



# St Thomas More's Parish



*St Thomas More's Catholic Parish, a welcoming people of faith,  
lives out God's Mission, embracing love, justice and peace.*

*We acknowledge the Wakka, Giabal and Jarowair people, the Traditional Owners who have walked upon and cared for this land for thousands of years. We acknowledge the continued deep spiritual attachment and relationship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to this country and commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of Reconciliation.*

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Parish Website: [www.stthomasmores.org.au](http://www.stthomasmores.org.au) Parish Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/stmparishtwmba/>

## Third Sunday of Advent, Year A: 14 - 15 December, 2019

Readings: Isaiah 35:1-6,10; James 5:7-10; Matthew 11:2-11

The third Sunday of Advent used to be called *Gaudete* (be joyful) Sunday. It provided a mid-term break within a period of austerity or penance in preparation for Christmas. Advent is no longer celebrated as a penitential period, but rather as a reflective time of expectation and hope. The invitation to rejoice nonetheless remains part of the Advent liturgy: it is certainly present in the first reading: *"the desert shall rejoice and bloom ..."* (Isaiah 35:1-6, 10).

Today's gospel passage is full of questions. John sends his disciples to Jesus with a question: "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another? Jesus responds by directing them to the evidence: "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them." He adds a comment about those who take no offence at him: they are blessed. He then turns to the crowds with a series of rhetorical questions about their motivation for going out to John in the desert. His words to the crowds conclude with an identification of John as God's prophet and messenger, his own precursor. He pays an extraordinary tribute to John, but leaves the reader puzzling about the final statement: the least in the kingdom is greater than John.

John's imprisonment is a sobering reminder of what can happen to those who are faithful to their mission. As Matthew's Jesus will attest, John is no reed shaken by the wind. This could well be a subtle reference to Herod Antipas' choice of the reed as a symbol on the coins commemorating the founding of Tiberias. Herod has arrested and imprisoned John and later will have him put to death on specious grounds. John is not a fickle reed like Herod, but steadfast and strong.

The reader knows that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah or God's Anointed One. John is checking it out. He clearly has contact with disciples whom he sends to Jesus with the question about his identity. Is Advent over or not? The answer to John's question is to be found in what they hear and see. The restorative and healing activity of Jesus is realising the Messianic dream of the prophet Isaiah (first reading). In a sense, Advent never ends: the women and children brought into our own cities as sex slaves can attest to this, as can those who remain in the limbo of Nauru and Manus Island. We might well pray: "Strengthen our weak hands, and make firm our feeble knees" in the face of such challenges. The Christ, the Anointed of God, lives on in the community and the community is called to bring the saving power of God, the joy of the Gospel, to a troubled world.

(Reflection by Sister of Mercy, Sr Veronica Lawson RSM, Theologian and Biblical Scholar)

Parish Leader:..... Michael Bermingham  
Priest Director:..... Michael O'Brien  
Pastoral Council:..... Terry Carter  
Finance Committee:..... Tim Davis  
Secretary:..... Donna Pugh  
Secretary:..... Jenny Bartkus  
School Principal:..... Michael Cash  
APRE:..... Lee ann Weekes  
School Board..... Karen Tobin  
Parish Safeguards Contact:  
Sarah Holcombe – 0408 193 636

### Parish Diary for This Week

Monday: 9.00am.....Mass  
7.00pm.....St V de P  
Tuesday: 5.30pm.....Mass  
7.00pm.....Choir Practice  
Tue to Sat 7.00am.... Mass at St Pat's  
Wednesday: 9.00am.....Reconciliation  
10:00am.....Open Door  
6.00pm.Reconciliation St Pat's  
Thursday: 7.00pm.....Social Justice  
Friday: 9.00am.....Mass

### Next Sunday 21 and 22 December

### Fourth Sunday of Advent Year A

Mass: 6.00pm Saturday  
8.30am Sunday  
Readings: Isaiah 7:10-14  
Romans 1:1-7  
Matthew 1:18-24

## December 2019

18 December – Second Rite of Reconciliation

### HAPPENINGS IN OUR PARISH

#### Christmas Mass Rosters:

The roster sign-up sheets for Mass Coordinators, Altar Servers, Readers and Communion Ministers for Christmas Masses is now available in the Church Foyer. Please indicate on the sign-up sheet your availability to assist.

#### Annual Rosters:

The new annual rosters are almost finalised and they will begin on the first weekend of January, the weekend of 4 and 5 January 2020.

#### Christmas Choir Practice:

Choir Practice for Christmas Masses will continue on Tuesday 17 December at 7 pm in the Church. All singers welcome.

#### Manger Collection:

The Manger is in the centre aisle of the church for those who wish to make a monetary gift as part of their Christmas sharing. The beneficiaries this year will be those affected by drought in the far South West of the State.

#### Advent Second Rite of Reconciliation:

Our Advent Second Rite of Reconciliation will take place on Wednesday 18 December 2019. There will be two services on that day – 9.00 am here at St Thomas More's and 6.00pm at St Patrick's Cathedral.

#### Caring for Each Other:

As a community of faith, we are called to be aware of those around us in the community. If you notice that a regular Mass attender has not been here for a while, if you know of someone who may be going through a tough time, if you know of someone who is on their own and could benefit from a visit, if you have heard that someone from the community is in hospital, if you notice someone who seems new to the community, please advise the Parish Leader, talk to a member of the Parish Council or contact the Parish Office. We have groups in the Parish such as Care and Concern and our local St Vincent de Paul Conference who may be able to assist.

#### Christmas Mass Times:

Christmas Eve – 6.00pm and 8.00pm  
Christmas Day – 8.30am



#### Children wanted for our Christmas Play:

We are still welcoming children to present our Christmas Play at the 6.00 p.m. Christmas Eve Mass. Practices are scheduled in the Church on Monday 16 December and Monday 23 December at 10 am. Come one! Come all! Please contact Michael, our Parish Leader, on 0407 804 461 or Mary Taylor on 0418 987 195.

#### St Vincent de Paul Christmas Appeal:

Envelopes for donations to the St Vincent de Paul Christmas Appeal are now available in the Church foyer.

#### St Vincent de Paul Christmas Tree Appeal:

The Christmas Tree has been set up in the Church foyer nominating gifts to be included in Christmas Hampers. Please ensure tag is attached so it can be placed in the appropriate hamper. Gifts should be returned **by Monday 16 December**.

#### Annual Working Bee:

Sunday 22 December after the 8.30am Mass till lunch at noon. The Dust and Dirt Brigade cleans the interior of the Church building – fans, cupboards, notice board, kitchen and an outside scrub and garden make-over helps with the sparkle of Christmas. It's a good way to meet other parishioners. In Peter McDonald's absence, a volunteer coordinator is needed for the day. Please talk with Michael, our Parish Leader if you are able to assist.

#### Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament:

The Blessed Sacrament Chapel is open every Wednesday and Thursday from 10am to 3pm for adoration, and personal prayer.

#### Baptism:

This Sunday we welcome into our Church Community **Addison Marie Capewell** daughter of Liam and Judith Capewell.

#### Drought Angels:

The Burchell Family wish to express their profound thanks to all who donated items for Drought Angels over the past few weeks. A truckload of goods was delivered to Drought Angels at Chinchilla last Monday.

#### Columban Calendars and Christmas Cards:

2020 Columban Calendars **\$8.00** each and Christmas Cards **\$3.00** per packet. These are now available in the Church Foyer.

#### Sacramental Gifts:

Gifts for children receiving the Sacraments are often hard to find. South Street Newsagency now has a new range of beautiful gifts available. It is a range of gifts for Baptism, Confirmation and Communion and other religious gifts for all occasions including statues, crosses and candles.

### AROUND THE DIOCESE

#### Advent Resources from Caritas:

Children's liturgy resources, young adult resources and parish resources - suitable for small groups or Gospel discussion groups <https://www.caritas.org.au/advent> Global Gifts - You can be an angel this Christmas and give the gift of water, food or a sustainable livelihood.

Visit [https://www.caritas.org.au/donate/christmas\\_appeal](https://www.caritas.org.au/donate/christmas_appeal) or <https://www.globalgifts.org.au/>

#### Employment: Catholic Care Big Buddy Coordinator:

Catholic Care Social Services are looking for a Big Buddy Program (BBP) Coordinator. The Big Buddy Coordinator (BBC) will have a strong community focus and will be responsible for the coordination and implementation of the Big Buddy Project (BBP). More information at: <https://www.seek.com.au/job/40487025...>

#### Plenary Council 2020: Local Listening & Discernment

**Date:** 15/2/20 Saturday **Time:** 10:00am - 2:00pm

**Where:** To be confirmed dependent on numbers.

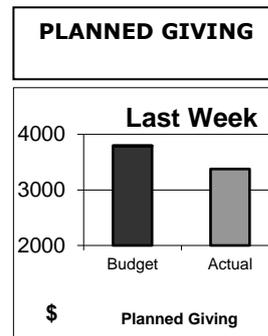
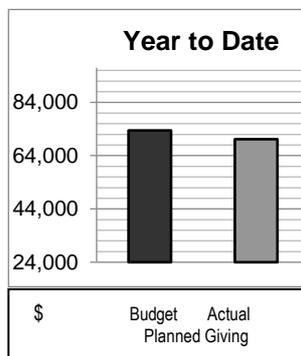
The event will be held in Toowoomba. A gathering is on offer to people interested in participating in the Listening and Discernment Phase for the Plenary Council but have missed this opportunity in their parish or agency. Register your interest at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RSY83FC> Registration will be open until 31/1/20. At that time people will be notified of venue. If you have any questions regarding this event, please contact Mary Otto on 0447 074 807 or email [rcia@twb.catholic.org.au](mailto:rcia@twb.catholic.org.au).

#### PLEASE REMEMBER IN OUR PRAYERS:

**Those who are ill:** Bryan Flemming, Terry Tyers, Ned Sparksman, Pauline Dixon, Allan Wills, Damian Wyvill, Sara Mehari, Scott Murphy, Michelle Halpin, Christine Prescott, Toni Fitzgibbon, Camille Taylor, Patrick McNamee, Janice Lockhart, Dodie McGrane, Val Sharpe, Paul Turner, Mary Buttin, Rev Fr Brian Sparksman, James Babineau, Mort Edmiston, Arleen Hansen, Peter Webster, Monica Gleeson, Georgie Rose Allen, Pat Chapman, Alvina Denison, Megan Ford, Bev Walls, Paul P. Lamerand,

**Recently Deceased:** Rev Father Bill Grundy

**Anniversaries:** Neil and Patti Mitchell, Rev Father James Wiemers.



## God's Side Show Alley

### A Reflection from our Priest Director, Fr Michael O'Brien

As in every small town, the Annual Show was a great and welcome event in the community. For the adults it was an opportunity to check out some of the local art, livestock, agriculture and even the biggest marrow! For the younger ones, it was the fun opportunity to visit "sideshow alley" with all the games and cries of "Every child wins a prize!" and all the rides of the Cha Cha, the Octopus, the Hurricane, the mirror maze and many more old favorites. Not to forget the food – Pollywaffles, Shannon's Chips, Fairy floss....but I digress! When I was perhaps 10 years old I was at the Roma Show with my sisters and brothers and we were there until the final rides of the night. I remember getting on a ride with my family that had seats suspended by a chain from a central wheel – like an adult version of a merry-go-round. As the ride gets faster, the seats swing out further. So when it started I felt a little worried about how I would feel. As it was the end of the night they keep us going for quite a while. It was exhilarating, but every time they would say "Let's go round for another minute", my heart would take a jump. My feelings would go from "Yes, how exciting" to "Oh God what if the chair falls off! I'm not sure I want to do this anymore!" and back around it goes again!

This sense of excitement followed by fear is something we encounter throughout life which teaches us to conquer our fears to open ourselves to new experiences, whilst being aware of possible dangers and perils. I guess it is a natural instinct that has helped us to survive from the earliest of ages. I wonder whether it is also what those listening to John the Baptist felt. To hear the words of hope – of someone powerful to come who would right all the wrongs – would make the hearers feel great excitement. At the same time there would have been a little fear. Fear of what is to come, fear of repentance, fear of stepping into, and trusting the unknown.

When we enter this time of the year we too are asked to take stock of our faith lives. When we immerse ourselves in the promises of salvation and the story of God's love for us, we are excited at the wonder of all God has given to us. Not only that, but also the strength and courage in life when we have needed it the most. Deep down though, there is a little niggling fear of the cost of discipleship – of repentance – of the unknown.

A couple of weeks ago the gospel called us to STAY AWAKE! This message firstly assumes that we are already AWAKE. Take a moment to reflect on where/when in your life you are most awake to the presence of God/Jesus? Then STAY AWAKE to that gift! Advent doesn't ask you to take on more prayer or actions, or to concentrate on giving something up – Advent invites you to sit in presence of Christ – EMMANUEL – "God is with us".

**BE CONFIDENT** that where you are AWAKE to God now, is where God wants you to be. Simply be more deeply aware of God's presence and joy in those moments. In those quiet moments – walking – having a cuppa with friends/family – prayer – laughter – ***SIMPLY STAY AWAKE and know you are already in God's all-embracing presence.***

*God's Blessings on your Advent Journey, Fr. Michael*

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### Wednesday 18 December is celebrated as International Migrants Day

**Perhaps the most striking thing about International Migrants Day on 18 December is its name. It is not Immigration Day but Migrants Day.**

Immigration is about policy, about looking at migrants as a class of people, and all too often as a problem. Immigration policies and departments are notorious for disregarding the rights and humanity of immigrants. Migrants are people, each of them precious and deserving of respect for their rights as human being. Their lives merit a day in which we can recognise how many they are and can celebrate their resilience in the face of the difficulties they so often face...

To be a migrant, particularly when forced to leave one's own nation, has always been difficult. It involves being deprived of home, of a shared native language or dialect, of a familiar landscape on which one's history is inscribed, of customs and of all that is unfamiliar. It also means discovering oneself as an outsider in a land where the natives are at home in all these respects. To be a migrant is to be familiar with prejudice and contempt, and to experience through losing the use of one's own language a return to childhood in a world where even the local children are adults.

We celebrate migrants because they enrich the nations which receive them. That is evident in Australia in the range of foods and restaurants we can all enjoy, and at a deeper level in the rich and varied stories that make up our history. Our differences allow us to see difference is not a curse but a blessing that enriches both parties.

In a healthy nation, migrants are welcomed because they will help build a stronger and more generous society.

*(The above is an excerpt from an article by Father Andrew Hamilton SJ in the online publication, Australian Catholics)*

## Gathering: Advent Song

D Browne

***Gather in hope, people of God  
Sing the Advent Song!  
Song of faith, song of trust,  
A song to welcome the Christ!***

C: Let the warmth of our love, like the long summer days,  
Prepare the way of the Lord!

All: Prepare the way of the Lord!

C: Let our will for justice, as strong as the sun,  
Prepare the way of the Lord!

All: Prepare the way of the Lord!

C: Let our thirst for the truth, like the dry, parched earth,  
Prepare the way of the Lord!

All: Prepare the way of the Lord!

C: Let our dream for peace, as bright as the sky,  
Prepare the way of the Lord!

All: Prepare the way of the Lord!

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## Placing the Stars:

***Sing out, earth and skies!  
Sing of the God who loves you!  
Raise your joyful cries,  
Dance to the life around you!***

M Haugen

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## Psalm:

C Smith

**Response: *Come O Lord, Come and save us.***

It is he who keeps faith forever,  
Who is just to those who are oppressed.  
It is he who gives bread to the hungry,  
The Lord, who sets prisoners free.

The Lord who gives sight to the blind,  
Who raises up those bowed down,  
The Lord who protects the stranger  
And upholds the widow and orphan.

It is the Lord who loves the just  
But thwarts the way of the wicked.  
The Lord will reign forever,  
Zion's God, from age to age.

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## Advent Litany

B Farrell

### Cantor:

Word we long for  
Word we thirst for  
Key of David  
Son of Mary  
Promised Saviour  
True Messiah  
Cry of Prophets  
Hope of ages

### All

**Alleluia  
Maranatha  
Alleluia  
Maranatha  
Alleluia  
Maranatha  
Alleluia  
Maranatha**

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## The Apostles' Creed:

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ,  
his only Son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried; He descended into hell;  
on the third day he rose again from the dead;  
He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the  
right hand of God the Father almighty  
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen

## Prayers of the Faithful:

You have called us to bring good news to the poor.

For your word which endures, we give you thanks. For your promises to which we hold, we give you thanks. For such intimacy with you, we give you thanks. For the love which from our birth over and around us lies, we give you thanks. For those gathered here today, we give you thanks. For family, friend and stranger, we give you thanks. For those who minister your grace, we give you thanks. For the hope that lives each Advent of a love that has no end, we give you thanks. Amen

## Acclamation:

We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.

## Communion: As the Deer Longs

B Hurd

***As the deer longs for running streams,  
So I long, so I long, so I long for you.***

Thirst my soul for you, the God who is my life!  
When shall I see, when shall I see, see the face of God!

Echoes meet as deep is calling unto deep  
Over my head, all your mighty waters, sweeping over me.

Continually the foe delights in taunting me:  
"Where is God, where is your God?" Where, O where are you?

Defend me, God, send forth your light and your truth.  
They will lead me to your holy mountain, to your dwelling place.

Then I shall go unto the altar of my God.

Praising you, O my joy and gladness, I shall praise your name.

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## Thanksgiving: You Are Mine

D Haas

I will come to you in the silence, I will lift you from all your fear.  
You will hear my voice, I claim you as my choice,  
Be still and know I am here.

I am hope for all who are hopeless,  
I am eyes for all who long to see.  
In the shadows of the night, I will be your light,  
Come and rest in me.

***Do not be afraid, I am with you,  
I have called you each by name.  
Come and follow me, I will bring you home:  
I love you and you are mine.***

I am strength for all the despairing,  
Healing for the ones who dwell in shame.  
All the blind will see, the lame will all run free,  
And all will know my name.

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## Recessional: Every Valley

B Dufford SJ

***Ev'ry valley shall be exalted  
And ev'ry hill made low.  
And all God's people shall see together  
The glory of the Lord!***

A voice cries out in the wilderness,  
'Prepare the way of the Lord.  
Make straight in the desert a highway,  
A highway for our God.'

Stand up on the mountain top;  
Lift up your voice to the world.  
Sing joyfully Jerusalem;  
Behold, Behold your God.

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