



THE SAVING WORD

MATTHEW

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT / A

14 DECEMBER 2025

FIRST READING

Isa 35:1-6, 10

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

God himself will come and save us.

Let the wilderness and the dry-lands exult,
let the wasteland rejoice and bloom,
let it bring forth flowers like the jonquil,
let it rejoice and sing for joy.

The glory of Lebanon is bestowed on it,
the splendour of Carmel and Sharon;
they shall see the glory of the Lord,
the splendour of our God.

Strengthen all weary hands,
steady all trembling knees
and say to all faint hearts,
'Courage! Do not be afraid.
'Look your God is coming,
vengeance is coming,
the retribution of God;
he is coming to save you.'

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
the ears of the deaf unsealed,
then the lame shall leap like a deer
and the tongues of the dumb sing for joy,
for those the Lord has ransomed shall return.

They will come to Zion shouting for joy,
everlasting joy in their faces;
joy and gladness will go with them
and sorrow and lament be ended.

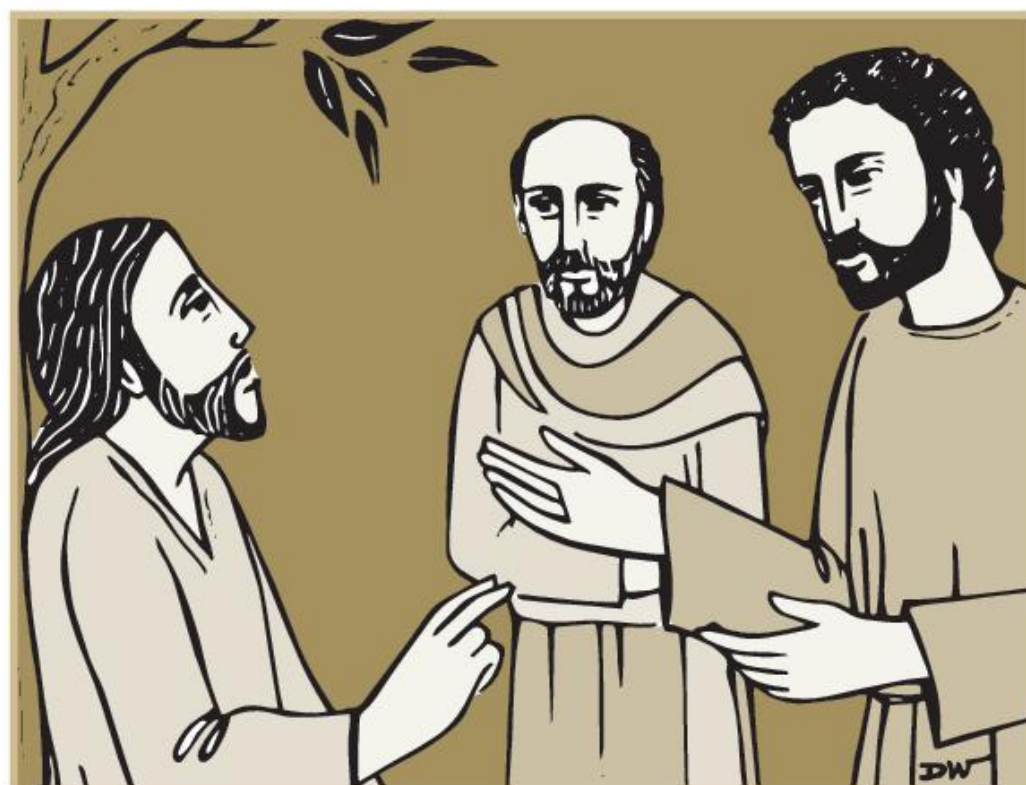
■ The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Ps 145:6-10. R. cf. Isa 35:4

R. Lord, come and save us. (or Alleluia!)

1. It is the Lord who keeps faith for ever, /
who is just to those who are oppressed. / It is
he who gives bread to the hungry, / the Lord,
who sets prisoners free. **R.**

2. It is the Lord who gives sight to the blind, /
who raises up those who are bowed down, /
the Lord, who protects the stranger / and
upholds the widow and orphan. **R.**



3. It is the Lord who loves the just / but
thwarts the path of the wicked. / The Lord
will reign for ever, / Zion's God, from age to
age. **R.**

SECOND READING

James 5:7-10

A reading from the letter of St James

*You also must be patient; do not lose heart, the
Lord's coming will be soon.*

Be patient, brothers, until the Lord's coming.
Think of a farmer: how patiently he waits for
the precious fruit of the ground until it has had
the autumn rains and the spring rains! You too
have to be patient; do not lose heart, because
the Lord's coming will be soon. Do not make
complaints against one another, brothers, so as
not to be brought to judgement yourselves; the
Judge is already to be seen waiting at the gates.
For your example, brothers, in submitting with
patience, take the prophets who spoke in the
name of the Lord.

■ The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Isa 61:1; Lk 4:18

Alleluia, alleluia!

The spirit of the Lord is upon me;
he sent me to bring Good News to the poor.
Alleluia!



The Parish of St Joseph's, Elsternwick & Holy Cross, Caulfield South
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P.O.Box 664, Elsternwick 3185 🌐 www.melbcatholic.org/stjosephholycross

PARISH PRIEST: Rev Fr Leenus Neetany SAC

Permanent Deacon: Rev John Lam
Parish Coordinator: Joanna Lam

ST JOSEPH'S, ELSTERNWICK

71 Orrong Road, Elsternwick 3185

Mass

Friday 10:00am, Saturday 6:30pm and Sunday 10:30am

Reconciliation

Friday after Mass, Saturday 6:00pm

HOLY CROSS, CAULFIELD SOUTH

707 Glen Huntly Road, Caulfield South 3162

Mass

Thursday 10:00am and Sunday 9:00am

Reconciliation

Thursday after Mass

ST ANTHONY'S, GLEN HUNTLY

74, Grange Road, Glen Huntly 3163

In Residence: Fr Pat Jackson SAC, Br Lindsay Rust SAC

Mass

Monday - Saturday 9:15am

Saturday 6:00pm

Sunday 9:00am, 11:00am, 5:00pm

Reconciliation

30-mins before all Masses & Saturday 9:45-10:10am

Thanksgiving & Special Collections

Church: \$TBA Presbytery: \$TBA
Special Collection: -

Thanksgiving



Next Week's Roster

Lectors:

Saturday 6:30pm J Lam

Sunday 9:00am D Duffy

10:30am La Bonne family

Counters: No Counting

Upcoming Week's Liturgical Calendar

Sun 21 Dec: 4th Sunday of Advent

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON (Phil 4:4-5)

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice. Indeed the Lord is near.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON (cf. Isa 35:4)

Say to the faint of heart: Be strong and do not fear. Behold, our God will come, and he will save us.

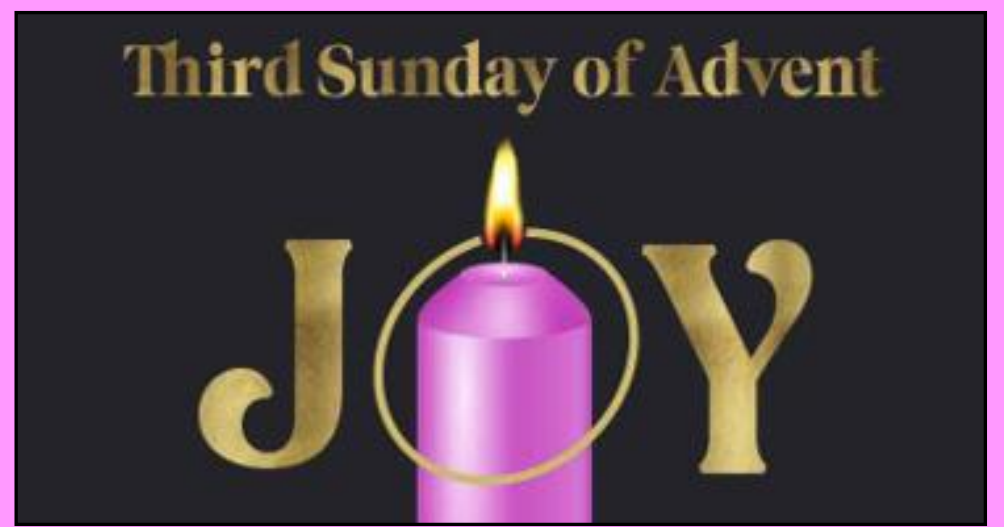
PLEASE PRAY FOR

Those who are ill*: Tony Messina, Paulette Dobbin, Carol Burgess, Pam O'Reilly, Bernie Smith, Marie Gaudry

* Names will be published for a month, unless otherwise requested.

Recently Deceased: -

Death Anniversary: -



Advent Scripture Reflection Sessions

"Advent Scripture Reflection" sessions will be held on 4 consecutive Fridays, commencing on 28th November 2025 from 7pm to 8pm at St. Anthony's Church. All welcome!



St Vincent de Paul Society
CAULFIELD SOUTH & ELSTERNWICK *good works*

Christmas Appeal

Columban Calendars and Vinnies Christmas Cards

- Calendars \$10.00 each
- Christmas Cards \$5.00 per pack of 5 cards

Donations for Christmas Hampers

We are looking to supplement the food parcels for our Conference's Companions this year some specific items for Christmas. If you are interested in assisting, please check the list at the church foyer and **only bring in what is requested** by Sunday 21st December 2025.

As always, thank you for helping those in need.

Fr Pat's Birthday Celebration

Fr Pat's 90th birthday is on 30th January 2026. We, together with our Sister Parish, will celebrate the occasion on Sunday, 1st February at St Anthony's Parish Hall after the 11:00am Mass. We seek expressions of interest in forming an organising team. Please contact the Parish Office.



Letter from Archbishop P. Comensoli

"To our parish communities, schools, families, teachers, and staff: thank you. Your support, encouragement, and faithful accompaniment opened the door for so many of our young people to walk this sacred journey. Whether you prayed from afar, volunteered, spread the word, or walked alongside our youth - your role mattered, and the fruits are already visible."

Copies of the letter are available at the Church foyer.



Christmas 2025 & New Year 2026

St Joseph's, Elsternwick
Holy Cross, Caulfield South

1st Rite of Reconciliation * Saturday 20 December

5:30pm Reconciliation - St Joseph's

Christmas Eve * Wednesday 24 December

6:00pm Carols, 6:30pm Vigil Mass - St Joseph's

8:30pm Carols, 9:00pm Vigil Mass - Holy Cross

Christmas Day * Thursday 25 December

9:00am Mass - Holy Cross

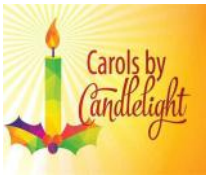
10:30am Mass - St Joseph's

New Year's Day * Thursday 1 January

10:00am Mass - Holy Cross

Carols by Candlelight at St Anthony’s

Sunday, 14th December at St Anthony’s Parish Hall, immediately after the 5pm Mass. This is a joint event by the Sister Parishes of St Joseph’s & Holy Cross and St Anthony’s & St Aloysius’. Come support our children and musicians at this joyful annual event and join in for a sing-along! Please bring a plate to share.



Christmas Day Dinner 2025



Thursday 25 December at 12-noon at St Anthony’s Church Parish Hall, 164-168 Neerim Road. This will be the 33rd year that St Anthony’s has served a traditional meal on Christmas Dinner.

We all know that December can be a difficult time for many and 2025 is no exception. In 2024 we served over 500 meals. In 2025, as always, we ask for your help to reach out to others. We will again be offering 3 options: a sit down meal; a takeaway meal; or a meal delivered to people who are housebound and who live locally. What sort of help is needed? 1. Please pray that those who need the Dinner will hear about it and be able to attend. 2. Reach out to anyone you think might like a Dinner, or some company and give them a yellow invitation. 3. Think about practical help, especially volunteering and complete a green form accordingly. Both yellow and green forms can be collected from the church foyers and returned to the box provided. Donations to the Dinner can also be made to: **Account name: St Anthony’s Parish Tony’s Café** **BSB 083-347 Account number 227-402-447** **(Reference Christmas Dinner)** For more info email stanthony.christmasdinner@gmail.com or call 9401-6336. Thank you all for your support.

History of Advent Season

Origins and Early Observance (4th-6th Centuries): Advent first emerged in the 4th and 5th centuries in Spain and France. Initially, Advent was not directly linked to Christmas. It was a 40-day period of intense preparation, fasting, and prayer for new Christians who were to be baptized at the Feast of the Epiphany in January.



Focus on the Second Coming: By the 6th century, the church in Rome adopted a form of Advent, but the primary focus was on Christ's Second Coming in glory as the judge of the world (Parousia), rather than solely on his birth in Bethlehem. This early Roman observance was more a matter of liturgical celebration than a strict penitential fast. Development in Middle Ages to Modern Era. Over time, the season's duration and focus were formalised and combined with existing traditions. Formalisation and Length: Pope Gregory I (590-604 AD) significantly influenced the Roman Advent, composing many of the prayers and antiphons and shortening the season to its current four weeks, beginning on the Sunday nearest November 30th. The season also came to mark the beginning of the liturgical year in Western Christianity. Integrating the Nativity: It was not until the Middle Ages that the season was explicitly and widely linked to the anticipation of Christ's first coming (his birth at Christmas). This led to a twofold character: preparing for the historical nativity and looking forward to the promised second coming. Shifting Tone: The strict fasting rules of earlier times were gradually relaxed in the West, though a penitential spirit (symbolized by the liturgical colour violet or purple) remained. The third Sunday of Advent is called Gaudete Sunday (meaning "Rejoice"), where rose-coloured vestments may be worn to signify a break in the somber mood and the approaching joy of Christmas. Modern Traditions: Many modern Advent traditions originated in Germany and gained popularity in the 19th and 20th centuries. The Advent Wreath: The modern Advent wreath originated in the 16th century, though the contemporary version is often credited to Johann Hinrich Wichern, a Protestant pastor who, in 1839, used a cartwheel with candles to help children count the days until Christmas. The four or five candles typically used today symbolise themes like hope, peace, joy, and love. Rejoice! *Fr Leenus.*

Prayer
for
Life



Helpers
of God's
Precious
Infants
helpers101@hotmail.com

Feast of the Holy Innocents
MONDAY 29TH DECEMBER 2025

THE JERICHO PRAYER
near Jolimont Station,
Wellington Pde. East Melbourne
8.30am to 9.30am
Surround the ‘Fertility Control Clinic’ with prayer. Pray for the conversion of all those involved in abortion and those who condone the killing.
Followed by morning tea in the park.

HOLY MASS & ROSARY
St. Mary Star of the Sea
33 Howard St West Melbourne
11am Holy Mass
Fr James Grant OFM Cap
12.15am Holy Rosary
Luncheon after Rosary provided by Helpers. Please bring a dessert.

ALL WELCOME
PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS REPLACES OUR NORMAL
FOURTH SATURDAY VIGIL FOR DECEMBER

It was Christmas and the judge was in a merry mood as he asked the prisoner, “What are you charged with?” “Doing my Christmas shopping early”, replied the defendant. “That’s no offense”, said the judge. “How early were you doing this shopping?” “Before the store opened.”

Young Adults & Youth Mass - 27 December

We look forward to celebrating Mass with the Young Adults and Youth from our 3 churches. This is an initiative from the Young Adults’ Group to host the 6:30pm Saturday Vigil Mass on the 4th Saturday of every month at St Joseph’s Church. Our Young Adults are aged 18-35 and our Youth are those aged 7-17. For the slightly older but still young-at-heart, you are most welcome to join the group as Youth Coordinators; to support the Young Adults and also to guide our Youth at Mass and during fellowship. **This will be the first gathering after the recently concluded ACYF-2025. Please encourage our youth and young people to attend.**

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Are you the one who is to come, or must we wait for someone else?

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.'

■ The Gospel of the Lord.

Breaking Open the Word

THE ONE WHO IS TO COME

Today's Gospel focus continues with John the Baptist, introduced to us last Sunday. From prison he sends his followers to Jesus to find out if he is the 'one who is to come or have we to wait for someone else?' This question picks up an early memory that some thought John might have been the Messiah. Jesus explicates his Messianic credentials to John's enquirers: the blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear and the dead raised to life. In other words, Jesus affirms that he is the one who brings restoration, community and healing. Jesus' self-identification further affirms the blessedness of those who remain faithful to him.

In the biblical world, 'faith' was another way of affirming fidelity and commitment to another. This leads Jesus to attest, in this spirit of fidelity and commitment, John's prophetic mission of desert ascetism and preparation for the coming of the Messiah. As we come into these final days before Christmas, our role becomes like John: we align ourselves in fidelity and faith to the one who is to be born, who will bring healing and hope to our world that struggles to know this.

But we also hear Jesus' affirming words – the final sentence in today's Gospel passage addressed to us. Despite John's greatness as the one who prepares for the coming of Jesus, 'yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he'. The Gospel's audience, including us, are affirmed. We have unique status in the eyes of God. This divine promise accompanies us in the days ahead.

A SERVICE OF THE SOCIETY OF ST PAUL



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Fr Michael Trainor