

Risen



Christ

Third Sunday of Advent Year A

13 & 14 December 2025

The Catholic Communities of Our Lady Help of Christians, Eltham & St Francis Xavier, Montmorency



We acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation who are the traditional custodians of this land and pay our respect to the elders past, present and emerging.

Christmas Mass Timetable

Wednesday 24 December

- 6pm Christmas Eve (Outdoor) at Holy Trinity Primary School Oval
- 8pm Christmas Eve at Our Lady Help of Christians, Eltham
- 10pm Christmas Eve at St Francis Xavier, Montmorency

Thursday 25 December - Christmas Day

- 8:30am Christmas Day at St Francis Xavier, Montmorency
- 10am Christmas Day at Our Lady Help of Christians, Eltham



Gospel: Matthew 11:2-11

John in his prison had heard what Christ was doing and he sent his disciples to ask him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or have we got to wait for someone else?' Jesus answered, 'Go back and tell John what you hear and see; the blind see again, and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised to life and the Good News is proclaimed to the poor; and happy is the man who does not lose faith in me.'

As the messengers were leaving, Jesus began to talk to the people about John 'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swaying in the breeze? No? Then what did you go out to see? A man wearing fine clothes? Oh no, those who wear fine clothes are to be found in palaces. Then what did you go out for? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you and much more than a prophet: he is the one of whom scripture says: Look, I am going to send my messenger before you; he will prepare your way before you. I tell you solemnly, of all the children born of women, a greater than John the Baptist has never been seen; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he is.'

Gospel Reflection

The performance of athletes at the Paralympic Games fills one with admiration. Events such as this have brought about a change of mindset in society. A person with a disability is no longer thought of as lacking something from the 'normal', or needing in some way to be 'fixed': they are 'differently-abled'. However, our assumptions and social prejudice can easily morph into marginalisation and discrimination. We value and respect every person no matter who they are, and we do not define people by their abilities or disabilities; We rejoice in differences and work for recognition and inclusion.

It is against this background that we need to understand Isaiah's vision of God's kingdom and Jesus' appropriation of these words to describe his own ministry. All are called to participate in the rejoicing in God's Kingdom.

*This parish has a commitment to ensuring the safety of children and vulnerable people in our community.
We support the recommendations of the Royal Commission into institutional abuse and pray for all the survivors.*



PARISH TEAM & INFORMATION

OUR PEOPLE & OUR CONTACT DETAILS



Parish Priest

Michael Sierakowski - **Moderator**

Michael.Sierakowski@cam.org.au

Parish Office

all correspondence to:

86 Mayona Road,
Montmorency Vic 3094
9435 4742

RisenChrist.Parish@cam.org.au

Kate Kogler:

Parish Secretary

Tue-Fri 9am-3pm

Peter Williams:

Safeguarding Officer

RisenChrist.ChildSafety@cam.org.au

Volunteers

Marisa Capuana:

Various

Kerry Mash:

Wed & Fri 10am-3pm

www.melbrcatholic.org/risenchristparish

Facebook:

[Risen Christ Parish](https://www.facebook.com/RisenChristParish)

Risen Christ Parish Bulletin items:

RisenChrist.Parish@cam.org.au

Schools

Holy Trinity Primary School

Principal: Vince Bumpstead: 9431 0888

principal@htelthamnth.catholic.edu.au

www.htelthamnth.catholic.edu.au

Our Lady Help of Christians Primary School

Principal: Rudy Vail: 9439 7824

school@olhceltham.catholic.edu.au

www.olhceltham.catholic.edu.au

St Francis Xavier Primary School

Principal: Jo Nolen: 9435 8474

principal@sfxmontmorency.catholic.edu.au

www.sfxmontmorency.catholic.edu.au

RECONCILIATION

available half an hour before
any weekday or weekend Parish Mass.

Collections: 30 Nov & 7 Dec 2025

		OLHC	SFX
Thanksgiving	Cash	\$304.00	\$817.00
	Electronic		
Presbytery	Cash	\$697.00	\$955.10
	Electronic		

Thanksgiving / Stewardship Offering

Month	OLHC	SFX	Total
September	\$6,600.67	\$11,649.50	\$18,250.17
October	\$5,901.67	\$10,143.50	\$16,045.17
November	\$6,322.39	\$7,7987.50	\$14,309.89

Risen Christ Parish Calendar of Events

Saturday 13 December

10:00am	Safeguarding Meeting	Eltham
12:00pm	Baptisms: Walker, Hugh, Milla & Luka	Montmorency
6:00pm	Mass	Montmorency

Sunday 14

8:30am	Mass	Montmorency
10:00am	Mass & First Eucharist	Eltham
12:00pm	Baptisms: Eva, Milla, Ethan	Eltham
7:00pm	Music Rehearsal	Montmorency

Tuesday 16

9:30am	Mass	Montmorency
10:00am	Rosary	Montmorency
10:00am	Craft Group	Montmorency
6:00pm	HT Grade 6 Graduation Ceremony	Holy Trinity
7:00pm	OLHC Grade 6 Graduation Ceremony	Eltham

Wednesday 17

9:30am	Liturgy of the Word with Communion	Eltham
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Thursday 18

9:30am	Liturgy of the Word with Communion	Montmorency
10:30am	ASRC Food Collection	Montmorency

Friday 19

9:30am	Mass	Eltham
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Saturday 20

6:00pm	Mass	Montmorency
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Sunday 21

8:30am	Mass	Montmorency
10:00am	Mass	Eltham

Tuesday 23

9:30am	Mass	Montmorency
10:00am	Rosary	Montmorency

Wednesday 24

6:00pm	Christmas Eve Outdoor Mass	Holy Trinity
8:00pm	Christmas Eve Mass	Eltham
10:00pm	Christmas Eve Mass	Montmorency

Thursday 25

8:30am	Christmas Day Mass	Montmorency
10:00am	Christmas Day Mass	Eltham

Thanksgiving

Dear Parishioners,

Following is a list of ways in which you can give towards the running of our Parish (clockwise from top right):

- scan the QR code (<https://bit.ly/45ifhRp>) & you can donate to any Parish finance campaign including Thanksgiving, Presbytery Offerings, baptisms etc.
- cash/coins in the collection baskets at each church
- EFTPOS terminals
- thanksgiving envelopes
- set up payments from credit/debit cards

Thank you for your generous support,

Michael





*Let us pray for all those who have gone
before us marked with the sign of faith ...*

Montmorency

For those in need of **healing**, remembering especially:
*Nora Edmond, Pat Hosmer, Siobhan Lappin, Frances McDonald,
Jarrod Mizzi, Cindy & Ed Morrissey,
Regina Roszczenko (mother of Liz Gray),
Jeanne Vanderwert, Br Doug Walsh*

For those whose **anniversaries** are at this time:
Kim Brisbane, Terry Flannery, Leo Fell, Kevin Shannon

Eltham

For those in need of **healing**, remembering especially:
*Stephen Andrew, Des Arneson, Bill Boyce, Penny Boyce,
Ruth Decker, Mary Luttick, Bernard Murray, Audrey Tunks*

For those whose **anniversaries** are at this time:
Connie Lynch

To include an anniversary please contact Parish Office
9435 4742 or RisenChrist.Parish@cam.org.au.



SVdP Montmorency

Tax Receipts and Letters of Appreciation - 2025 Christmas Appeal

The Montmorency conference of St Vincent de Paul thank all parishioners who donated to our appeal last week. Tax receipts and/or letters of appreciation have been sent earlier in the past week to those who requested a receipt. If you wish to contribute to the appeal, details are below.

The members of the St Vincent de Paul Montmorency conference wish to thank all parishioners for their continued support of our work and wish all parishioners and their families every blessing and happiness for Christmas and a very happy and safe New Year.

How to donate to the SVDP Christmas appeal

Envelopes: SVDP envelopes are available at SFX in church pews or at the tables at the entrance doors or at the Presbytery/Church office. You are welcome to leave your donations and/or envelopes in the SVDP Donation boxes on the tables near the entrances to the church, at the Parish Office or to an SVDP member. Tax receipts can be issued by simply completing name and address on the envelope.

Direct Credit: BSB 063003 Account 1008 1787 with Montmorency 916 in the reference box. In this way monies will be credited to the Montmorency Conference account and stay within our community.

On Line: vinnies.org.au In terms of directing funds back to the Montmorency or Eltham Conferences, we request that you state Montmorency or Eltham in the "Comments/Conference Name" box which is just after the postal address box.

By Phone: by calling 13 18 12 and again stating your donation is for the Montmorency or Eltham conference.

If you are donating online, by phone or direct credit could you please send an email to msaid@netspace.net.au with your full name and address, amount and date of deposit so that the conference can acknowledge your generosity and ensure these monies are allocated to the Montmorency or Eltham Conferences.

Assistance is always promptly available to the community
by contacting 1800 305 330 between 10am and 3pm weekdays.

Roster for week ending 14 Dec 2025

Castellanos, Rodrigo	E10:00
Donnellan, Denise	E10:00
Drljo, Frank	CLNR
Dunell, Linda	H10:00
Dunell, Rick	H10:00
Edwards, Elisabeth	C10:00
Edwards, Elisabeth	E10:00
French, Jossie	W8:30
Hall, Vali	ASE
Love, Philip	W8:30
Maloney, Nigel	W6:00
Nolan, Kathleen	PRYR
Nolan, Kathleen	R10:00
Nolan, Mike	PRYR
Roy, Yvonne	E10:00
Said, Marie	ASRC
Said, Mike	ASRC
Scannell Family	PRSE
Skipper, Patsy	LoW-01 Thu
Smith, Neil	E10:00
Stone, Nan	CLNR
Stone, Nan	W6:00
Turnbull, Mark	H10:00
Turnbull, Pauline	H10:00
Zerjal, Frida	CLNR

Roster for week ending 21 Dec 2025

Bacani, Brian	W6:00
Capuana, Marisa	LoW-01 Thu
Capuana, Marisa	W6:00
Cseh, Ferenc	E10:00
Dunell, Linda	ASE
Dunell, Linda	E10:00
Haines, Geoff	R10:00
Iliffe, Yvonne	E10:00
Lucas, Maree	CLNR
Mallia, Anthony	E10:00
McKinley, Michael	W8:30
Ramsdale, John	W8:30
Reardon, Kathy	E10:00
Sorian, Kimberly	H10:00
Stephens, Patricia	CLNR
Stewart Family	PRSE
Taylor, Trish	C10:00
Taylor, Trish	PRYR
Volunteer please	H10:00
Volunteer please	H10:00
Volunteer please	H10:00

ASE = Altar Society @ Eltham;
C = Commentator;

CLKR = PowerPoint Clicker @ SFX;
CLNR = Cleaner @ SFX; R = Reader;

E = Eucharistic Minister;
H = Hospitality;

LoW-01 = Liturgy of the Word with
Communion @ SFX;

PRSE = Pilgrim Rosary Statue @ Eltham;
M = Music; W = Minister of the Word

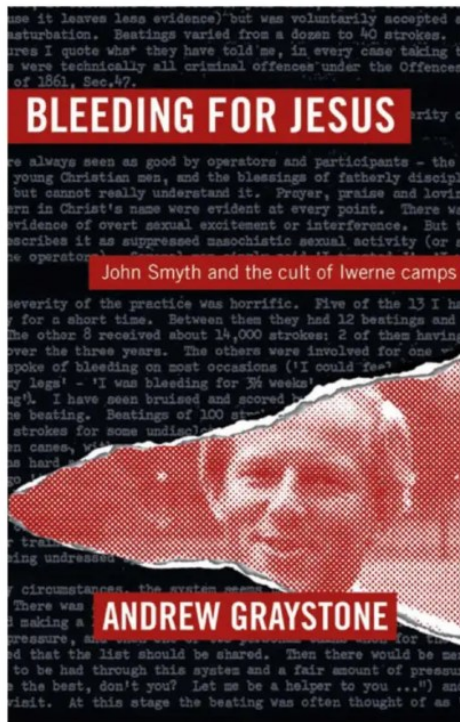
In spite of the many inquiries and reports and the many new safeguarding policies, committees and initiatives, and in spite of the repeated insistence that ‘victims must come first’, sexual abuse in the Church remains misunderstood and church leaders remain confused about what they can or should do to respond to it / **By Andrew Graystone**

A gaping wound in the Church

It was almost 10 years ago, on a sunny afternoon in a pub garden in Surrey, that I first knowingly met victims of abuse in a Christian context. Three exceptionally clever, articulate men had asked me to meet them. Then in their early fifties, they had been broken 35 years earlier by their encounter with the notorious evangelical Christian barrister John Smyth, a lay reader in the Church of England. He had groomed them at school and university, through a Christian discipleship programme called Iwerne camps. Then he took them to a specially constructed shed in his garden in Winchester and lashed them hundreds of times until they bled. He did this many times, claiming that he was acting on behalf of God to bring them into Christian maturity.

The physical scars that those men and a score of others received at the hands of Smyth had long ago healed, but the damage done to their souls was still immediate and present. They were broken. You can judge that for yourself, because the men I met in that pub garden have told their stories to me in my book *Bleeding for Jesus* and in the remarkable films *See No Evil* that will be broadcast on Channel 4 next week. From that strange beginning, scores of others - from different Churches and denominations - who have been crushed out of shape by their encounters with Christian leaders have come to me to tell their stories, or to ask for advocacy or support. It is a strange, unsought vocation, but it is now my full-time occupation.

Abuse remains a gaping wound in the Church. It is like a leak in the church roof through which water is pouring in, even on sunny days. No matter how much money is spent, and how many experts are called in to examine the problem, it seems that no one can work out how to fix it. Some in the Church have concluded that they just have to learn to live with it. The best



they can manage is to send in tooled-up lawyers, insurance companies and communications managers to mitigate the immense reputational damage. That doesn't begin to recognise, let alone address, the spiritual and psychological wounds that abuse inflicts on the body of Christ. It doesn't address the trauma felt by ordinary worshippers as they watch their Church being trashed either. Nor does it do anything to repair the almost complete loss of trust in the established Church.

The strange truth is that after all this time, I find that many leaders in the Churches cannot effectively articulate what abuse *is*, nor do they know what it would mean to respond to it in a Christian way. In the absence of this understanding, church leaders tend to treat abuse as a civil wrong rather than a spiritual one, offering secular answers to religious questions. Perhaps this comes from a fear that if it were to be treated as a spiritual issue, the questions about power and privilege that follow would be too searching. This vacuum of theological diagnosis produces a

confusion about what the Church can or should do to treat it. Managerialism and delay fill the gap, and this response re-abuses the victims.

In the case of John Smyth, leaders in the Church of England were first made aware of his abuse in 1982. Instead of dealing with him there and then, he was enabled to carry on abusing until his death 35 years later. It wasn't until 2018 that the Church of England commissioned a review from Keith Makin. That review was scheduled to last nine months, but thanks to poor management and inadequate resourcing, it took more than five years to report. When the Makin Report was published this time last year, it led to the reluctant resignation of Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury. In the 12 months since not a single victim has received any offer of redress from the Church of England; not one of the scores of clergy who covered up for John Smyth has been subject to church discipline; not one of the report's recommendations has been enacted.

Even more important, there has been no deep listening to victims. In my experience, almost no victims of church-related abuse report that they have been helped or satisfied by the Church's response. Many say that they regret ever having disclosed their abuse to the Church. Many church leaders are exhausted and frustrated by this issue too, some to the point of giving up.

For all the new safeguarding policies, debates in the church councils, vigils, and endless committees and initiatives, and in spite of repeated insistence from bishops and others that “victims must come first”, church leaders don't seem able to grip the issue in a meaningful or effective way. The bishops in the Church of England have failed to find a way to make

meaning out of abuse and recovery. Some senior leaders even construe the stream of disclosures as an attack on the Church, and see themselves as the victims; rather than engaging with the problems, they put their head down and plough on. Meanwhile the Church is being dragged reluctantly towards grace by courageous victims and campaigners.

“Abuse” is a vague and contested term. A typology of abuse usually sorts it according to the nature of the act: physical, sexual, emotional or psychological, and so on. There is a debate within the Church as to whether spiritual abuse should be included as a distinct category, or whether it is best defined as a subset of the others. One of the drawbacks of this way of thinking is that it constructs abuse as an event (or a procession of events) in which the emphasis is on the actions of the abuser, rather than on the impact on the victim. In Christian theology, wounded relationships matter as much if not more than wounded bodies. In Jesus’ parable about the man beaten up on the Jericho Road, the priest and the Levite don’t just ignore the needs of the victim; they define themselves against him. They cross the road. The priest and the Levite, for all their status and privilege, are the pitiable figures. The victim knows his own need; neither the priest nor the Levite acknowledge their own wounds. It shouldn’t really be called the Parable of the Good Samaritan. It is the Parable of the Bad Priests.

The theologian Miroslav Volf has questioned the appropriateness of the rigid separation between the categories of the “oppressor” and the “oppressed”, arguing that it can make true reconciliation more difficult. This, he recognises, is a challenge that must be heard with utmost sensitivity. While some people, and classes of people, are victims of abuse, and others are abusers, Christian theology recognises there is also a complex, more nuanced and less binary understanding of the realities of power and oppression. Every human relationship is an encounter between two or more wounded people, and each is capable of good and of evil. Abuse occurs when a broken person misuses their potency to harm another broken person. Repair is achieved not merely by repaying the debts, but by rebalancing both parties to a relationship of dignity and humility before each other and before God.

In my experience many victims of church abuse understand this, and it partly accounts for their enduring longing for the Church to return to a place of humility and justice. Victims own their own brokenness, while the Church and its agents struggle to do so. The broken victim crying out for justice is often a theologian and a prophet whose voice the Church needs to hear. When wounded victims, robbed of all but the least scrap of their dignity and identity, cry out, “I too am human; and, broken as I am, I matter”, they bring to the Church a profound lived

truth that those who feel the need to project strength and control need to understand. And when the victim stubbornly says to the Church, “You are better than this”, the Church needs to hear what is being said to it.

There’s a phrase in Luke’s gospel (22:51) that chokes me up every time I read it. It comes in the account of Jesus’ arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane. When an armed mob came to arrest Jesus, his disciples grabbed their weapons. They were making a wild effort to take control of the situation; to manage the outcome. One of them even struck out with a sword, and cut off the right ear of the high priest’s servant.

Jesus told them to put away their weapons. In the middle of the melee, he stopped and touched the ear of the injured servant boy, and healed him. It’s the touching that gets me. You can’t heal someone if you are not close enough to touch them. Every time I meet with a person who has been abused in the life of the Church - and I meet them almost every day in the course of my strange vocation - I remember how, in the middle of chaos and threat, Jesus made it his absolute priority to heal the person his disciple had hurt.

Andrew Graystone is a writer and theologian, and an advocate for victims and survivors of church abuse. His PhD thesis is about the theology of touch in digital culture. *Bleeding for Jesus: John Smyth and the Cult of Iwerne Camps* (revised and updated edition) is published by Darton, Longman and Todd.

It is the role of adults to keep children safe.

Daniel Morcombe Foundation Inc ~ www.danielmorcombe.com.au



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kwbddzqwhTg>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yvffh-mGbS0>



Prayers of the Faithful for 14th December 2025 Third Sunday of Advent

Leader: On this Joyful Sunday, Christ wishes to fill all humanity with His hope and His joy. In anticipation of His blessings, we offer our prayers today .

For all who profess the Christian faith: that we faithfully follow Christ's teaching in our daily lives and bring joy to all those we encounter. Let us pray to the Lord.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For all catechumens who are acquainting, or re-acquainting themselves with the Good News of Christ: let us pray for them as they continue on their journey of discovery.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer

For our Risen Christ Parish: that we continue working together to promote the well-being of both communities, and to strive to offer service according to our individual charisms.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For those who are oppressed, for those who lack adequate food or shelter, for those who are in prison: may they receive the physical and spiritual comfort to address their need.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For those in our Parish who are ill: may they be comforted by the presence of the Lord, who brings joy to our lives, and by those who assist them in their need.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For those who have died recently, and for those whose anniversaries occur at this time, including: Kim Brisbane, Terry Flannery, Leo Fell, Kevin Shannon & Connie Lynch: may they rejoice forever in the loving presence of their God.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: Lord, Jesus Christ, you who have come to announce the Good News to the poor, please listen to our prayers and deign to grant them. You who live and reign for ever and ever.

All: Amen



**Congratulations to all who celebrate
their sacraments this weekend:**

Saturday, 13th December, 2025

St Francis Xavier, Montmorency, 12:00pm

Luka Bond

Baptism

Milla Jieun Lee

Baptism

Hugh Jim Serpless

Baptism

Walker Ian Serpless

Baptism

Sunday, 14th December, 2025

Our Lady Help of Christians, Eltham, 12:00pm

Ethan Mark Henry Brohan

Baptism

Eva Jayne Ross

Baptism

Milla Joy Ross

Baptism

Music Rehearsal for 10pm Christmas Eve Mass

As we get ready to raise our voices in song this Christmas, we want to extend an invitation to anyone and everyone who wishes to help lead the music at the 10pm Mass on Christmas Eve at Monty (carols from 9.30pm).

Rehearsal will take place in the Church at Monty
on **Sunday 14th Dec, 7-9pm.**

All are welcome to join us. Bring your voices, instruments, energy and Christmas cheer.



Melbourne Archdiocese
Catholic Schools



Holy Trinity
Primary School ELTHAM NORTH
2025 - YEAR 6

Laudato Si'

<https://vimeo.com/1145113318?fl=pl&fe=sh>

Holy Trinity Year 6 2025 – Laudato Si'

As part of the Year 6 Religious Education program in 2025 the Year 6 students explored the theme Care for Our Common Home, inspired by Pope Francis' encyclical Laudato Si'. Throughout the unit, students reflected deeply on our shared responsibility to care for creation and to respond with compassion to both the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor.

As a culmination of their learning, the students composed an original song titled Laudato Si', expressing their hope, faith, and commitment to protecting God's creation. We acknowledge and commend Miss Clare Smith, along with students Noah and Thomas, for their additional creativity and contribution to the lyrics.

Recognising the potential of this work, Religious Education and Wellbeing Leader, Mrs Kathy Toomey, partnered with the creative team at Stampede Immersive to record and film the song, transforming the students' efforts into a professional lyric and film clip.

Through this project, our students have been able to realise their dream of sharing Pope Francis' message with the wider world; that we are all called to live in harmony with creation and take meaningful action to safeguard our common home. Their lyrics remind us that even the smallest voices can inspire great change when grounded in faith, compassion, and love for our planet.

We hope this song inspires you to reflect, act, and continue spreading the message of caring for our Earth.

Risen Christ Parish Community thanks you



We think it is timely to stop and give thanks to all you caring and kind parishioners, and there are many, who religiously chauffeur to Masses those who would otherwise be unable to attend Mass. To you who regularly take Communion to the sick or housebound. To you who visit and bring Communion to those elderly residents in Care Facilities, Calvary Lower Plenty Garden Views, St Vincents Care Services, you bring joy and the love of Jesus to the hearts of many. You who volunteer and donate your time to attend so many other unseen but necessary tasks. You the quiet un-noticed ones help keep the heart and Spirit of Jesus alive among us. **We warmly thank you.**

Volunteers for Christmas Masses

Our Advent journey of prayer and waiting is soon to be over and we will celebrate the Birth of Jesus. If you are around over the Christmas Season we would like to invite you to be involved in our Christmas Masses. In the Church Foyer you will find the Volunteer Sheets for each of the Masses in both of our Churches. Please place your name and phone number on the sheet of the Mass you will be attending.

We are looking for Readers, Ministers of the Eucharist, welcomers, those who may wish to join in with the music or singing, and others who may wish to be involved in any way. We will be in touch with you before our celebrations, to confirm your role.

Let us celebrate the Birth of Jesus with welcoming open hearts and love that reaches out to all!

Saint Francis Xavier

Primary Religious Education News

Last week on our Feast Day, our students learnt more about the values and virtues of our Patron Saint.

We explored the big question:

How can we live more like St Francis Xavier?

Several of our grades took up the challenge to spread kindness with others in our local parish community. It was decided that we would make the SFX parishioners 'Christmas Blessing Bags'.

The children have been busy making an amazing array of Advent prayer cards, wreath decorations, nativity scenes and Christmas cards for the parishioners. These have been packaged up in gift bags and left for parishioners to take home with them after the parish Masses, as a way of giving to others and spreading kindness this Advent season.

Thank you to Prep BM, 1LC, 1KH, 4DO & 4MA for their creative contributions!

Special thanks also to Ms Hanley who made a delicious batch of shortbreads which were delivered to the parishioners following Mass on Tuesday.

Merry Christmas from the students and staff at
St Francis Xavier Primary School!
Megan Bird, Faith Leader



You are warmly invited to our final
**Charismatic Mass for 2025 and
Christmas break-up**

at St Thomas the Apostle Church,
251 Diamond Creek Rd, Nth Greensborough
on **Thursday, 18th December.**

The evening will commence with praise & worship
at 7.30pm followed by **Mass at 8pm,**
and supper afterwards.

Enquiries: Emilia 0418 120 902



14th December 2025
3rd Sunday of Advent

Announcement Melbourne Archdiocesan Synod

Dear Friends in Christ, the faithful of Melbourne,

On this Third Sunday of Advent, in the days following the *Australian Catholic Youth Festival*, and as we ready our hearts for the coming of the Lord at Christmas, I write to share with you an important moment in the life of our local Church in Melbourne.

This Jubilee Year of Hope has been a time of great grace for us. Throughout the year, I have been meeting with clergy and lay leaders, listening to them, and discerning with them as to how the Archdiocese of Melbourne might respond to the call to hold an Archdiocesan Synod.

From this time of prayer, grace and reflection, I now wish to share that I have initiated preparations for a Synod to be held in the Archdiocese of Melbourne in 2026. I have asked Bishop Rene Ramirez RCJ to assist me in leading this process, drawing on the *Pathways for the Implementation Phase of the Synod 2025 - 2028*, endorsed by Pope Leo XIV. I have also appointed Ms Cathy Jenkins as Synod Program Lead.

Over recent years, the whole Church has been invited into a renewed way of walking together. This way - *synodality* - is rooted in our baptism and asks each of us, whether lay, religious, or ordained, to listen deeply to the Holy Spirit and to one another. This is to be “the ordinary way in which the Church seeks to live and work in our time.” (International Theological Commission).

Here in Australia, this journey has been unfolding for many years, The Fifth Plenary Council (2021-2022) arose from a nationwide effort of prayerful listening and discernment. We then contributed to the global Synod (2021-2024), which invited us to reflect on how we live communion, foster participation, and carry out Christ’s mission in the Church.

I am grateful for the many people across the Archdiocese who took part in these consultations. You have offered insights filled with faith in Christ, love for the Church, and hope for the future. The fruits of *Take the Way of the Gospel*, the development of parish formation through the Bethany Way, and the vibrant witness of young people at the recent *Australian Catholic Youth Festival* likewise to continue to shape our discernment.

Three themes will be taken up in the Synod process:

- **Young Discipleship**
- **Missionary Leadership**
- **Formation and Participation**

These three themes have not arisen in isolation. They have emerged consistently and clearly through all the listening, discernment, and consultation undertaken in recent years across the Archdiocese, including the Plenary Council process, the global Synod, and our local pastoral initiatives. Together, they will now form the foundational focus of our Archdiocesan Synod. They are vital to the missionary endeavours of the people of God in Melbourne because they speak directly to how faith is awakened, how leadership is exercised in service, and how every baptized person is formed and enabled to participate actively in the life and mission of the Church. When these three are alive and flourishing, they bring life, vitality, and vibrancy to the heart of the Gospel as it is lived and proclaimed in our parishes, families, schools and communities throughout our world.

The first step in our journey toward the Synod will be the establishment of a Synod Commission. Following prayerful discernment and consultation - including with the Council of Priests - I will invite the Commission to help us explore the three foundational themes and prepare us for the journey ahead.

More information about the Archdiocesan Synod process will be shared with you in early 2026. For now, I simply ask for your prayers and your openness to journey together as the Church in Melbourne - across our parishes, apostolates, works and communities.

May this Advent season renew within us a spirit of hope and a desire to welcome the Lord who comes to dwell among us.

With every grace and blessing.
Yours sincerely in Christ Jesus,



We proclaim a crucified Christ
1Cor1.23

Most Rev Peter A Comensoli
Archbishop of Melbourne