

Risen Christ



The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary & Joseph

27 & 28 December 2025 - Year A

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.

As we conclude 2026, I want to take this opportunity to thank a few people...

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Gospel: Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

After the wise men had left, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother with you, and escape into Egypt, and stay there until I tell you, because Herod intends to search for the child and do away with him'. So Joseph got up and, taking the child and his mother with him, left that night for Egypt, where he stayed until Herod was dead. This was to fulfil what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: I called my son out of Egypt.

After Herod's death, the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother with you and go back to the land of Israel, for those who wanted to kill the child are dead'. So Joseph got up and, taking the child and his mother with him, went back to the land of Israel. But when he learnt that Archelaus had succeeded his father Herod as ruler of Judaea he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he left for the region of Galilee. There he settled in a town called Nazareth. In this way the words spoken through the prophets were to be fulfilled:

He will be called a Nazarene.



Reflection - Break Open the Word 2026:

The gospel today is in two parts and tells the story of the flight into Egypt. It omits the paragraph about Herod's killing of young male children, a text read three days after Christmas on the feast of the Holy Innocents. If it is historical, this would have been a relatively small-scale event in the vicinity of Bethlehem. Herod may have died just a few months later.

The story is clearly symbolic in Matthew's gospel. He is keen to show how the Scriptures were being fulfilled. Coming out of Egypt constitutes a new Exodus and a new covenant established in Jesus. This is the purpose of Matthew's narrative.

The chronology of the Lectionary is a little confusing because the feast of the Holy Family is celebrated a week before the Epiphany when we hear the basic story of the wise men coming from the East.

Joseph shows himself to be an admirable father, taking every care to protect Mary and Jesus and keep them safe. He was also radically open to the prompting of the Holy Spirit - three times in this short text, Joseph receives divine messages in a dream and acts on them.

*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.*



FEATURES / Gaudium et Spes at 60

Reading the signs of our Times

Released 60 years ago, the final document of the Second Vatican Council illuminated the geopolitical, economic and social dynamics of globalisation with remarkable prescience - by Thomas Banchoff

Sixty Years ago this month the world's Catholic bishops gathered in Rome to approve a historic but often neglected document. The pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes* ("Joy and hope"), closed the Second Vatican Council and opened a new phase in the history of Catholicism. After two centuries opposing modernity, the Church embraced democracy, religious freedom and interfaith dialogue and set out a positive vision for global peace and justice.

Six decades later that vision has renewed relevance. Amid the ruins of neoliberalism, with its failed promises of shared prosperity and lasting peace, the nuanced analysis by *Gaudium et Spes* of the challenges of globalization - and ways to address them - speaks to our current moment. "Today, the human race is involved in a new stage of history," the Council fathers affirmed. "Profound and rapid changes are spreading by degrees around the whole world." In the two decades since the end of the Second World War, the creation of the UN system, the onset of the Cold War, and the dissolution of Europe's colonial empires had given rise to a new world order.

Advances in science and technology were driving improvements in economic productivity, nutrition and medical care, extending lives and lifting millions out of poverty. And revolutions in communications and transportation technology were bringing people closer than any time in history. As *Gaudium et Spes* underlined (using the then prevailing sexist idiom), "One of the salient features of the modern world is the growing interdependence of men one on the other, a development promoted chiefly by modern technical advances."

But even as the world was drawing closer - Marshall McLuhan coined the term "global village" in 1962 three decades before 'globalisation' became popularized - it remained deeply divided. "Never before has the human race enjoyed such an abundance of wealth, resources and economic power". *Guardium et Spes* pointed out, "yet a huge proportion of the world's citizens are still tormented by hunger and poverty." And while an awareness of living in one world was growing, dangerous divisions persisted.

"Differences crop up too between races and between various kinds of social orders; between wealthy nations and those which are less influential or are needy; and, finally, between international institutions born of the popular desire for peace and of the ambition to propagate one's own ideology, as well as collective greeds existing in nations or other groups."

Two decades before the end of the Cold War and the ascent of neoliberalism gave rise to illusory hopes of a world united around western, liberal values, *Gaudium et Spes* illuminated the complex political dynamics of globalisation. It saw that inequality was an engine of conflict, as "excessive economic and social differences between the members of the one human family or population groups cause scandal, and militate against social justice, equity, the dignity of the human person, as well as social and international peace". And prospects for peace were dim "as long as feelings of hostility, contempt and distrust, as well as racial hatred and unbending ideologies, continue to divide men and place them in opposing camps". While the council endorsed peacemaking efforts amid the Cold War, it acknowledged that "political, social, economic, racial and ideological disputes still continue bitterly, and with them the peril of a war which would reduce everything to ashes". The way forward was not victory over the enemy but rather patient, constructive dialogue. "Respect and love ought to be extended also to those who think or act differently that we do in social, political and even religious matters," *Gaudium et Spes* emphasized. "The more deeply we come to understand their ways of thinking through such courtesy and love the more easily will we be able to enter into dialogue with them."

Gaudium et Spes for only foregrounded challenges of inequality and pluralism later neglected in the neoliberal celebration of globalization; it also provided a more balanced understanding of technological changes and its impact. The Church welcomed "technical progress, an inventive spirit, an eagerness to create and to expand enterprises, and the application of methods of production" as ways to advance the biblical mandate to steward Creation. "Man judges rightly that by his intellect he surpasses the material universe," the constitution stated, "for he shares in the light of the divine mind."

But over and against the uncritical optimism that would later accompany the digital revolution *Gaudium et Spes* insisted that technology as an end in itself was a dangerous idol. It was to be pursued not for its own sake but rather in "the service of man" and indeed of the whole man with regard for the full range of his material needs and the demands of

his intellectual, oral, spiritual, and religious life". Technology divorced from the values of human dignity and the common good, designed only to accumulate wealth and power and provide distraction, was antithetical to human flourishing. Technical advances, the constitution underlined, "can supply the material for human progress, but of themselves alone they can never actually bring it about".

DECADES BEFORE the mobile phone and social media were heralded for their power to connect *Gaudium et Spes* acknowledged the potential of new technology to not only extend but also destroy human relationships. "New and more efficient media of social communication are contributing to the knowledge of events," it noted, "giving the swiftest and widest possible circulation to styles of thought and feeling." If managed carefully, such interdependence might draw the world together while respecting diversity, forging "a more universal form of human culture, which better promotes and expresses the unity of the human race to the degree that it preserves the particular aspects of the different civilisations". At the same time, it warned against technological connectivity displacing human interaction; "Brotherly dialogue among men does not reach its perfection on the level of technical progress, but on the deeper level of interpersonal relationships."

Two imperatives emphasized in *Gaudium et Spes* - the need for dialogue across differences and for careful attention to the human impact of technology - are especially relevant today. For world leaders to grapple effectively with our new global disorder, they have to recognize the reality of political and ideological pluralism. "A firm determination to respect other men and peoples and their dignity, as well as the studied practice of brotherhood," the constitution underlined, "are absolutely necessary for the establishment of peace."

With the AI revolution today in full swing ethical oversight and effective governance will be critical to human flourishing. "The human race has passed from a rather static concept of reality to a more dynamic, evolutionary one," the Council noted. Six decades later, if we are to look forward to a new era of machine-human interaction with "hope and joy", human dignity and the common good must be first principles. As *Gaudium et Spes* put it, "all that men do to obtain greater justice, wider brotherhood, a more humane disposition of social relationships has greater worth than technical advances."

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