

Risen Christ



Fourth Sunday of Advent Year A

20 & 21 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



*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	\$1,906.00	\$5,152.00
Presbytery	Cash	\$697.00	\$955.10
	Electronic	\$150.00	\$240.00

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 20

6:00pm Mass

Montmorency

Sunday 21

8:30am Mass

Montmorency

10:00am Mass

Eltham

Tuesday 23

9:30am Mass

Montmorency

10:00am Rosary

Montmorency

Wednesday 24

6:30am Meditation

Montmorency

6:00pm Christmas Eve Outdoor Mass

Holy Trinity

8:00pm Christmas Eve Mass

Eltham

10:00pm Christmas Eve Mass

Montmorency

Thursday 25 - Christmas Day

8:30am Christmas Day Mass

Montmorency

10:00am Christmas Day Mass

Eltham

Friday 26

9:30am Mass

Eltham

Saturday 27

12:00pm Baptism: Levi

Montmorency

6:00pm Mass

Montmorency

Sunday 28

8:30am Mass

Montmorency

10:00am Mass

Eltham

Tuesday 30

9:30am Mass

Montmorency

10:00am Rosary

Montmorency

Wednesday 31

6:30am Meditation

Montmorency

Thursday 1 January 2026

10:30am ASRC Food Collection

Montmorency

Friday 2

9:30am Mass

Eltham

Saturday 3

6:00pm Mass

Montmorency

Sunday 4

8:30am Mass

Montmorency

10:00am Mass

Eltham

Tuesday 6

9:30am Mass

Montmorency

10:00am Rosary

Montmorency

Wednesday 7

6:30am Meditation

Montmorency

Thursday 8

10:30am ASRC Food Collection

Montmorency

Friday 9

9:30am Mass

Eltham

Saturday 10

12:00pm Baptisms: Enzo & Stirling

Montmorency

6:00pm Mass

Montmorency

Sunday 11

8:30am Mass

Montmorency

10:00am Mass

Eltham

Tuesday 13

9:30am Mass

Montmorency

10:00am Rosary

Montmorency



*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 the recently **deceased**:
Barbara Steward (sister-in-law of Barney & Jeanette)

For those whose **anniversaries** are at this time:
*Vito Capuana, Peter Carbone, Bernie Farrell,
Kevin Gregson, Bernie Harris*

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

A note from Kate... Hello lovely Parishioners,

Thank you for a wonderful & blessed year. I am so grateful for the love, prayers & kindness of the amazing people in this Parish. Thank you for your prayers as I underwent long-awaited surgery to remove my gall bladder, I am (slowly) healing and recovering.

The office will be 'closed' from next Tue 23 Dec until I return from annual leave on Fri 30 Jan 2026. However, as always, Michael is available on the office phone (9435 4742) & he is able to contact me if needed. This bulletin is our last 'normal-sized' issue for 2025. From Christmas Day through to the end of January the bulletin will be a much simplified, double-sided A4 edition (thank you Angela!). All notices of events etc, will start again in February.

I have been blessed continuously to be able to work with amazing people; thank you Michael, Marisa, Peter, Patsy, Kerry & Angela, you bring joy and laughter and enormous help. Blessed Christmas, Kate



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
Illiffe, 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

Gospel: Matthew 1:18-24

This is how Jesus Christ came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a man of honour and wanting to spare her publicity, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins." Now all this took place to fulfil the words spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel,
a name which means 'God-is-with-us'. When Joseph woke up he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do: he took his wife to his home.

Gospel Reflection - Break Open the Word 2026

The message of the second reading is reinforced in this gospel passage. Jesus Christ is a real human being, born of Mary who is betrothed to Joseph of the ancient House of David. Yet he is conceived through the Holy Spirit and so is the incarnation of 'Emmanuel/God-is-with-us'. He will save people from their sins, which is clearly the work of God.

Matthew gives us a unique insight into who Jesus is and opens for us the significance of the Christmas mystery we are about to celebrate.

From a human point of view, we identify with the terror Mary was experiencing in finding herself pregnant, and the bewilderment of Joseph in discovering what was happening. What an extraordinary character he was to stand by her, believing the incomprehensible message he received from heaven. His naming of the child Jesus is significant for this was the role of the legal father.



The **biblical menorah** is a **seven-branched lampstand** made of pure, hammered gold that was a central sacred object in the ancient Tabernacle and the Temple in Jerusalem. It is one of the oldest and most significant symbols of Judaism, representing divine light, the eternal presence of God, and universal enlightenment.

The biblical seven-branched menorah is distinct from the **Hanukkah menorah**, or *hanukkiah*. The *hanukkiah* has nine branches - eight for the nights of the Hanukkah festival and a ninth "servant" (*shamash*) candle used to light the others. The Hanukkah menorah commemorates the miracle of the oil that occurred during the rededication of the Second Temple, an event where the single-day's worth of oil for the seven-branched Temple menorah miraculously burned for eight days.

What is Hanukkah and why is it celebrated?

Hanukkah is a festival built around the act of kindling light in public, as a declaration that Jewish life will endure despite attempts to extinguish it. Often referred to as the Festival of Lights, it recalls a moment in history.

Did Jesus celebrate Hanukkah?

Yes, Jesus celebrated Hanukkah, which the Bible calls the "Feast of Dedication," as recorded in John 10:22, where He was present at the Temple during the winter festival, using it as a backdrop for significant teachings about His divine identity, linking Himself to the Temple's rededication. While He observed this Jewish festival commemorating the Maccabees' rededication of the Temple, His message centered on being the true, greater Temple, fulfilling the event's meaning.

How do you explain Hanukkah to someone?

Hanukkah, or Chanukah in Hebrew, is the Jewish festival of light. The word Hanukkah means 'dedication' and celebrates one of the greatest miracles in Jewish history. The dates of Hanukkah change every year, but it will always fall in November or December and lasts for eight days.

Are Christians allowed to celebrate Hanukkah?

Yes, Christians can celebrate Hanukkah, and many do, viewing it as a way to connect with their Hebraic roots, honour God's miracles, rededicate themselves to Jesus (the Light of the World), and see parallels between the Maccabean victory and Christ's light, though it's a Jewish holiday with no biblical mandate for Gentiles to observe. It's often celebrated alongside Christmas as the "Festival of Lights," highlighting themes of faith, dedication, and God's provision, but it's distinct from Christmas, focusing on the miracle of the oil and the Temple's rededication.

Why is the number 8 important in Hanukkah?

While seven signifies the completion of the natural world, eight signifies going beyond nature and imbuing nature with sanctity, Soloveitchik said. Each night of Hanukkah and especially the eighth night presents a chance to rise above the ordinary, focus on the miraculous and connect.

How to explain Hanukkah to non-Jews?

Hanukkah is a Jewish holiday that commemorates the successful victory of a small but devout band of Jewish rebels (the Maccabees) against their Syrian occupiers in 164 B.C. (B.C.E. in Judaism) and the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem.

What was the miracle of the Hanukkah?

There was only one small cruse of pure oil, enough to light the menorah in the Temple for one day. But it lasted eight days, in time to produce new pure oil and the menorah was able to remain lit and never burn out. This miracle is attributed to God and the faith that the Jews had in God.



Reverence & Awe: Are We Open to Awe? (<https://cac.org/daily-meditations/are-we-open-to-awe/>)

The roots of ultimate insights are found ... on the level of wonder and radical amazement, in the depth of awe, in our sensitivity to the mystery. - Abraham Joshua Heschel, *God in Search of Man*

Richard Rohr teaches that awe is a foundational spiritual experience that keeps us open to the mystery of God:

I believe the basic, primal, foundational spiritual intuition is a moment of awe and wonder. We say, "God, that's beautiful!" Why do we so often say "God!" when we have such moments? I think it's a recognition that this is a godly moment. We are somehow aware that something is just too good, too right, too much, too timely. When awe and wonder are absent from our life, we build our religion on laws and rituals, trying to manufacture some moment of awe. It works occasionally, I guess.

I think people who live their lives open to awe and wonder have a much greater chance of meeting the Holy than someone who goes to church but doesn't live in an open way. We almost domesticate the Holy by making it so commonplace. That's what I fear happens with the way we ritualise worship. I see people come to church day after day unprepared for anything new or different. Even if something new or different happens, they fit it into their old boxes. Their stance seems to be, "I will not be awestruck". I don't think we get very far with such resistance to the new, the Real, and the amazing. That's probably why God allows most of our great relationships to begin with a kind of infatuation with another person - and I don't just mean sexual infatuation, but any deep admiration or appreciation. It allows us to take our place as a student and learner. If we never do that, nothing new will happen.

I think Russian writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn understood this when he wrote, "The Western system in its present state of spiritual exhaustion does not look attractive". It's a telling judgment. The Western mind almost refuses to be in awe anymore. It's only aware of what is wrong, an seemingly incapable of rejoicing in what is still good and true and beautiful. The surest way out of that trap is through a new imagination and new cosmology, often created by positive God-experience. Education, problem-solving, and rigid ideology are ultimately inadequate by themselves to create cosmic hope and meaning. Only *great religion* can do that, which is probably why Jesus spent so much of his ministry trying to reform religion.

Healthy religion, which always makes space for Mystery, gives us a foundational sense of awe. It re-enchants an otherwise empty universe. It gives people a universal reverence toward all things. Only with such reverence do we find confidence and coherence. Only then does the world become a safe home. Then we can see the reflection of the divine image in the human, in the animal, in the entire natural world - which has now become inherently "supernatural".



Reverence & Awe: Contemplation and Awe (<https://cac.org/daily-meditations/contemplation-and-awe/>)

God is the wisdom of every lifetime, a deep plunge into a clear pool, the sinew and muscle of ethical responsibility, a community of goodness, but always more. Descriptions reach out as far as they can toward the God of the universe, and then, like a rubber band stretched too far, they snap back and we are left with the silence of mystery and awe. - Barbara Holmes, *Liberation and the Cosmos*

Father Richard considers how contemplative practice deepens our capacity to experience awe and wonder:

Moments of awe and wonder are the only solid foundation for the entire religious instinct and journey. Look, for example, at the Exodus narrative: It all begins with a murderer (Moses) on the run from the law, encountering a paradoxical bush that "burns without being consumed". Struck by awe, Moses takes off his shoes and the very earth beneath his feet becomes "holy ground" (see Exodus 3:2-6) because he has met "Being Itself" (Exodus 3:14). This narrative reveals the classic pattern, repeated in different forms in the varied lives and vocabulary of all the world's mystics.

We're usually blocked against being awestruck, just as we are blocked against great love and great suffering. Early-stage contemplation is largely about identifying and releasing ourselves from these blockages by recognising *the unconscious reservoir of expectations, assumptions, and beliefs in which we are already immersed*. If we don't see what's in our reservoir, we will process all new encounters and experiences in the same old-patterned way - and nothing new will ever happen. A new idea held by the old self is never really a new idea, whereas even an old idea held by a new self will soon become fresh and refreshing. Contemplation fills our reservoir with clear, clean water that allows us to encounter experience free of our old patterns.

Here's the mistake we all make in our encounters with reality - both good and bad. We don't realise that it wasn't the person or event right in front of us that made us angry or fearful - or excited and energised. At best, that is only partly true. If we allowed a beautiful hot air balloon in the sky to make us happy, it was because we were already predisposed to happiness. The hot air balloon just occasioned it. *How* we see will largely determine *what* we see and whether it gives us joy or makes us pull back with an emotionally stingy and resistant response. Without denying an objective outer reality, *what we are able to see and are predisposed to see in the outer world is a mirror reflection of our own inner world and state of consciousness at that time*. Most of the time, we just do not see at all but rather operate on cruise control.

It seems that we humans are two-way mirrors, reflecting both inner and outer worlds. We project ourselves onto outer things and these very things also reflect back to us our own unfolding identity. Mirroring is the way that contemplatives see, subject to subject rather than subject to object.

AN UPDATE ON OUR RECENT PARISH RENEWAL PROGRAM

Dear Parishioners,

The Parish has just finalised our Renewal Program results which was held in November, and I wanted to share with you some of the exciting outcomes.

The Program invited all parishioners in 'Risen Christ Parish' to reflect on the importance of our great communities in our lives and I am pleased to advise it has been very successful and a great initiative for the Parish.

Financial Support

Parish Income has received a significant and timely boost. Thus I am pleased to report a very positive response. Current parishioners responded to the call to "review and renew" their existing pledges of support, and we have welcomed 45 new contributors to the Thanksgiving Program. With nearly 200 families re-committing and a large group of 'new' families to support the parish for the first time! Seriously 'Good News'.

We began the Program with a weekly income of approximately \$3,000 per week and I am pleased to say, that through your wonderful generosity and support, we now have pledged income of nearly \$4,500 per week. We also asked parishioners to consider a direct method of contribution – by Credit/Debit Card or Direct Deduction from your bank account. As a result, we now have just under 80% contributing by these methods. The really great news, as we move forward, is because you have embraced a more sensible low cash way of contribution, we no longer need to restart the old practice of taking up collections during Sunday Mass. **Thank you!**

Groups & Ministries Response

We also encouraged parishioners to engage in the life of the Parish, through active involvement in our Parish Groups & Ministries – adding your talents, energy and commitment to help live the mission of the Parish. With over 130 individual responses received, our Groups & Ministries have been revitalised. **Thank you!**

So, in the early months of 2026 we plan to begin a process of collating all Groups & Ministry responses, and hopefully we will be in contact with all those who responded, in the New Year.

When does it all start?

Over the next few days, everyone will have received mail (letters and/or envelopes) just before Christmas - and this new financial journey will take effect from Sunday 28th December 2025.

Thank you to everyone for your support of the Parish Renewal Program 2025.

It shows once again that we have a wonderful Parish community, committed to living the Gospel in word and action.

Warmest love, Michael

Thanksgiving

Dear Parishioners,

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

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

Thank you for your generous support,
Michael



Prayers of the Faithful for 21st December 2025

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Leader: This, the final week of Advent, continues our journey in preparing for the great event of our faith: the birth of the Christ, Jesus.

We reflect on the extraordinary challenges Mary and Joseph faced, and we ask that we too have the courage to face our challenges. *Let us pray to the Lord.* **Lord, hear our prayer.**

In today's world, with its emphasis on consumerism, it is easy to be distracted from the name Emmanuel: *God is with us.* Let us make space for a quiet time and whisper that name in our hearts. Emmanuel. *Let us pray to the Lord.* **Lord, hear our prayer**

We realise that it is not a joyful time for the sick, the lonely and the bereaved. We reach out where we can and thank the wonderful volunteers who give their time to bring the true spirit of Christmas into their lives. *Let us pray to the Lord.* **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Our children are precious. They thrive on love. We hold those children subjected to violence at home, and those in war-torn countries, as we remember Jesus saying, "Let the children come to me for the kingdom of Heaven is theirs." *Let us pray to the Lord.* **Lord, hear our prayer.**

The word religion can be related to 'religatio', meaning 'tying up', or 'connecting'. Jesus said, "I and the Father are one." Help us to discover the truth of our own intimate connection with the God who sustains our life. *Let us pray to the Lord.* **Lord, hear our prayer.**

With the tragic unfolding of violence, around our world and here in Australia, we implore that the Spirit of Peace enters our humanity so that innocent people may live their lives in freedom. As Pope Leo prayed in his final Mass in Beirut, "et us be artisans of peace, heralds of peace, witnesses of peace." We pray especially for the Jewish community in Sydney after the horror they have experienced. *Let us pray to the Lord.* **Lord, hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who have died recently, especially *Barbara Steward* and all those who were killed at Bondi Beach. We pray also for those whose anniversaries occur at this time, including *Kate Boyce, Vito Capuana, Peter Carbone, Bernie Farrell, Kevin Gregson & Bernie Harris.* May they forever enjoy peace in the loving arms of their God.

Let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader: God of peace and eternal love, hear our prayers offered to you today. Through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord.

All: **Amen**

