



# St Paul Apostle Catholic Community

## One Family

5 William Hovell Drv, Endeavour Hills 3802  
T. 9700 3781 / F. 9700 6228  
didi.karkas@cam.org.au  
<https://www.melbcatholic.org/s/endeavourhills>



### Third Sunday of ADVENT Year B, 16-17 December, 2023

## Christmas in Vietnam

(written by Deacon Tuan Paul)

Christmas is now extensively celebrated around the world, including in non-Christian countries. Despite some similarities, each place has its own unique manner of celebrating Christmas. On the occasion of my diaconate ministry in Endeavour Hills, I would like to share with you how the Vietnamese prepare for and celebrate Christmas.

### A Christmas without Christ

The majority of Vietnamese people practice Buddhism, Taoism or Confucianism. As a result, Christmas is not an official holiday in Vietnam. It may come as a surprise, but Christmas is becoming increasingly popular in Vietnam. Many Vietnamese people celebrate Christmas without understanding its religious origins and significance. For them, Christmas seems more a commercial event rather than a religious holiday. Every year, by late November, shopping malls, markets, restaurants, and coffee shops are splendidly decked out with Christmas ornaments, multicolored lights, and tinsel in preparation for Christmas. There is also sparkling lighting decorations on trees, streets and in front of houses. Christmas carols resound in every corner of the town. Many people flock to the marketplaces to do their Christmas shopping. Non-Christian Vietnamese also practice the act of sending Christmas gifts and cards to their loved ones, along with best wishes. Aside from that, some companies host a Christmas party. Primary schools organize Christmas activities for children including a visit from Santa Claus. On Christmas Day, somebody disguised as Santa Claus will deliver the gifts which the children have wished for in front of their house.

and have fun with loved ones, neighbours and friends. On Christmas Eve the city streets are flooded with people and vehicles headed down town. People swell to the point that car travel is prohibited in some places. People rush to the Cathedral, prominent churches and commercial places to enjoy the magnificent decorations and experience the spirit of Christmas. Many non-Catholic Vietnamese also go to the churches to listen to choirs performing Christmas carols and watch Christmas plays. Some musical performances are held in public in town centers. Many of my friends tell me that, while they may not fully appreciate the profoundly religious nature of Christmas, they do feel joy and tranquility on every occasion when Christmas comes. In some ways, the feeble light that shone in Bethlehem's modest and dark manger over two thousand years ago continues to burn across Vietnam. I hope that one day the Vietnamese will celebrate the true light of Christ rather than the light of decorations.

### A Christ-centered Christmas

Even though Vietnamese Catholics make up only about 7% of the population, we are deeply devout. We are constantly striving to shine the light of Christ on everyone around us. Therefore, Christmas is truly an excellent time to carry out this mission of evangelisation. All our parishes are illuminated by Christmas decorations for others to see. While we joyfully participate in the cultural festival of Christmas our main focus is of course to reflect upon, and be inspired by the mystery of God's Incarnation. This is plainly demonstrated by the way we celebrate Christmas. All of our Christmas celebrations revolve around the incarnation of Christ. For instance, the non-Catholic Christmas decoration is highly commercial and entertaining in order to attract viewers.

Unlike in other Western countries, where the focus at Christmas is family reunions, for non-Christian Vietnamese, it is a time to socialize

.... Continue to last page.....

### Weekday Masses

**Monday**  
9am Mass

**Tuesday**  
9am Mass

**Wednesday**  
7pm Mass

**Thursday**  
9am Mass

**Friday**  
9am Mass

**Saturday**  
6pm

**Sunday**  
9am, 11am and 6pm

Please note Sunday 11am is also  
ONLINE

Please click on this link to follow  
<https://youtube.com/live/RujCSJmPR34?feature=share>

**Reconciliation**  
**Saturdays**  
**10am—10.30am**

#### Priests:

Fr Brendan Connell CP (PP)  
Fr Luke Bulley CP

#### Parish Staff:

Gillian Velupillay (Bursar)  
Didi Karkas (Secretary)

#### Passionist Community

Fr Brendan Connell CP  
Fr Kevin Hennessy CP  
Fr Luke Bulley CP  
Dcn Tuan Paul Anh-Do CP

#### St Paul Apostle North

**Primary School**  
Ph. 9700 6068  
Principal  
Mrs Mary Lucas

#### St Paul Apostle South

**Primary School**  
Ph. 9700 3663  
Principal  
Mr Paul Gleeson

#### St John's

**Regional College**  
Ph. 9791 3366  
Principal  
Mr Tim Hogan

## Readings for Next Week

### Fourth Sunday of ADVENT Yr B

#### **First Reading**

**2 Samuel 7:1-5. 8-12. 14-16**

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah

Now when David, the king, was settled in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the Lord is with you."

But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan: Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the Lord: Are you the one to build me a house to live in?

I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.

I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne, David, shall be established forever.

#### **Psalm**

I will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, forever;  
with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness  
to all generations.

I declare that your steadfast love is established forever;  
your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.

You said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one,  
I have sworn to my servant David:

'I will establish your descendants forever,  
and build your throne for all generations.'

He shall cry to me, 'You are my Father,  
my God, and the Rock of my salvation!'  
Forever I will keep my steadfast love for him,  
and my covenant with him will stand firm.

#### **Second Reading**

**Romans 16: 25-27**

Brothers and sisters

To the One who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

#### **Gospel**

**Luke 1:26-38**

The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

#### Reflection on the readings

Q. Who do you know who has tried to live their life in response to God?

Q. In what ways does God communicate a call or challenge to people today?

Q. To what aspects of your life do you need to say 'Yes'?

Q. In what way, or in what direction, are you called by God?

*We are committed to the safety, wellbeing and dignity of all children and vulnerable adults*

## THANK YOU

To all parishioners who have supported the active 'giving' spirit of Lawless family who raised fund for the orphanages in Vietnam. From selling the biscuits and lemonade, they generated \$1067.80. Through Fr Peter Gardner CP, they will distribute this to few orphanages in Vietnam.

*Thank you!*

## PARISH CHRISTMAS CAROLS at Martin Place

Please remember our parish Christmas Carols on **SUNDAY, 17th December after 6pm Mass until 9pm.**



Fr Chris and his team will be leading us singing carols. Our parish choirs will also take part during the night. Weather permitting, we will hold the carols at Martin Place (the backyard of the Parish Office). FREE Sausages and Ice Creams will be available during the night. Please come along and join us carolling

## HAMPER

Please remember the following:

- 1/ Mark the hamper with the '**CODE**' from the coloured card
- 2/ Bring the hamper to the church by **Sunday 17th December**, before 6pm Mass. We kindly ask you to ensure you deliver your hamper to Church on time



The agencies will be picking them up on Monday the 18th of December, in the morning.

## Children's Nativity Play

(Christmas Eve 6pm Mass)

We still have some rooms for Shepherds and Angels in the play (non speaking roles) If your child/ children wish to be one of them, please come to our next practices:

**MONDAY, 18th December and WEDNESDAY, 20 December, both at 4pm in the Church.**



## Mission Catholic and Melbourne Overseas Missions

Last weekend we have a special collection to support these missions. We thanked you all for your generous support. We received \$902.55 for this good cause

## GARDENING

Thank you to all who have donated their spare time to help us cleaning and tidying up the Church garden. It is now ready to celebrate Christmas

## CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY

This weekend, children are welcome to bring back their decorated DOVE and polystyrene balls so that they can be hung on our Christmas tree.

Children are also invited to bring home another ball to draw their joyful face on it. This also to bring back next weekend for the Christmas tree.



### **Readings:**

#### **Third Sunday of ADVENT Year B**

Isaiah 61:1-2. 10-11;  
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24;  
John 1:6-8. 19-28

#### **Fourth Sunday of ADVENT Year B**

2 Samuel 7:1-5. 8-12. 14-16 ;  
Romans 16: 25-27 ;  
Luke 1:26-38

[www.universalis.com](http://www.universalis.com)

### **This weekend we pray for:**

#### *Those who are sick*

Selena Leroux, Annette Evans, Meti Pereira-VanEijk, Danny Sugunasekera, Imelda Lynch, Agnes Fernandez, Shirley C. Esteban, Joaquina Braz, Norah Ekanayake, Grace Sprigg, Lara Moyle, Michael D' Silva, Lina Jom, Giorgia Vella, Lucia Lay, Bernardo Cabrera, Anne Ghatt, June Enright, Leang Diep, Roger Gray, Anthona Henderson, Nimal Pandithakoralage, Cecil Harper, Nicole Pinto, Toni Celona, Shinead Kralj, Carlos Aquino, Jamie Cabrera, Angela Schink, Roy Conyers, Sandra D'Costa, Annette Perera, Ronald Peters, Godfrey Joseph, Camilla D'Rozario, Esric Jackson, Emily Broadbent, **and All those in aged care or home-bound with chronic health issues**

#### *Those who have died*

Anne-Marie Grizelle, Brian Dwyer, Serge De Mezieres, Aurora Mesa-Manzanilla Vda de Jover, Marcia Harter, Natividad Inductivo Chua, Sonia Singh, Matthew Brady, Francisco Bernardes, Russell Sugunasekera, Emmanuel Cardona, Henry Peteru **and all who are named in our church memorial book**

*May they rest in peace*

....continue .....*Christmas in Vietnam*

For Catholics, Christmas decorations are centered on religious symbols that let the faithful ponder on the mystery of the Word-made flesh. As a result, the crib is the focal point of the Christmas setting; all other decorations serve just to draw attention to the crib in which Jesus is born.

Life in the parishes becomes more animate, vibrant, and bustling during the Advent/Christmas period. The whole community gathers in the Church to get ready for Christmas as all are involved in its various activities. Some adults assist children in practicing their Christmas plays, while others prepare Christmas performances for Carol Day. Strong men assist in the construction of a large cave with a manger inside and women are in charge of decorations. Others are busy preparing and wrapping Christmas gifts which will be delivered by young people to disadvantaged children in the most remote areas where the light of Christmas is barely visible. They may also stay for a few days to prepare, clean up, cook, decorate, and organize Christmas activities for children. Others will ride their motor-scooter to every corner of the town at midnight to offer supplies and necessities to the homeless – these charitable activities normally take place a few days before Christmas day. Parish Priests also help their community by offering the sacrament of reconciliation and organizing reflections that assist people to spiritually prepare for the birth of the Saviour.

In contrast to non-Catholics, all of our activities take place in the Church on Christmas Eve. Most of us go to church to attend the Eucharist. Before the Eucharist, there is a Christmas play with several acts. The story of God's wonderful salvation from Adam to Jesus' birth is performed so that people can comprehend the true meaning of Christmas. The Eucharist then follows. Following that, people are welcome to stay in the church to share food, exchange Christmas gifts, and wish each other a Merry Christmas. Finally, they will return home to enjoy the Christmas meal with their families. Those who are unable to attend the Eucharist on Christmas Eve may attend the mass on the morning of the 25th. Although Christmas is not a public holiday, many Catholics take the day off to spend time with their family. In summary, all our Christmas activities are centered and anchored on Christ.

I have offered here just a brief example of the Vietnamese Christmas experience. If you have the opportunity, you should go there to enjoy the Christmas spirit and atmosphere in person.

## Advent and Christmas at St Paul Apostle Catholic Community

### Dec 17th, Sunday

Hamper Mass at 6pm

Carols night at 7pm at Martin Place (backyard of Parish office)

### Dec 18th, Monday

Advent Reconciliation at 7pm in the Church  
(Communal and Individual Reconciliation)

### Dec 24th, Sunday

9am & 11am Mass of 4th Sunday of ADVENT

Christmas Eve Masses are:

6pm Children's Mass

9pm Family Mass

11.30pm Carols followed by MIDNIGHT Mass

### Dec 25th, Monday

Christmas Day Masses are 9am & 11am  
(NO evening Mass on this day)

### Dec 26th, Tuesday

Boxing Day—Mass at 9am

### January 1st, Monday

New Year's Day Mass at 9am

**\*\* Normal Mass time between Boxing day and New Year's Day \*\***

