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Pope's intention for December: For persons with disabilities We pray that people living with disabilities may be at the center of attention in society, and that institutions may offer inclusive programs which value their active participation. Lord, hear us.



Child Safe Church The Parishes of St Columba's & Our Lady Help of Christians (including Lexton, Miners Rest and Waubra) follow the Child Safe Standards outlined by the Victorian Government and we also implement procedures and standards as directed by the Ballarat Diocesan Office. You can download our Code of Conduct and Child Safety Policy from the Parish website or on the foyer notice board. If you have any concerns whatsoever—please contact the Parish Office, Fr. Marcello or one of the Safe Guarding Officers at wendouree@ballarat.catholic.org.au or ballaratnorth@ballarat.catholic.org.au

Our Diocesan Community Please feel free to take copies to the homebound, nursing homes, hospitals, etc., to spread the good news of the diocese.

Pope Francis' Prayer for Peace in Ukraine: I ask you to pray the Our Father for peace in Ukraine, now and throughout this day. **Our Father...**

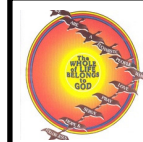
Let us ask the Lord to grant that the country may grow in the spirit of brotherhood, and that all hurts, fears and divisions will be overcome. We have spoken about the Holocaust. But let us think too that [in Ukraine] millions of people were killed [1932-1933]. They are a people who have suffered; they have suffered from hunger, suffered from much brutality and they deserve peace.

May the prayers and supplications that today rise up to heaven touch the minds and hearts of world leaders, so that dialogue may prevail and the common good be placed ahead of partisan interests. Please, no more war.

COVID Safe Plan

Checking-in is no longer a requirement. Face Masks are no longer required to be worn in most indoor settings but are recommended, particularly if you have any COVID-19 symptoms. They are also recommended for people who may be vulnerable to COVID-19 and are in settings where keeping a safe physical distance from other people is not possible.

- **If you are feeling unwell or have any symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough or sore throat) please do not attend Mass.**
- **If you are awaiting results of a COVID test, please stay home.**
- **Please use the hand sanitiser available upon entering the Church.**
- **Please do not touch any surfaces unnecessarily.**



Parishes of St Columba's and Our Lady Help of Christians

Communities of Ballarat North, Lexton, Miners Rest, Waubra, Wendouree

www.ballarat.catholic.org.au (select Parish)



Office: 306 Gregory St, Ballarat Nth **Phone:** 5331 1012
Email: ballaratnorth@ballarat.catholic.org.au

Office: 480a Gillies Street, Wendouree **Phone:** 5339 2302

Email: wendouree@ballarat.catholic.org.au

P O Box 192, Wendouree

School Principal: Leigh Bradshaw

School Co-Principals: Bambi Afford & Shaun Mohr

School Phone: 5332 4894

School Phone: 5339 4726

Staffing

Parish Priest:
Fr Marcello Colasante

Finance Officer:
Bernadette Prestwood

St Columba's
Parish Co-Ordinator:
Lia Andanar Yu

Wed-Friday 10:00am -2:00pm

Safeguarding Officer:
Peter Marquand

Our Lady Help of Christians
Parish Co-ordinator and
Safeguarding Officer:
Maree Roache

Wed-Friday 9:00am -1:00pm

MASS TIMES (This week)

St Columba's
Sunday 10.00 am
Wednesday 10.00 am

Our Lady Help of Christians
Waubra 1st & 3rd Sunday 8.30 am
Beaufort 2nd & 4th Sunday 8.30 am
Lexton 5th Sunday 8.30 am
Wendouree

Saturday (Vigil) 6.00 pm
Thursday 11.00 am (Kelaston)
Friday 10.00 am

Readings: 4th Sunday of Advent

2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8-12, 14, 16
Ps 88: 2-5, 27, 29 R. see v. 2
Romans 16: 25-27
Luke 1: 26-38



17th December 2023 ~ Third Sunday of Advent Year B

Focus on the Scriptures

The first section of today's gospel reading comes from the prologue of John's gospel and offers comment on the identity of John the Baptizer. The second section revolves around a question that has already been answered in the prologue. In other words, the reader knows the answer to the question that is put by the characters in the second section. The prologue presents John the baptizer as one "sent from God". He is not "the light"; he is rather a "witness" whose role is to testify to "the light". The true light [Jesus] was "coming into the world". As we proclaim Jesus as "the light", we might take time to appreciate the wonder and the properties of the material reality that informs this metaphor.

In the face of less than friendly questioning, John the Baptizer responds simply and honestly to questions about his identity. The questions in this second section of the reading are relentless and John's responses are unambiguous. He is not the Messiah/the Christ, the Anointed of God. He is not the prophet Elijah that some identified with God's messenger of Malachi 3:1-3 who would return and restore the "descendants of Levi" He is not the prophet-like-Moses of Deuteronomy 15. He states his identity with reference to the words of the prophet Isaiah: he is the voice crying out in the wilderness, inviting God's people to prepare the way for God's advent, God's coming.

John the Baptizer knows who he is. He understands the parameters of his mission and he points his questioners in the direction of the truth. His role is pivotal in the story of God's saving action and in the unfolding of the drama of the fourth gospel. It is worth asking how we might answer the question that the priests and Levites put to John on behalf of the Jerusalem "Jews": "Who are you?" If we can answer that question honestly, if we can admit who we are with all our strengths and limitations, if we can know our place in the scheme of things and own it in all humility, then we are probably in a good position to recognise and, like John, witness to the "one who is coming", the light of the world, the revelation of God, the Word who became flesh and tented amongst us. The global conflicts of the present might serve to sharpen our awareness of who we are and of how we are called to witness to "the light" who proclaimed a message of peace.

A caution is in order regarding this reading: not only Jesus and his opponents, but most of the actors in the gospel drama are Jewish. The group of characters specifically named as "the Jews" includes some influential members of the Jewish religious leadership, but cannot be identified with them because it comprises a more extensive group who are consistently in conflict with Jesus. It would be a serious disservice to the gospel to condemn the Jewish people on the basis of this and similar stories of Jewish opposition to Jesus.

- Veronica Lawson RSM

Responsorial Psalm: (R.) My soul rejoices in my God.

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; he sent me to bring Good News to the poor. Alleluia!

Recently Deceased: We commend to God: all who have died recently.

Anniversaries: We remember: Kathleen Thorne, Kathleen McDaid, Sarah Tonkin, David Fithall, Ronald Mark Edgar, Ronald Leslie Edgar, Stephen Head, Patrick Curran

We pray: for all in areas of conflict, war and natural disasters, for the sick and all in need of our prayers.

Making a Scene at Christmas Over 500 Christmas Nativities from more than 60 countries will be displayed at the Bridge Mall Ballarat and at the Catholic Diocesan Archives until Friday, December 22, 2023. You can see and smell real frankincense and myrrh; see coins minted around the time the census was called that brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem; see hand crafted cultural nativities from Australia, Africa, Asia, North & South America, Europe (and one that went to Antarctica); nativities that prize social justice and the environment. Schools can book for an educational experience. For more info on the Ballarat Bridge Mall display, contact Fiona Tonkin Fiona.tonkin@ballarat.catholic.org.au. All welcome. Entry by gold coin donation.

OLHC Christmas Lunch- December 25th OLHC Parish Wendouree volunteers are hosting lunch on Christmas Day in the Parish Hall, 480A Gillies Street, Wendouree from 12.00noon – 2.00pm. Bookings are essential as seating is limited, ph. 0419 975914. If you are able to volunteer on this day, please phone the number listed to register your availability.

Parish Office hours over the Christmas period Lia and Maree will both be taking leave during the month of January. Whilst the parish offices will not be staffed during this time, please make contact via email or phone parish offices (St Columba's 5331 1012. OLHC—5339 2302). In an emergency please contact St Patrick's Cathedral 5331 2933

St Columba's Dec 24	Christmas Eve	Sunday 5.00 pm
LEADER OF SONG		Tony Beggs
COMMENTATOR		(Please see sign-up sheet at foyer)
MINISTER OF THE WORD		Terry Ranger
COMMUNION MINISTER		(Please see sign-up sheet at foyer)
DIGITAL PROJECTOR		Bruce Chapman
SACRISTAN		Barb Brown

St Columba's Dec 25	Christmas Day	Monday 10.00 am
LEADER OF SONG		Mark Lacey
COMMENTATOR		(Please see sign-up sheet at foyer)
MINISTER OF THE WORD		Min Myers
COMMUNION MINISTER		(Please see sign-up sheet at foyer)
DIGITAL PROJECTOR		Vicki Moroney
SACRISTAN		Josie Crowe

Collections Last Weekend Columba's Thank you for your contributions.
 Presbytery: \$ 375.50 Parish: (Env, loose, DD, CC etc) \$ 750.00

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Parishes of St. Columba's Ballarat North and Our Lady Help of Christians Wendouree recognise the traditional owners of parish lands. We acknowledge their ancestors with respect and we are committed to working for justice and reconciliation.

A letter from Bishop Paul Bird CSsR, Bishop of the Diocese of Ballarat

Over the past few months, our Diocesan Pastoral Planning Panel has met with priests and parishioners of parishes in the Ballarat region to review the ministry districts proposed in our Looking Forward Pastoral Plan.

The timing of this review is linked with some changes in appointments that we are anticipating in the coming months. Fr Eugene McKinnon has indicated that he would like to retire from his responsibilities as Parish Priest of Redan, Sebastopol and Linton when he turns 75 in April 2024. Also, Fr Jorge de Chavez has advised that his Congregation, the Oblates of St Joseph, plans to transfer him from his current role at Ballarat East to serve in a parish in Western Australia. Another Oblate priest will come to serve in our diocese. In the context of these expected changes, it seems opportune to review the appointments to the Ballarat region parishes generally.

In the light of the recent discussions, I am pleased to announce the following ministry districts, with the new grouping of parishes to take effect after Easter 2024. The new ministry districts will be:

Cathedral Parish, Ballarat North Parish and Beaufort Parish

Ballarat East Parish, Bungaree Parish and Gordon Parish

Redan Parish, Sebastopol Parish and Linton Parish

Wendouree Parish, Creswick Parish and Daylesford Parish

The priests who are currently serving in these parishes will continue in their current appointments until April 10, 2024. They have agreed that they will then conclude their appointments to allow new appointments to be made corresponding to the new ministry districts. I will contact priests throughout our diocese inviting them to express interest in serving in any of these ministry districts.

In consultation with our Diocesan Personnel Board, I will consider the expressions of interest early in the new year, with a view to making appointments to take effect on April 10, 2024. I hope this advance planning will be helpful in allowing time to prepare for the transition to the new arrangements.

God bless you all.

Bishop Paul
Paul Bird CSsR



Christmas Mass Times

St Columba's Sun 24th at 5:00 pm Christmas Eve
 OLHC Sun 24th December at 7:00 pm. Christmas Eve
 Beaufort Sun 24th at 9:00 pm Christmas Eve
 Waubra Mon 25th December at 8:30 am Christmas Day
St Columba's Mon 25th at 10:00 am Christmas Day

Please note: there **will** be Mass at OLHC at 6:00 pm on Saturday 23rd. **No Masses** on the morning of 24th December, Sunday, at either Beaufort or Ballarat North.

Volunteers for Christmas Masses Volunteers needed please for our Christmas Eve mass, 24th December, Sunday at 5pm and our Christmas Day mass, 25th December, Monday at 10am. Please write your name on the sign-up sheet at the church foyer if you're happy to help out. **A heartfelt thank you to our St Columba's parish volunteers for your continued generous sharing of your time and talents! God bless!**

Next Centralised Baptism Preparation Session Parents planning to have their child baptised are required to attend a Baptism Preparation Session. Next sessions are at the MacKillop and Glowrey Rooms, St. Patrick's Cathedral Hall, 3 Lyons St South, Ballarat, **Thursday, February 1, 2024.** You may attend either the 10.00 am or the 5.30 pm session.

Advent Appeal for Ukraine During Advent 2022, all Australian dioceses were invited to take up a special collection for the people of Ukraine. Hundreds of thousands of dollars was raised to support people in the war-torn nation through the work of *Mudra Sprava* (Wise Action), a Patriarchal Charitable Foundation in Ukraine. The organisation has three focus areas: Evacuation of people from frontline territories; food packages for people in need; shelters for internally displaced persons. At the Bishops Conference's November 2023 meeting, bishops were asked to again consider if an appeal could be taken for the people of Ukraine during Advent. To donate, go to the diocesan website <https://www.ballarat.catholic.org.au/advent-appeal-for-ukraine-2/>

OLHC 23rd December	(next week)	Saturday 6.00pm
LEADER OF SONG		Sue Searls
PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL		Volunteer, please
MINISTER OF THE WORD		Kevin Murphy & Trish Lawson
COMMUNION MINISTERS		Christine Richardson & Tony Bruty
SACRISTAN		Anne Slattery

Collections Last weekend OLHC Thank you for your contributions.
 Presbytery: \$ 321.20 Parish: (Env, loose, DD, CC etc) \$ 340.00