

CATHOLIC

# VOICE

ARCHDIOCESE OF CANBERRA AND GOULBURN  
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## Rebuilding Hope





**Archbishop's Message**  
Archbishop Christopher Prowse

# Bethlehem hope

## snapshots of 2020/21

HOPE is one of our fundamental three theological virtues – Faith, HOPE and love. This means it is God's gift to us. It also requires our response.

The greatest HOPE that God has given us is JESUS. At Christmas, we reflect on this in a profound way. The little and vulnerable baby Jesus of Bethlehem stills and silences us. We reach out to respond. To hold. To caress love itself. To offer the Son of God to the world.

Jesus makes our faith both gift and task – invitation and mission. Bethlehem hope keeps us from despair (no hope) and presumption (arrogant over-confidence in our own resources).

Surely, the gift of hope is what is keeping us going in this most unexpected 2020/21.

I have experienced some wonderful examples of hopeful living in these months.

Here are some snapshots.

**There were the bushfires on the South Coast. The trauma is ongoing for those affected.**

I witnessed hope in hearing of the generosity of heart shown by the frightened gathered at the Moruya Showgrounds.

There was the raw courage shown by the two women who saved our Cobargo Church and belltower.

I witnessed Fr Luke Verrell and others offering hope to the people at the Bega Emergency Centre.

The three families I visited who had lost their homes along the Eurobodalla Rd impressed me deeply by their Marian Catholic faith and hopeful determination to build again. Sadly, this rebuilding still remains a dream.

There was hope and excitement from some who pointed out to me small green shoots starting to come from charred trees.

South Coast families expressed much hope and thanks from the incredible generosity of Canberra parishes who sent immediate financial help to those most in need.

Our social welfare agencies continue to provide hope for the homeless, hungry and mentally ill.



Canola fields, Harden

**At the other end of the Archdiocese, there is the hope that the long and devastating drought is finally breaking.**

The rains have come. The canola fields near Harden are healthy and brilliant in gold. The vision exudes hope. Travellers are stopping to take photos and breathe in the clean air.

It is a total change from smoky and hail-damaged Canberra in January.

Even the farmers themselves seem rather upbeat and hopeful for the immediate future. The despair surrounding suicides and mental health issues remains a threat to hope.

**The COVID-19 global catastrophe has really worn us out.**

We are tired. Schoolteachers have exhausted themselves by offering so much hope to their students and parents. They have kept our schools open during the threatening weeks.

Whole families studying and working from homes has not been easy.

People are turning to prayer and silence in greater numbers.

From the "monastic" feel at home, egotistical presumption is challenged.

Reliance on Jesus in faith and hope has received a more favourable listening heart.

The sick, aged and vulnerable appreciate the extra on-line Masses and prayer the Archdiocese and parishes have offered this year.

The youth, as always, have shown us an example of on-line evangelisation.

Parishioners talk of the hope that a phone call or visit gives the house bound.

Grandparents delight to see their children and grandchildren on FaceTime, Viber or whatever is electronically available.

In so many ways, the underlining pandemic of loneliness and isolation is conquered by all these "little miracles" of practical hope and closeness, as Pope Francis would phrase it.

In 2021, we await in hope a vaccine. Will it ever come? We hope it does.

**In the meantime, we continue to offer others the "new normal" of a kindly smile and generous word and help. It is all part now of the vaccine of hope we offer. This is especially shared at Christmas.**

Over the centuries, Christians have knelt in awe before the Holy Family at the Bethlehem stable. They have done so in greater fervour in times of war, pestilence and catastrophe.

They have done so not simply to draw personal hope for life after death.

They have prayed too for the communitarian hope in the here and now that unfolds from the Kingdom of God arising from the humility of the Bethlehem stable.

This is our hope. This is our Christmas prayer. Emmanuel – God is with us! Do not be afraid!

A prayerful and Happy Christmas and New Year to all!

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Cover picture: Hans and Jennifer Brosch are about to begin rebuilding west of Bodalla. The Brosch's are currently awaiting a living pod (shipping container) as temporary living shelter while their house is built.  
PHOTOGRAPH by Deacon Paul Rummery

### ARCHBISHOP'S DIARY DECEMBER 2020

**TUESDAY, 8** Episcopal Ordination of Bishop-elect Rev Greg Bennet, Sale VIC

**WEDNESDAY, 9** 5.30am Liturgical Blessing of St Christopher's Statue

**SUNDAY, 13** 11.00am Mass, St Christopher's Cathedral

**TUESDAY, 15** 11.00am Australian Multicultural Foundation Board Meeting, Melbourne

**SUNDAY, 20** 11.00am Mass, St Christopher's Cathedral  
12.30pm African Community Mass, St Peter Chanel's, Yarralumla

**THURSDAY, 25** 12.00am Midnight Mass, St Christopher's Cathedral  
10.00am Mass, St Christopher's Cathedral  
11.00am Mass, St Christopher's Cathedral  
12.30pm Clergy Christmas Lunch, Archbishop's House

# Life online

## Here's how it became a good story

BY DON SMITH

"IT". Not only the name of a Stephen King novel it's what we've been dealing with over the last year.

Coronavirus is our "It".

Whether it be in matters of faith, work, or study, we've been locked up, locked down, locked out, and gone online.

How have we coped with "It"?

"Don't have too many days alone," says Marie Hargraves, 90, of Canberra.

She has her iPad and a diminishing circle of friends and she says she's blessed to have her family close by since she lost Brian, her husband of 63 years.

She doesn't drive and has nobody to drive her and she's grateful she can use her computer to access daily online Mass services.

"They [online Masses] have been fantastic," she says.

This pleases Fr Trenton van Reesch.

The Administrator of the St Christopher's Cathedral parish is at the forefront of daily Mass services for a digital audience.

He sees online masses as a gift to the Archdiocese, especially for the ill, the elderly, and for helping to bring back those who had not been active in the church.

Saying Masses in front of a camera was nerve-racking at first, he says but once he settled 'into the moment' all was fine.



Teena McGrath supports her son with his study during lockdown.



Marie Hargraves gets help navigating the Archdiocesan online Mass from her grandchildren Elizabeth and Sam

Being in front of a camera is one thing but schooling in front of a classroom is another for Claire Egan-Richards, year one teacher at Sacred Heart Primary School Canberra.

She had never had to work as hard as she had during the lockdown with some students in the classroom and others at home.

"But we discovered a lot from remote learning," she says.

"Our message of hope was

that we all truly realised and valued our community. The students wanted to come back to school. We had something special and we missed it. We really missed it."

There's a message of hope, too, in the bush where life online has presented its own set of trials.

Teena McGrath and her husband Dermott along with their teenagers Marty, Rory and

Majella, work the family sheep farm between Yass and Boorowa.

The lockdown was a crazy time for Mum who learnt much about the uneasy fit between the on-land and online worlds.

With little time for her own work, she's had to battle bad internet connections and insistent questions from her stay-at-home scholars about equations or



Cathedral Administrator, Fr Trenton van Reesch live-streaming Mass

**Our message of hope was that we all truly realised and valued our community. The students wanted to come back to school. We had something special and we missed it. We really missed it.**

spelling.

Then there's dealing with the inevitable demands of life on a farm.

"Where are you going?" says Mum.

"Gotta help dad move the sheep."

And Teena found the clan wasn't sheepish when it came to taking a break for their constantly urgent nutritional needs.

"It always seemed to be lunch time around here!"

But despite the tribulations, she says, on reflection, being together was a beautiful time for the family.

'Being together' is a sentiment shared by Ross Fox.

The Director of Catholic Education for the Archdiocese's 56 schools says digital interactions are helpful but they can't replicate the human experience of being with others especially, in his case, when it comes to the Archdiocese's education communities.

He says they've shown hope is not a "treacly" concept but one with real meaning.

"We're so fortunate to have people filled with hope doing something really worthwhile."

Hope.

It's an old dog but have we taught this new "it" new tricks?

Put real flesh and blood back on its bones: faith, community and being together.

Hope. It's a good story.

A story about "It".

# Where are they now?

*The first anniversary of the devastating bushfire front that swept across large parts of the Archdiocese of Canberra-Goulburn last Christmas-New Year will be a time for “looking back and looking ahead”. DEBRA VERMEER speaks to a number of people who have witnessed first hand the destruction and the rebuilding.*

The first anniversary of the devastating bushfire front that swept across large parts of the Archdiocese of Canberra-Goulburn last Christmas-New Year will be a time for “looking back and looking ahead”.

The recovery continues for those who lost homes, property and businesses.

Parish Priest of St Bernard’s at Batemans’s Bay Fr Martins Aloga says that on December 31 the parish will hold a special liturgy at the 9am Mass to mark the anniversary.

“In looking back to that event we are acknowledging that there are many people living with the impact of the fires,” he says.

“As we look around us every day we see the impact on our local environment, the buildings, human beings and businesses.

“In looking ahead, we see the environment beginning to rejuvenate, buildings going up on the sites of old buildings that were lost. But it’s expensive to rebuild, values have gone up, and housing is still short for lots of people.

“However, going beyond that, to the human recovery, the fire brought a lot of trauma, stress, distress and grief.

“There has been an escalation of mental health issues in the community because of people living with heightened stress and the human recovery will be ongoing.”

Fr Martins says the parish has collaborated with other faith communities to help provide chaplaincy, counselling and

**In looking ahead, we see the environment beginning to rejuvenate, buildings going up on the sites of old buildings that were lost.**

support.

“As a parish, we are concentrating on being the face of Christ in the community,” Fr Martins says.

Builder Bernie Basevi’s plans for retirement have been put on hold again, as he picks up the tools to help people rebuild after the fires.

“I’m building a house for some people who lost their home and it’s really nice to see how excited they are as it goes up,” he says.

“So, people are recovering in that sense, but the mental scars are something I haven’t encountered before. *(continued page 4)*



Madalen and Howard Immanuel



(Above left) Peter and Jenny McGann’s Mogo property after the fires. (Above Right) The McGann’s rebuilt house.



Archbishop Christopher along with Fr Joe Tran blesses the newly refurbished Bell Tower



Archbishop Christopher visits the parish of Cobargo early January 2020



The above and below photos show the same area of land during, immediately after and a year after the fires. (Above) Security cameras on the McGann's property pic up the intensity of the fire



(Left) Mick Lowe shows Archbishop Christopher and Fr Martins his burnt out property. (Right) The same place a year later



Janice and Tony outside the ruins of their Batlow property

For retired Batlow orchardists Tony and Janice Vanzella, who lost everything in the fire, the prospect of rebuilding at their time of life was too great and they have recently re-located to Sydney to be nearer to family.

"We came to the decision to move because of our age," Janice says. "We didn't want to start building again and going through all that hassle, and so far we're settling in well here."

Janice says the Batlow community is still struggling in the wake of the fires, but there are definite signs of hope.

## I think just knowing that there are still people thinking of them and their town will be a real boost for people

*(continued from page 3)*

The stories you hear are just unbelievable. It will take a long time for people to heal."

Fellow parishioner Cecilia Jackson says the parish sent regular bulletins and opportunities via email during COVID-19, as well as bulletin drops in letterboxes for parishioners who weren't online.

"As COVID restrictions eased, the church returned to being a place of reflection and worship, but also a focal point for the community ... a place of foundation for recovery as the journey continues," she says.

Mick Lowe, who, with wife Christine, lost buildings, tools, bikes, equipment, gardens, fences, a swimming pool and tennis court in the Batemans Bay fire, but retained their house, says their road to recovery started the

day after the fire when they went back to survey the damage and prepare reports for their insurer.

Almost a year down the track, Mick says they have cleared damage and debris, a new shed is up, fences have been rebuilt and things are definitely looking up.

"The generosity of people has been amazing," he says. "A lot of people in the community checked in with each other regularly and there was a real sense of people coming together and working together."

Madalen and Howard Immanuel lost their home when the fire raced through the Bega Valley Shire and while they have decided not to rebuild, they are still dealing with the mental and emotional recovery.

"We grappled with that decision all year," Howard says. "We haven't been back to the

property since February. It was very confronting and upsetting when we did go back and we hated the thought of going back again.

"We can't afford to rebuild to the current bushfire standards. We're living in Melbourne now, which, because of COVID, has meant we couldn't get back to the property anyway, but we've got an open mind about where we end up.

Fr Luke Verrell, Parish Priest at St Patrick's, Bega, says while the town itself didn't come under immediate threat, people in the surrounding area are still re-establishing their lives.

"People in the bush are rebuilding but are still recovering from the trauma," he says.

"We've learnt that one good way to help with the recovery is for people to speak about their experience, so we're trying to provide forums for that.

"Another good thing is that we've had wonderful rains and so everything is growing and that is

also helping with the recovery."

In Mogo, the picturesque South Coast village where about 300 homes and businesses were lost, local beekeepers Peter and Jenny McGann are slowly getting back on their feet.

"We lost our home, our sheds and all our equipment," Peter says. "We had one shed that didn't burn and that was really good. And we saved most of our beehives which were spread out all over the place."

After staying in emergency accommodation for several months, they received an offer which has helped them to recover.

"The elderly man on the neighbouring property to us had died just before Christmas and his son came to see me and asked if we were interested in purchasing that property. So we were able to purchase that house which backed onto our property and that's where we are now," Peter says.

Meanwhile in Cobargo, where

local residents Deb Taylor and Carolyn More spent their New Year's Eve fighting desperately to save the Cobargo Catholic Church, people are slowly putting their lives back together and supporting each other through the trauma.

"I think just knowing that there are still people thinking of them and their town will be a real boost for people," says Carolyn, who has a background in chaplaincy.

She says the COVID-19 social distancing restrictions had a big impact on the physical, emotional and spiritual recovery of the community.

Carolyn and Deb, who are neighbours but not parishioners, are delighted to see people take a pilgrimage to visit the church when they heard it had survived.

"And it does give us both joy to hear them gathering in the church and to know they still can. Occasionally they will ring the bells too and that is really lovely to hear."

# My Christmas

*Catholic Students from across the Archdiocese share with the Catholic Voice*



I wish for Christmas that all the people in the world have water to drink and food to eat. I hope they have shelter and a safe place to sleep at night. I want to give books to the poor so they can get educated. I want to give food to people in need and who are hungry. I would like to give some toys to the little boys and girls that don't have any, to make them happy.  
**Sophia, Year 5, Mt Carmel School Yass**



This Christmas I wish that COVID-19 would just go away! I wish people would be nice to each other and that there will be no violence or wars in people's houses and countries, and that everyone can have joyful and happy times with friends and family.  
**Peter, Year 5, St. Joseph's Primary Boorowa**



Everyone would agree that 2020 has been a challenging year, but as Christians we know to have faith and hope. Baby Jesus is a great symbol of hope and as we prepare for Christmas we should let Baby Jesus remind us that we can be hopeful for better times ahead.  
**Olivia, Year 6, St. Patrick's Primary School Gundagai**



We would like to wish everyone a safe and joyful end to a challenging year and pray that 2021 brings happiness and opportunities to all in our Archdiocese. We hope that, after facing many challenges this year, we have a greater appreciation for what we have.  
**Year 12 2021 Student Representatives, St. Mary MacKillop College, Tuggeranong**



Imagine a world with no poverty. Imagine no one was homeless, no one was sad or poor. Imagine everyone was happy. So many people in our world don't have the things we take for granted. My Christmas wish is to end poverty and have a world of equality for all.  
**Jaz, Year 5, St. Bernard's Primary School, Batemans Bay**



I wish for the world to be peaceful and free from wars. I want there to be no criminals or any violent things. People should be nice to one another. The world God made was to be peaceful. We need to be kind to each other and follow God's commandments.  
**Keaton, Year 5, Good Shepherd Primary Amaroo**



We wish that businesses affected by corona can recover and rebuild what was destroyed. We hope that all of the workers who had to endure the worst of the pandemic can rest and have a fulfilling holiday and that families affected can recover and mourn what they have lost.  
**Jett, Year 8, Hennessy Catholic College, Young**



My Christmas wish this year is for all of the Australian farmers to have a good harvest. After three years of drought, I hope that this year is a better year.  
**Liam, St. Mary's War Memorial Primary, West Wyalong**



My Christmas wish is to cook food and tell Santa to deliver it to the people.  
**Essie, Kinder, St. Joseph's Primary School, Bombala**



# Wish

*their Christmas Wish for 2020*



We hope all people will unite to hear 'The Cry of the Earth and The Cry of the Poor' this Christmas. For those who are displaced including the homeless, refugees, migrants or loved ones who are unable to be with family due to the pandemic, may they be comforted by the love, peace and JOY of Jesus.  
**Gracie, Alannah, and Nicola, St Vincent's Primary Aranda.**



My 2020 Christmas wish is to spend time with my family and remember Jesus because if Jesus wasn't born, we all would not have Christmas. We should be thankful for all we have. It can even be as simple as going through your clothes and donating some to charity or making some cards. Maybe if someone is holding a money can you could put some money in it. Let's make the world a better place.  
**Molly, Year 3, Ss Peter and Paul's School, Goulburn**



When the thought of Christmas comes to mind, you think of presents, parties and hot meals, but there are people out there for which Christmas is just another painful day in their lives. I wish them this year and every other a hope-filled and happy Christmas. I wish 2021 to be a better one, the pandemic to be over, with and bushfires to retire, and our world to recover.  
**Sajika, Year 7, Hennessy Catholic College, Young**

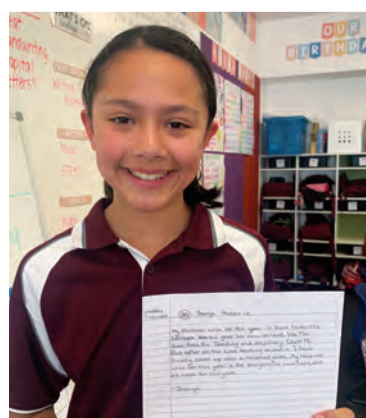


This year has brought many changes to society. It started with the bushfires that hit our beloved land earlier this year. This Christmas I ask that everything that was destroyed is restored. I ask for the trees to grow green again and the homes to be rebuilt. I know that the people that were lost in the fires can never be replaced but I ask that their loved ones find peace and hope for their futures ahead.  
**Lara Year 9 St Clare's College, Griffith**



This year was filled with unfortunate obstacles which we have overcome as a community. We have built better relationships, mended bridges, and our faith has become stronger. My wish is for those who are not as fortunate and who have suffered severely due to COVID and the bushfires, that they feel surrounded by Christ's love and that their families have a blessed Christmas.  
**Lexi, Year 10, Lumen Christi Catholic College, Pambula.**

My Christmas wish for 2020 is that society can take the coronavirus as an opportunity to rehabilitate the earth in the same way it has done to itself during the lockdown. We need to care for our common home and God's creation, which includes allowing the earth to get to a healthier state, so the planet's most vulnerable aren't facing the effects so greatly.  
**Luke, Year 11, St Francis Xavier College, Florey**



My Christmas wish from this year is hard to decide because this year has been so difficult with the bushfires, the floods and especially COVID-19. But after a lot of time thinking about it, I have finally come up with a Christmas wish. My Christmas wish for this year is for everyone to have hope, a lot of hope for next year.  
**Jazmyn, St Francis of Assisi Primary School, Calwell**



My Christmas wish is for all those who are homeless, to have a Merry Christmas and be fed, watered and have access to basic human rights, such as personal hygiene. I hope that they feel the warm touch of God's hand resting upon them and understand the real meaning of Christmas.  
**Brigid, Year 6, St Benedict's Primary Narrabundah**

# Support services' help has grown

CATHOLIC support services CatholicCare and Marymead have stepped up during the pandemic to provide more support for the most vulnerable in the community.

Extra funding from the government meant the agencies could extend their services and accommodation.

Marymead chief executive officer Camilla Rowland said services were continued without significant interruption but with many modifications.

"We often found that we addressed the overflow from other services who shut down in the initial stages of the pandemic," she said.

"As a result we have grown our family relationship counselling services and our respite and emergency accommodation services."

She hoped funders would recognise the growth in community demand through the COVID recovery months ahead and look to growing funding support for essential services delivered by agencies including Marymead.

CatholicCare chief executive officer Anne Kirwan said she has seen an increase in demand for mental health and counselling services and an added pressure for additional housing support as more people reached out for help.

"We increased our support to people sleeping rough on the streets of Canberra, and opened a new homeless service for women to accommodate women in crisis who could not self-isolate because they didn't have a home," she said.

"The ACT Government launched several initiatives that were fantastic in responding to COVID.

"We are concerned for the changes to JobKeeper and that this will force people to live below the poverty line, which is unacceptable in such a wealthy and successful country.

"We are liaising with the ACT Government to try to seek ongoing funding for our homelessness services that have been able to support so many people during this challenging time."

# A new way to give

BY FR TONY PERCY, VG

MY father used to say, 'money's a lot when you don't have any.'

We need money.

As a means of exchange, money not only alleviates poverty, but enables us to delight in non-essential items.

This forms part of a 'theology of money.'

Sounds strange. Isn't the bible opposed to money?

It is the 'love of money,' not money itself that is troubling:

*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs (1 Timothy 6:10).*

Money, like private property and private initiative, is orientated to the common good, which is all those conditions, facilitating human flourishing.

With this type of thinking, we begin to sense the possibility of 'human harmony.'

Furthermore, 'no money, no mission.' And no maintenance besides.

This is a welcome thought. Giving time, talent and money contributes to and conserves the 'building of the kingdom' on earth.

COVID-19 has accelerated our transition to digital giving.

Two benefits come to mind. We used to think of money as a commodity, since it is literally in our hands.

But the 'digital world' has granted us the advantage of not having to carry it.

This is risk-reduction at its best.

Collecting money, carrying money, counting money, banking money.

Every step of the way there is risk. But no longer.

Furthermore, digital giving grants us the possibility of being a little more generous than we might otherwise have been – a rich symbol of the gift of ourselves to God and others.

Join us in passing on the treasure of our faith to the next generations.

Since COVID 19 there are now four ways to give:



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Tap & Go



Cash

Contact your parish and they can set you up.



# Well rounded, grounded in mission.



# What will the Catholic Church look like in 2021?

BY DR PHILIPPA MARTYR

PROPHECY is a risky business, but I'm happy to have a go at describing what the Church might look like in Australia after COVID-19.

For starters, I'm wondering if we'll ever see holy water in stoups at the doors of our churches again – although I've been really impressed at the contactless holy water dispensers I've seen in some parishes.

And I am one of those germophobes who is really happy with the way we've swapped out the handshake Sign of Peace for a simple nod of the head or a smile and wave.

But the biggest difference you'll probably notice is that there's fewer of us at Mass on Sundays. I've just completed a national survey on the impact of COVID-19 on Catholic worship choices, and it's been very interesting.

For some people, church closures have ended their relationship with the sacraments, which is really sad. Now that churches have re-opened, they're simply not going to Mass anymore.

But for others, church closures were an opportunity to discover just how much they wanted to be with the living God in the Eucharist, and to be with other Catholics.

So they got creative – and I think this is something we'll see more of in future, if we have to go through church closures



A priest wearing a protective face mask gives Holy Communion May 1, 2020, in a Catholic church in Kevelaer, Germany.

often we were going to Mass in the first place.

The second-best predictor of coming back to Mass is how much real-life worship we engaged in while churches were closed, even if it was just praying in each other's homes.

For most of us, what really got us through church lockdowns was real-life contact with priests and the sacraments and other Catholics.

I asked my participants what they'd like to see happen with real-life worship if churches have to close again. They overwhelmingly supported access to the sacraments with proper safeguards, so that everyone can stay healthy both physically and spiritually.

We know this is possible. It's been done successfully in the United States, where there's now a terrific set of guidelines for Catholics to use that meet World Health Organisation protocols for preventing the spread of infectious diseases.

So a future Church in Australia might be one where it's possible for Catholics to receive the sacraments safely, even when our churches are closed and we can't gather together.

My prediction for the future Church in Australia? A much smaller Church, and a younger Church, with more adult converts.

And it will be a real-life Church, not a virtual one – just like it's always been.

again.

I watched with delight on Facebook and YouTube as priests all over the world set up drive-through confessions, walked or drove the Blessed Sacrament around towns, and went into hospitals in protective gear.

And people came. People came out on their front lawns or verandas and did Adoration in public. People met their priests at a safe distance in the parish church's rose garden and went to Confession. People contacted priests and asked to receive Holy Communion safely outside of Mass.

Parish churches hosted toilet paper amnesties and organised

food collections for people hit hard by the pandemic. Courageous priests made careful and well-sanitised home visits.

And lay people welcomed them because this crisis has brought us closer together. Perhaps priests and people had been dangerously close to taking each other for granted before church closures came along.

You might notice that I'm focusing on real-life activities. That's because the Catholic Church is a real-life church made of real-life people, who thrive when they do real-life worship.

We all tried the virtual worship thing, and it was okay for some of us. Livestreamed and televised

Masses became a regular event in our homes. I kept meeting Catholics under 35 who were choosing to watch livestreamed Latin Masses as well.

Livestreaming has also been a great way for curious evangelical Christians to see firsthand exactly what we do in Mass and to realise that it's not scary or secret. Some of them have become Catholics now, precisely because they love the other-worldly beauty of a Mass that's really focused on worshipping God.

But virtual worship isn't what gets people back into churches once they reopen. The thing that best predicts people coming back to Mass after COVID-19 is how

## Vocation Matters

Are you considering a vocation as a priest in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn? If so please contact Fr Paul Nulley. paul.nulley@cg.org.au

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# Waiting well during Advent

BY BR BARRY DONAGHUE

ADVENT—waiting for the Coming of the Christ Child ... We wait for many things, do we not? Usually with some anxiety we wait for the call to board an aircraft, for a diagnosis to come through, for exam results, for a friend to arrive, for a baby to be born.

Is this waiting a time of Chronos for you, just the meaningless ticking of a clock? Or is it Kairos time, opening yourself to the peace-filled space where enlightenment can occur? In the hustle and bustle of this pre-Christmas period, try to find a still point in our rapidly turning world, a place of sheer silence, for this is where Alaha or Sacred Unity, (Aramaic for God) can reveal Godself to you.

There is a play, *Waiting for Godot*, where the waiting was pointless, even absurd. And just last week, I waited with a man whose complicated wheelchair had run out of battery and whose phone was dead. I called his regular maxi-taxi man, who couldn't come for forty-five minutes and then brought him



water for his thirst, but he kept fretting about when the taxi would come. As I waited with him, I suggested he join me in contemplation of the gift of all the shades of green this generous Spring was revealing around us, but he could not do anything like that; negative waiting as opposed to positive waiting—energy sapping rather than life enhancing.

And so, we wait to remember the extraordinary gift of God's

embodiment in Jesus, one of us. But surely this event is more than a re-enactment, a performance. It needs to be a 'transformation,' something that changes us utterly for the better; not as an intellectual understanding, but in our ability to relate to ourselves, to each other and to everything that is.

So, wait in expectation, wait in hope, open to gift, open to revelation.

Wait well.

# A gift for the opening



BY SHARON BREWER



IT'S hard isn't it? We get to December, and even though our intentions are good, other things seem to get in the way of our spiritual preparation for Christmas. So often Christmas gets hijacked by the commercialisation of the event and all those jobs we feel compelled to get done before the year ends. I think this mad rush is heightened in the southern hemisphere because for many, Christmas heralds in the start of our summer holidays. More planning, more money, more people to please. You know the story!

But does it have to be like this? Is there something not quite right when you get to Christmas Mass, the children all looking shiny, the crib ready to receive the baby Jesus, and all you can think is – what happened to Advent? I've certainly had that feeling. But as I've got a little older, I've tried a little harder not to let Advent pass me by.

There is, of course, the external preparations. We do our best at home to get the Christmas tree and the Advent wreath decorated on the first Sunday of Advent – sometimes tricky when you have two family birthdays in December. But still, we try. We are blessed in our parish to have a very active St Vincent de Paul Society who make it very easy for us to donate gifts and Christmas fare to those who cannot afford them. And our parish goes to great effort to make sure all the

signs and symbols are there to accompany us as we journey to Christmas day.

While these are all excellent ways to prepare for Christmas, I've discovered the joy of doing some internal preparation as well. What does this mean? Well, for me it means intentionally retreating to a quiet space, even if it is just for one hour. I take with me some spiritual reading or reflections – there are so many available now through the internet and several dioceses produce some beautiful resources. My preference is to head out into the beautiful bush tracks near my home and I find a place to sit and reflect on the readings and on God's gift of creation. It is in this silence that I can let my own voice be still and make space for God's voice.

I also get myself to the sacrament of Reconciliation. In my preparation for the sacrament, one of the areas I focus on is where I have failed in my relationships with family, friends and work colleagues. I know I have plenty of other failings (!) but I find getting this area of my life sorted out leads to a more peaceful heart in the lead up to Christmas.

Advent is a time of waiting, of expectation as we prepare to celebrate the anniversary of the birth of Jesus, our God and Saviour. Advent is a gift – and it is ours for the opening if we so choose.

• Sharon Brewer is the Formation Co-ordinator for the National Centre for Evangelisation and the Catholic Enquiry Centre

## Keeping the Faith alive



Aid to the Church in Need

ACN AUSTRALIA

When you hear the word 'charity' what comes to mind? Perhaps it is feeding the hungry, caring for the sick and sheltering the homeless. These are vital material needs and the Church has indeed carried them out since her inception.

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**Herein lies the uniqueness of Aid to the Church in Need (ACN). We are the only international Catholic charity focused on the spiritual and pastoral needs of suffering Christians. Our mission is to nurture the faith where the faithful are oppressed and persecuted.**

We support the Church where the Church cannot support herself. We form priests, fund nuns, build churches, provide pastoral transport, train catechists and distribute Catholic books and media.



In short we offer faith, hope and love to our brothers and sisters who cry out to us for Jesus. out to us for Jesus.

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Send the below completed form to **Aid to the Church in Need** PO Box 335 PENRITH NSW 2751, call **1800 101 201**, or arrange your offering online at **www.aidtochurch.org**

Please accept my offering of \$

I enclose a cheque/money order payable to *Aid to the Church in Need* OR debit my Visa / Mastercard:

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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Expiry date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

My personal details: (BLOCK LETTERS PLEASE)

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Suburb: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

CV

Yes, please send me the rosary beads.

# Flocking to Christmas Mass

## The Delights of Advent

BY SHARON BOYD

BY PATRICK MCARDLE

*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone. You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing (Is 9: 1 – 2a)*

THIS quote is from the first reading at the (Mid-)Night Mass for Christmas – in many ways the Prophet Isaiah was not only prophesying the coming of the Messiah but here in 2020/21 our own situation. Following bushfires, flood, storm and pestilence we are all searching for that great light and the joy that derives from it.

At Christmas people flock to churches – even if this is not part of their normal religious practice. For some, this is just tradition or part of catching up with family or a kind of legacy recollection of an almost childish religious affiliation. Yet, I also think it signifies a deeper reality too.

In Catholicism the practice of the faith becomes woven into the fabric of who we believe ourselves to be. My father rarely attended Mass but knew in his marrow that he was Catholic and that all ritual, all gift giving, all family was an expression of that same faith. Of course, being a passionate Glasgow Celtic supporter faith was really lived out on a Saturday on the pitch and then on Sunday in church! Still by his adult years in Australia, he ‘lapsed’ more often than he attended. I was puzzled by this fierce faith and lack of much



tangible expression of it until he was dying. He told me then that his faith was always an invitation waiting to be accepted. In fact, in the days before he died, he spoke of visions of Christ welcoming him.

I can be quite cynical about that – perhaps it was the pain medication inducing hallucina-

### Attending Mass at Christmas for those who do not normally come could be a form of annual vaccination

tions? What I cannot be cynical about is the fact that he believed the visions to be genuine. He believed it not just for comfort or to have a few dollars each way on the ever-nearing outcome, but because he was deeply Catholic and when Catholics are dying, Jesus welcomes them.

Attending Mass at Christmas for those who do not normally

come could be a form of annual vaccination but there is something more to the ritual renewal of affiliation. It has to do with the essential and integral hope that Christmas offers. It is the story of each of us – a baby welcomed to a family; celebrated as the coming of joy into the lives of others. I know this is not

the universal experience, but it is the universal aspiration. The promise of new life is precious and, as we have been fully reminded this year, precarious. Yet it is something that attracts each of us.

One example of my hubris is that I fervently wish that God’s invitation to participation came in a consistent form that mirrors

how I think the faith should be lived out. Unfortunately for me, the Divine One who chose to save the world by becoming part of it, plays by a different set of rules. God invites and God welcomes – and an annual acceptance of the invitation for just a short time may be just as much part of the plan as weekly participation.

The levels of engagement with the Church’s various ministries throughout the year would suggest that God is quite good at shaping invitations attuned to the capacity of people to receive them. At Christmas, the larger groups of people attending Mass, may just be remembering that the invitation is open-ended. They are responding in this time and this place to the offer of abundant joy that is at the heart of our faith and our worship.

The beginning of the new liturgical year has arrived with the Season of Advent. The four weeks of Advent are a joyful anticipation of the birth of Jesus; after the year we’ve had with COVID-19 this new liturgical year and this season of delight will be welcomed. Advent however, does have a more sober side to it, as it is also a time when we focus our attention upon waiting for the Second Coming of Christ.

Throughout Advent, vestments are the colour of violet, with the exception of the Third Sunday of Advent which is Gaudete Sunday. “Gaudete” is the first word (in Latin) of the Entrance Antiphon for the day and it means “Rejoice”. Rose-coloured vestments are worn at this time as it is a joyful colour that helps to visually heighten the awareness that the Solemnity of Christmas is fast approaching.

The circle of evergreens that make the Advent wreath reflects the colour of the vestments, three purple/ violet and one rose. Sometimes a white candle is included which is lit at the Christmas liturgies.

The reflective and penitential dimensions of Advent are expressed through the restrained manner of decorating the church and altar, as well as in the more sparing use of music:

This liturgical year, the Sunday cycle will focus upon Year B, where the Gospel readings are dedicated (mainly) to St Mark’s Gospel. The Weekday readings, which rotate on a two-year cycle, will shift to Year 1.

As we begin a new liturgical year, may we be sure to dwell in the delights of this joyful season

# Christmas in the parish of Bombala: back in 1959

BY DENIS CONNOR, ARCHDIOCESAN ARCHIVIST

We wish everyone in the parish a very happy and holy Christmas and every blessing during 1960: So read page 1 of Bombala’s St Mary’s Parish Record issue for November-December 1959.

Parish Priest Fr John Kelly noted that the Parish Record, a monthly newsletter, had been with them since 1951 and this final issue for 1959 was issue number 100. Long-term members of Bombala parish may recall those years when the Parish Record was produced. Bound sets of the Parish Record are held by the Archdiocesan

Archives.

In 1959, Bombala parish comprised the major towns of Bombala and Nimmitabel, and also included the village of Cathcart and the locality of Bungarby where the Mass centre was the community hall. All centres were to receive Mass at Christmas. The Parish Record reported that a visiting priest – a member of the Passionist Order from Goulburn’s Marymount Monastery – would assist with Christmas masses, allowing for midnight Mass to be celebrated in Bombala and Nimmitabel, and Christmas Day Mass to be held in all centres.

Tribute was paid to all who had contributed to the parish

through the year: the Sisters of St Joseph who taught in the two parish schools; the altar servers, church cleaners, altar society members and Propagation of the Faith collectors; the members of the Mothers’ Clubs and the Society of St Vincent de Paul; those responsible for parish fundraising through the year (including those who ran the Thursday night Housie in Bombala); and those who coached the school sporting teams.

There is also a reminder that Christmas cards would be available for sale through the St Vincent de Paul Society and Far East (Columban) Calendars could be purchased from the

Sisters of St Joseph communities.

The Parish Record offers readers a message of hope and encouragement for the coming year with these words:

- For all of us this is an appropriate time to take a close and honest look at ourselves,
- From this feast of Christmas we shall be able to draw strength to renew our efforts during the coming year, to observe God’s law and to do his will.



# 'Fire, pestilence' and beauty of being together

To provide encouragement and a sense of connection across the Archdiocese, Archbishop Christopher began a series of pastoral visits starting in the western region of Lake Cargelligo. Here the Catholic Voice provides a snapshot of nearly twelve weeks of parish and school visits. From the beautiful and diverse landscape, to the rich cultures and gifted people, His goodness is evident.

**A collective sigh of relief that Mass (and morning teas) resumed albeit in restricted numbers with social distancing**



Fr Peter My, Hang Van and Thanh Van from St Thomas the Apostle Kambah

In a year like no other Archbishop Christopher hit the road visiting country and city parishes the length and breadth of our vast Archdiocese.

He wanted to know how parishioners were coping... and they told him. Apart from the threat of COVID-19, he perceived a "pandemic of loneliness".

But it was more than that, particularly in the country. One parish reported: "2020 has been a lousy year so far in Braidwood with drought, fire and pestilence all in the one year!" But the community hung together and helped each other through the worst of their troubles.

Priests and people everywhere told in various ways how they suffered "most grievously losing Easter, our choirs, receiving communion on the tongue, and our seats at Mass".

Goulburn was particularly disheartened by the traffic into the area of shoppers from Sydney, "the lack of trust we felt as toilet paper and other essentials flew from the shelves".

COVID brought so much to a halt. West Wyalong said: "It slowed Easter down, at a time when there should have been movement, joy, and noise".

And from Moruya... "We were deprived of Lent, Holy Week and Easter celebrations, and the absence of Mass and Holy Communion was a dreadful experience for all."

Every parish courageously responded to the crisis, however, some in strikingly imaginative ways.

In Kambah, some parishioners drove past each other's houses and called out from the driveway to check they were OK.

O'Connor reported it used new

technology "to build a database of parishioners, a safe and secure network for parish groups to digitally meet and connect, and a state-of-the-art online donations facility".

Parishes organised online Mass and prayer groups on Zoom and Facebook, the elderly and isolated without the comfort of technology were regularly contacted, and one was practical enough to replace the usual winter after-Mass soup with a delivery service of the frozen variety!

It wasn't only the elderly or infirm who found COVID isolating. Campbell noted "a collective sigh of relief that Mass (and morning teas) resumed albeit in restricted numbers with social distancing, no singing, no shaking hands and a sense of unease about the omniscient threat of 'germs' ... for those with small, barely controllable, often snot-nosed children, attendance at Mass is currently almost impossible".

But, a worthy summary of the situation came from Cootamundra and Harden-Murrumburrah, where the priest said he had been "overwhelmed by the faith and generosity of our rural people, and the practical and substantial ways in which they have kept faithful and been true witnesses of God's love to all those around them".

In the city, Gowrie said having to slow down brought "great appreciation for everyday things".

The final word comes from one of the last parishes Archbishop Christopher visited in mid-November: historic Bungendore where he blessed the newly restored sanctuary stained-glass window. An archbishop 145

years before him in the same place blessed the church's new extension, including the original window.

The Bungendore parish of today reported: "Just as our Catholic forebears created a place of worship and beauty for the community, current St Mary's parishioners trust that the restoration of this treasure brings light and hope to all."

**In the city, Gowrie said having to slow down brought "great appreciation for everyday things".**



St Joseph's School, Bomballa REC's Lily Sato and Alice Shannon



Archbishop Christopher with students from St Francis Xavier's Primary School, Lake Cargelligo



Transfiguration parishioners (from left to right) Aurelia, Nandi, Anaya and Er-cilia Bucuane who recently joined wife and mother Aura



Morning tea for Our Lady of the Annunciation, Weston Creek parishioners



Joan and Bill Hibberson from St Anthony of Padua Wanniassa and Fr Joshy and Anne Oberg, 29 years a Catechist from Mary Queen of Apostles Parish in Goulburn



Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish Parishioners attend the blessing of the newly refurbished Bell Tower



St John the Apostle Kippax parish priest Fr Kimi (far left) with St John the Apostle Primary School principal Matthew Garton and students.



St Thomas Aquinas Parishioners with Parish Priest Fr Tom Thornton (back left)

**Overwhelmed by the faith and generosity of our rural people, and the ways in which they have kept faithful and been true witnesses of God's love to all those around them**

# The joy of a child's Christmas

*Uncle Les getting into a Santa Suit, Uncle Frank with a crate of crayfish and celebrating Christmas in a winter wonderland. Here, our priests and nuns unlock precious memories of their childhood Christmases*



*Pictured from left, are a young Alex, his twin sister Louise, cousin Ben and older brother Adam*

## Fr Alex Osborne – Assistant priest, Goulburn Mission

Looking back on my childhood Christmases there's a couple of things I miss. I grew up in the North of England, which meant Christmas was in winter, a most appropriate time for it! Days would grow shorter and shorter until the sun would set as early as 4pm, the occasional snow would be had, and the whole world would transform to a winter wonderland. My family was spread out through the UK so Christmas and New Year's Day would be among the few times we could all gather and celebrate as a family.

I think, however, the thing I miss most from my childhood Christmases was how exciting they were! Little could fill me with more anticipation than opening the days on my advent calendar, or the hints from my parents about possible presents. At the back of my mind was the thought of Santa Claus, or more properly Father Christmas, watching me and deciding whether I was on the naughty or nice list, and whether I'd be receiving presents or a lump of coal. Like most children, I am sure, I was more excited for dinner and unwrapping Christmas presents than I was for midnight or Christmas morning Mass.

But somewhere in my soul stirred the thought that God chose to be born a little baby named Jesus, and for reasons I wouldn't understand until I was much older, this little baby's birthday is the most important event in the world.

## Judy Bowe - Missionaries of God's Love Sisters, ACT

So many presents under a sparkly tree made Christmas magic when I was a kid. We always went to Mass in the morning after the initial present unwrapping. While we knew it was Jesus we were celebrating, those toys were the highlight of the day. We had a huge lunch with grandparents and lots of other relatives, where the kids were always playing with and comparing gifts.

My most memorable present was a doll's house made by my father out of wood. I loved its little furniture, windows and verandas that were doll size and I always knew that every detail was made for me by his hands. Maybe the reason it is memorable after all this time is because it lives on in my family. When I grew out of it, other little girls have had the same resurrected freshly painted and re-decorated doll's house arrive brand new under their Christmas tree.

I think it's helpful to have strong memories of the magic of receiving gifts at Christmas as a child. I know our whole lives are gifts from God; all that is good handmade for us by a loving Father. Remembering childhood and the openness and delight of children at Christmas reminds me of this bigger perspective that is always true and often hidden.



*Judy's young relative playing with the old doll's house*



*Judy (tall one at back) looking to see what's next*

## Sr Bernadette, Carmelite Monastery Red Hill



*Bernadette & Michael with Santa at Myer Melbourne - later disappointed that he didn't come good with the scooter I'd asked for.*

The best Christmases I remember are when we lived at the Torpedo Depot in Bicton WA. We'd meet our grandparents at St Mary's Cathedral Perth for morning Mass then descend on our place for an outdoor lunch which Mum and the aunts must have slaved over (and later tidied up) unbeknown to us children who excitedly opened and compared presents.

Uncle Frank always brought a crate of crayfish from Geraldton and in the late afternoon we kids would go swimming, while the men sailed Dad's 12-footer on the Swan. One year Uncle Kevin even produced a soggy £5 note from his bathers pocket!

## Fr Pale Leota – Parish Priest, St Peter's, Pambula

Growing up in Samoa, Christmas was a time of the year that I always looked forward to as a child and we were lucky to get one gift. Christmas for us was a big event. We didn't have much money, but we had a lot of love.

We were taught the most important thing was celebrating Jesus' birth. My parents made sure that everyone went to midnight Mass.

When our family was together, even though it was loud and crazy sometimes, it was always fun. I most looked forward to the Christmas day get-togethers with my extended family. It was these that I have the fondest memories of. My family on my dad's side lived in relatively close proximity to each other, no more than two hours of travel time. Each year, we would do our morning Christmas traditions and then go or get ready for the family. My family was always very low key.



*Fr Pale (far right) with his family*

## Sr Maureen McDermott rsj - Pastoral Associate, Ardlethan/Ariah Park Parish (Temora Mission)

How blessed we were to have so much at our fingertips as we prepared for Christmas on the dairy farm in the northern rivers of NSW where I grew up. Preparations commenced at varying stages prior to the happy day when we celebrated joyfully with family; cooking, cleaning, lopping a tree which was later placed in a cream can before being decorated. The crib, visible in a central position.

Prior to going to midnight Mass, we sat on the back porch, searching the night sky for the first signs of Santa. Mass in the middle of the night, the thrill of Santa, sharing with grandparents, delighting in the tasty array of food prepared from farm produce, wondering who would find the coins in the plum pudding, gifts received with joy.. a cricket set provided much delight for after-milking fun in the late afternoons, or the bucket and spade to build sandcastles when we visited the beach. What a treat it was when a doll appeared under the tree!



*Maureen with her brothers, John, Bill and Kevin.*

# What is it that affords us hope?

BY MONS JOHN WOODS

‘LET IT BE’ is one of the Beatles enduring songs. Paul McCartney wrote it reflecting on his mother’s death from breast cancer when he was 14. “In my hour of darkness Mother Mary comes to me speaking words of wisdom, let it be, . . .” Asked if Mother Mary referred to Mary, Mother of God, McCartney explained not as such – his mother’s name was Mary – but he was fine if people chose to make that allusion. The song afforded McCartney hope and consolation.

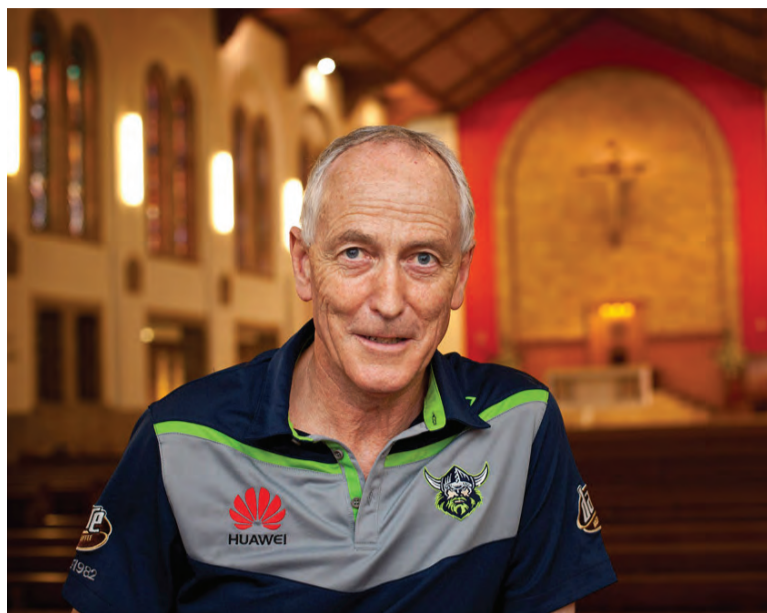
What understandings and patterns of behaviour afford us hope? The Catechism of the Catholic Church refers to the inter-related theological virtues of faith, hope and love as gifts from God, distinct from the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance. Our hope is fullness of life in Christ. All virtues are to be nurtured as they orient us to the good and a share in God’s life (nn. 1803-1829).

Advent is the liturgical season

of hope and expectation. We recall God’s loving fidelity and surprising ways. Why choose an old man to be the father of a great nation? The people of the old covenant hoped for a political Messiah. Wrong. The baby born in a manger would die on a cross, rejected by political and religious authorities, only to rise and call all to new life.

The takeaway: ‘in Christ’ we share in the call to life and to death, or more truly to ongoing transformation into new life. This same pattern is manifest in our expanding universe. It is the pattern of all life. God is manifest in and through the material and there is life in death.

The highpoint of that manifestation is what we celebrate at Christmas, God-with-us, with all of us and for all time. Pope Francis has reminded us of this in ‘Laudato Si’ with his call to an ‘integral ecology’ and in ‘Fratelli Tutti’, which affirms human solidarity. These are documents of founded hope. So my hope for the new year: to affirm the Church’s call for both faith and reason and for an end to the



point-scoring talk of a sacred-secular divide. If we foster respect, connection and community we will more likely hear and respond to the voice of God, though many will not reference the source as the Holy Spirit.

A particular hope is that delegates to the 2021-2022 Plenary Council will not listen ‘with their answer running’ but rather let the Spirit move in dialogue and lead

to appropriate outcomes.

As a life-long seeker, I hope to encounter the mystery of God anew in stillness, as well as all manner of personal and pastoral activity. I hope that parishioners will feel affirmed, welcomed and encouraged to share their time, talent and treasure so that our community might be a sign and instrument of God’s presence.

With them, I look forward

to celebrating the Eucharist and freely singing liturgically appropriate music of whatever genre. That being said, I hope to better understand charismatic spirituality as I continue to struggle with it.

I hope to nurture good friendships, to continue with regular exercise (jogging) and to improve my limited cooking skills. I am hopeful that discussion of personal morality would consider a relationship focus and not just an act-centred approach, especially in recognition of those who walk in faith and are same-sex attracted. I hope that governments would provide more social and affordable housing, and that the cause of national reconciliation would highlight success more than woe. I hope to visit my sister Sharon who is in care in Melbourne. We all hope for a COVID vaccine, and I hope that the Raiders win another NRL Grand Final.

• *Monsignor John Woods is the Vicar for Education, Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn and Parish Priest of the Transfiguration Parish North Woden*

## Not just a day but a season...

BY HELEN & GARRY PIEPER  
ST BEDE’S, BRAIDWOOD

OUR Lord, through His birth and his death, provided forgiveness and reconciliation. With us, each Christmas is so different. Our first married Christmas, Garry was deployed to the jungles of Vietnam; I was two months off the birth of our first child and needed my faith. Last year we had the bushfires come through; this year is the Garden of Eden.

With 27 grandchildren, for us, it is not Christmas day, but a season. Each year, I make Christmas cards with a letter and a personal note to all friends and family. The tree is decorated with all received cards attached. Often

on Christmas day we are treated like Royalty and wined, dined, and nurtured by our son, his beautiful wife and their children. Then we have family arrive and children stay for work experience and Pa’s department classes; forming lifelong bonds with cousins, learning teamwork and skills. We will go to all services at St Bede’s and St Andrews because we intend to be fed on every spiritual blessing on offer. It is so important to treasure and live every precious moment, not only during Advent but the whole year through.

The main thing is, we thank our wonderful God for His son Jesus and we celebrate his birth, spreading love and peace with family, friends, and strangers.



2019 Christmas Card



2020 Christmas Card



# SUPPORT FAMILIES THROUGH A CHRISTMAS LIKE NO OTHER

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# Let our young be heard

BY MARIA HICKS

THIS year has seen the continued implementation of Archdiocesan child protection policies and procedures. It has been three years since the Royal Commission into institutional response to child sexual abuse presented its final report to the Governor-General. Our resolve remains firm. Our children are our most precious gift; a gift to be nurtured, a gift to be kept safe. Our children have an intrinsic right to dignity of life, respect and protection from harm.

Even before the final report recommendations were released, our Archdiocese was implementing policies and processes to keep our children safe. We have come a long way. Protecting children is not in addition to our Ministry, nor is it solely the responsibility of the parish priest. It is our collective responsibility and collectively we are responding.

Many volunteer parishioners, regardless of whether they work with children, have read, and signed the acknowledgement

to, the Archdiocesan Child Protection Code of Conduct. Safeguarding and child protection training for parishes, while hampered somewhat by the COVID restrictions, did occur and will continue throughout 2021. Attendance to these sessions, prior to COVID had been strong. Parish volunteers now routinely apply for and/or renew their WWCC/WWVP registration. We all understand that this type of screening not only provides assurance to our community that we are suitable to work with children, we provide assurance to ourselves that those working with our children are cleared to do so.

During 2020, all of our active clergy and youth leaders attended webinar training on the child safe standards as delivered by the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG). This was in addition to the training they attended on the NSW Children's Guardian Act which commenced on 1 March 2020.

In addition, clergy commenced the process of completing the 11 Child Safe elearning

modules; the Archbishop and Vicar General leading by example having completed all of the modules

Finally, this year, our Youth Co-ordinator with the assistance of Catholic Education Canberra-Goulburn staff managed the *My Voice* project; it sought input from children within the Archdiocese on what it meant to them to become, belong, believe.

One of our school leaders noted that the involvement of youth keeps the church young and alive. "It's great having wiser members in the church but if we don't give a voice to the youth the church will cease to be. The youth are the future and essential for the growth and lasting of the Catholic Church."

Over 500 survey responses were received. Of significance was the importance of God and faith in the lives of the students. One of our school leaders highlighted the fact that without the voice of youth – the Church may cease to exist. The youth are the future and essential for the growth and lasting of the Catholic Church. Another young leader



Archbishop Christopher with the Nair family, parishioners at Holy Spirit Gungahlin

stated that through her relationship with God she felt loved and supported, which helped her to face the daily challenges of life. However she also commented that young people in the church should be welcomed and listened to more often.

Let's not so much hope, but

make possible for our young people to be heard within their parishes in 2021. Their voices are not only the future; but the present.

• *Maria Hicks is the Manager Institute for Professional Standards and Safeguarding for the Archdiocese*



Seek  
WISDOM



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*Seek Wisdom*

St Clare's College is an outstanding school, offering rich opportunities in the pursuit of academic excellence for girls in Years 7-12. The College's strong academic program is complimented by the extra-curricula activities that we have on offer which include but are not limited to leadership development; science; robotics; debating; drama; music and team sports.

At St Clare's College our strategic intent – *Seek Wisdom* frames our commitment to become a Visible Learning School. Facilitating the use of research based teaching practices in all classrooms helps ensure that every student is engaged; challenged and experiences growth in their learning. We have both the opportunity and the obligation to change the world by empowering our students to recognise their potential and to embrace the opportunities open to them. We do this in partnership with parents and together we achieve amazing outcomes.

Our heritage and traditions coupled with our superb location, contemporary learning facilities and dedicated professional staff make St Clare's the Secondary College of choice in the ACT.

**Enrolments for 2022 will be accepted from February 2021.**

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# COVID didn't close us down

*Susan Tighe, principal of St Joseph's Primary School Bombala, shares with the Catholic Voice lessons learnt during 2020*

ST MARY of the Cross MacKillop had a saying "Whatever troubles may be before you accept them bravely, remembering whom you are trying to follow. Do not be afraid. Love one another, bear with one another, and let charity guide you all your life. God will reward you as only He can."

Throughout this exceptional year the words of St Mary MacKillop have demonstrated for us that our faith in God and each other will bring rewards. When challenges came our way, God's Spirit living within gave us the strength to support each other and our community.

As we commenced our school year at St Joseph's Bombala, we were faced with the effects of an ongoing drought on the Monaro. Families and local businesses were finding life extremely tough. During January, the fires came, burning land, bringing smoke and ash and darkness. Local homes were destroyed, properties suffered losses of infrastructure and livestock.

Through this time, our school also needed to support one of our own families that suffered tragedy. In an instant, lives were changed and would never be the same. While supporting our community with the havoc of summer, COVID-19 came with a rush and took us all by surprise. We had to learn new ways to keep our staff and families connected. We needed to ensure as much as possible that our students were able to not only



*Then and now of the Bombala countryside*

learn but to flourish.

From these challenges, our blessings came in abundance.

School communities and individuals from across the country sent resources to support our families who were devastated by the fires. Student school supplies, backpacks, food, clothing, books and toys all came into our school to be shared with the wider community.

We also received letters of support from school students in Queensland who wanted to show their support for our community.

We didn't close down during COVID. We opened up new possibilities through our

connection with the families. We set our students up for success through online learning platforms and by being accessible. Keeping in touch with families through personal phone calls meant so much to parents who needed some reassurance that their children would still be provided with quality education. Packs of schoolwork were sent home to families who had connectivity issues - the mail could still get through.

The pandemic has meant that our parents and community



*Letters to the St Joseph's school community from St Augustine's School Currumbin Waters Queensland.*

members have not been able to visit on site, however we have reached out to them through newsletters and online communication. Our parents and community showed faith and trust in us to provide for the children in our care.

The welcome rains have come and turned our paddocks green; a sense of gratitude and hope for spring. The success of our vibrant community comes from knowing that we are here for one another and that we can learn from each other how to be a resilient and faith-filled community.

## Grit and persistence prevail in 2020



*Mr Ross Fox, Catholic Education Director, Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn reflects on hope in 2020*

**This year we have been reminded about the reality of our Catholic schools. They are places of great hope.**

It may be tempting to think of hope as wistful, ephemeral and even transitory. Catholic schools give practicality and reality to hope. In the sparkle of eye of the kindergarten student as they sound out words and reveal meaning in their reading. A life of learning ahead of them. The smile of a college student as they return to school eager to again share with other students and their teachers in the endeavour of learning. Surprised to realise that school was more attractive than they had previously acknowledged.

This year principals and teachers have shown the hope Catholic schools share with students and families is a solid and tangible manifestation of our shared faith. It is a hope of grit and persistence. An abiding sense of purpose and mission.

In an Old Testament year of fires, floods, pandemic and smoke the Archdiocesan community should rightly be proud of the hope that our Catholic schools offer to young people through the dedication and care of all our school staff.

I wish all our school communities a peaceful and Christ-filled Christmas. May our break renew our hope as we look towards next year.

## We stand with you

Principal of St Joseph's Primary School Bombala Susan Tighe speaks of the kindness received from a Canberra school in the wake of the fires.

"The school community of St Anthony's, Wanniasa, very kindly had a supply drive for families and communities impacted by the fires," she says.

"We received backpacks, school supplies and new sporting equipment. I met with Mr Greg Walker, Principal of St Anthony's, and shared our heartfelt thanks for their support."

The following letter from St Anthony's accompanied the goods.

*"While collecting these items, we spoke to many beautiful people, we heard stories of resilience and hope. There were handshakes and hugs in abundance, and we have been brought to tears by the generosity of individuals, families, schools, businesses and organisations within the Canberra community. Know that these packs come with thoughts, love, support and prayers for all of our neighbours who so courageously faced the ferocious bushfires that have had such a devastating impact on our beautiful country. We stand with you for the long road ahead."*



*St Anthony's Primary School teachers Angela Ryan and Tracey Adamson with some of the donated supplies.*



# A new frontier for ministry

*The past year has captured moments of profound hope among young people in the Archdiocese, beginning with the launch of a three-year plan to raise up a new generation within the life and mission of the Church, centred on the themes Belong, Believe and Become.*

*Youth Ministry experienced a significant shift in its approach to ministry as it was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The response to these challenges is a key sign of hope. Moving to digital platforms allowed for a new frontier for ministry, often supporting the pastoral outreach of the broader community.*

*The Youth Ministry has begun to encompass the pastoral support of Catechists in public schools, development of a young adult ministry and resourcing sacramental initiation.*

## Hope in our parishes

Youth Ministers have moved to leading online Youth Masses, Youth Groups, Youth Alpha programs, prayer groups and bible studies.

The parish-based initiative Belong Circles was launched, seeking missionary renewal through Circles that gather, pray and give. These are small groups of children, youth and adults who gather regularly, with over 22 Circles running across the Archdiocese.

Archbishop Christopher spoke of the Belong Circles, saying that “evangelisation is at the heart of the Church’s deepest identity. My prayer is this new initiative – Belong – brings forth a new missionary impulse inspired by the Holy Spirit. Belong represents a new pastoral initiative for evangelisation” in the Archdiocese and beyond.



Youth Ministers lead Primary school children at the 'Illuminate' Conference, 2020



## Hope in our schools

The school Youth Ministry, based on CSYMA Four-Phase Model, has experienced an increase in our Catholic schools. Key events for young people to be formed in the life and mission of the Church and ongoing formation programs integrated into the faith life of the school are essential characteristics of the model.

A number of events were run in the first half of the year before lockdown. From Journey with Jesus and Catch the Wave Retreats to the annual Oceania Equipping School, these events supported a further six schools to a total of 29 across the Archdiocese.

In the second half of the year, events such as the Made for More retreat and Lead Team Training were modified to be run online or in small groups.

The Youth Ministry has seen an increase in the number of young people electing to go into the Youth Ministry units of study and other curriculum pathways.



## Youth leaders share their hopes for 2021...

**Leader – Nathan Galea:** That our school and parish communities become places where people come to a greater awareness and appreciation of the gifts and talents that God has given them. May they realise how they can put them to use to build God’s Kingdom exactly where they are!

**Youth Chaplain – Fr Paul Nulley:** To be able to say a generous

‘yes’ to Jesus each day!

**Catechist – Christian Nobleza:** That as a local Church, we will continue to commit to building new expressions of faith that will lead to a deeper sense of connection and belonging.

**Youth Minister – Chiara Catanzariti:** To see the renewal of young people in knowing the

truth of who they are, what they are made for and that they belong to the Church.

**Young Adult – Chloe Kelly:** To see the community united in care for another and motivated to love.

*Below Left: Chiara Catanzariti  
Middle: Chloe Kelly and Below:  
Nathan Galea,*



Catechist Leader, Christian Nobleza



# Navigating Year 12 in 2020

*More than 2000 Year 12 Catholic students from across the Archdiocese have completed their final exams to end the year, in what has been arguably the most challenging final year of school. Catholic Voice spoke to some Year 12 students from the Archdiocese to see how they coped in Year 12 with all the changes and disruptions throughout the year.*

## Mackenzie, Trinity Catholic College Goulburn

### How did you cope with the disruptions throughout the year?

Friends and family were definitely a blessing during this year. Because we were all going through the same experience we were able to join together to cope and it brought us all closer. Resilience was an attribute that everyone had to work on this year and it was essential in coping with the disruptions.

### What was something that you were really looking forward to but was cancelled due to the pandemic?

As a Year 12 student one thing you look forward to is your last sporting carnivals. It's your last chance to dress up in house colours and give it a red hot crack with your friends. We were lucky to be able to have a swimming carnival before things got bad, but unfortunately our athletics and cross country carnivals were cancelled.

### What is something you are you proud of this year?

The thing I'm most proud of this year was being school captain. I was very proud to represent my school in such a way. As a leader I am proud of the effort that our whole leadership team put in and the friendships I made in this role along the way. I think all Year 12 students should be proud of their efforts this year.



## Lesh, Marist College



### How did you cope with the disruptions throughout the year?

The College was able to overcome hardships by uniting as one community and approaching challenges with the underlying goal of collective success. This was achieved by utilising new, modern mediums to keep students connected and by conducting COVID-safe events to maintain a healthy mental state for all boys at Marist.

### What was something that you were really looking forward to but was cancelled due to the pandemic?

The cancellation of the Year 12 Formal was a disappointing and heartbreaking announcement for the College community. However, the 2020 leadership team employed initiative and determination to create an alternate COVID-safe event for the students.

### What is something you are you proud of this year?

I am especially proud of the manner in which all students exhibited an optimistic attitude throughout times of hardship and despair. This accurately reflects the culture of teamwork and commitment that is exemplified by students of Marist College Canberra.

## Shannon, St Francis Xavier College



### How did you cope with the disruptions throughout the year?

Studying at home in my warm bed with my pyjamas was an all-time fantasy of mine but it quickly grew lonely and I began to miss the social interactions school had to offer. My family were a major help during this difficult year. My family and I all aimed to step away from our computers and have lunch all together in our backyard. With remote learning, I felt as though I was always studying so these lunches were beneficial to break away from those feelings.

### What was something that you were really looking forward to but was cancelled due to the pandemic?

The Year 12 formal is what I was most looking forward to. Although my school is still going ahead with it, it is not like other years. We do not get to do arrivals out the front of the National Library with all our family

and friends watching, and we do not get to spend the night at Parliament House.

### What is something you are you proud of this year?

An achievement I am most proud of this year is finishing Year 12. This year was challenging and there were moments where I was sceptical about my ability to complete my final year. However, I am now graduated and I am immensely proud of myself.

# The daily harmony of the 'singing principal'



BY ANGUS TULLEY

CATHOLIC Education is a kaleidoscope of faces, memories and experiences. It is a story of many joys and the occasional sorrow.

From my early days, I saw education as a gift and a blessing. I also learnt that with the gift and blessing came responsibility.

The joys are in terms of having the privilege to work with thousands of young people over the years. The greatest sorrows were journeying with families dealing with terminally ill children and young adults killed in car accidents.

Pearl S Buck said, 'only the brave should teach' and it is true. Not because you have to perform each and every day, for each and every class. Not because you never know what is going to happen on any given day. Not because it can be a battle to face the angry parent or staff member. 'Only the brave should teach' because it takes heart, and it is so much more than a job.

I can remember on my first day as Principal I went through a number of belief statements with my staff. Given my sense of humour there was 'I have two ears and one mouth, and I use them in that proportion' and 'I'm sure that on my death bed I'll not be wishing I'd spent more time at work'. I said, 'family always comes first' and 'look after the little things and the big things will look after themselves'. Scripture has always provided consolation, challenge and guidance – I also said that everything we did in a Catholic school was to follow in the footsteps of our Lord and Saviour who had said 'I have come that they may have life and have it to

the full' (John 10:10).

Some of my most vivid memories are of the ways students with additional and/or diverse needs have enriched the lives of students and staff at school. I can see the faces of these boys and girls, and I see them laughing and smiling. I remember thanking a student one day for looking after one of these students. She had taken her by the hand and was guiding her through another group of students. The student politely chastised me and said there was no need to thank her, she was just looking after her friend.

I was sometimes called the singing Principal. The irony was that I gained the confidence to sing as I sang for my mother, who had a debilitating stroke nine years before she died. She couldn't put a sentence together but could belt out the Skye Boat song when the music started. The students would groan when I started to sing at assembly and they would then join in, just to give the Principal a break. To this day I'm still reminded of the singing and I've heard that on occasion the students still break into song.

I do believe in miracles. The miracle of every Monday morning when the students greet each other. The miracle of the countless staff who go the extra mile for their students. The miracle of the way students put their trust in their teachers. The miracle of the parents who give their all for their children. Little miracles happen in Catholic schools every day.

One of St Mary MacKillop's favourite sayings was 'gratitude is the memory of the heart'. I'm truly grateful for the time I have spent in the Catholic education system as a student, teacher and administrator.

# How the Church was tested in 2020

*COVID-19 has dominated the Church's interactions with government this year, with discussions focusing on looking after vulnerable people, health restrictions for church services and the ethics around the widely anticipated vaccine.*

Bishops Conference president Archbishop Mark Coleridge pointed out that the coronavirus was testing the resilience of Australians, but the solidarity it provoked would create stronger communities.

Catholic Social Services Australia lobbied to keep the higher rates of JobKeeper and JobSeeker to give people more certainty during a time of crisis.

Catholic Health Australia worked with governments and the private hospital sector as part of the National Coronavirus Partnership, to make beds available to help cover any spike in coronavirus patients.

And Catholic schools have offered fee relief to families under strain because of COVID-19.

## Help for homeless

Locally CatholicCare converted MacKillop House in Lyneham to provide accommodation for 32 homeless women and men, while the Vinnies Street to Home program helped people move off the streets into public housing.

## Minimum wage action

The Bishops Conference

joined in submissions to the Fair Work Commission's annual wage review, arguing for an increase in the national minimum wage so low-paid workers could have a decent standard of living. The Conference argued that in order to meet its statutory obligation to keep workers on the minimum wage out of poverty, the Commission should increase the minimum wage by four per cent.

## Making churches safe

Parishes across Australia were closed for months, with work focused on how best to make churches safe as restrictions eased and churches reopened. Governments have often been slow to allow churches and other places of worship to open, in comparison to shops, bars and restaurants, so the Church had to point out that disparity in the hope of fair treatment.

## The source of vaccines

The federal government has been signing agreements with vaccine research projects around the world, trying to ensure Australians get access to COVID vaccines as soon as they become



MacKillop House in Lyneham houses up to 32 homeless women including those with children. The service is run by CatholicCare.

available. Bishops Conference spokesman Archbishop Peter Comensoli cautioned that "we have to be mindful of how vaccines are developed and discourage research that fails to respect the dignity of unborn human life ... [and] where there is a choice, we encourage people to use a vaccine that has not been developed using human foetal cells deriving from abortion. The bishops accept that the use of an ethically compromised vaccine is acceptable if no other option is available, in order to protect lives."

## New laws go too far

In the last sitting week before the October election, the ACT Government passed legislation banning "conversion therapy". The Catholic Church does not support coercive practices to change a person's sexual orientation, but the new laws go much further. They potentially criminalise parents, carers, teachers and anyone else who might counsel a child who has gender dysphoria to wait until they're older before considering transitioning.

## Against sincere belief

Despite the admirable emphasis on the value of all human lives in our struggle against coronavirus, many states are still considering euthanasia and assisted suicide.

Following the ACT's October election, Chief Minister Andrew Barr says new Human Rights Minister Tara Cheyne will lead the Government's advocacy for the right of our community to determine laws on voluntary assisted dying.

Queensland, Tasmania and South Australia are expected to vote on euthanasia legislation in the coming months.

The sponsor of Tasmania's euthanasia bill is causing particular concern because he wants to ensure all faith-based institutions are obliged to allow euthanasia on their premises.

Opponents have pointed out that no health facility offers every procedure, so why should religious ones be forced to act against their sincere belief that lethal drugs are not in patients' best interests?

# Our serious challenge to support newly marrieds

BY LARA KIRK

WHEN all the bishops of Australia met via zoom in November one issue discussed was how best to prepare and support couples who approach the Church for the sacrament of marriage.

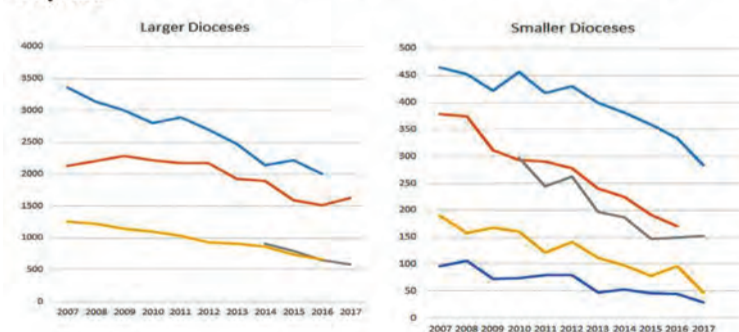
Marriage rates in Australia have dropped dramatically over the last 50 years from just under 10 marriages each year per 1000 people in the early 70s to just under 5 per 1000 people now. Of those couples still marrying, the vast majority (78 per cent) are now married by a civil celebrant compared to only 10 per cent in 1970.

Of the 22 per cent of religious marriages performed, only a third are Catholic. These trends are reflected across all rural and metropolitan dioceses of Australia.

So when couples do approach the church seeking a sacramental marriage, it is vital that they are welcomed, celebrated and supported in their journey towards marriage and beyond.

Pope Francis has signaled the urgency of the issue by holding two synods on marriage and the family then promulgating the

Numbers of couples marrying in Australian dioceses over the last 10 years



Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*.

There Francis describes the church as a 'family of families' and points out that each wedding signifies the founding of a new 'domestic church' which contributes to the Church's renewal.

Francis also makes clear that the responsibility for forming couples for the path of married life does not belong just to priests, pastoral professionals or specialised ministries within the church. It is the responsibility of the whole faith community.

Since then, the Pope has been proposing a vision for a 'catechumenate for the sacrament of marriage'. Pope Francis has argued that the "marriage catechumenate"

should extend into the first few years of marriage.

It's an ambitious and challenging vision but it dovetails beautifully into the plenary questions we are all reflecting on regarding what sort of church we want to be and what we want our parishes to look like.

Practicing Catholic married couples in particular need to take seriously the responsibility we have to support new marriages. We can begin by just welcoming young couples who turn up for Mass on a Sunday.

Beyond that, we can become involved in a pastoral programs such as *The Marriage Course* which is currently being piloted in other Archdiocese.

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## Finding a way through challenging times



BY ANGELA MCCABE  
TRAUMA PSYCHOLOGIST

The COVID-19 pandemic has had significant impact on individual, family and community wellbeing, prompting new emotional and mental health problems and aggravating existing ones. The key issues include isolation, uncertainty, grief for what has been lost and an increase in the physical and emotional demands placed on us. Our challenge is to find ways to help ourselves, our loved ones and our colleagues to remain healthy and productive through this period.

We can begin by prioritising those things that support wellbeing. This includes following the WHO and Australian Government health rules and maintaining a positive lifestyle: that is, taking care of your diet, getting a little exercise and sufficient sleep, and adhering to a routine. As important, avoid what might be described as “negative coping”: overworking, overeating, gambling, misuse of alcohol, drugs or medications.

When we are experiencing stress, it is normal to experience more emotional ups and downs, therefore it is important to proactively look after our feelings and try to restore a sense of calm. Some practical ideas include, talking to someone you trust, and cultivating an attitude of optimism, compassion and gratitude. Many clients have told me how important their faith has been in sustaining them.

As a clinician, I am humbled and impressed at how often people have made the most of the situation. For example, as challenging as homeschooling has been, many clients have told me how much they enjoyed the extra time with their children and families. Others explored new interests or took up study

**If you, or anyone you know is in crisis or feels overwhelmed, please seek immediate help:**

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**Lifeline: 13 11 14**

**Kids Helpline: 1800 551 800**

**MensLine Australia: 1300 789 978**

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(02 61626100)

or new hobbies.

Most heart-warming has been the way people are working hard to stay connected despite social isolation. Many of us are using new technologies, in ways we never anticipated.

Living with guilt and regret is an added stress that none of us need. This is the time to take extra care to nurture our relationships and make values-based decisions. In the years ahead we will want to look back on our response to this time with a quiet pride and dignity, safe in the knowledge that we genuinely did our best.

If you are interested in knowing more about wellbeing and emotional and mental health, there are a number of excellent online tools and resources you may wish to explore. Some to consider are Beyond Blue, The Black Dog Institute and Help Guide.

Sadness, loss of motivation, anxiety or worry that continues for more than a few days will benefit from professional help. Your GP is an excellent first port of call. He or she will have the expertise to offer care and assistance and to make the appropriate referrals if needed.

## Pray, hope and don't worry

BY ANNA HITCHINGS

AS 2020 draws to a close and we can begin to look at it in hindsight, you might be forgiven for wondering whether we unwittingly strayed into the Twilight Zone.

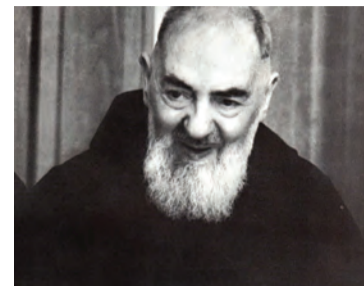
At what point did terms like ‘social distancing’, ‘iso’ and ‘one-point-five metres’ become household jargon? When did face-masks become a fashion statement? And what exactly does ‘new normal’ mean?

If you feel as if the world flipped upside down and inside out almost before you could blink; if you feel like you just can’t keep up with the new rules about what you can or can’t do; if you’re feeling scared, overwhelmed or just very, very confused, allow me to assure you: you’re not alone.

I’m willing to bet just about everyone feels like this. Things changed so much, so fast some of us are still recovering from whiplash. How do we respond to so much turmoil?

St Padre Pio told the faithful: “pray, hope and don’t worry” – but how can we when each day brings fresh news of death, mental health decline and economic and social disaster?

It can be easy to get weighed down when faced with all this,



St Padre Pio

and even more so by the question of what life will look like in 2021. However, let me also assure you that things are not as terrible as they seem, and there is plenty of reason to hope.

For a start, the average age of death for Australian COVID victims (81.1 for men, 85.2 for women) is actually higher, or older, than the average death rate overall (80.7 and 84.9 for respectively). Even for over-70s there’s a 94.6 per cent survival rate (99 per cent for everyone else), according to the CDC, and of all those who have died in the US during the pandemic, only six per cent (about 9700 people) died solely from COVID with no accompanying illnesses or conditions. These are all reasons to be hopeful.

And while it’s good to know these facts, it’s even more important for us to cultivate a spirit of detachment. That is, creating an emotional distance

between ourselves and the state of the world.

Popular American priest Fr Chad Ripperger exhorts the faithful to periodically step away from the news completely to “clear your head”.

“A person should be able to walk away from it and not be stewing or thinking about it,” he said in a recent talk. “Once the emotions begin to quieten down then the judgement can come in and start looking at things more objectively.”

We should then make acts of trust and confidence in God such as, ‘God, I have perfect confidence in you’. Making time to walk away from the news, to practise emotional detachment and acts of trust in God are the antidote all of us need to find hope and clarity during these troubled times, says Fr Ripperger.

At the end of the day, we should remember that God is in charge. He has guided His faithful through floods, plagues, earthquakes, wars, starvation, and all kinds of devastation. He will get us through this pandemic. Just put your faith and your trust in Him.

As St Pio tells us: “pray, hope, and don’t worry”.

## Parliament House supports Vinnies

SOME of Canberra’s disadvantaged who received prepared food from the St Vincent de Paul Society during the pandemic lockdown would have been surprised at where it was cooked.

Vinnies was stocked with food because it was used to helping people in crisis, and gained support from Parliament House to supply cooked meals to the community.

“The kitchens at Parliament House were available to cook some of the food because the House of Representatives and the Senate were not sitting during lockdown,” chief executive officer of the St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn Bernie Van Wyk said.

“We bought some of the food from Costco and the chefs at Parliament House cooked it on our behalf so we could deliver it to the people who needed it.”

At the height of the pandemic, Vinnies was not able to use all their volunteers, which was a big problem, he said.

“In some cases we had



volunteers that wanted to come and work, but if they were in the risk category we didn’t allow them to work.”

Vinnies had to adapt to changes especially with their food service to ensure those who needed help could be fed.

“Our Blue Door service in Ainslie was unable to provide a dine-in service, so takeaway food services were arranged for those needing meal assistance,” Mr Van Wyk said.

Mr Van Wyk noticed an increase in the number of people feeling isolated and lonely during

the lockdown in Canberra and its surrounds.

“We had a number of instances where people were really struggling and they were not coping,” he said.

“The staff even struggled with isolation and when I told them they could come back to work they were so happy and delighted to be able to come back.”

• You can donate to the Vinnies Christmas appeal to support Australian families at <https://donate.vinnies.org.au/christmas-appeal>.

# Women's Taskforce Celebrates One Year



Members of the Archdiocese of Canberra Goulburn Women's Taskforce meet via Zoom

IT'S been just over a year since consultations with women across the Archdiocese resulted in the formation of the Archdiocese of Canberra Goulburn Women's Taskforce (ACGWT), a peak body dedicated to providing opportunities for connection, faith formation and enhanced participation for women in the Church.

Despite bushfires, a pandemic and the unexpected closure of the national Office for the Participation of Women, the 12 local Taskforce members pushed on valiantly through a hugely productive first year.

As well as the inevitable work in setting up a new organisation (negotiating name, branding, structures, processes, goals and

tasks) the Taskforce launched a website ([womenstaskforceacg.org](http://womenstaskforceacg.org)) audited Archdiocesan decision making forums and lobbied the restructured ACBC to include women's participation in their new mandate and expand the local plenary delegation to include more than one woman.

Most importantly though, the Taskforce hosted three very successful events which functioned to connect, enrich and encourage the women of the Archdiocese in a very difficult year.

An International Women's Day Breakfast was held in March to lament and raise funds for bushfire affected areas of the Archdiocese.

A Reflection Afternoon in August was broadcast via YouTube

to over 80 small groups who gathered around the Archdiocese to enjoy the event simultaneously. Five women's prayer groups led various expressions of prayer and speakers Clara Geoghegan (an executive secretary for the ACBC) and Bridget Cooney (Archdiocesan delegate to the Plenary Council) offered their perspectives on lay mission.

Finally, in November, Andrea Dean and Clare Condon ran a zoom reflection on *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment, which was extremely well attended.

Goals, tasks and events for 2021 were decided at the closing meeting for 2020 where outgoing Chair, Lara Kirk, handed over the baton to Andrea Dean.

# Plenary prepares for 2021

PREPARATIONS for the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia, remain on track according to the facilitation team helping to lay the groundwork for the historic event.

Its opening assembly was to have been held in Adelaide in October this year but due to COVID-19 was deferred to 3-10 October 2021.

The second assembly due to be held in Sydney in the middle of next year is now scheduled for 4-9 July 2022.

Peter Gates is a member of the Council's facilitation team.

He said they were very mindful of the journey experienced by Australia's Catholic community during the pandemic and of how it might inform the process of discernment leading up to the Council.

"Access to the sacraments, for example, has been critical for

many," Peter said.

"We have been challenged to find new ways to experience the liturgy, be a community, and to minister pastorally. How do these experiences in 2020 help us discern what God is asking of us as we listen and reflect along the Plenary journey?"

The facilitation team's message was that this act of discernment, of allowing the Spirit to work through each other, was paramount.

"This is something we hope to nurture in the Council's delegates, clergy, religious and lay people alike; to come to the Council, on behalf of all of Australia's Catholics and non-Catholics, bringing their gifts and insights of what the Spirit is asking of us," he said.

The Plenary will be the first to be held in Australia since 1937.



Plenary representatives from every diocese meet regularly in the lead up to the October gathering in 2021 (Photo taken 2019)

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# Sharing the gift of love



THIS year has challenged all people throughout the world and left constraints on our abilities to gather, worship and help others. Still, the need is great and many communities we seek to help do not have the same means we do to meet their needs.

Generosity and support is very much needed to enable us to continue assisting people in need through the National Council of Churches' Christmas Bowl Appeal and to assist Church communities in Africa, Asia, Oceania and within Australia. Supported projects within the Dioceses of Otukpo, Africa, Thamarassery, India and Wilcannia Forbes locally, along with the La Salette Martha Province and the Society of the Oblates of the Sacred Heart (OSH) will assist those in need. Further assistance will go to Bethlehem University as well as contributing to construction of a multipurpose hall at a school for migrant children from Kiribati and Malaita in Nusabaruku, Diocese of Gizo, PNG.

Archbishop Christopher expressed his gratitude and 'Thank you!' to all who supported last year's Appeal. Almost \$74,000 was raised for projects within

Australia, Papua New Guinea, Africa and Asia. \$10,000 was provided for projects within the Diocese of Wilcannia Forbes, \$15,000 was given to assist the Diocese of Otukpo, Nigeria in Africa, whilst in India just over \$10,965 was given to the Society of the Oblates of the Sacred Heart (OSH), \$10,000 will assist with the rebuilding of houses in the flood affected communities of Kozhikode and Malappuram within Thamarassery Diocese, and \$8,000 towards projects focused on helping the poor within the La Salette Matha Province. Bethlehem University in the Holy Land, where the University is endeavouring to train future leaders within a Catholic education environment, received \$5,000 for student assistance to those in need with a similar amount provided towards classroom construction within Budoya Parish on Fergusson Island, Milne Bay Province, PNG.

Further support within our region was achieved through the ongoing \$10,000 assistance to the ecumenical Christmas Bowl Appeal and the National Council of Churches in Australia's (NCCA's) Act for Peace's projects.

## ARCHBISHOP'S CHRISTMAS APPEAL

I would like my donation to be:  
| \$20 | \$50 | \$100 | \$150 | Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/Dr/Rev \_\_\_\_\_  
(Block letters please)

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Please find enclosed my | Cheque | Money Order

I prefer to use my | Bankcard | Visa | Mastercard

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Expires \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

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Please send to: **Archbishop's Christmas Appeal,  
Attn: Deacon Joe Blackwell  
GPO Box 3089, Canberra, ACT, 2601**

Inquiries: Deacon Joe Blackwell: 0407 909 295

## St John's & St Joseph's Goulburn Reunion 2021

Reaching out to all Old Boys and Girls of  
St John's and St Joseph's  
orphanages Goulburn.  
And to the Sisters who cared for us.

You are invited along with family and  
friends to our 2021 Reunion at  
St Joseph's Taralga Rd.  
Kenmore (Goulburn)  
Saturday April 10th 2021  
10.30am to 3.00pm

For catering purposes and further  
information please RSVP to:

**Text:** Phil Merrigan on 0407 618 100

**Email:** phil.merrigan@outlook.com

**Check out your website:**

[www.stjohnsgoulburn.org](http://www.stjohnsgoulburn.org)

## Every goodbye is different

Some things are more important than others, like finding a local funeral director you can trust. We bring a depth of experience and understanding that could only come from being an integral part of the community.

**Proud sponsor of the Pilgrimages of St. Therese in 2002 & St. Francis Xavier during the Year of Grace.**

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Kingston	6295 2799
Queanbeyan	6297 1546
Tuggeranong	6293 3177



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## TRIBUNAL of the Catholic Church

Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn

*Outreaching to all those who have experienced a  
marriage breakdown and question the validity of  
their first marriage as understood by the Church.*

ENQUIRIES: Ph (02) 6239 9813

Mail: GPO Box 89, Canberra 2601. Email: [tribunal@cg.org.au](mailto:tribunal@cg.org.au)

## An appeal for free mental health services

This Christmas, Marymead needs your help to raise \$50,000 to fund 640 FREE counselling sessions for children and young people.

With droughts, bushfires and now COVID-19, 2020 has been a tough year. We have seen a significant increase in the demand in mental health support for children and young people experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, mental illness.

Demand is so high that we currently have over an 18 month waitlist for New Horizons, our FREE mental health counselling program for children and young people (0-18 years old). That means that right now, there are children and young people needing help who have to wait. We don't think that's ok, and we know the community don't either.

This Christmas, our target is \$50,000 which would give our children and young people access to 640 additional counselling sessions and have a significant impact on reducing the 18 month waitlist.

Marymead is reaching out to our community and asking, if they are able, to cover the cost of a counselling session (\$120) so a child or young person can get the help they need. To donate go to [marymead.org.au](http://marymead.org.au)

**Find all the  
latest  
Coming Events  
online at the  
Catholic Voice  
website**

[www.catholicvoice.org.au](http://www.catholicvoice.org.au)

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# Christmas Mass Times

## **BATEMANS BAY:**

Christmas Eve: 6pm - Children's Mass (Outdoor); 9pm - Mass  
Christmas Day: 9am - Mass; 5pm - Mass

## **BEGA:**

Christmas Eve: 7pm - Outdoor Family Mass, Bega (Carols from 6:30pm); Christmas Day: 7:45am - Outdoor Mass, Tathra;

## **BINALONG:**

Christmas Day: 10am Liturgy of the Word with Holy Communion

## **BOOROWA:**

Christmas Eve: 6pm (Outside)

## **BRAIDWOOD:**

Christmas Eve: 5pm Family Mass; 7pm Mass; For bookings please go online <https://www.trybooking.com/BMYAJ> and select your preferred time, or call Helen on 0430 169 849. Bookings open 1 December 2020 and close 5.00pm 23 December 2020.

## **BUNGENDORE:**

Christmas Eve: 6pm (outside in Church grounds). Christmas Day: 8.30am (probably outside, depending on Government regulations)

## **CAMPBELL:**

Christmas Eve: 6pm - Mass (Outside, please bring your chair)

## **CATHEDRAL & ST PETER CHANEL'S, YARRALUMLA:**

Christmas Eve: 5:30pm - Yarralumla; 6pm - Cathedral; 8pm - Cathedral; 9pm - Yarralumla (Carols at 8:15pm); Midnight - Cathedral (Carols at 11:15pm) Christmas Day: 8am - Cathedral; 9am - Yarralumla; 10am - Cathedral; 10:30am - Yarralumla; 11am - Cathedral; 5pm - Cathedral; Masses will use outdoor

space at both Churches, numbers inside will be restricted

## **CENTRAL CANBERRA:**

Christmas Eve: 6pm, 9pm and Midnight - St Brigid's, Dickson; Christmas Day: 8am - St Patrick's, Braddon; 9:30am St Brigid's Dickson

## **CHARNWOOD:**

Christmas Eve: 6pm & 7:30pm  
Christmas Day: 8am & 9:30am  
Please call 6258 1563 to book in for your chosen Mass.

## **COOMA:**

Please check with the parish office (02) 8331 7609

## **COOTAMUNDRA:**

Christmas Eve: 7.30pm - Cootamundra  
Christmas Day: 9.30am - Cootamundra

## **GALONG:**

Christmas Eve: 6:30pm  
Christmas Day: 9am

## **GOULBURN MISSION:**

Christmas Eve: 6pm - Goulburn SPP; 6pm - Crookwell; 6pm - Taralga; 8pm - Goulburn SPP; 12 Midnight - Goulburn SPP; Christmas Day: 8am - Goulburn SPP; 8am - Goulburn OLOF; 9am - Crookwell; 10am - Goulburn SPP; Names recorded on entry to Church. Numbers will be restricted to Govt. regulations.

## **GUNDAGAI:**

Christmas Eve: 6pm  
Christmas Day: 8am

## **GUNDAROO:**

Christmas Day: 9am

## **GUNGAHLIN:**

Christmas Eve: 4pm - Children's Mass; 5:30pm - Children's Mass; 7pm - Mass; 8:30pm - Mass; 10pm - Mass;

Christmas Day: 8am - Mass; 9:30am - Mass; 11am - Mass;

## **HARDEN-MURRUM-BURRAH:**

Christmas Eve: 7pm - Harden

## **KAMBAH:**

Christmas Eve: 7pm - Outdoor Family Mass; Midnight - Mass (in Church only 100 people); Christmas Day: 9am & 3pm - Vietnamese Service (both Outdoor);

## **KIPPAX:**

Please check with the parish office (02) 6254 3236

## **LATIN MASS COMMUNITY:**

Christmas Eve: Midnight - Garran.  
Christmas Day 7.45am - Campbell; 10am - Garran.

## **MORUYA:**

Christmas Eve: 6.00pm Outdoor Mass - St Mary's Primary School (bring a chair/blanket); Christmas Day: 8am & 10am - Sacred Heart, Moruya; 8am - The Pines, Tuross Head; 9:30am - St Edmonds, Bodalla;

## **NAROOMA-COBARGO:**

Christmas Eve: 5pm - Cobargo; 7pm - Narooma; Christmas Day: 7.30am - Bermagui; 9.30am - Narooma;

## **NARRABUNDAH:**

Christmas Eve: 6pm & Midnight - Mass; Christmas Day: 9am - Mass;

## **NORTH BELCONNEN:**

Christmas Eve: 6pm & 8pm - Evatt; 6pm & 8pm - Kaleen; Christmas Day: 10am - Evatt; 8am & 10am - Kaleen;

## **NORTH WODEN:**

Christmas Eve: 6pm Vigil - Curtin (on school grounds); 9pm - Curtin Christmas Day: 8am & 10am - Curtin

## **O'CONNOR:**

Christmas Eve: 6pm - Vigil Mass; 9pm - Mass  
Christmas Day: 9am - Christmas Mass

## **PAMBULA:**

Christmas Eve: 5pm - Lumen Christi Catholic College (Children's Mass); 7pm - Our Lady Star of the Sea Church, Eden; 9pm - St Joseph's Church Merimbula.  
Christmas Day: 10am - St Joseph's Church Merimbul

## **QUEANBEYAN:**

Please check with the parish office (02) 6299 4611

## **SNOWY MONARO:**

Christmas Eve: 5pm - Adaminaby; 5pm - Delegate; 6:30pm - Bombala; 6:30pm - Cooma; 7pm - Berridale; 9pm - Nimmitabel; Christmas Day: 8am - Jerangle; 9am - Jindabyne; 9am - Cooma; 9:30am - Numeralla;

## **SOUTH BELCONNEN:**

Christmas Eve: 6:30pm - St Vincent's Primary School Oval, Aranda; 9pm - Page (streamed <https://www.facebook.com/southbelconnen/live/>)  
Christmas Day: 8:30am - Page; 10am - Aranda; 3pm - Aranda (Korean)

## **SOUTH TUGGERANONG:**

Christmas Eve: 6pm - Outside SHC, Calwell; 6pm - Outside HFC, Gowrie; 9pm - HFC, Gowrie; Midnight - HFC, Gowrie; Christmas Day: 8am - HFC, Gowrie; 10am - Outside SHC, Calwell; 10am - Outside, Gowrie; Bookings essential for all Masses at <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/o/corpus-christi-parish-gowrie-17757154026>

## **SOUTH WODEN:**

Christmas Eve: 6pm - Children's Mass at Marist College Canberra; 9pm - Vigil; Midnight Mass  
Christmas Day: 8:30am - Mass; 10am - Mass

## **SYRO-MALABAR** (Malayalam language):

Christmas Eve: 10:30pm - St Joseph's, O'Connor  
Christmas Day: 10:15am - St Joseph's, O'Connor

## **TEMORA MISSION:**

Christmas Eve: 6pm (outdoors) - Temora;

Christmas Day: 8am - Ardlethan; 10am - Barellan; 5pm - Temora

## **TUMUT MISSION:**

Christmas Eve: 6pm - Gundagai (Outside); 7pm & 11pm - Tumut; 6:30pm - Jugiong (Outside); 8:30pm - Adelong; Christmas Day: 8am - Talbingo; 8am - Gundagai; 10am - Batlow; 10am - Tumut;

## **WANNIASSA:**

Christmas Eve: 5:30pm Vigil (Oval adjacent to Church); 7:30pm Vigil  
Christmas Day: 9am All open air Masses

## **WATSON:**

Christmas Eve: 5.00pm to 5.30pm - Reconciliation; 6.00pm - Mass; 9.00pm - Mass; Christmas Day: 8.00am - Mass; 10.00am - Mass; 10:30am - St John the Evangelist Chapel, John XXIII College, 51 Daley Road Acton; NO 5.00pm Mass Bookings are essential and can be made by phone: 62485925 or email: [watson@cg.org.au](mailto:watson@cg.org.au)

## **WESTON CREEK:**

Christmas Eve: 6.00pm - Vigil; Children and Family Mass at both churches; St Jude, Holder and St John Vianney, Waramanga; 9.00pm St John Vianney Church (preceded by carols)  
Christmas Day: 9.00am St Jude's Church Holder

## **WEST WYALONG MISSION:**

Christmas Eve: 6pm - West Wyalong; 6pm - Lake Cargelligo.  
Christmas Day: 9:30am - West Wyalong; 9:30am - Ungarie

## **YASS-GUNNING:**

Christmas Eve: 5.30 - St Francis Xavier, Gunning in the grounds of the church; 7pm - St Augustine's, Yass in the grounds of the Hartigan Centre; Christmas Day: 8am - St Augustine's, Yass;

## **YOUNG MISSION:**

Christmas Eve: 6pm - Young (Outside); 6pm - Boorowa (Outside); 6pm - Grenfell; 9pm - Young; Christmas Day: 9am - Young; 9am - Grenfell.