

**Reflection on the Gospel: Christmas Year A
(Matthew 1:1-21; Luke 2:1-20; John 1:1-18)**

-Veronica Lawson RSM

The readings for the Christmas liturgies vary from celebration to celebration. The prologue to Matthew's gospel provides the first part of the gospel for the Christmas Vigil Mass. The first two words of the gospel (*biblos geneseōs*) evoke the first words of the Book of Genesis and thus locate the child to be born within the broad sweep of the birth of the cosmos. At the same time, the child Jesus is identified as Messiah or *Christos* (the anointed of God) and descendant of Israel's ancestors, Abraham and David. His name is symbolic of the salvation or liberation he will bring for "his people". At this time of Earth's distress, we are conscious of our need to be saved from our "sins" which include our capacity to destroy God's world for selfish gain.

The gospel for Midnight Mass (Lk 2:1-14) comes from the great story-teller, Luke, as does the gospel for the early morning Mass (Lk 2:15-20). Luke tells us that Jesus was born into the world of the Roman Empire during the reign of Caesar Augustus. In his lifetime, Augustus was acclaimed by the people as saviour of the world, son of God, and bringer of peace, albeit by violent means. Luke's communities at the end of the first century would have known the achievements and reputation of Caesar Augustus. These early Christians would have recognised in Luke's story of the birth of Jesus a very deliberate attempt to proclaim Jesus, rather than Caesar Augustus, as the face of God, as saviour of the world, and as bringer of the good news of peace. Luke is a master storyteller. He weaves, from Israel's sacred history and from what he knows about Jesus' origins, a wonderful tapestry of life and hope for the world, a tapestry that unites the heavenly, the human, and the animal world in one great act of praise. The violence that brought "peace" to the Roman Empire has no place in this scene. The peace of Christ is the deep peace of non-violence and reconciliation. It is the peace that satisfies the longing of our hearts.

On Christmas morning, we hear the words of John's prologue. Once more, Earth's genealogy in Genesis 1 is evoked: "*In the beginning* was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was *in the beginning* with God." The gospel then asserts that "all things came into being through him" and that "what has come into being in him was life and the life was the light of the people". These assertions prepare the way for the extraordinary statement that the Word was en-fleshed and tented among us. John brings home to us the momentous nature of the birth of the child whom Matthew has named Emmanuel, God-with-us.

BULLETIN FOR THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD



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, 26th DECEMBER 2016**

MONDAY:	No Mass
TUESDAY:	No Mass
WEDNESDAY:	No Mass
THURSDAY:	No Mass
FRIDAY:	No Mass
SATURDAY:	No Sacrament of Reconciliation

NEXT WEEKEND'S MASSES

ST. ALIPIUS	SAT	6.00 PM
	SUN	9.00 PM
BUNINYONG	SUN	10.30 PM

MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD

READINGS -	First:	Numbers 6:22-27
	Second:	Galatians 4:4-7
	Gospel:	Luke 2:16-21

RECENT DEATH: Margaret Taylor, Tom Donohue.

ANNIVERSARIES: Nancy Nugent.

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).

COUNTING TEAMS:

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

Next Week: **Team 11:** E. Kennedy ©, C. Stewart.



COLLECTIONS LAST WEEKEND:

PARISH:	Envelopes:	\$ 1,579.00
	Loose money:	\$ 300.00
	Credit Cards:	\$ 3,927.00
	Direct debits:	\$ <u>440.00</u>
		\$ 6,246.00
PRESBYTERY:		\$ 991.00

THANK YOU

Mary Martin thanks the community for prayers offered for Evie May Laffey and Christine Martin during their recent illness.

CHRISTMAS APPEAL 2016

Our Christmas Appeal is one way by which the diocese can respond to the many communities near and far who turn to us for assistance. Often these requests come to us through people who have bonds with the Diocese of Ballarat
Bishop Paul thanks the people of the diocese for their support of last year's appeal. The money was distributed as follows:

Loreto Vietnam Australia Program	5,000
St Columban's Mission Society	5,000
Refugees in the Middle East	5,000
Catholic Education in Myanmar	5,000
Caritas Australia	5,000
Catholic Mission	5,000
Nazareth House Ballarat	5,000
Australian Catholic Bishop's Conference Aboriginal Ministry	5,000
Exodus Community, Wendouree West	2,000
Australian Catholic Relations Against Trafficking in Humans	2,000
Edmund Rice Centre	2,000
3BA Christmas Appeal	<u>2,000</u>
	\$48,000

KEEP THIS DAY FREE

Sunday, 22nd January 2017—a farewell for Fr Adrian in the Parish Hall at **midday** (following the 10.30 am Mass). More details to come.

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.

PALMS AUSTRALIA

A Palms Encounter with our Catholic Communities in East Timor. A last minute gift that will deliver a real message of Christmas and be remembered forever. Palms long-term volunteers guide this intimate, immersive, inter cultural experience providing insights that challenge perceptions and deepen understanding.

Get a Christmas Gift voucher for any 2017 encounter.

Register now for our **2-4 April Encounter** and receive **\$400 off a second ticket**.

Call Roger on 02 9560 5333 or go to [www.palms.org.au/ Encounters](http://www.palms.org.au/Encounters)