

OUR LADY OF LOURDES

PARISH OF SEVEN HILLS

"Still a wonderful place to pray & stay."

7 Grantham Road, Seven Hills. NSW. 2147

Ph. 9622 2920

Email: secretary@lol7hills.com.au

Parish Priest: Fr Henry Huu Duc Tran
Parish Deacon: Deacon Thong Nguyen
Parish Office Team: Rosie Sadipoor, Kim Dang Jane Nguyen
Office Hours: Monday-Friday: 9am - 3.00pm
WEEKDAY MASS: Tues, Wed, Fri. 8.00am
Thursday 9.00am
WEEKEND MASS: Saturday Vigil 6pm
Sunday 8am & 9.30am

Parish School: OLOL 8869 6800
Principal: Ms Keiran Byrnes
Reconciliation: Saturday 4:30-5:30pm
Baptismal Preparation: 21st February 2024
Baptism: 28th January 2024
Sacrament Co-Ordinator: Mrs Artelle Lenthall
Parish Website: www.lol7hills.com.au
Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/LOL7Hills/>

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT 24 December 2023 • Year B



Let us Pray for the Sick

Leonila Ahillon, Mary Attard, Cynthia Avery, Barrie Chamberlain, Rosella Booth, Penny Briscoe, Khien Doan, Anthony Janicska, Carlos Moreno, Zeferino Jayson Morales, Debra Price, Camy Ratnam, Sr Colleen O'Sullivan, Sue Tipaldo, Natalie Woodward.

If you would like to add to our Sick List or know of any Parishioner who is unwell please contact Father Henry or email the Parish Office: secretary@lol7hills.com.au
We can also arrange for Holy Communion or a visit if required.

Let us Pray for the Deceased

Recently Deceased: Mansour Ahmad, Ronald Bailey, Connie Busuttill, Charlie Calleja, Charlie Cheteuti, Noel DCruz, Maximilian Epondulan, Sonny Elluh, Bonosa Enfesta, Gladys Fernando, John Lionel, Joan Falzon, Mary Ann Farugia, Alfredo Fernandez, Ranjan Fernando, Epifanio Jalandoni, Mary Mifsud, Solomon Morias, Anthony & Evangelista Micallef, Josip Mrzljak, Marilyn Nalapo, Pacienza Piscopo, Connie Redman, Mercedes Yu, Anna Vingerhoed, Epifania Cruz Samaniego, Maria Fely Sebastian, Joseph & Theresa Vella

Anniversaries: Fredy Alphonse, John Azzopardi, Carolina Borg, Merlene & Ralph Blackford, Josephine & Family Calleja, Fe Licup Carmen, Mary Carmenzuli, Dennis Clarke, Philomena Corera, Mervyn Costello, Conchita Deloso, Rita de Silva, John Falzon, MA Fernando, Josephine Francis, Charles Francis, Russell, Sheela Franklin, Frank Galea, Paul Gauci, Charlie Gravina, Ivan Elisha, Martha Joseph, Ngoc Khuong Mai, Irene Moroney, Thelma Morrissey, Anton Motha, Paul Mula, Jason Muscat, Alberto Nahoy, Aurora Nonato, Makalita Kilisitina Pongi, Sam Silvia, Cordula Paiva, Jose Reyes, Lorraine Rigney, Cornelio & Iluminada Rondario, Santan & Pauline Soares, Caroline Susainathan, Jim Vella, Alison Vella, Melchor Usman.

Remembrance: Neil Amaratunga, France Angseeing, Carmen Attard, Joseph Azzopardi, Roy, Mary & Des Barney, Eveillino Bhundoo, Brian Carrebine, Lina Cabaero, Mary Chircop, Cini Family, Sam & Silvia Debbattista, Carmen, Joe, Lonsan, Jimmy & Tony De Guarie, Julian Epondulan, Melvyn Fernandes, Sammy Formosa, Evangeline Garcia, Jose Garcia, Christine Gomez, Harold, Rosine, Marc LaFleur, Sashin Patrick Manamperi, Mangion Family, Elenoa Matavesi, Pauline Meilak, Mary Mifsud, Emilia & William Mifsud, Marcel Mohsen, Lourda Motha, Louis & Stephen Mula, Felix & Adriana Muscat, Michelle Muscat, Mary & Francis Muscat, Josephine Muscat, Charles Muscat, Philippa & Jim Muscat, Piu Muscat, Adrian Pereira, Lakshman Pereira, John Portelli, John & Roseline Ratnam, Jose Sanchez, Sem Serna, Joyce & John Sutari, Tony Vassallo, Shane Vaz, Jonathan Tek Kie, Stevenson Upulasi and all the Holy Souls of Purgatory.

Funeral Notices

May the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace. Amen



THE PILGRIM STATUE OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES

The Statue of Virgin Mary is available for home visitation and will reside with you for a week, being Sunday to Saturday. If you are wishing to participate, please leave your name and address at the Parish Office or contact Maryse Augseeing on 0467 701 010.

Our Lady of Lourdes



Ever Immaculate Virgin, Mother of mercy, health of the sick, refuge of sinners, comfort of the afflicted, you know my needs, my troubles, my sufferings; cast on me a look of pity.

By appearing in the grotto of Lourdes, you were pleased to make it a privileged sanctuary,

from which you dispense your favours, and already many sufferers have obtained the cure of their infirmities, both spiritual and physical. I come, therefore, with the most unbounded confidence to implore your maternal intercession. Obtain most loving mother, my requests, through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.
Amen.

REGULAR COLLECTIONS - First and Second

FIRST COLLECTION and Matt's Point is for the support of Priests throughout the Diocese.

ON-LINE BANK DONATIONS

Account name: Parramatta Diocesan Clergy

BSB: 067 950

ACC: 00 00 4265

Reference: Seven Hills - 6035

SECOND COLLECTION or Planned Giving Program

On behalf of the Parish Community, I would like to thank you very much for your ongoing support, which has been absolutely vital in keeping our Parish going strong. Projects completed include the Hall Kitchen renovation, Parish Meeting Room painting, Parish Office and Meeting Room Roof painted, Church roof cleaned and ceiling repaired and painted.

ON-LINE BANK DONATIONS

Account Name: Seven Hills Catholic Church.

BSB: 067 950

ACC: 000552

Reference: (Your *Planned Giving envelope number* or for a one off donation, 'DONATION')

IN-PERSON BANK DEPOSIT (at a Bank Inst / Branch)

Account Name: Seven Hills Catholic Church

BSB: 062 315

ACC ID # 00901486

AGENT # 660



KEEP UP TO DATE

By visiting our parish website with news, the bulletin, prayers and much more - a great way to stay up to date with what's on in our parish Visit www.lol7hills.org.au

FIRST READING A reading from the second book of Samuel 7:1-5. 8-12. 14. 16

Once David had settled into his house and the Lord had given him rest from all the enemies surrounding him, the king said to the prophet Nathan, 'Look, I am living in a house of cedar while the ark of God dwells in a tent'. Nathan said to the king, 'Go and do all that is in your mind, for the Lord is with you.'

But that very night the word of the Lord came to Nathan:

'Go and tell my servant David, "Thus the Lord speaks: Are you the man to build me a house to dwell in? I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be leader of my people Israel; I have been with you on all your expeditions; I have cut off all your enemies before you. I will give you fame as great as the fame of the greatest on earth. I will provide a place for my people Israel; I will plant them there and they shall dwell in that place and never be disturbed again; nor shall the wicked continue to oppress them as they did, in the days when I appointed judges over my people Israel; I will give them rest from all their enemies. The Lord will make you great; the Lord will make you a House. And when your days are ended and you are laid to rest with your ancestors, I will preserve the offspring of your body after you and make his sovereignty secure. I will be a father to him and he a son to me. Your House and your sovereignty will always stand secure before me and your throne be established for ever."

The Word of the Lord

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

(R) For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.

1. I will sing for ever of your love, O Lord;
through all ages my mouth will proclaim you
truth. Of this I am sure, that your love lasts for
ever, that your truth is firmly established as the
heavens. **(R.)**

2. 'I have made a covenant with my chosen one;
I have sworn to David my servant:
I will establish your dynasty for ever
and set up your throne through all ages.' **(R.)**

3. He will say to me: 'You are my father,
my God, the rock who saves me.'
I will keep my love for him always;
for him my covenant shall endure. **(R.)**

SECOND READING A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Romans 16:25-27

Glory to him who is able to give you the strength to live according to the Good News I preach, and in which I proclaim Jesus Christ, the revelation of a mystery kept secret for endless ages, but now so clear that it must be broadcast to pagans everywhere to bring them to the obedience of faith. This is only what scripture has predicted, and it is all part of the way the eternal God wants things to be. He alone is wisdom; give glory therefore to him through Jesus Christ for ever and ever. Amen.

The Word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

I am the servant of the Lord:
may his will for me be done.

Alleluia!

GOSPEL A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke 1:26-38

The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. He went in and said to her, 'Rejoice, so highly favoured! The Lord is with you.' She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, 'Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'But how can this come about, since I am a virgin?' 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you' the angel answered 'and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. Know this too: your kinswoman Elizabeth has, in her old age, herself conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God.' 'I am the handmaid of the Lord,' said Mary 'let what you have said be done to me.' And the angel left her.

The Gospel of the Lord.

PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

My Jesus, I believe that you are truly present in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the altar.

I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from you. Amen





Dear Friends,

'Nothing is impossible to God.' These are the final words that the angel Gabriel conveyed to Mary at the end of his Annunciation trip informing her a virgin, of her call to conceive and bear a son whom she had to give the name Jesus. This is no ordinary son, since he is the Son of God, Son of the Most High.

Humanly speaking, Mary had to be skeptical, because it was impossible for a virgin to conceive and bear a child in her womb, and she had no hesitation to question the angel about the logic of his message, since the possibility of her conception was zero from our human perspective, that's why she asked Gabriel 'How

can this come about, since I am a virgin?'

The angel then explained to Mary about the wonder God was going to show the world through the work of God's Holy Spirit. In other words, the angel seemed to remind Mary that her conception was something beyond any human perception, and it had a divine dimension, consequently it was possible.

To prove his point, Gabriel also threw in another example to assure Mary, that her elderly cousin Elizabeth whom people thought as impossible of conception was going to conceive and bear a son, and we all know that Elizabeth's son was John the Baptist, Jesus' cousin, who was to become his herald later on.

Through the message the angel left with Mary in the Gospel today, we are invited to reflect upon the wondrous power of God, which can make the impossible possible, therefore we must put all our trust in Him and allow him to make his name shone and glorified through us.

Trusting in God's invincible power, let us put ourselves, our families, our community and our world before him, and pray that he shall grant us what we need to fulfill our calls as his disciples, and heal the wounds of wars and conflicts that have devoured our world today.

Have a trust-filled week,

Fr Henry

PARISH NEWS...

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR

In this joyful time of the year, I would like to thank each of you for your support throughout the year and wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. May the Lord fill your hearts with joy and hope and help you share them with people around you both in this Parish community and beyond.

CHRISTMAS MASS TIMES

Christmas Eve 6pm, 9.00pm & Midnight
Christmas Day 8am & 9.30am



CHILDREN'S LITURGY—CHRISTMAS STORY

Thank you to the children who have volunteered to act out the Christmas Story this year. This will take place on the Sunday 24th December at 6pm mass. For those children not participating but attending the mass, you are invited to dress up as angels or shepherds.

CHURCH WELCOMERS

As part of the feedback from Synod in our parish, we need some new welcomers to greet and offer bulletins at all services to help continue to create a better community, welcoming parishioners and visitors before each mass. If you are able to assist please contact the parish office.



ADVENT WREATH

This circular base is traditionally taken to symbolise the ever-renewing cycle of the seasons.

The four candles, represent the four Sundays of Advent. The fourth candle, the "Candle of Love," reminds Christians that God loves them enough to send his only Son to Earth.



PARISH OFFICE HOURS & BULLETIN

Our Parish office will close between Christmas and New Year and there will be no bulletins throughout the month of January 2024 to allow our Parish staff to take a break. However, I will be around in the Parish office as usual.

FREE ZUMBA CLASSES

Zumba classes have now finished for 2023. A future announcement will be made in the bulletin of the return date for classes in 2024. We look forward to seeing you then and wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

CHURCH CLEANING

We urgently need extra people to do the church cleaning once a month for about an hour. If you can help please phone the Parish Office or put your name and number on the A3 roster located at the back of the church under the weeks of your availability.

COMMUNION TO THE SICK MINISTERS

If you are a current Minister who gives Communion to those sick or homebound or wishing to serve in this ministry, please kindly contact the Parish Office to provide your name as Deacon Thong is creating a parish data base to offer any assistance when needed with home visits.

DIOCESAN NEWS

NEW Diocesan website launched

The new parracatholic.org website is now here with exciting new features and functionality including a comprehensive 'Find a Mass' function which includes Daily and Weekend Masses, Reconciliation and Adoration times; a centralised event calendar; Daily Mass readings and different ways you can contribute to the Church in Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains. Check it out today!

2023 Diocese of Parramatta Christmas Mass Times

Christmas Mass and Reconciliation Times from parishes across Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains are available now on our Diocesan website (www.parracatholic.org) and on Catholic Outlook (www.catholicoutlook.org). The Diocese of Parramatta wishes you, your families and faith communities a Merry Christmas.

Advent and Christmas | Summer 2023 Catholic Outlook Magazine out now!

The Advent and Christmas | Summer 2023 edition of the Catholic Outlook Magazine is out now! This edition features reflections on Mary's journey into the dark night, how our communities celebrate Christmas, our four new leaders in the Diocese, a handy Christmas Mass Times guide, plus so much more. Pick up your free copy from parishes and offices across Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains today or read it online via catholicoutlook.org/magazine

It's not too late to gift faith, hope, comfort, and a brighter new year to people in hospital!

Thank you to everyone who gave a Christmas gift to enable our 15 Catholic Care chaplains to give spiritual, sacramental, and emotional support to people suffering in hospital. If you haven't had a chance to donate, please visit yourcatholicfoundation.org.au/appeal or scan this QR code. With so many isolated, elderly, seriously ill, and dying people in hospital, our chaplains need your compassionate generosity and prayers to keep bringing the light of hope to more people experiencing their darkest days. Thank you.



Be Part of Our Synod Journey: Diocesan Synod Report Now Available

The Diocesan Synod Report is now available for download. The newly released Diocesan Synod Report offers a summary of our first Diocesan Synod assembly, held from 13-15 October 2023, its preparatory stages, in-depth details of the proceedings, and insights from delegates. Download your copy from the Parramatta Synod website now:

<https://parracatholic.org/synod2023/>

Liturgical Ministry Course returns in 2024

The Liturgical Ministry Formation Courses will recommence in February 2024. This is formation for anyone interested in serving within the Liturgical Ministries either as Readers, Extraordinary Ministers of Communion, Communion to the Sick and Dying and Ministers at the Altar. If you are interested or would like more information, please contact the Office for Worship on 0460 037 795 or mary.gale@parracatholic.org or visit our website to download an enrolment form at

<https://officeforworship.org.au/>

Diocesan World Day of the Sick Mass: 10 February 2024

A Mass for the World Day of the Sick, including the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, will be held at 11am on the Saturday of 10 February 2024 at St Patrick's Church, Mary, Queen of the Family Parish, Blacktown. All are welcome, including those who may be sick, and those who care for the sick and dying and health care professionals. RSVPs are required by 6 February 2024 to mary.gale@parracatholic.org

Music for Lent Workshop: 12 February 2024

Musicians and Liturgy Planners are invited to attend an evening exploring Music for Lent on Monday 12 February 2024 from 7pm to 8.30pm at the Bishop Bede Heather Centre, Blacktown. The session will be presented by Eric Grella, Music Formation Facilitator, Mission Enhancement Team. To RSVP, please contact mary.gale@parracatholic.org by 5 February 2024.

Marriage Preparation Courses in 2024

Getting married in 2024? Let the Diocese of Parramatta help you prepare. Visit www.parracatholic.org/celebrate/marriage/marriage-preparation to view weekend course dates in the New Year, to book and pay. An online preparation called *SmartLoving* can also be booked via the website. For more information, email met@parracatholic.org or phone Karin on 0419 242 435 or Marisa on 0412 280 017.

Donate to Caritas Australia's Gaza Appeal

Following a series of surprise attacks against Israel by Hamas in early October, Caritas Australia is supporting partner agencies on the ground to provide emergency cash, shelter, and psychosocial support to those affected by the violence. The efforts of these partner agencies are expected to support 17,000 displaced families, representing around 100,000 of the 1 million people displaced. To support Caritas Australia's Gaza Appeal, call 1800 024 413 toll free or visit www.caritas.org.au/donate/emergency-appeals/gaza-crisis/

Are you interested in becoming a pastoral and professional supervisor?

Transforming Practices offers a rich formation in Pastoral Supervision. Supervision Formation comprises of 5 two day Modules, held over 7 months. The next Portfolio of Learning Day will be held on Friday 3 February 2024 (with sufficient applicants). For those proceeding – an Introductory Day will be held on Friday 5 April 2024. All training days may be held on Zoom, face to face or in dual mode depending on successful applicant's location. For program prerequisites, please visit www.transformingpractices.org. For further information, please contact the Registrar, Mary Pearson via email marypearson@gmail.com

Soul Food Podcast – Mission Enhancement Team

Do you find life & faith inspiration by listening to the experiences of others?

The Mission Enhancement Team's *Soul Food Podcast* features life & faith stories of people from our diocesan family. Listen now for FREE via our website or on Spotify: www.parracatholic.org/resources/soul-food

POPE FRANCIS' ANGELUS



Dear brothers and sisters, *buongiorno!*

Today, the Third Sunday of Advent, the Gospel speaks to us about John the Baptist's mission (cf. *Jn* 1:6-8, 19-28), indicating that he is the prophet sent by God to "testify to the light" (v. 8). Let us reflect on this: *to testify to the light*.

Testimony. The Baptist is certainly an extraordinary man. The people flock to listen to him, attracted by his consistent and sincere way of being (cf. vv. 6-7). His testimony comes through his frank language, his honest behaviour, his austerity of life. All this makes him different from other famous and powerful people of that time, who, instead, invested a lot in appearances. People like him – upright, free and courageous – are luminous, fascinating figures: they motivate us to rise above mediocrity and to be in turn models of good living for others. In every age, the Lord sends men and women like this. Do we know how to recognize them? Do we try to learn from their witness, allowing ourselves to be challenged? Or rather, do we allow ourselves to be bedazzled by fashionable people? Then we get caught in artificial behaviour.

John instead is luminous insofar as he testifies *to the light*. But what is his light? He himself responds when he states clearly to the crowds who had flocked to hear him that he was not the light, that he was not the Messiah (cf. vv. 19-20). The light is Jesus, the Lamb of God, "God who saves". Only He redeems, frees, heals and enlightens. This is why John is a "voice" who accompanies his brothers and sisters to the Word; he serves without seeking honours or the spotlight: he is a lamp, while the light is the living Christ (cf. vv. 26-27; *Jn* 5:35)

Brothers and sisters, the example of John the Baptist teaches us at least two things. First, that we cannot save ourselves alone: only in God do we find the *light* of life. And second, that each of us, through service, consistency, humility, witness of life – and always by God's grace – can be a lamp that shines and helps others find the way on which to meet Jesus.

So, let us ask ourselves: In the places I live, how can I *testify to the light*, testify to Christ in the here and now this Christmas, not in the distant future?

May Mary, mirror of holiness, help us be men and women who reflect Jesus, the light who comes into the world.

After the Angelus

Dear brothers and sisters,

Yesterday in the Shrine of Our Lady of Luján in Argentina, Cardinal Eduardo Pironio was beatified, a humble and zealous pastor, a witness of hope, defender of the poor. He collaborated with Saint John Paul II in the promotion of lay people and World Youth Day. May his example help us to be a Church that goes out, that accompanies everyone on their way, especially the weakest. A round of applause for the new Blessed!

Today I want to remember the thousands of migrants who try to cross through the Darién jungle between Colombia and Panama. It's often families with children who venture along dangerous paths, deceived by those who falsely promise them short and safe passage, mistreated and robbed. Not a few lose their lives in the jungle. Combined efforts are needed by the countries more directly affected and the international community to prevent this tragic situation from passing unnoticed, and to provide together a humanitarian response.

And let us not forget our brothers and sisters who are suffering because of war, in Ukraine, in Palestine and Israel, and in other conflict zones. As Christmas approaches, may the dedication to open paths of peace be strengthened.

I continue receiving very serious and sad news about Gaza. Unarmed civilians are targets for bombs and gunfire. And this has happened even within the parish complex of the Holy Family, where there are no terrorists, but families, children, people who are sick and have disabilities, sisters. A mother and her daughter, Mrs. Nahida Khalil Anton and her daughter Samar Kamal Anton, were killed, and other people were wounded by the shooters while they were going to the bathroom... The house of the Sisters of Mother Teresa was damaged, their generator was hit. Some are saying, "This is terrorism and war". Yes, it is war, it is terrorism. That is why Scripture says that "God puts an end to war...the bow he breaks and the spear he snaps" (cf. *Ps* 46:9). Let us pray to the Lord for peace.

I greet all of you, families, parish groups and associations, who have come to Rome from Italy and so many parts of the world. In particular, I greet the pilgrims from the United States of America and Poland; the faithful from Mormanno, Acilia and Viterbo.

And now I greet you, dear children from the oratories and schools in Rome who have brought your Baby Jesus figurines to be blessed. I bless them. In blessing your *Bambinelli*, I ask that you pray before the Nativity scene for children who will experience a difficult Christmas in places where there is war, in refugee camps, in situations of profound misery.

Thank you for doing this, and Merry Christmas to all of you and your families. A round of applause for the children!

I wish a Happy Sunday to you all.

Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your meal and *arrivederci!*

POPE FRANCIS: 'AT CHRISTMAS LET US THINK ABOUT THE HOLY LAND' By Lisa Zengarini

Pope Francis has once again reiterated his closeness to all the people suffering the ongoing war between Hamas and Israel. During an audience on Saturday with a group of actors featuring in a Living Nativity Scene at the Patriarchal Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome, he called on Christians to turn their thoughts and prayers this Christmas to the Holy Land.

Praying for all those suffering the war

"We know the situation, caused by the war, the consequence of a conflict that has lasted for decades," he said, remarking that for Palestinians living in Bethlehem too this Christmas will be marked by suffering and grieving, with no pilgrims and celebrations. Because of the conflict in Gaza, and rising tensions also in the West Bank, in Bethlehem tourism has halted and pilgrimages have been suspended, while all public celebrations have been cancelled, resulting in further hardships for its inhabitants many of whom live on tourism and pilgrimages. "We don't want to leave them alone", said Pope Francis, urging for prayers and tangible support.

The historical connection between Bethlehem and St. Mary Major

In his speech, the Pope recalled the close connection of the Basilica of St. Mary Major to Jesus' birthplace which goes back to the first centuries of Christianity. The ancient Roman church has a precious relic of pieces of Christ's crib sent from Bethlehem by St. Sophronius, then the Patriarch of Jerusalem, to Pope Theodore I in the seventh century. For this reason, it was also referred to as "the Bethlehem of the West."

Living Nativity scenes are not mere folkloric facts

Also, its underground Chapel of the Nativity once displayed the first known nativity scene figurines, sculpted by Arnolfo di Cambio in the late 13th century for Pope Nicholas IV, who was inspired by St. Francis of Assisi, creator of the first Living Nativity in Greccio, Italy, 800 years ago. Referring to this detail, Pope Francis remarked that living nativity scenes must not be reduced to mere folkloric facts. Their purpose, as intended by St. Francis, he said, must "be to reawaken wonder in the heart, before the mystery of God who became a child." *"Francis wanted to represent in life the birth of Jesus to inspire, in friars and in the people, emotion and tenderness towards the mystery of God born of Mary in a stable and laid in a manger. He wanted to give substance to the representation: not a painting, not statues, but people in flesh and blood, in order to highlight the reality of the incarnation."*

Suffering of Bethlehem is an open wound for the world

Concluding his address, Pope Francis reiterated his call to think about the Holy Land at Christmas, noting that the Living Nativity Scene in St. Mary Major will help remind everyone "of how the suffering of Bethlehem is an open wound for the Middle East and for the entire world."

POPE FRANCIS' AUDIENCE ADDRESS

Catechesis. The passion for evangelization: the apostolic zeal of the believer. 30. Ephphatha, Church, be open!

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today we will conclude the series dedicated to apostolic zeal, in which we have allowed the Word of God to inspire us, to help nurture a passion for the proclamation of the Gospel. And this involves every Christian. Let us consider the fact that in Baptism, the celebrant, touching the ears and the lips of the baptized, says: "May the Lord Jesus, who made the deaf hear and the mute speak, grant that you may soon receive his word and profess the faith". And we have heard the miracle of Jesus. The evangelist Mark goes to great lengths to describe where this took place: toward "the Sea of Galilee" (Mk 7:31). What do these two regions have in common? The fact that they were predominantly inhabited by pagans. They were not areas inhabited by Jews, but mostly by pagans. The disciples went out with Jesus, who can open the ears and the mouth, thus, the phenomenon of mutism, of deafness, which is also metaphorical in the Bible, signifying being closed to God's calls. There is a physical deafness, but in the Bible, the one who is deaf to the Word of God is mute, and does not communicate the Word of God. There is another indicative sign: the Gospel reports Jesus' decisive word in Aramaic. Ephphatha which means "be open", may the ears be open, may the tongue be open. And it is an invitation that is addressed not so much to the deaf man, who could not hear him, but precisely to the disciples of that time and of every age. We too, who have received the Ephphatha of the Spirit in Baptism, are called to be open. "Be open", Jesus says to every believer and to his Church: be open because the Gospel message needs you to witness it and proclaim it! And this makes us also think about the attitude of Christians: Christians must be open to the Word of God and service to others. Christians who are closed up always end up badly because they are not Christians. They are ideologists of closure. A Christian must be open to the proclamation of the Word, and to welcoming brothers and sisters. And this is why ephphatha, this "be open" is an invitation to us all to open ourselves. Even at the end of the Gospel, Jesus entrusts us with his missionary desire: go beyond, go to tend, go to preach the Gospel. Brothers, sisters, let us all feel called, as baptized people, to witness and proclaim Jesus. And let us ask for the grace, as Church, to bring about a pastoral and missionary conversion. On the banks of the Sea of Galilee, the Lord asked Peter if he loved him and then asked him to tend his sheep (cf. vv. 15-17). Let us too ask ourselves. Let each one of us ask ourselves this question, let us ask ourselves: Do I truly love the Lord to the point of wanting to proclaim him? Do I want to become his witness or am I content to be his disciple? Do I take to heart the people I meet, bringing them to Jesus in prayer? Do I want to do something so that the joy of the Gospel, which has transformed my life, may make their lives more beautiful? Let us think about this, let us think about these questions and go forward with our witness.

Appeal

I am continuing to follow the war in Israel and in Palestine, with great concern. I renew my appeal for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. There is much suffering there. I encourage all the parties involved to resume negotiations, and I ask everyone to make an urgent commitment to ensure that humanitarian aid will reach the people of Gaza, who are in dire straits and in great need of it. Let all the hostages be freed immediately. They had seen some hope in the recent truce. May the enormous suffering of the Israelis and the Palestinians end. Please: no to weapons, yes to peace!

Summary of the Holy Father's words

Dear brothers and sisters: Today's catechesis concludes our series of reflections on apostolic zeal and our baptismal mission to be joyful witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In the rite of Baptism, our lips were blessed as a sign that, reborn in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are sent forth to share with others the Good News of our redemption and our newfound dignity as adopted sons and daughters of the Father. May the love of God, poured into our hearts by the gift of the Spirit, inspire within us ever greater zeal for the Church's mission of proclaiming the Gospel, drawing all hearts to Christ and working for the spread of his Kingdom of holiness, justice and peace.

GENERAL NOTICES...

NEW TO OUR LADY OF LOURDES? HOW CAN WE SERVE YOU?

Welcome. Wherever you are in your faith journey, it is great to have you. Please visit our website or call the parish office. We're here to serve you. www.olol7hills.org.au

FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK <https://www.facebook.com/OLOL7Hills/>

SICK AND/OR HOMEBOUND?

Would you like to receive Communion? Or seriously ill or in danger of death? We have dedicated ministers who can visit and bring you communion. Feel free to approach or call Fr Henry for the Holy Anointing of the Sick. Please call the parish office 96222920

FUNERALS

When a Funeral is to be celebrated, please contact the parish office to organise a meeting with Fr Henry. Funerals are not permitted on Sundays or Holy Days of Obligation.

BAPTISM

Parents desiring Baptism for their children are encouraged to contact the parish office to arrange for the required preparation class for parents.

MASS INTENTIONS

All Mass intentions must be submitted to the Parish Office on or before Thursday. Names will be published for 4 weeks at a time.



LOURDES OVER 50s GROUP

Over 50s meeting Thursday 8th February 2024, 10.30am– 1pm. Please bring a plate to share. Look forward to seeing you there.

Lourdes: Luminate Young Adults Group

Wishes you a Merry and Blessed Christmas. The next group night will be in early 2024. If you would like more information please kindly contact Ian Epondulan: youtholol7h@gmail.com

LOURDES PLAYGROUP

Our Lady of Lourdes Parish playgroup is a fun playtime for children aged 0 to 5 years old and their carers. It is held every Friday morning during school terms 9.30am-11.30am in the Parish Meeting Room. For further information please contact Maria Hosni 0432 174 056 or the Parish Office.

FREE ZUMBA CLASSES

Every Tuesday and Thursday 6.00pm-7.00pm in the Hall. Everyone Welcome!

LEGION OF MARY

Thursdays at 1.30pm in the Parish Meeting Room. All Welcome.

Christ Catholic Community Prayer Group

Thursdays at 9.30am in the Parish Meeting Room. All Welcome

VINNIES SUPPORT CENTRES ARE STILL AVAILABLE TO THOSE IN NEED

St Vincent de Paul Support Centres across Greater Sydney are still available and taking calls to arrange for food vouchers or other items to be provided to those in need. If you need assistance, call the Support Centres in Blacktown on (02)8861 9777, Harris Park on (02)8861 9757 and Penrith on (02)8861 9770. To find out more about what support is available, visit <http://vinnies.org.au/covidsupportnsw>

OFFERTORY PROCESSION FOR OUR WEEKEND MASSES

With the intention to help our community to get more involved at Mass and better appreciate our share in the priesthood of the faithful, meaning our call to be priests, prophets and kings or queens of Jesus through baptism that Fr David Orr reminded us in our recent Parish retreat, I would like to invite all our parishioners to take part in the offertory procession, especially families that have some special celebrations in the families, such as wedding anniversaries, baptisms, birthdays, or death anniversaries. Please see Fr Henry or Ernie before Mass to arrange it.

CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE 2023

DECEMBER	
24 Children/Family Christmas Mass	6.00pm
24 Christmas Mass	9.00pm
24 Midnight Mass	12.00am
25 Christmas Day Mass	8.00 & 9.30am



OLOL MINISTRY ROSTER

Acolytes, Ministers, Readers and Altar Servers, please remember to arrive 15 minutes before the beginning of Mass.

23/24 December 2023

Acolytes	Vigil: Derick Soares 8am: Ernie Gartner 9.30am Ramzee Michael
Ministers	Vigil: A.Bellissimo, R.Soaes 8am: F.Balatbat, A.Joseph 9.30am: P.Gow, M.Michael
Readers	Vigil: L.Bellissimo, C.Rodrigues 8am: M.Santos, K.Walker 9.30am: F.Kennedy, S.Manamperi
Altar Servers	Vigil: A.Laus, L.Laus 8am: Volunteers 9.30am: S.Culili, L.Culil
Morning tea (after 9.30am Mass)	Couples for Christ
Musicians	Vigil: Nina's Group 8am: Fr. Henry 9.30am: Nina's Group
Flowers	Annette & Mary B
Church Cleaning	21 December Cathy Hutchings & Annette Peatman
Welcomers	Vigil: Judith Deloso 8am: Volunteer 9.30am: Volunteer

30/31 December 2023

Acolytes	Vigil: Abel Do Rosario 8am: Terry Jordan 9.30am Ian Epondulan
Ministers	Vigil: M.Mifsud, J. Sarmiento 8am: E.Gartner, F.Paiva 9.30am: C.Brooks, B.Chandler
Readers	Vigil: N.Do Rosario, A.Punch 8am: P.Ferriols, A.McNally 9.30am: C.Diaz, R.Epondulan
Altar Servers	Vigil: A.Bagatella, M.Glivic, J.Martinez 8am: S.Park, P.Park 9.30am: C.Attard, F.Wanandy
Morning tea (after 9.30am Mass)	Volunteer
Musicians	Vigil: Shaun's Group 8am: Fr. Henry 9.30am: Maximilian's Chorale
Flowers	Team
Church Cleaning	4 January Lourdes Spiteri
Welcomers	Vigil: Ram Urge 8am: Volunteer 9.30am: Volunteer

The Kids' Bulletin

Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 24th, 2023

True or False?

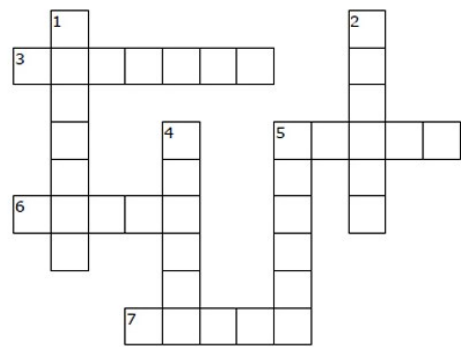


Today's Gospel Reading: The Angel Visits Mary

How well do you know the story of the Annunciation?

See if you know which are true and which are false:

1. God sent the angel Michael to bring His message to Our Lady. True or false?
2. When Mary saw the angel, she covered her eyes. True or false?
3. The angel told Mary, "Do not be afraid." True or false?
4. The angel told Our Lady that she would have a Son that she would name 'Jesus.' True or false?
5. Mary just said okay and the angel left right away. True or false?
6. When Mary said she didn't understand, Gabriel told her that the baby would be the Son of God. True or false?
7. Before he left, the angel told Mary that her old cousin, Elizabeth, was going to have a baby too. True or false?



ACROSS

3. To be joined together as husband and wife
5. A heavenly being; a messenger for God
6. The son who was born to Mary
7. A very young person especially between infancy and youth

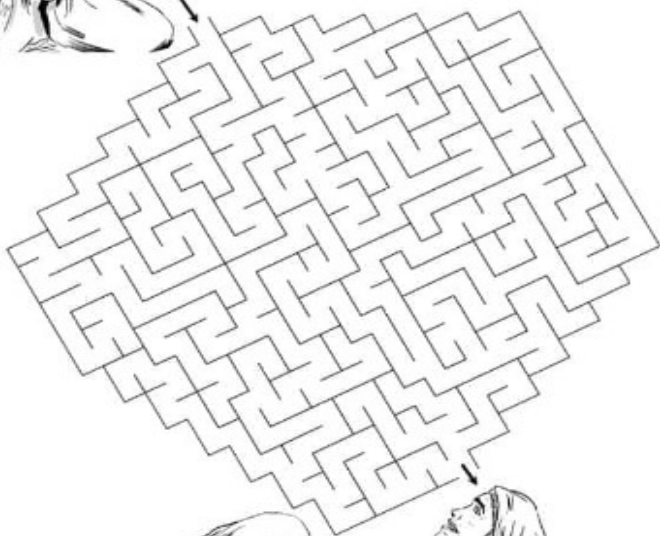
DOWN

1. The name of the angel who appeared to Mary
2. A young unmarried woman; a maiden
4. The man to whom Mary was engaged to marry
5. To be filled with fear

JOSEPH GABRIEL	MARRIED CHILD	AFRAID ANGEL	VIRGIN JESUS
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HELP MARY VISIT ELIZABETH



angel

