

The Fourth Wise Man—Peter Kearney

Three wise men came to Bethlehem following a star,
Their names we're told were Melchior, Gaspar and Balthasar.

One brought a gift of Frankincense, the others Myrrh and Gold,
They came to greet the new born King, the Gospel story told.

They gave their gifts to Jesus in the manger where he lay,
His mother offered coffee, but they said they couldn't stay.

They got back on their camels, near the stable they'd been tied,
And as they headed off back East, Mary softly sighed.

"I really don't need perfume, though Myrrh of course is tops,
And gold is always useful, but we're nowhere near the shops.
And frankincense is lovely, but a stable's not the place,
I hope they're not the wisest men in all the human race.
It was very good of them to come from such a far off land,
After all that time on camels, it's a wonder they could stand.
But bringing Jesus gifts of Myrrh & Frankincense & Gold
Is just not very practical, he's only ten days old."

Next afternoon a man appeared outside the stable gate.
He said he was the fourth wise man, and sorry he was late.

"I've brought some things I thought you'd need, it's just a little gift."

A quick inspection of his bag gave Mary's heart a lift.

A frozen casserole was there, and a stuffed and fluffy toy,
Some baby clothes in pastel blue, he'd guessed it was a boy.

The thought of washing nappies Mary cried, need not un-nerve us,
For here's a six month voucher for a nappy washing service.

She turned to thank the stranger, but the stranger wasn't there,
He'd slipped away and vanished in the chilly winter air.

But on the gate he'd left a note, quite simple but profound,
"Don't write this in the Gospel please, I'd never live it down."
So don't forget the fourth wise man, the wisest of the lot,

He brought the really useful gifts the other three forgot.



The Legend of St. Nicholas: The Real Santa Claus
The legend of Santa Claus can be traced back hundreds of years to a monk named [St. Nicholas](#). It is believed that Nicholas was born sometime around 280 A.D. in Patara, near Myra in modern-day Turkey. Much admired for his piety and kindness, St. Nicholas became the subject of many legends. It is said that he gave away all of his inherited wealth and travelled the countryside helping the poor and sick. One of the best-known St. Nicholas stories is the time he saved three poor sisters from being sold into slavery by their father by providing them with a dowry so that they could be married.



The Origins Of.....

Boxing Day, Dec 26th

The name comes from a time when the rich used to box up gifts to give to the poor. **Boxing Day** was traditionally a day off for servants, and the day when they received a special Christmas box from their masters. The servants would also go home on **Boxing Day** to give Christmas boxes to their families. (The Irish call Dec 26th St. Stephen's Day)

Christmas Tree

Germany is credited with starting the **Christmas tree tradition** as we now know it in the 16th century when devout Christians brought decorated **trees** into their homes. ... To recapture the scene for his family, he erected a **tree** in the main room and wired its branches with lighted candles.

Christmas Cake

Christmas cake is an English **tradition** that began as plum porridge. People ate the porridge on **Christmas** Eve, using it to line their stomachs after a day of fasting. Soon dried **fruit**, spices and honey were added to the porridge mixture, and eventually it turned into **Christmas** pudding.

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Ararat, Christmas Weekend Masses

The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas) Night

As we celebrate, we acknowledge the Indigenous owners of the land on which our Churches are built, the Tjapwurong people, and we respect the presence of the spirits of their ancestors among us.

Fr. Andrew Hayes

Masses this Week

Ararat Fri Jan 1st 9.30am

A Blessed Christmas

After a horror year for many, and inconvenient one for everyone, I wish you all a very blessed, safe and peaceful Christmas.

Let's hope for a better 2021. Me? I have just packed up and returned from the run-around with "Making a Scene at Christmas," modified of course for Covid, still exhausting but good to do. Hundreds of visitors to our pop-up shop in Bridge Mall in Ballarat. The new year? Bit of a rest in January. Merging the parishes will be on the agenda after that. We will have property decisions to make in Stawell. We need to get Fr Eric's house rented out. Where will we put the office? Those sorts of questions. In both parishes we'll have lots of organising to do with setting up small groups of people to do lots of jobs, things that Fr Eric used to do in Stawell, things that I won't be able to do in Ararat now that I'm part-time in Stawell. All that. Let's to look forward to.

Today is the solstice. Last night the planets lined up. Yesterday was gravy day. Mary and Joseph are half-way to Bethlehem. The shepherds are tending their sheep, completely oblivious at this point. Joyce wants my paragraph for the bulletin. Let's happening.

A happy and holy Christmas everyone!

St. Mary's Café

Our Café will be taking a break—see you when the schools go back. Have a great Christmas to one and all.

Bishop's Christmas Appeal

Please see the notice board for how you can contribute to the Bishop's Christmas Appeal and where previous year's contributions have been donated.

100 at Mass - Sundays

Easy explanation

Everyone can come to Mass now, every Sunday. We can have 100 people at Mass, but we need to register everyone who attends by scanning a QR code with our smart phones. For those who have a smart phone and can do this, please scan yourself in and be prepared to help others who don't have a fancy phone. If you haven't got a smart phone, no problem, we'll do it for you.

Technical explanation

If we register everyone with pen and paper we can have 4sq metres per person = 50 people. If we QR code everyone we can have 2sq metres per person = 100 people. Why the difference? If we QR code, the contact tracers have instant access to data rather than contacting the parish to find and scan the handwritten notes, thus wasting precious hours. There is a different QR code for each church and this will be at the doors, in the pews, on the bulletins, easily available. You might need to download a code reader app. Sometimes it works straight from your camera.

We can handwrite the names and numbers for weekday Masses (smaller numbers) and also at Lake Bolac and Landsborough for Sundays. Lake Bolac and Landsborough will need to QR for Christmas and funerals because we'll be wanting to fit more people in at 2sqm.

OFFICE HOURS

The office will be **closed** over the Christmas break. It will re-open:

Wednesday January 6th—10am to 3pm
Normal hours resume that week.

First Reading Is 9:1-7

A son is given to us.
The people that walked in darkness has seen a great light; on those who live in a land of deep shadow a light has shone. You have made their gladness greater, you have made their joy increase; they rejoice in your Presence as men rejoice at harvest time, as men are happy when they are dividing the spoils. For the yoke that was weighing on him, the bar across his shoulders, the rod of his oppressor, these you break as on the day of Midian. For all the footgear of battle, every cloak rolled in blood, is burnt and consumed by fire. For there is a child born for us, a son given to us and dominion is laid on his shoulders; and this is the name they give him: Wonder-Counsellor, Mighty-God, Eternal-Father, Prince-of-Peace. Wide is his dominion in a peace that has no end, for the throne of David and for his royal power, which he establishes and makes Secure in justice and integrity. From this time onwards and for ever, the jealous love of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Responsorial Psalm Ps 95:1-3. 11-13 R. Lk 2:11

(R) Today is born our Saviour, Christ the Lord.

1. O sing a new song to the Lord, sing to the Lord all the earth. O sing to the Lord, bless his name. (R.)
2. Proclaim his help day by day, tell among the nations his glory and his wonders among all the peoples. (R.)
3. Let the heavens rejoice and earth be glad, let the sea and all within it thunder praise, let the land and all it bears rejoice, all the trees of the wood shout for joy at the presence of the Lord for he comes, he comes to rule the earth. (R.)
4. With justice he will rule the world, he will judge the peoples with his truth. (R.)

Second Reading Ti 2:11-14

God's grace has been revealed to all people.

God's grace has been revealed, and it has made salvation possible for the whole human race and taught us that what we have to do is to give up everything that does not lead to God, and all our worldly ambitions; we must be self-restrained and live good and religious lives here in this present world, while we are waiting in hope for the blessing which will come with the Appearing of the glory of our great God and saviour Christ Jesus. He sacrificed himself for us in order to set us free from all wickedness and to purify a people so that it could be his very own and would have no ambition except to do good.

Gospel Acclamation Lk 2:10-11

Alleluia, alleluia!
Good News and great joy to all the world:
today is born our Saviour, Christ the Lord.
Alleluia!

Gospel Lk 2:1-14

Today a saviour has been born for you.

Caesar Augustus issued a decree for a census of the whole world to be taken. This census – the first – took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria, and everyone went to his own town to be registered. So Joseph set out from the town of Nazareth in Galilee and travelled up to Judaea, to the town of David called Bethlehem, since he was of David's House and line, in order to be registered together with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to a son, her first-born. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them at the inn. In the countryside close by there were shepherds who lived in the fields and took it in turns to watch their flocks during the night. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone round them. They were terrified, but the angel said, 'Do not be afraid. Listen, I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people. Today in the town of David a saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. And here is a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.' And suddenly with the angel there was a great throng of the heavenly host, praising God and singing:

'Glory to God in the highest heaven
and peace to men who enjoy his favour.'

Gospel Reflection

If you were to give just a cursory glance at a collection of 'religious' Christmas cards, or even the local nativity scene, you would undoubtedly see a varied assortment of shepherds, wise men, livestock and angels gathered around the holy family in a timber structure of some sort. Even the most casual reading of Luke's account of the birth of Christ would reveal that most of the nativity figurines are missing! Our retelling of the birth of Christ tends to be an amalgamation of the Luke and Matthew versions with a bit of creative tradition thrown in for good measure.

The Luke account of the nativity carries a very specific theology that runs throughout the rest of that gospel. It is a theology that places the outcast and downtrodden at the centre of Jesus' mission. In this account, Jesus is born outside the town because there is no room for Joseph and Mary within the safety of the inn. Like those he will minister to later in life, Jesus is born 'on the edge' – even outside the boundaries. Rather than the impressive 'Wise Men' of the Matthew infancy account, the witnesses to Jesus' birth in the Luke account are lowly shepherds. Unlike the somewhat romantic notion we may have of shepherds, in Jesus' time they were regarded as little better than thieves and cut-throats. All they could be trusted to do was tend sheep outside of townships and away from 'civilised' society. They held one of the lowest positions in Jewish society. The gospel writer's choice of these witnesses to the birth of Jesus is a very deliberate one that clearly announces the purpose and direction of Jesus' mission.

ANNIVERSARIES: Dec 28th—Jan 3rd

Anne Handley, Joseph Colwell, Mary Pola, Peter Williams Andrew Jackson, Bishop Joe Grech, Zsonella McGrath James O'Connor, Fr. Ted Glowrey, Johanna Lannen Winifred Hynes, Annette Mair, Bernice Clinton, Bernardino Torrecampo, Ivan Lee, Des Brennan, Dorothy Phylard, Sr Veronica O'Brien, Bernie Moloney, Stephanie Mitchell, Jacob Pitcher, Theresa McColl, Roger Gleeson, Vincent Daly, Margaret Cochrane, Eileen Field, Fr Pat McGuire Jessie Fleming, Sharon McMaster, Alfred Stanley Young

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE SICK:

Julie Neale, Jean Rolfe and Margaret Hassell

Please contact the office if you would like your name to be on the sick list. Names are kept on this list for one month—and be put on again.

Anyone in hospital wishing to have communion, please contact the office on 53525460.

Ministry to the Sick:

Please email Fr. Andrew during these difficult times to discuss Ministry to the sick on
andrew.hayes@ballarat.catholic.org.au

Or phone the office on 5358 1119 Stawell (Thursdays)

Pope Francis—Twitter

Those who fail to view a crisis in the light of the Gospel simply perform an autopsy on a cadaver. They see the crisis, but not the hope and the light brought by the Gospel.

Readings Jan 3rd 2020

First Reading [Is 60:1-6](#)

Second Reading [Eph 3:2-3. 5-6](#)

Saint of the Week—Mary The Blessed Virgin

Feastday: January 1 Patron: of all humanity

Birth: September 8, Nativity of Mary

Death: August 15, Assumption of Mary

Mary, also known as St. Mary the Virgin, the Blessed Virgin Mary, Saint Mary, Mary Mother of God or the Virgin Mary is believed by many to be the greatest of all Christian saints.

The Virgin Mother "was, after her Son, exalted by divine grace above all angels and men."

Read more on—www.catholic.org/saints

Christmas Prayers 2020

Priest: On this holy night let us turn to God and offer our prayers for a world that needs God's love and hope:

Reader: For the leaders of our Church: that through humility and compassion they will show the love of the Christ-child for all peoples.

Shine on us we pray:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: For peacemakers on earth: that those who work to end war and violence will be given new heart.

Shine on us we pray:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: For the homeless and the lonely: that Christians everywhere will be the instruments of God's grace and love.

Shine on us we pray:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: For families, reunited or apart: may their hearts be gladdened by contact and the joy of this holy season.

Shine on us we pray:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: For this community gathered: that like the shepherds, we will give enthusiastic witness to the coming of God among us.

Shine on us we pray:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: For those who have gone before us and all those whose anniversaries occur at this time : that they will meet the saviour they longed for face to face in the company of the angels,

Shine on us we pray:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Priest: God of the heavens, your child has appeared among us and brought joy to the world. Hear our prayers and shine your light on those who long for your peace. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

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