

Reflection on the Gospel-Advent 4A

Matthew 1:18-24 -Veronica Lawson RSM

One of my friends asked me what I would like for Christmas. "Nothing", was my immediate response. "I just want to spend time with community and friends and family". And that's what I'll be doing, simply "being with". Being-with others in joy or sorrow or in the hum-drum of life is probably the best gift we can offer and the best gift we can receive. It is not always possible to be present in person and, thankfully, true friends know that "being-with" is not restricted to physical presence. There is a sense in which those we love are always with us and we are always with them, even when the demands of life and our work or ministry choices separate us geographically. Real friends are "with-us" even in our absence and "being-with" in spirit or in person is closely allied with "being-for". Today's gospel affirms "being-with" as God's Christmas gift to us.

The first chapter of Matthew's gospel tells us that the expected child Messiah or Christ-child is "God-with-us", Emmanuel. The gospel will conclude with the assurance of the resurrected Christ, "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt 28:20). As we celebrate the successive liturgical seasons in the coming year, we shall have the opportunity to enter into Matthew's story of God-with-us in the person of Jesus and to live out the pattern of that story more fully in our own lives.

There is no angelic annunciation to Mary in Matthew's gospel, no embrace of an expectant mother. There is no inn or innkeeper, no shepherds or shepherds' fields. These are all features of Luke's tableau. Matthew brings different features and different characters to centre stage. Chief among Matthew's characters is Joseph who, like Joseph of old, receives God's revelation in a series of dreams. The angelic annunciation in today's gospel is to Joseph: he is not to be afraid, but to accept the extraordinary ways of God which will bring salvation for God's people. Joseph trusts the word of God's messenger: he abandons his own plans and lives by faith in God.

If we try to harmonise the different gospel accounts of the events surrounding the birth of Jesus, we may lose some of the wondrous mystery of the feast we celebrate. If, on the other hand, we attend to the awesome truth that God is with us, then we might be more attentive to how we are with one another. We may also come to acknowledge our presence or "being-with" as a precious Christmas gift. Those who distance themselves from the community of life run the risk of succumbing to fear and of losing the joy in living. Acceptance of the truth that God is with us has the potential to drive out fear and to draw us into the deepest mysteries of life.

BULLETIN FOR FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT, YEAR A



ST ALIPIUS PARISH, BALLARAT EAST

Including St Peter & Paul's, Buninyong

Parish Address: 84 Victoria Street, Ballarat East. 3350

Telephone: 5332 6611

Fax: 5332 3303

Email: ballarateast@ballarat.catholic.org.au

MASS TIMETABLE FOR THE WEEK BEGINNING MONDAY, 19th DECEMBER 2016

MONDAY:	No Mass
TUESDAY:	11.00 am in Mercy Centre
WEDNESDAY:	11.00 am in Mercy Centre
THURSDAY:	No Mass
FRIDAY:	9.30 am in Parish Church
SATURDAY:	No Sacrament of Reconciliation

NEXT WEEKEND'S MASSES

SATURDAY:	CHRISTMAS EVE	St Alipius: 6.00 pm
		9.00 pm
		Ss Peter & Paul: 7.00 pm
SUNDAY:	CHRISTMAS DAY	St Alipius: 9.00 am
READINGS -	First: Isaiah 9.2-4, 6-7	
	Second: Titus 2.11-14	
	Gospel: Luke 2:1-14	

RECENT DEATH: Eileen Egeberg, Velda Clark.

ANNIVERSARIES: Nola & Leo Clamp, Margaret Flanagan, Mary Hammer, John Taffe, Jane Taffe, Terry Howlett, John Curran, Bob MacDonald.

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE SICK: Nell McGettigan, Pamela Hayes, Nathan Cambell, Denise Learmonth, Cath Wheelahan, Barbara Keirl, Mick Kent, Terry McGarry, Kevin Walsh, Peter McDonald (Ocean Grove), Peter Clohesy, Kaye Tuddenham, Frank Nolan (Buninyong), Evie May Lafey, Christine Martin.

COUNTING TEAMS:

This Week: **Team 9:** J. Patton ©, J. O'Brien, B. Brisbane, J. Gibcus.

Next Week: **Team 10:** P. Saunders©, M. Saunders.



COLLECTIONS LAST WEEKEND:

PARISH:	Envelopes:	\$ 1,840.60
	Loose money:	\$ 300.00
	Direct debits:	\$ <u>1,055.00</u>
		\$ 3,195.60
PRESBYTERY:		\$ 833.00

COMMUNAL RITE OF PENANCE

Wednesday, 21st December at 7.00 pm in St Alipius Church.

CHRISTMAS MASSES

The following number of Ministers of the Eucharist will be required at the St Alipius Christmas Masses:

Christmas Eve: 6.00 pm....7
9.00 pm....5
Christmas Day: 9.00 am....3

Please help out if you are able as there is no roster.

CHILD SAFETY OFFICER

Jim Moran has accepted an appointment as Child Safety Officer for the parish. All parish policies and procedures regarding parish child protection will be made public and available as they are developed.

CAROLS IN THE CATHEDRAL

A Festival of Readings & Carols, Friday 23rd December at 7.30 pm at St Patrick's Cathedral. See Notice Board for details.

Ss PETER & PAUL'S LITURGY ROSTER

Please collect your roster from Mike Maloney

PIETY STALL

Columban calendars and Christmas cards are available for purchase.

CATHOLIC MISSION DIARIES

There is a limited number of 2017 diaries available this weekend.

KEEP THIS DAY FREE

Sunday, 22nd January 2017—a farewell for Fr Adrian in the Parish Hall at 3.00 pm.

MERCY CONNECT BALLARAT

Supporting refugee and asylum seeker students in local schools

Mercy Works is currently recruiting volunteers to support refugee and asylum seeker students in Ballarat schools through the Mercy Connect project. The volunteer commitment is for approximately three hours per week for four school terms. Experience working in an educational setting is preferred, but you will receive ongoing training and support. Initial training for new volunteers will be held in February 2017. Contact Paulene Barton—Mercy Connect Project Coordinator on 0417 624 330 or email mercyconnect@gmail.com for information and an application form. Applications close on 2nd February 2017.

OLHC CHRISTMAS DAY LUNCH

You are invited to join us on Christmas Day for lunch (no cost).

Time: 12.00 md - 2.00 pm
Where: OLHC Parish Hall
482 Gillies St Nth, Wendouree
Book as early as numbers are limited.
Phone: 0419 975 914

BDSJC: Who is coming for Christmas Dinnner?

In September the Australian Bishop's Social Justice Statement was titled "**A Place at the Table**" *Social Justice in an Aging Society*. In response to this statement the Ballarat Diocesan Social Justice Commission is asking the families of our Ballarat Diocesan community to consider whether there might be an extra place at their Christmas dinner table for an elderly relative, friend or neighbour who may otherwise be spending Christmas Day alone.

PARISH APPOINTMENT

Bishop Paul Bird has announced the appointment of Fr James Kerr, who has served in the Cathedral Parish for the past three years, as the new assistant priest in Mildura from January onwards. He will replace Fr Damien Styles who is returning to full-time chaplaincy with the Australian Army.

POP up Shop for the Homeless and Those in Need

Thank you to everyone who popped something in the box at the rear of the church. We have had toiletries, underwear, socks, hats, gloves and blankets. All greatly appreciated and the box will remain. With Christmas, holidays etc the need does not go away. At the moment there is a great need for underwear for men. Sample toiletries are great for care packages. Again, **THANKYOU** for your continued support.