

Reflection on the Gospel — 3rd Sunday of Advent Year A (Matthew 11:2-11)

-Veronica Lawson RSM

The third Sunday of Advent used to be called *Gaudete* (be joyful) Sunday. It provided a mid-term break within a period of austerity or penance in preparation for Christmas. Advent is no longer celebrated as a penitential period, but rather as a reflective time of expectation and hope. The invitation to rejoice nonetheless remains part of the Advent liturgy: it is certainly present in the first reading: *"the desert shall rejoice and bloom ..."* (Isaiah 35:1-6, 10).

Today's gospel passage is full of questions. John sends his disciples to Jesus with a question: "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another? Jesus responds by directing them to the evidence: "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them." He adds a comment about those who take no offence at him: they are blessed. He then turns to the crowds with a series of rhetorical questions about their motivation for going out to John in the desert. His words to the crowds conclude with an identification of John as God's prophet and messenger, his own precursor. He pays an extraordinary tribute to John, but leaves the reader puzzling about the final statement: the least in the kin-dom is greater than John.

John's imprisonment is a sobering reminder of what can happen to those who are faithful to their mission. As Matthew's Jesus will attest, John is no reed shaken by the wind. This could well be a subtle reference to Herod Antipas' choice of the reed as a symbol on the coins commemorating the founding of Tiberias. Herod has arrested and imprisoned John and later will have him put to death on specious grounds. John is not a fickle reed like Herod, but steadfast and strong.

The reader knows that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah or God's Anointed One. John is checking it out. He clearly has contact with disciples whom he sends to Jesus with the question about his identity. Is Advent over or not? The answer to John's question is to be found in what they hear and see. The restorative and healing activity of Jesus is realising the Messianic dream of the prophet Isaiah (first reading). In a sense, Advent never ends: the women and children brought into our own cities as sex slaves can attest to this, as can those who remain in the limbo of Nauru and Manus Island. We might well pray: "Strengthen our weak hands, and make firm our feeble knees" in the face of such challenges. The Christ, the Anointed of God, lives on in the community and the community is called to bring the saving power of God, the joy of the Gospel, to a troubled world.

Matthew 11:2-11 When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me." As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.' Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kin-dom of heaven is greater than he.

ST ALIPIUS PARISH — BALLARAT EAST & BUNINYONG THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT — YEAR A, SUNDAY 15TH DECEMBER, 2019

*Our parish is committed to the safety, wellbeing and dignity
of all children and vulnerable adults.*

St Alipius' Parish Church
82 Victoria Street, BALLARAT EAST 3350

SS Peter & Paul's Church
701 Fiskens St, BUNINYONG

Contact Details

Parish Office: 84 Victoria Street, Ballarat East 3350

Hours: 9.30am - 1.30pm Tues, Thurs, Fri **SAP Liturgy email:** sapliturgy@gmail.com

Telephone: 5332 6611 **SAP Liturgy website:** www.sapliturgy.net.au

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Clergy and Staff

Priests: Frs Justin Driscoll, Jorge De Chavez OSJ, Vincent Pham Van Long CSsR

Visiting Priests: Frs Dan Arundell and Barry Ryan

Parish Coordinator: Lucy O'Beirne

Child Safety Officer: Roxanne Leed

Finance Officer: Kerrie McTigue

Funeral Ministry: Kathy Curran & Carmel Flynn

Masses This Week

Tuesday, 17th December	12.00 pm	St Alipius Primary End of Year Mass
Wednesday, 18th December	9.30 am	St Francis Xavier End of Year Mass
	12.00 pm	Emmaus Primary End of Year Mass
Thursday, 19th December	11.00 am	Mercy Place Anointing Mass (Corbett St)
Friday, 20th December	9.30 am	St. Alipius' Church

Next Weekend's Masses

St Alipius' Church , Ballarat East	Saturday	21st December	6.00 pm
	Sunday	22nd December	10.30 am
SS Peter & Paul's Church , Buninyong	Sunday	22nd December	9.00 am

Fourth Sunday of Advent — Year A

Readings	First:	Isaiah	7:10-14
	Second:	Romans	1:1-7
	Gospel:	Matthew	1:18-24

Baptisms: Harvey Tuddenham, Paddy Tuddenham, Pip Tuddenham

Recent Deaths: Tony Bazzano, Greg Roberts

Anniversaries: Jim Power, Anna Ridsdale

We pray for Kateri Byrne, Pat Hogan, Cathy Jones and Peter Martin and all who are unwell

What's on for Advent that can help us prepare for Christmas?

- **Lead Kindly Light** Advent Reflection opportunities. Week 4 - Thursday December 19th, 10.30 am at Ss Peter Paul Buninyong & in the evening, 7.00 pm at St Alipius'. All welcome to join Fr Vincent who will lead this week.
- **Advent Retreat** Sunday December 15th, St Alipius' Hall, 2.00pm - 5.00pm Loreto Sisters Natalie Houlihan and Rachel McLoughlin will lead the retreat which will be a spacious Advent time of reflections, readings, music, images, silence and ending with Spiritual Conversation circles to conclude. All are welcome.
- **"A Christmas Musical"** Sunday 15th Dec. 10.00am & Tuesday 17th Dec. 7.30pm. The Neil Street Uniting Church Choir, cnr Neill St & Macarthur Sts, Soldiers Hill. Free Admission.
- **Anglican Cathedral** Service of Lessons & Carols Sunday December 22nd 7.00 pm

Giving Tree Gift Tags

Now available near the Giving Trees in each church. Please return gifts by Sunday Mass on 22nd December. Any late offerings will need to be personally delivered by parishioners. Thank you for your anticipated support.

St Vincent de Paul Society Christmas Appeal

Please help us to "Help A Family Celebrate Christmas", this year. Envelopes available at the Piety Stall. All donations are used in the Ballarat area; amounts over \$2.00 are tax deductible.

Parish Pastoral Council Discernment gathering

Nominated parishioners have been invited to gathering in the St Alipius' Hall on Monday 16th December 7.00pm - 9.00pm.

Advent Penitential Service

Friday December 20th, 7.00 pm at St Alipius' Church with Frs Jorge and Vincent available for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Christmas Masses

Christmas Eve: 6.00pm & 8.00pm at Ballarat East, 7.00pm at Buninyong
Christmas Day 9.00am Ballarat East

Counting Teams

This Week: **Team 8:** J. Patton ©, B. Brisbane, J. O'Brien
Next Week: **Team 9:** P. Saunders ©, M. Saunders

Parish: Envelopes: \$ 694.70
Loose: \$ 300.00
Direct Debits: \$ 175.00
Catholic Missions '19 \$ 450.50
\$ 1620.20

*Thank you to those who
contributed to the
collections last weekend*

Presbytery: \$ 837.00

Stewardship Renewal - Parish Groups, Ministries and Organisations

This week we look at the responses received for interest in Youth activities for our parish:

- 0 Adult Team to Support the Youth
- 0 Young Adults ~ 18 - 35 years
- 0 Youth Group ~ 12 - 17 years

"Making a Scene at Christmas"

Nativity displays will be held at Ss Peter & Paul's Church, Buninyong, December 12th -15th. Open this Saturday & Sunday 9.00 am - 5.00pm. Parishioners are invited to help pack up on Monday 16th December from 3.00 pm.

Please note there will be no morning tea after Mass at Buninyong this week due to the nativity display. Instead there will be Christmas morning tea after 9am Mass on 21st December. All welcome. Please bring a plate.

SVDP Christmas Cards & Calendars — St Alipius' Piety Stall

Christmas cards (\$5 for 8 cards) and 2020 Columban calendars (\$9 each) available.

OLHC Parish Wendouree Christmas Day Lunch

OLHC Parish Wendouree are hosting lunch on Christmas Day in the Parish Hall, 482 Gillies Street, Wendouree from 12.00noon – 2.00pm. Transport is available. For bookings or further information phone 0419 975914 or email christmaslunchwendouree@gmail.com.

Plenary Council 2020 — Discernment Gatherings

Thank you to all those who joined in last week's discernment gatherings. Our next parish discernment gatherings will be held in the St Alipius' Hall on Monday 17th February 7pm - 9pm, and Tuesday 18th February 1pm - 3pm. Many thanks to John Clonan, Damien McCartin, Kristen Murray and Bernadette Tolan who are our Parish facilitators.

Bishop's Annual Christmas Appeal

At Christmas Masses in the Diocese of Ballarat all are invited to contribute to a special collection that seeks to respond to some of the many who seek assistance from us. Last year \$45,000 was contributed by those at Christmas Masses and was distributed to the following:

◆ Flood Appeal Townsville	\$ 5000	◆ The Soup Bus (Ontrack Foundation)	\$ 2000
◆ Catholic Mission	\$ 5000	◆ Uniting Care Meal Program	\$ 2000
◆ Caritas Australia	\$ 5000	◆ Exodus Community Wendouree West	\$ 2000
◆ Sunraysia Drought Relief Group	\$ 5000	◆ ACRATH*	\$ 2000
◆ OnePlate International Food Programs	\$ 5000	◆ Opening the Doors Educ'n Foundation	\$ 2000
◆ 3BA Christmas Appeal	\$ 4000	◆ Edmund Rice Education	\$ 2000
◆ Nazareth House Ballarat	\$ 4000	TOTAL donations 2019	<u>\$45000</u>

(*ACRATH: Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans.)

St Alipius' Parish's collection that contributed directly to the Bishop's Appeal in 2018 was \$2,509.45. Envelopes for this year's appeal are available on the church seats.