

Reflection on the Gospel: Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God (Luke 2:16-21)

The celebration of Mary as Mother of God has very ancient roots. Mary was venerated in the East from the early third Christian century as *theotokos*, a Greek term that means God-Bearer. This designation for Mary was affirmed by the Council of Ephesus in 431 CE. The subsequent Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE, in the face of arguments to the contrary, declared that Jesus was both fully human and fully divine, and that Mary could rightly be called *theotokos*. The title Mother of God is a loose equivalent of the more ancient designation, *theotokos*. It affirms the Christological affirmations of Chalcedon and reminds us of the fullness of the humanity and the divinity of Jesus. It also reminds us of the extraordinary role of Miriam of Nazareth in the mystery of the incarnation.

At Christmas, the liturgy invites us to focus on Luke's story of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth and John's reflection on the Word made Flesh. Today's liturgy shifts the focus ever so slightly to Mary, through whose "yes" the mystery of the incarnation is realized. Today's gospel takes up the Lukan account of the birth of Jesus. Mary has given birth to her son, wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, a feeding place for animals. An angel has announced the good news to shepherds who are tending their flocks in the fields. The shepherds have listened to the proclamation of the angel and the heavenly host that joined the angel and set out in search of the child. They find Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger, just as the angel had told them. The shepherds, outcasts in their society, have become the agents and proclaimers of the good news of salvation.

The all-knowing narrator tells us that Mary treasured or carefully preserved all these happenings and pondered them in her heart. A little later, we hear the story of the twelve year old Jesus going up to Jerusalem with his parents for Passover and staying behind in the temple, teaching the teachers. Mary and Joseph listen to his explanation about remaining "in his Father's house" or "being about his Father's business" though they fail to understand. The narrator tells us that "his mother treasured all these things in her heart." While a different Greek verb is used for "treasured" in this passage, the meaning is the same as in today's gospel passage. Mary has to struggle to comprehend the ways of God in her life. She is presented as a grace-filled woman forever pondering the mysterious ways of God. We too are called to treasure "all these things" in our hearts and trust that their power will transform our lives even if we do not always understand.

BULLETIN FOR MARY THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD



ST ALIPIUS PARISH, BALLARAT EAST

Including St Peter & Paul's, Buninyong

Parish Address: 84 Victoria Street, Ballarat East. 3350

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MASS TIMETABLE FOR THE WEEK BEGINNING MONDAY, 2nd JANUARY 2017

MONDAY:	No Mass
TUESDAY:	No Mass
WEDNESDAY:	10.00 am Funeral Mass - Joy Fogarty
THURSDAY:	9.30 am in Parish Church
FRIDAY:	9.30 am in Parish Church
SATURDAY:	No Sacrament of Reconciliation

NEXT WEEKEND'S MASSES

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

THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

READINGS -	First:	Isaiah 60:1-6
	Second:	Ephesians 3:2-3.5-6
	Gospel:	Matthew 2:1-12

RECENT DEATH: Raymond Dickson, Olga Rodlic, Joy Fogarty, Brenton Simpkin, Nell McGettigan.

ANNIVERSARIES: Fr Paddy Culligan, Mary McCann, Margaret & Maurice Troy.

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE SICK: Nathan Cambell, Denise Learmonth, Cath Wheelahan, Barbara Keirl, Mick Kent, Terry McGarry, Kevin Walsh, Peter McDonald (Ocean Grove), Peter Clohesy, Frank Nolan (Buninyong), Mary Barnett.

COUNTING TEAMS:

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

Next Week: **Team 1:** L. Noonan ©, G. Clarkson, L. Mullane.



COLLECTIONS LAST WEEKEND:

PARISH:	Envelopes:	\$ 1,473.50
	Loose money:	\$ 300.00
	Direct debits:	\$ <u>590.00</u>
		\$ 2,363.50
PRESBYTERY:		\$ 4,371.00

CHILD SAFETY IN OUR PARISH

Notices, relating to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children in our care, are on display in the church foyers for your information.

DIOCESAN COMMUNICATIONS

Diocesan Website www.ballarat.catholic.org.au. The website contains current news and information on the diocese and parishes and also a section for members to access resources relevant to diocesan ministries.

e-News: e-News is available to all members of the diocese and those associated with an interest in the life of the diocese. It is published every two weeks and distributed via email. You can subscribe to receive e-News on the diocesan website www.ballarat.catholic.org.au or you are welcome to submit items for publication to enews@ballarat.catholic.org.au. News items submitted should have relevance to the life and activity of the parishes and schools of the diocese and include photos where possible.

Our Diocesan Community: ODC is published three times a year and delivered to parishes for distribution to those in the diocese. This magazine contains the good news stories of events and people in the diocese. You are welcome to submit items for publication to odc@ballarat.catholic.org.au and again, news items submitted should have relevance to the life and activity of parished and schools of the diocese and include photos where possible.

LAY PASTORAL MINISTRY PROGRAM—START IN 2017

The Ballarat Diocese Lay Pastoral Ministry Program offers low-cost opportunities for online study and formation for lay workers, both employees and volunteers. Details are on the diocesan website (link to Program on lower front page) email: amanda.smith@ballarat.catholic.org.au or phone 5337 7125.

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.

ECOS

The Diocesan Ecological Sustainability Group (ECOS) is encouraging parishes to spread the word of *Laudato Si*. There will be information regularly available on the diocesan website www.ballarat.catholic.org.au

“We come together to take charge of this home which has been entrusted to us, knowing that all the good which exists here will not be taken up into the heavenly feast. In union with all creatures, we journey through this land seeking God, for ‘if the world has a beginning and if it has been created, we must enquire who gave it this beginning, and who was its Creator’ (172). Let us sing as we go. May our struggles and concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope”. (Pope Francis, *Laudato Si* #244).

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC YOUTH FESTIVAL

The Catholic Bishops of Australia invite Catholics across the country to join in celebrating a Year of Youth from the beginning of Advent 2017 to the end of 2018. The theme is “Open New Horizons for Spreading Joy: Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment”. The emphasis is on local discussion and dialogue in Parishes, schools, youth groups and dioceses. The Year of Youth will be launched at the next Australian Catholic Youth festival in Sydney in December 2017. More information on diocesan website News and Youth and Young Adult pages www.ballarat.catholic.org.au