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**Child Safe Church** The Parishes of St Columba's, St Patrick's Cathedral Ballarat and St John the Baptist Beaufort 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 Diocesan or Parish website or on the foyer notice board. If you have any concerns whatsoever—please contact the Parish Offices, one of our priests or Safe Guarding Officers at <https://www.ballarat.catholic.org.au/>

**Pope's Prayer for December - For Christians in areas of conflict:** Let us pray that Christians living in areas of war or conflict, especially in the Middle East, might be seeds of peace, reconciliation and hope. Lord, hear us.

*Wishing you a Blessed and Peace filled Christmas Season and a Safe and Happy New Year!*

**Our Diocesan Community Issue 3** The final edition of ODC for the year is available at our church foyer. Please feel free to take copies to the home-bound, nursing homes, hospitals, etc., to spread the good news of the diocese.

**OLHC Parish Wendouree Christmas Day Lunch** OLHC Parish Wendouree volunteers are hosting a free lunch on Christmas Day in the Parish Hall, 482A Gillies Street North, Wendouree from 12.00noon to 2.00pm. Bookings are essential as seating is limited, ph. 0491 029217.

Thank you to all the very wonderful volunteers for all their work in making the Christmas Day lunch at OLHC so special over all the years it has been held. We welcome all those who would like to be with us as a guest or a volunteer on the day, and we are especially looking for a few fit people who might commit to two hours of their time between 2.00pm - 4.00pm to clean up/pack up. To volunteer, please phone 0467 683504.



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\*Interest rates subject to change. View current rates on the [CDF website](http://www.catholicdevelopmentfund.org.au).



Parishes of St Columba's and St Patrick's Cathedral Ballarat

Communities of Ballarat North, Ballarat Cathedral, Beaufort

[www.ballarat.catholic.org.au](http://www.ballarat.catholic.org.au) (select Parish)

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

Office: 3 Lyons St South, Ballarat Phone: 5331 2933  
Email: ballarat@ballarat.catholic.org.au

School Co-Principals: Shaun Mohr & Bambi Afford  
School Phone: 5332 4894

Staffing

**Administrator:**  
Fr Edward Moloney  
**Assistant Priests:**  
Fr Francis Kureeckal MST  
Fr Abraham Thomas MST  
Fr James McKay

**Finance Officer:**  
Jackie Wrigglesworth

**St Columba's Parish Coordinator:**  
Lia Andanar Yu  
Wed-Friday 10:00am - 2:00pm  
(closed on school holidays)

**Safeguarding Officer:**  
Anthea Hinchey

MASS TIMES (This week)

**St Columba's**  
Sunday 10.00 am  
Wednesday 10.00 am  
[Reconciliation 10.30am]

**Beaufort**  
2nd & 4th Sunday 8.30 am

**Readings for Next Weekend**  
Sir 3: 2-6, 12-14  
Ps 127:1-5, R. see v.1  
Col 3:12-21  
Luke 2: 41-52



22nd December 2024 ~ Fourth Sunday of Advent Year C

Focus on the Scriptures

**A Time to Nurture the Life that is Coming to Birth** The fourth Sunday of Advent draws us closer to the celebration of the Christmas mysteries. The gospel offers the story of the young pregnant woman, Miriam of Nazareth, travelling purposefully from her home town of Nazareth to the hill country of Judaea, some 130 kilometres to the south, to be with an older woman who is also pregnant, her cousin Elizabeth. Mary enters "the house of Zechariah" who remains in the background. While Zechariah is the householder according to Jewish law, his earlier reluctance to believe renders him silent and powerless to offer hospitality. Elizabeth's contrasting openness to recognise and to affirm the living presence of God in their midst makes her the true householder and foreshadows the reversal that is to characterise the new order, an order that is yet to be fully realised. The two women embrace and, in their loving embrace, the Spirit-filled life gestating within Mary encounters and physically affects the life that is coming to birth in Elizabeth.

Elizabeth's words resound throughout the ages in the prayer we know as the Hail Mary: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb..." These are the words of one prophetic woman to another. Elizabeth recognises that Mary is blessed by God because she believed that God's promise to her would be fulfilled. As God's prophet, Elizabeth gives expression to the faith that is to be embraced by all who accept that Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Miriam of Nazareth, is the Holy One of God (Luke 1:35). The lives of both women prophets have been transformed through the power of God's Spirit. Their respective children will bring to birth unprecedented events in human history.

Elizabeth's proclamation of the blessing of God on Mary is found daily on the lips of countless faith-filled Christians across the globe. It echoes the blessing prayer of Moses to the Israelites (Deuteronomy 28: 2-4): "May you be blessed in the city and blessed in the country. Blessed is the fruit of your womb, the produce of your soil and the offspring of your livestock..." This ancient blessing recognizes the interconnection of all God's creation. We might make it our own blessing prayer.

In our times, God's blessing on the whole Earth community can only become a reality when we stop playing politics in the interests of short-term gains or personal greed, when we read the signs of the times and work together to address the underlying causes of global warming and its effects. Advent is not a time of passive waiting. It is a time to ponder the various ways that God sustains life in its diverse forms. It is a time to become householders, like Elizabeth, who clear the paths and open our doors for the God of life to enter in. It is a time to embrace, to "be there" for one another and to nurture the life that is coming to birth.

-Veronica Lawson RSM

**Responsorial Psalm:** (R.) Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.  
**Gospel Acclamation:** Alleluia, alleluia! I am the servant of the Lord: may his will for me be done. Alleluia!

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

**Anniversaries: We remember:** Denis Edgar, Lawrence Jones, Norma McLoughlin, Kathleen Canning (Melbourne), Basil Torpy, Helen Flynn, Julia Duffy, Margaret Maher, Jean McMahan, Lorna Lia

**We pray:** for all in areas of conflict, war, natural disasters, for those who are sick and all in need of our prayers.

**Christmas Mass Times at St Columba's Church:**

Christmas Eve, Tue, 24th December, 5pm Carols & 5:30 pm Mass

Christmas Day, Wed, 25th December, 9:30am Carols & 10am Mass

*Fr. Ed, Fr. Francis along with Lia, wish all the members of our community a blessed and peace filled Christmas Season and a safe and happy New Year!*

**9 Day Novena for Christmas** is a series of nine Masses on the days leading up to Christmas which are held at **St James' Parish Church Sebastopol**. Masses began last December 15 and continue on this evening, Sunday, Dec 22 at 7.00pm; Monday, Dec 23 at 7.00pm & dinner. Please bring a plate to share. If you have any questions or need further information, please contact Fr Eladio, ph. 0450 017 007 or Dion, ph. 0427 876 553. Everyone welcome.

**Christmas Mass Times within our Ministry District:**

**St Patrick's Cathedral Ballarat**

Christmas Eve Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> December 6.00pm 9.00pm 12am (Midnight)  
Christmas Day Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> December 8.00am 10.30am

**St John the Baptist Beaufort**

Christmas Eve 7.00pm Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> December

**Christmas Mass Times in the diocese** A list of Christmas Mass times in our diocesan parishes is available from the website:

<https://www.ballarat.catholic.org.au/christmas-mass-times/>

**Parish Office hours over the Christmas period** Fr. Francis will be taking leave during the month of January and Lia will be away. Whilst the parish office will not be staffed during this time, please make contact via email or in an emergency please call St Patrick's Cathedral 5331 2933.

St Columba's Dec 29 (next week) Sunday 10.00 am	
LEADER OF SONG	Terry Ranger
COMMENTATOR	Judy Brown
MINISTER OF THE WORD	Fiona Newton
COMMUNION MINISTER	Bruce Chapman
DIGITAL PROJECTOR	Vicki Moroney
SACRISTAN	Norah Moloney

**Collections last week** Thank you for your contributions  
Presbytery: \$ 302.05 Parish: (Env, loose, DD, CC etc) \$ 1,111.50

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

*The Parish of St. Columba's Ballarat North recognises the traditional owners of parish lands. We acknowledge their ancestors with respect and we are committed to working for justice and reconciliation.*

**Baptism** This weekend we welcome to our Parish through the sacrament of Baptism: **Bonnie Rose Black**, daughter of Hannah and Joseph.



*"The Church gives the faith to your children through Baptism and you have the task to make it grow...." - Pope Francis*

May Bonnie grow in faith with the support of her family and our Catholic Community.

**Bishop Paul's Christmas Message 2024** is available to view on the diocesan website <https://www.ballarat.catholic.org.au/bishop-pauls-christmas-message-4>.

*A massive and heartfelt thank you to our wonderful volunteers here at St Columba's for all your help this 2024!*

*We appreciate you and your generous sharing of your time and talents. We pray for God's continued blessings upon you.*

St Columba's Dec 24 Christmas Eve Tuesday 5:30 pm	
LEADER OF SONG	Kerin Johnson
COMMENTATOR	Jo-anne van der Voort
MINISTER OF THE WORD	Fiona Newton
COMMUNION MINISTER	Tim O'Farrell
DIGITAL PROJECTOR	Vicki Moroney
SACRISTAN	Barb Brown

St Columba's Dec 25 Christmas Day Wednesday 10:00 am	
LEADER OF SONG	Tony Beggs
COMMENTATOR	Colleen Wakefield
MINISTER OF THE WORD	Min Myers
COMMUNION MINISTER	Michael O'Neil
DIGITAL PROJECTOR	Kathleen Keogh
SACRISTAN	Josie Crowe



**Bishop Paul's message about the Diocesan Christmas Appeal 2024**

Our Christmas Appeal is one way by which the Diocese can respond to the many communities from near and far who turn to us for assistance. Often these requests come from people who have personal links with the Diocese of Ballarat. I thank the people of the Diocese for their support of last year's appeal. The funds raised were distributed as follows:

Caritas Lebanon Appeal	\$ 5,000	
Catholic Mission Myanmar Appeal	\$ 5,000	
St Columban's Mission Peru	\$ 5,000	
Nazareth House Ballarat	\$ 5,000	
St Vincent De Paul	\$ 5,000	
Catholic Care Victoria	\$ 5,000	
Australian Catholic Religious...		
Against Trafficking in Humans (ACRATH)	\$ 2,000	<b>\$32,000</b>

In recommending the Diocesan Christmas Appeal to you, an opportunity to contribute will be given at Mass on **Christmas Eve / Christmas Day**.

**World Day of Peace – January 1, 2025** Hope has been a constant theme in all of Pope Francis' World Day of Peace messages. This is all the more true in his message for the 58th World Day of Peace, which will be marked on January 1, 2025, as the Church begins the Jubilee of Hope amid an unprecedented combination of challenges facing the world today. Read the Pope's message for World Day of Peace at <https://shorturl.at/6DZCp>.

**High Court Judgement – Message from Bishop Paul**

Dear People of the Diocese,

You may have seen media coverage following a recent judgement of the High Court of Australia that involved the Diocese of Ballarat. This judgement has prompted renewed discussion about liability. I appreciate people's concern for those who have suffered abuse and people's questions about organisations accepting responsibility. I offer the following notes in response to people's concern and questions.

In cases where there is evidence that the Diocese of Ballarat has been negligent in the duty of safeguarding children, the Diocese accepts liability and provides compensation to victims.

In the case considered by the High Court, Victorian courts had found that the Diocese of Ballarat was not negligent but still held that the Diocese was liable – vicariously. The High Court set aside this decision of the Victorian courts.

I would like to make it clear that the Diocese of Ballarat will continue to accept liability and provide compensation in cases where there is evidence that the Diocese has been negligent in safeguarding. In addition, the Diocese will continue to provide compensation through the Federal Government's Redress Scheme and through the state-wide Church process called Pathways Victoria. As well as providing compensation in these ways, the Diocese will continue to provide assistance to those who have suffered abuse by funding counselling and other pastoral help. God bless you all. ~ Bishop Paul