only for a while, so that we find the

courage and strength to go out from here, confront the wolves and thieves of our own day and be in the right place at the right time for God to find us.

As a result of that first Christmas, Christ wants to nurture a people who by their lives will change the world for the better, for all people everywhere. So this Christmas cash in your secret service card and, 'Go tell it on the mountain, over the hill and everywhere. Go tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.'

© Richard Leonard SJ

Richard Leonard SJ is the Director of the Australian Catholic Office for Film and Broadcasting, is a member of the Australian Catholic Media Council and a film critic for all the major Australian Catholic newspapers. He completed a PhD in cinema studies at the University of Melbourne. He lectures in cinema and theology at the Jesuit College of Spirituality and has been a visiting lecturer in Australian cinema at the University of Melbourne, a visiting scholar within the School of Theatre, Film and Television at UCLA and is visiting professor at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. He is an Honorary Fellow of the Australian Catholic University, has lectured widely and is the author of numerous books.

THE CHUCKLE

Did you hear about what happened to the man who stole the advent calendar?

He got 25 days.



HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Nativity scene

St Francis of Assisi is credited with setting up the first nativity scene and thus establishing a tradition that is carried on today in homes, churches and public spaces in Christian communities everywhere. In 1223, in the town of Greccio he created a life size tableau of the nativity scene to heighten the awareness of the celebration of the birth of Christ. It included statues of the holy family and a live ox and donkey. The inclusion of the livestock has no scriptural support and it is to Francis that we owe the array of sheep, oxen and donkeys that have become standard inclusions in our nativity scenes.

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM POPE FRANCIS

What does this night still have to say to our lives? Two thousand years after the birth of Jesus, after so many Christmases spent amid decorations and gifts, after so much consumerism that has packaged the mystery we celebrate, there is a danger. We know many things about Christmas, but we forget its real meaning. So how do we rediscover the meaning of Christmas? First of all, where do we go to find it? The Gospel of Jesus' birth appears to have been written precisely for this purpose: to take us by the hand and lead us where God would have us go.

It starts with a situation not unlike our own: everyone is bustling about, getting ready for an important event, the great census, which called for much preparation. In that sense, the atmosphere was very much like our modern celebration of Christmas. Yet the Gospel has little to do with that worldly scenario; it quickly shifts our gaze to something else, which it considers more important. It is a small and apparently insignificant detail that it nonetheless mentions three times, always in relation to the central figures in the narrative. First, Mary places Jesus "in a manger" (Lk 2:7); then the angels tell the shepherds about "a child wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger" (v. 12); and finally, the shepherds, who find "the child lying in the manger" (v. 16). In order to rediscover the meaning of Christmas, we need to look to the manger. Yet why is the manger so important? Because it is the sign, and not by chance, of Christ's coming into this world. It is how he announces his coming. It is the way God is born in history, so that history itself can be reborn. What then does the Lord tell us? Through the manger, three things, at least: closeness, poverty and concreteness.

Closeness. The manger serves as a feeding trough, to enable food to be consumed more quickly. In this way, it can symbolize one aspect of our humanity: our greed for consumption. While animals feed in their stalls, men and women in our world, in their hunger for wealth and power, consume even their neighbors, their brothers and sisters. How many wars have we seen! And in how many places, even today, are human dignity and freedom treated with contempt! As always, the principal victims of this human greed are the weak and the vulnerable. This Christmas too, as in the case of Jesus, a world ravenous for money, ravenous for power and ravenous for pleasure does not make room for the little ones, for so many unborn, poor and forgotten children. I think above all of the children devoured by war, poverty and injustice. Yet those are the very places to which Jesus comes, a child in the manger of rejection and refusal.

In him, the Child of Bethlehem, every child is present. And we ourselves are invited to view life, politics and history through the eyes of children.

In the manger of rejection and discomfort, God makes himself present. He comes there because there we see the problem of our humanity: the indifference produced by the greedy rush to possess and consume. There, in that manger, Christ is born, and there we discover his closeness to us. He comes there, to a feeding trough, in order to become our food. God is no father who devours his children, but the Father who, in Jesus, makes us his children and feeds us with his tender love. He comes to touch our hearts and to tell us that love alone is the power that changes the course of history. He does not remain distant and mighty, but draws near to us in humility; leaving his throne in heaven, he lets himself be laid in a manger.

Dear brother, dear sister, tonight God is drawing near to you, because you are important to him. From the manger, as food for your life, he tells you: "If you feel consumed by events, if you are devoured by a sense of guilt and inadequacy, if you hunger for justice, I, your God, am with you. I know what you are experiencing, for I experienced it myself in that manger. I know your weaknesses, your failings and your history. I was born in order to tell you that I am, and always will be, close to you". The Christmas manger, the first message of the divine Child, tells us that God is with us, he loves us and he seeks us. So take heart! Do not allow yourself to be overcome by fear, resignation or discouragement. God was born in a manger so that you could be reborn in the very place where you thought you had hit rock bottom. There is no evil, there is no sin, from which Jesus does not want to save you. And he can. Christmas means that God is close to us: let confidence be reborn!

The manger of Bethlehem speaks to us not only of closeness, but also of poverty. Around the manger there is very little: hay and straw, a few animals, little else. People were warm in the inn, but not here in the coldness of a stable. Yet that is where Jesus was born. The manger reminds us that he was surrounded by nothing but love: Mary, Joseph and the shepherds; all poor people, united by affection and amazement, not by wealth and great expectations. The poverty of the manger thus shows us where the true riches in life are to be found: not in money and power, but in relationships and persons.

And the first person, the greatest wealth, is Jesus himself. Yet do we want to stand at his side? Do we

draw close to him? Do we love his poverty? Or do we prefer to remain comfortably ensconced in our own interests and concerns? Above all, do we visit him where he is to be found, namely in the poor manglers of our world? For that is where he is present. We are called to be a Church that worships a Jesus who is poor and that serves him in the poor. As a saintly bishop once said: "The Church supports and blesses efforts to change the structures of injustice, and sets down but one condition: that social, economic and political change truly benefit the poor" (O.A. ROMERO, Pastoral Message for the New Year, 1 January 1980). Certainly, it is not easy to leave the comfortable warmth of worldliness to embrace the stark beauty of the grotto of Bethlehem, but let us remember that it is not truly Christmas without the poor. Without the poor, we can celebrate Christmas, but not the birth of Jesus. Dear brothers, dear sisters, at Christmas God is poor: let charity be reborn!

We now come to our last point: the manger speaks to us of concreteness. Indeed, a child lying in a manger presents us with a scene that is striking, even crude. It reminds us that God truly became flesh. As a result, all our theories, our fine thoughts and our pious sentiments are no longer enough. Jesus was born poor, lived poor and died poor; he did not so much talk about poverty as live it, to the very end, for our sake. From the manger to the cross, his love for us was always palpable, concrete. From birth to death, the carpenter's son embraced the roughness of the wood, the harshness of our existence. He did not love us only in words; he loved us with utter seriousness!

Consequently, Jesus is not satisfied with appearances. He who took on our flesh wants more than simply good intentions. He who was born in the manger, demands a concrete faith, made up of adoration and charity, not empty words and superficiality. He who lay naked in the manger and hung naked on the cross, asks us for truth, he asks us to go to the bare reality of things, and to lay at the foot of the manger all our excuses, our justifications and our hypocrisies. Tenderly wrapped in swaddling clothes by Mary, he wants us to be clothed in love. God does not want appearances but concreteness. May we not let this Christmas pass without doing something good, brothers and sisters. Since it is his celebration, his birthday, let us give him the gifts he finds pleasing! At Christmas, God is concrete: in his name let us help a little hope to be born anew in those who feel hopeless!

Jesus we behold you lying in the manger. We see you as close, ever at our side: thank you Lord! We see you

as poor, in order to teach us that true wealth does not reside in things but in persons, and above all in the poor: forgive us, if we have failed to acknowledge and serve you in them. We see you as concrete, because your love for us is palpable. Help us to give flesh and life to our faith. Amen.

GOSPEL FOCUS

A Great Census?

The decree of a census for the whole Roman world appears to be an unlikely event. A census of people in local regions was not unusual but a census that required people to return to their place of birth carries no historical validity. The gospel writer correctly places Mary and Joseph in their home town of Nazareth but prophecy indicated the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. The author needed an excuse for Mary and Joseph to travel to Bethlehem. We must remember that the gospels are not to be read as historical accounts but rather as faith accounts of the life of Jesus.

SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT

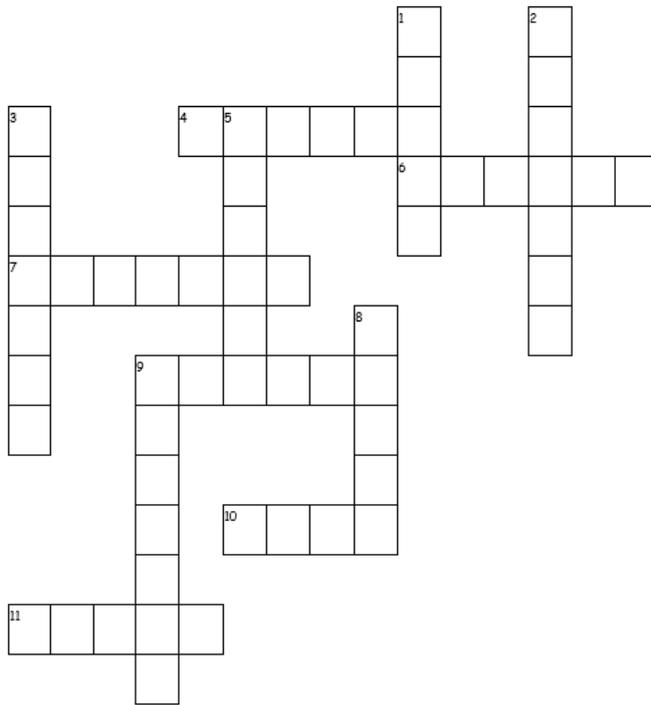
Ask a child (or even most adults) to describe the scene at the birth of Jesus and you will hear a confused combination of the two scriptural accounts with several non-scriptural additions. It is a shame that the two versions have merged into one as each is deserving of its own integrity. The Matthew account emphasises Jesus as the fulfilment of prophecy and has Wise Men as the witnesses to his birth in a house. It is from Luke that we have the much humbler birth in a manger witnessed by the lowly shepherds. Each has something different and distinct to say about Jesus and his mission.



CROSSWORD

Today is born our Saviour

Is 9:2-4, 6-7
Ps 96:1-2a, 2b-3, 11-12a
Ti 3:4-6
Lk 2:1-14



Across

- 4: Jesus slept in one of these
- 6: Messiah
- 7: soon to be married
- 9: Mary's husband
- 10: good natured
- 11: the angels sang, " _____ on earth"

Down

- 1: compassion
- 2: Christ the Lord is our _____
- 3: truthfulness
- 5: they sang in the heavens
- 8: a young person
- 9: rightful judgement

JUNIOR WORDSEARCH

Today is born our Saviour

Is 9:2-4, 6-7
Ps 96:1-2a, 2b-3, 11-12a
Ti 3:4-6
Lk 2:1-14

V I V E A X J J U Q W U F W O
T Y Q I D Q C N F M E R C Y K
O C H I L D K I N D T W X T E
T Y J Y R B S B T P U P T U N
X K X N M E H B S X M E Z B G
S A V I O U R Q S A Q I O R A
K O J Z W N W H M A N G E R G
O M O U K M H O R W G A A S E
A F S P S S H N H L Q Z A D D
N Y E X C L S E J U S T I C E
G T P Z U E A S P E A C E T Q
E Q H K V X I T H Y F A B D O
L G P P F Z B Y Y X S R F D I
S O P U R J C H R I S T R B Z

Try to find these words:

- Christ
- Joseph
- Saviour
- angels
- child
- engaged
- honesty
- justice
- kind
- manger
- mercy
- peace

PRAYER FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF OUR NEW BISHOP

Shepherding God
you reveal your way of unfailing love
in the image of the Good Shepherd
who seeks the lost,
shows compassion
knows and is known by the sheep
and lays down his life for them.
We your people of Maitland-Newcastle
are without a bishop to shepherd us.
We ask that your Holy Spirit
who moves through this great south land,
inspire the choice of our new Bishop,
empower his 'yes'
and open our hearts in hospitality and love.
We make this prayer through Christ our Lord, Amen.
Our Lady of Perpetual Help pray for us
Mary MacKillop of the Cross pray for us

ROSARY FOR UKRAINE

Pray the Rosary from 9.50am on Fridays at
St Joseph's Church, The Junction.



BOOK CLUB

Sunday, 5 February @ 6:15pm:
Bookclub meets to discuss *Lessons in
Chemistry* by Bonnie Garmus. If you
would like to participate in book club
meetings, please email the office



2023 LENTEN REFLECTION:

FINDING LIGHT WITHIN THE DARKNESS

Pastoral Ministries has prepared a Lenten resource for our diocese, Finding Light within the Darkness. Every Lent there is a fresh invitation to retreat from the noise and busyness of daily life. To listen with our heart, to contemplate our humanness so we can actively focus on humanity. We are invited to turn to God dwelling within us and consider how we can find light in the darkness and how we can be light to others. This resource provides opportunities for prayer, faith-sharing, and outreach in our local community.

This resource will be available at the end of January.
Ash Wednesday is Feb 22.

NOVENA CANCELLED FOR TWO WEEKS

There will be no Novena this coming Saturday (New Year's Eve)

BECOME AN SRE VOLUNTEER

Did you know that some 50% of Catholic children are in state schools? Have you ever thought of spreading the good news of the gospel and the love of Jesus Christ with children? Have you ever thought about becoming a Special Religious Educator?

This could be an opportunity for you to meet new people, discover new friendships and build quality relationships whilst mastering skills and confidence in Catechetics.

You can make a difference in the schools within your parish! For people of faith, knowing you are participating in Christ's call to share the Good News to all is a great source of joy and meaning.

If you would like to learn more about how you can help, please contact the Pastoral Ministries team on 4979 1200.

ENROLMENTS FOR 2023 SACRAMENTAL PROGRAM

A child's catholic faith journey began with the Sacrament of Baptism and continues by the reception of the Sacraments of Initiation, Confirmation and First Eucharist.

The preparations for these sacraments in the Inner Newcastle Parish run between February and June of every year and is designed for children going into Year, 4, 5 or 6 in 2022. Preparations are completed as a family with online activities and volunteer work within the community.

Enrolments are now open for the 2023 program. If you are interested in being apart of the program this year please visit the parish website and complete the online enrolment form.

<https://www.newcastlecatholic.org.au/sacramental-enrolment-form/>

For more information please contact the office on 49791101 or newcparish@mn.catholic.org.au



Please be aware the Regional Office will be closed over Christmas and New Year **from 4pm on Friday, 23rd December till 9:30am on Thursday, 5th January.**

Phone messages and emails received during this time will be answered ASAP upon our return in 2023.

TODAY'S LITURGY

First Reading: Is 62:11-12

Your Saviour is born.

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 96:1. 6. 11-12

(R.) A light will shine on us this day:
the Lord is born for us.

1. The Lord is king, let earth rejoice,
the many coastlands be glad.
The skies proclaim his justice;
all the peoples see his glory. (R.)
2. Light shines forth for the just
and joy for the upright of heart.
Rejoice, you just, in the Lord;
give glory to his holy name. (R.)

Second Reading: Ti 3:4-7

His own compassion saved us.

Gospel Acclamation: Lk 2:14

Alleluia, alleluia!
Glory to God in the highest,
peace to his people on earth. Alleluia!

Gospel: Lk 2:15-20

*The shepherds found Mary and Joseph, and the
baby lying in the manger.*

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TAIZE SERVICE

Venue: Immaculate Heart of
Mary Catholic Church Tighes Hill
Date: Sunday January 1
Time: 5.00pm – 6pm
followed by a shared supper.



PRAYER REQUESTS

RECENTLY DECEASED: Gino Malaspina, Narelle Turner, Margaret Broad

ANNIVERSARIES: Manuel Zaunders, Sylvia Fitzpatrick, Joan Hurtz, Ronnie Griffiths, Len Griffiths, Des Howard, John Hilton, Bruce Cathcart

IN REMEMBRANCE: Piero Barile, Nino D'Andrea and family

SICK: Christine Dowling, Margaret Cox, Helen Tumbers, Phil Bawden, Madge Humphries, Ronnie Jennings, Eileen Howard, Eva Grant, Colin Bryant, Maureen Sunman, Maree Halbert, Carlo Rossi, Kath Murray, Veronica McCann, Peter Skinner, Tiani Bishop, Tom Parker, Sam Broad, Ronald Watt

Names may be placed here by contacting the Parish Office. Please refer to the Policy Document on the Parish website—visit www.newcastlecatholic.org.au/downloads.

THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS

There are two principal feasts in the Liturgical Year: Easter and Christmas. These are both solemnities (and holydays of obligation) and in the current Liturgical Calendar are the only feasts that have octaves attached. Solemnities are festive and exceptional days, the highest ranked feasts of the liturgical calendar marked with special characteristics: An *octave* is the eight-day period during which Easter or Christmas is celebrated, and includes the actual feast. The eighth day is also called the octave or “octave day,” and days in between are said to be “within the octave”.

It has often been said that Catholics know how to celebrate. The Church has a built-in pattern within the liturgical calendar that provides what we need to celebrate the feasts of the year: times of preparation and penance building to major feasts that are prolonged, and multi-level feast days spread throughout the year. The octave gives us time to impress upon our souls the mysteries, joys and graces of the principal feasts of the Church year.

From Christmas Day until January 1st, the Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, is the Octave Day of Christmas. The Liturgy gives the clues that every day within the octave is treated the same as the original feast day of the Nativity of our Lord. Celebrate all week! Four days within the octave are feasts: St. Stephen, St. John the Evangelist, the Holy Innocents and the Holy Family.

Maybe this year, you could extend your birthday to an octave! Life is hectic, we can't pack all our celebrating into one day. Celebrate with Jesus this week and with yourself, too!