



**HOLY FAMILY**  
CATHOLIC PARISH  
— *Southern Hills* —

## **“Our Advent Plan – Our Advent Project 2025”**

**The journey of The People of God in the Holy Family Catholic Parish during  
Advent: 29<sup>th</sup> November – 25<sup>th</sup> December 2025.**

### **Encounters with Jesus**

“We consider Christmas as the encounter, the great encounter, the historical encounter, the decisive encounter, between God and mankind. He who has faith knows this truly; let him rejoice.” Pope Paul VI

**“And this will be a sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.”—Luke 2:12**



In his homily on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2025, at the 6.00pm mass that started our Advent journey as a parish for 2025, Fr Paul challenged all of us to take Advent seriously from a spiritual point of view. He and our Dcn Tee Ping repeated this during every homily in Advent 2025. Advent is a time of preparation; of ourselves, our hearts and also for sharing the Joy of Christmas with those around us. We are “The People of God” in the Holy Family Parish on our journey, as a part of all Salvation History. Once again, we have been asked to “Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight His path” as were the people of Judea more than 2000 years ago.

Here is a record of some of the effort that we have made this Christmas to be a celebration of the Faith we share, the Hope that we have and the Love that we seek to spread: His Peace and Joy in our homes and in our community.

It has been put together in this Special Edition of our Bulletin, to encourage ourselves and others, to reflect on the fact that when we act individually and together as a parish, we “do a lot of things that would make Jesus smile.” At the same time, it is a true representation of the sum total of our extra effort in preparing “The Way of the Lord this Christmas”. *As such, we will be presenting this record as a symbol of the loving offerings, as the Community of the Holy Family Parish in the*

*Southern Adelaide Hills, during the Offertory Procession at each of our Christmas masses.*

## **SHARING OUR FAITH JOURNEY**

Building a community of Love; “A Eucharistic Community,” requires us to care for one another and to value each member of our community; we need to know each other better and to respect the effort that each member makes to contribute to our journey together as a community.

This Advent we decided to ask people to share something of their Faith Journeys at the beginning of the “Gathering Rite” of the Mass, at each of the weekend masses in the Parish to build community and to focus on the sacred nature of our pilgrim community; “the Assembly”. Jesus said: when “two or three are gathered in my name, I am there with you” (Matt: 18; 20).

We have reviewed our lives and put in the special effort to make Christmas a reality: in our homes, our community and in the world, in this region of Adelaide 2025.



A record of these sharings has been put together, as a symbol of the Journey of the whole of our community. This symbol will be brought into each of our Christmas Eucharistic celebrations, as a part of the Offertory Processions. To join together with Jesus' offering at each Mass. It symbolises the gift of ourselves and all that we have done “To make thy Kingdom come”. We bring ourselves, our offerings of “time, treasure and talents” to every mass but this is a symbolical representation not only of the people sharing, but all the efforts that every volunteer in our community has contributed. It is especially our efforts during Advent this year; it is the fruit, the culmination of our collective

“Advent plans or projects”; it is our offering as the Holy Family community.



## FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT - HOPE

### Saturday Evening – Nativity Loretta Ward 29.11.2025

“Good evening I am Loretta Ward and Nativity has been my faith community since 24 February 1980, 3 weeks shy of the commencement of our parish. On this first weekend of Advent, where we reflect on Hope, I am going to provide a snippet of my faith journey and where I have truly felt the tangible presence of God in my life. It provides me with comfort knowing that I am one of God's children.



While I am a regular Mass goer and committed Catholic, over the years I have attended various seminars, workshops and retreats run by Hindu swamis and Buddhist monks and which I always come away with a heightened awareness of my Christian faith. There was a turning point many years ago when I was attending a workshop run by a Buddhist monk. Catholic guilt was kicking in about attending, so

I approached the Buddhist leader and explained how I was feeling. He told me that he was a former Catholic priest and then said that he likened all our lives to climbing and reaching the top of a mountain in the hope that we meet and be with God. He added each one of us is on a different path but with the same common goal at life's end, reaching the top to be with our Saviour. I felt it made sense and came away thanking God that I found the right person to ask about the connectedness in various faith beliefs as I continue to attend and learn from them.

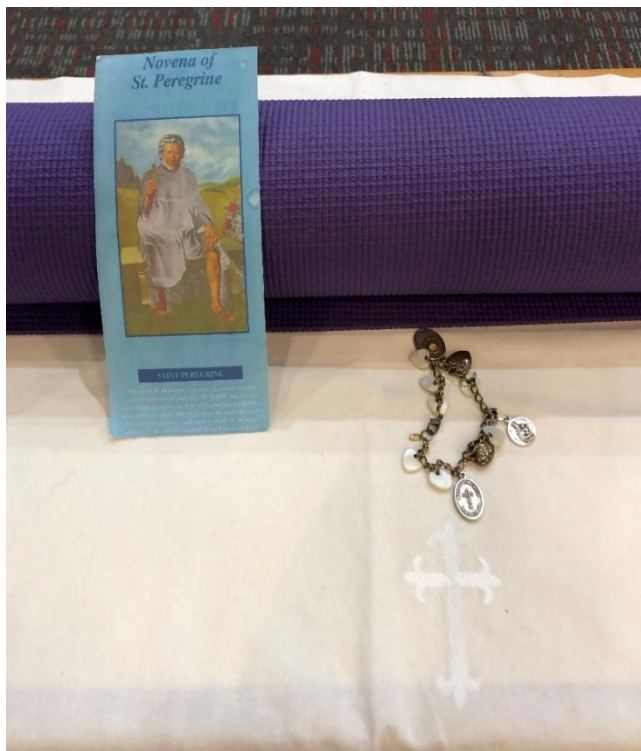
I have 5 siblings and last year Phil, one of my brothers, passed away. He had lost his wife Anna, the year before and he repeatedly said that he wanted to be with her. Being the first sibling to pass, God really helped me through coming to terms and accepting their deaths. Also, I have faith and hope that they are now together with our Lord. When I am grieving, I always find solace in my faith and aware in our cycle of life, there is a much better place to look forward to. It is the 1st weekend of Advent, where we are reminded to be watchful, vigilant and prepared as we don't know when it is our time.

In 2018, Kevin, my husband was diagnosed with myeloma, 10 days before we were to travel overseas. After discussing and praying, we stayed home and opted for immediate treatment, a wise decision, Kevin is still with us! In 2019, 1 week after Kevin was given an 'all clear', I felt a shooting pain from the right to the left side of my chest, I ignored it. The next day, the same intense pain that felt like an arrow passing through me was repeated and likewise on the 3rd day. Like the householder in today's gospel who would have stayed awake if he knew the burglar was coming, I was beginning to feel that I needed to heed this message that I truly believed was coming from God.

I went to my GP the following day, Monday, and a lump was found in my left breast. I never gave up hope and always remained positive that I would recover. Many blessings and the hand of God emanated from this outcome, it was caught at a very early stage and within those next 5 days, I had had all the standard tests with specialists and chemo commenced. I give thanks to this day of the presence of God when I really needed Him.

We have 3 children, Jarrod, Heath and Carine, all christened by Fr Roy Richardson, here at Nativity. They are all married to beautiful spouses, Kristin from Canada, Francesca from the UK, where the boys live respectively and Todd, who lives in Morphettsville, thankfully! We have 8 grandchildren and it saddens me that none of these children have been christened in the Catholic faith. Their parents are all good people and one conversation I had with one of them is that the children can make their own decision when they are older. I pray every night for my family and when at Mass and I receive Communion, I bring to mind and reach out from my heart to each one of my family members. I visualise that the body of Christ is touching their hearts, just as it touches mine, I truly believe it is so.

I have shared with some of you, my granddaughter Kaia's musings. She occasionally comes to Church with me and when she was 4, enjoyed climbing over the pews and then crawling under the seats, totally inattentive but always ready for Fr giving her a 'hi five' at Mass end. One Friday afternoon, Kaia and I were delivering the church bulletins into the foyer. There were only the 2 of us and she asked "where is the man?" I replied 'what man?' and her response, "the man who teaches us". I told her Fr wasn't there, she promptly sat on the ground and said she wasn't leaving until he came. Yes, I did have to forcibly remove her! On another occasion while in Mass, I was listening to Fr's homily, when Kaia whispered, "Umma, why do you love Jesus so much?" I believe these are words planted by God for Kaia and me to talk about God. Also, are you being vigilant and full of hope this first weekend in Advent too?



### ***My symbols***

My yoga mat is over 22 years old. Whilst on this mat, I have meditated, laughed, cried, been in physical pain, felt the pain of others, hugged, written reflections in my journal and listened to others share theirs. Oh, and I have practiced yoga poses too!

My bracelet is that which I wore throughout every treatment and specialist appointment. It was made by a woman with breast cancer and I added the medals: St Mary McKillop; the Virgin Mary and baby Jesus from Notre Dame and given to me by my best friend; lastly St Peregrine with relic given to me by Marilyn Monten.

He is the patron saint of cancer and life-threatening illnesses and came with a Novena prayer also, which I read daily.”

Thank you for the opportunity for me to share and I wish you all a hope filled week.”

**Sunday morning - St Paul of the Cross: Helen Douglas-Irving 30.11.2025**

### ***Hope – Father Lionel Marsden sm***

“Good morning, my name is Helen Douglas-Irving and I have been asked to speak to you of hope. To do this I have decided to tell part of the story of a person who was inspired by their experiences serving in WWII and also as a Prisoner of War under the Japanese. This particular person had influenced one of my relatives and mentors.



*This person said that "If I ever get out of here alive, 'he told himself', I will go to Japan as a missionary.'<sup>1</sup>"*

Out of so much horror, and cruelty this man decided that to harbour negative feelings might only lead to bitterness and rancour. So instead, he made a commitment to do as the gospels instructed and '*turn the other cheek*' moving forward in hope of a better understanding, in hope of true reconciliation, in hope of love in the way that Christ had demonstrated to his followers.

*Who was this man?*

Lionel Marsden, was a Marist Priest from NSW and after his ordination, he became an army chaplain. He would experience the fighting in Malaya, the defence and surrender of Singapore and his

subsequent imprisonment in Changi with thousands of other allied defence personnel including two of my Great Uncles and mentors. Worse of course was to follow; most Australians cognisant with our country's history, shudder when the infamous *Thai-Burma Railway* is mentioned. Father Marsden and his fellow POW flock would experience years of sickness, starvation, summary executions, torture and brutality. These experiences which could so easily have destroyed his faith, appeared to strengthen it.

WW2 would end in the East with the use of nuclear bombs. The lasting impact of the bombs and war deprivations upon ordinary Japanese people would increase his desire to spread hope. A big hurdle was getting support from Australians who were at the time very bitter towards the Japanese. It was quite an *unpopular* cause but he persisted eventually receiving the blessing to undertake this challenge. The mission in Nara prefecture was established in 1949.

Fr Marsden and other missionary Marists lived alongside Japanese people. The Marists came with a mission of hope and reconciliation, Marsden understood that '*to bury the hatchet*' is difficult, it requires humility, empathy and acts of love. Father Marsden's Marist Mission would bear fruit. Eventually churches, kindergartens, aged care homes for the destitute and facilities for those with special needs would be established. The Marists would be befriended and honoured by Japanese leaders of other faiths and loved by their communities. Father Marsden exemplified what it is to believe and understand God's elaborate plan of salvation, beginning in Genesis and continuing in the birth, life and death of Jesus; for this is our hope of things to come.

---

<sup>1</sup>Marist fathers.org.au May 2011, accessed 4.11.25



## My uncles

Now, to return to my own uncle POWs, one would die there the other would return a shattered man but over time he would be influenced by Marsden's example and have his own reconciliation between nations by hosting Japanese exchange students. *(Something my Great Aunt thought might never happen.)*

To conclude, you might think that you do not have it in you to be like a Father Marsden but I prefer to be optimistic and draw upon the wisdom of Mother Theresa who used the expression 'growing hope' when she said *"that hope often starts humbly, in your own home and actions towards others in your community, the light of hope shines and gives other people strength to go on and go forward in Christ..."*<sup>2</sup>

### **My symbol**

My symbol is a small porcelain figurine of Our Lady which belonged to my Great Aunt, dating from the 1930s. This Holy Mother is chipped and fractured, perhaps a reminder that humans are fragile, but that life too can be beautiful in all of its imperfections."

This little figurine also reminds me that acts of reconciliation can bring growth, spread hope and can simply be the catalyst of a myriad of possibilities. Thank you,

### **Sunday morning - Our Lady of the Way: Yolanda Tauro 30.11.2025**



---

<sup>2</sup>Mother Theresa [https://www.perthcatholic.org.au/News\\_Events-News-2016-September-Week\\_2-](https://www.perthcatholic.org.au/News_Events-News-2016-September-Week_2-) accessed 10/11/25 "prepare your heart for the coming of the Lord". norwichdiocese.org/stayinformed posted 17/12/24 accessed 7/11/25



"The humid air hung heavy as I stepped off the plane in Sydney, we landed August 2017 a stark contrast to the crisp India Air I'd left behind. Australia. The word itself felt like a promise, a whispered hope of a brighter future. For years, the idea had been a distant dream, a flicker of possibility fuelled by images of sun-drenched beaches and a vibrant, welcoming culture. Now, here I was, clutching a worn backpack and a heart full of excitement.

The initial months were a whirlwind of finding our feet, unpacking boxes, and navigating a new city. A good School for Johann, a good collage for Joanita. Finding a job for me proved more challenging than I'd anticipated; my qualifications, while valuable in India, seemed to require further certification here. And the worst part of it was, they wanted me to have local experience before I get the job... ( in my mind was "Try me out"). The Australian accent, initially charming, sometimes proved.

### ***My symbols***



difficult to understand There were moments of loneliness, of missing familiar faces and comforting routines.

But amidst the challenges, there were triumphs. The kindness of strangers, (this is talking about the Blackwood church); the breathtaking beauty of the landscape, the sheer diversity of the population – these things gradually chipped away at my initial apprehension. I found a job with a close friend to help in administrative job (NO Local Experience required) and this friend I talk about is Basava Shekar WHO WE WILL NEVER EVER FORGET - lead us to the shore of success. I made friends, both Australian and fellow expats, who shared stories and offered support. I learned to

surf, a skill I never imagined possessing.

Australia didn't magically erase my worries or solve all my problems. But it offered something more profound: a chance to rebuild, to reinvent myself, to discover strengths I never knew I had. It's a land of contrasts, of sun-drenched beaches and rugged outback, of bustling cities and quiet coastal towns. It's a land that challenges you, tests your resilience, and ultimately rewards you with a life richer and more

fulfilling than I ever imagined. My journey to Australia wasn't just a geographical move; it was a journey of self-discovery, a testament to the power of hope, and a reminder that even the most daunting dreams can, with enough perseverance, become a reality.

My symbols are the pebble with Hope on it to denote the first Sunday of Advent; the Hope Christmas card; my family and citizenship papers and our parish embodied by Fr Paul."

### **Sunday morning - Nativity: Krzysztof Duda 30.11.2025**

Hey everyone, my name is Kris, and I received my first communion this Easter. However, my faith journey began long before this. As a family, we came from Poland



14 years ago, in the hope of finding a new home. Moving here was difficult for all of us, as we barely knew English and had to no one to rely on but each other. While my dad worked, my mum home-schooled me and my sister. She patiently taught us all we needed to know, whilst giving us the space to pursue our own passions. Looking back, I believe this was God working through her, as my mom's support of my passions encouraged my interest in history.

This interest led me to pick up the Bible in 2023 and sparked within me a curiosity to learn more about Christianity. Our family was not religious, and I had only been Baptised – like everyone in Poland. It was because of my mum that I took this first

step into faith. But for the time that was all; I was adrift without anyone to guide me or show me the way.

This all changed last year when I met my friend Maria in high school. When I say friend, I also mean arch-nemesis, because we had a never-ending competition over who could 'top' year 12 English. But when we were not competing over grades, Maria and I also had debates on theology. She was catholic from birth and so I learned the basics of her faith through our debates. But even if all of these doctrines were new to me, I was surprised to find that they largely aligned with what I already believed. Perhaps, this was another sign that Jesus was with me all along. One thing I am sure of, is that sometimes you have the privilege of meeting people that have the most profound impact on your life, such that it is never the same again. Maria is one such person. She found me when I was lost, which in turn, led me to find faith and myself.

So, in 2024, I went to mass for the first time. I was home alone at that point and felt really isolated and vulnerable. My long-time friend Arwin, who was beginning to explore his faith at the same time as me, was a godsend throughout this period, and came along with me to mass. Both of us were confused as to whether to kneel or stand up, and what all the different ceremonies symbolized. However, we remained undaunted and went to a vespers service at Saint Paul of the Cross. This was a truly spiritually profound moment for me – the golden light of the setting sun shone through the stained-glass window, while all of us sang and held candles. In this moment, being home alone didn't feel quite so lonely anymore. And while I was still unsure as to how I was to practice my newfound faith, both me and Arwin decided to go through the RCIA program with Deacon Tee Ping and Father Mwaura. With their help, we received communion during Easter. It was a truly beautiful evening, and I was blessed to have my family and the whole congregation celebrate this wonderful moment.

But my journey in faith is far from over. It led me and my family to detour to Italy during our recent trip to Europe, where we went to a mass in the most wonderful cathedral of Santa Maria in Florence. We also visited St Peter's in Rome. Unfortunately, the Pope was away while I was there, so I have all the more reason to go back.

My faith has also cemented my desire to study law and help refugees – immigrants like us – and use law as a tool to help others and give back some of the love God has shown me and my family. What I have realised by looking back at my faith journey, is that I have never been truly alone. It has truly been a hope-filled journey. My family and friends were there to encourage me, and in the times it truly mattered, God was there too. Most importantly, I know that my journey is ongoing. There will be times when my faith will be challenged. But I also hope that I will be able to move past these challenges and give the love I have been given back to the world.

***Symbol of my journey:***





This is a pin with the Chi-Rho symbol, the first two letters of the word for 'Christ' in Greek. It is significant to me because it is a symbol of the Byzantine Empire. My interest in Byzantine history is what led me into reading the Bible. I also received the pin when I was with my family, reminding me of the time when we were all together. Moreover, this was just before I went into Year 12, the year I met Maria and went to church for the first time. So, in a way, this pin reminds me of all the different times God has guided me to bring me here today.

### **Reflecting on the sharings;**

Fr Paul brought each of the sharings into his homily, acknowledging their considerable effort in the planning and discovery of Hope in the many ways that God had touched each of their lives and all those who had brought them to Holy Family in 2025. He challenged us too to commit to an "Advent plan or project". Hope was truly brought out in the sharing of Loretta and her family with the challenge of illness with God touching her life not only through her deeply Christian family, but also in Yoga and meditation from other religious traditions and cultures. Helen reminded us of hope springing from the incredible role modelling and suffering on the Burma Railway and that forgiveness and reconciliation is possible, as it was in her family. It



was epitomised by her symbol: the little statue of Our Lady from the 1930's. The hope of coming to Australia and the challenges that tested Yolanda's faith, was clearly overcome through the support and care by others. So also, migration featured strongly in Kris' sharing of his journey to Faith through, his mother, friends, a love of history and the RCIA.

### **THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT - PEACE**

## **Saturday Evening - Nativity: Charlotte Hejka 6.12.2025**

“When I look back over my life, I can see that my journey of faith has never been a straight line. It’s been more like a long, winding path where God has been quietly present, even long before I had the language to name it.

I grew up with parents who were both baptised Anglicans, but we weren’t really practising. Faith wasn’t something we talked about much at home. And yet, from a young age, I had this sense that God was there – just beneath the surface of things.



School was where that sense really began to take shape. I attended Anglican and then Catholic schools, and it was there that I first experienced faith as something living and communal, not just ideas in a book. My time at Cabra Dominican College was especially significant. I was drawn to the rhythm of liturgy, the Sacraments, the symbols, and the way that faith and community were woven together. I remember feeling, often quietly to myself: “This feels like home.” At that stage I couldn’t have explained it theologically, but my heart knew.

In early adulthood, that quiet attraction deepened. I married a Catholic, and through that relationship I was gently invited further into the life of the Church. Eventually I joined the RCIA process, and at 24 I was received into the Catholic Church. For me, that moment wasn’t a sudden conversion out of nowhere. It felt more like naming

something God had already been doing slowly over many years – a ‘yes’, to a relationship that had been growing for a long time. From there, my faith grew through service. I became involved in parish life: Children’s Liturgy, children’s workshops, reading, commentating, and serving several times on the Parish Pastoral Council. At the same time, my work in Catholic Education, which I’ve been part of since 1996, became a key expression of my vocation. Teaching, leading, walking alongside young people – these have been some of the places where I’ve most clearly met Christ. Of course, my story isn’t just about roles and ministries. It’s also marked by grief and struggle. The deaths of my parents – my mum in 2000 and my dad in 2005 – were some of the most painful and defining experiences of my life. Add to that the ongoing reality of significant mental health challenges in my family, and my role as a support person for someone with a significant mental health disorder. These experiences have stretched my heart and my patience. They’ve forced me to confront my own limits, and they’ve deepened my compassion for others who live with quiet, ongoing pain. These seasons of darkness have made my faith more “real” and less theoretical. I’ve had to trust in a God who doesn’t always fix everything, but who abides in the mess, the questions, and the uncertainty.

This year, a really important part of my journey has been praying the Spiritual Exercises in Daily Life. Week by week, day by day, I’ve been praying with Scripture, reflecting, and sharing that journey under gentle spiritual guidance. Through the Exercises, my relationship with Jesus has deepened in a very personal way. I’ve become more attentive to consolation and desolation – to those inner movements that reveal where God is drawing me toward greater life, and where fear or self-doubt might be holding me back. They’ve given me practical tools for discernment: for listening to how God is at work in my family life, my work, my parish, and even in the decisions I make about how to serve in the wider Church, including my involvement in the 2026 Archdiocesan Synod.

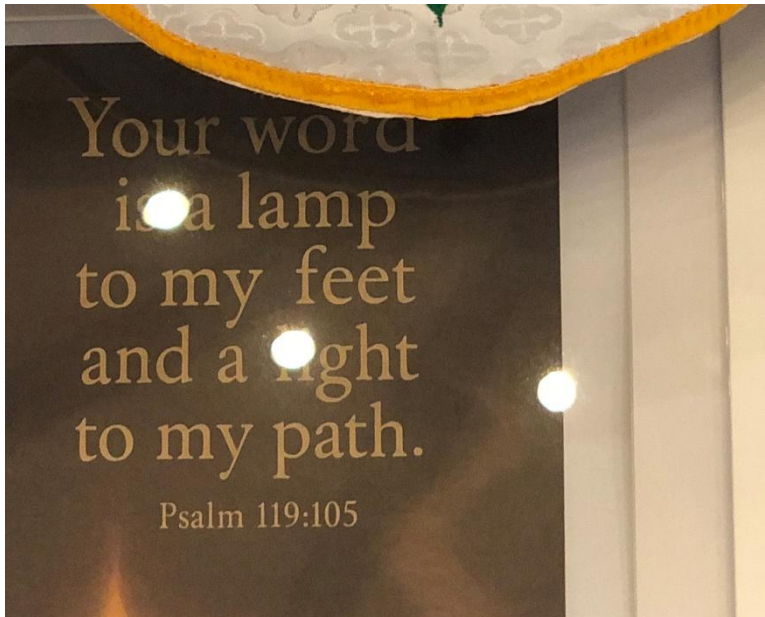
### ***My symbol***

A Scripture verse that has become especially important to me is from Psalm 119: “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” *That image of a lamp to my feet* – not a floodlight for the whole road, just enough light for the next step – feels very true to how God has led me. Out of that prayer, I bought myself a bracelet with a *small firefly charm*. For me, the firefly is a symbol of that gentle light in the darkness – a reminder that even when things feel confusing or overwhelming, God’s light is still there, often small and quiet, but real. I wear it as a daily reminder that God’s word, God’s presence, is that “lamp to my feet and light to my path” – guiding me one step at a time, not asking me to have everything worked out, but inviting me simply to stay close.





Today, almost three decades after becoming Catholic, I don't see my faith as



something finished or settled. I see it as a lifelong pilgrimage. I feel called to help build a Church that listens deeply, welcomes generously, and holds space for people who are struggling, or on the margins. In my marriage, my family, my grandchildren, my work in Catholic Education, and my service in our parish, I'm trying – imperfectly – to keep responding to that call.



And so, my story, really, is this: God has been patiently, faithfully shining just enough light for the next step – through schools, through grief, through family, through study and ministry, through the Spiritual Exercises, and even through a tiny firefly on my wrist. My hope is simply to keep walking that path, trusting that the same God who has led me

this far will continue to be my light, wherever the journey leads next.”

### **Sunday morning - St Paul of the Cross: Simon Honner 7.12.2025**

#### **“Peace - The Challenge**

The running of the country is a serious business. There is a lot to do and there are lots of things that need attending to. And not everything that needs to be done is

considered important to everyone. things, and growing food, and balancing payments with other countries and building roads and tunnels and hospitals, ports



and schools. There are the retirees to look after and the marginalised and the vulnerable. There are the very old and the very young and those who are not born yet. And there are future generations to take into account, as well with current planning. And whilst the decisions about these and other matters are being made, there is the well-being of all of us to consider. The safety of us all and our levels of contentment, and our need for satisfaction with the way things are being done. We need to know that these decisions are for the greater good, and that the cost of getting things done does the least damage to our way of life and the environment.

It's a serious business.

### **Our future:**

The young people of today are those who will undertake this serious business. Those who are in school right now are those people who will be running the country in the not-too-distant future. Not just as politicians, but as doctors, lawyers, nurses, ESO's, teachers, architects, occupational therapists, construction managers, engineers, business people, clerks, tradies, sales people and mums and dads. Everyone will be playing a part in the way we move forward and develop and plan and make this an even better place to live.

I was a teacher for nearly 5 decades, and I worked with young people, mostly 15- to 18-year-olds. Each year there was another group of young people released into the world outside the classroom, to take their part in the serious business. Each wave of graduates was part of a new generation, slightly different from other generations, but heavily influenced by them. Ready to make their mark on the world. To play their part in running the country.

### **My calling as a teacher:**

And in those few years leading up to their graduation, I witnessed their goodness and energy and their enthusiasm. I saw evidence of originality and freshness of ideas. I experienced the talent of young people, and their willingness to participate and to improve themselves and their surroundings. I may even have had some influence in the direction some of them took, but mostly I expect their families' support helped develop these young people into empathetic, humorous, artistic, clever individuals. All of them a work in progress, but bristling with possibility and hope and determination.

I witnessed this emerging generation every day. I was working with the future leaders and those who will shape our country's destiny. With those who would carry out the serious business. I had the best job in the world. It became clear to me that our future is in good hands. We can be confident that things will turn out alright, possibly better than we expected. We may have some very pleasant surprises. We are in good hands.

Whatever my role in the formation of the next generation, I can relax now, knowing that everything is turning out as it should. And this brings an enormous sense of Peace.





### ***My symbol***

The symbol here is an Acorn. With the right nurturing, this acorn will become the Mighty Oak Tree. A majestic tree, under which I can imagine people would relax in the shade, feeling content and at Peace. The Acorn represents the Young People of today who will become those Mighty Oaks that provide that sense of Peace."

### **Sunday morning - Our Lady of the Way: Michael Cogman 7.12.2025**

"Good morning. My name is Michael Cogman, and I've been invited to share my personal journey of faith. I must say that my faith was not a St Paul's road to Damascus miracle change.

Thank God, I was born into a loving Catholic family and marrying a wonderful Catholic girl with a similar background. My mother came from a typical strong Irish Catholic family. My English non-practicing protestant father was converted to Catholicism when courting my mother in London and they married in Ireland.

I was born in Ireland on Easter Sunday 1940. Britain was at war; London was being bombed and a very dangerous place to live. My mother returned to her family's farm

in County Cork for my birth, and after some time rejoined my father in London. I spent my early years with my grandmother until it was safe to join my parents in London. I was two and a half years old.



### **Growing Up in Faith**

Growing up in London, I attended St Francis de Sales primary school in Tottenham I had great desire to be an altar server from a very young age and finally, at the age of 9 , I joined the altar server's guild, St Stephen's, serving until I married and some fourteen years later and moved out of the parish. This period with the Altar server's Guild, became central to my life, serving as secretary of the Guild for several years. We started a Catholic youth club which led to many friendships and marriages—including my own to Mary.

Fr Vincent McCarthy, the parish priest, had a great influence on the formation of my faith in my youth. Both Mary and I developed a strong friendship with him and he was always so supportive of us. We were married in June 1963 by Fr Mc Carthy and he presented us with a Pope (now saint) John 23<sup>rd</sup> Apostolic Blessing. We have always displayed this with respect in our house and thank God it has blessed our long and beautiful marriage.



## Journey & Community

Our married life / my work took us from Bishops Stortford in Hertfordshire where our first daughter Angela was born, to Newcastle where daughter Maria was born. Then to Nigeria for six and a half years where son Sean and daughter Jane were born. Eventually back to London for the next thirty years. As we had travelled so had our children and in 2006, we found ourselves in London with no older parents or family to care for and all our children overseas, three in Australia and one in Hong Kong. We decided to follow the children and retired to Australia in 2007. In 2010 our daughter in Hong Kong joined the rest of the family in Australia. We are Blessed that we now have our three daughters in Adelaide and our son in Brisbane. God has been very good to us.

I recall the fondest memories of our encounter at Our lady of the Way when we were searching for a place to settle down. We were not looking in this area and what happened changed our lives completely. One Sunday we attended Mass at Our Lady of the Way, Glenalta, and after we joined for the tea/coffee morning in the



cottage. We were welcomed by parishioners Margaret Ash and Teresa Lavers both still members of the community and are here today. That warm and loving encounter made such a huge impact. It made us feel at home, and we ended up settling in the Blackwood area; we had found a truly welcoming parish community. We have enjoyed parish life ever since. The friendliness of all the parishioners, not only at Glenalta, but equally at St Paul of the Cross and recently the Nativity churches make the presence of God real for us.

## Symbols of Faith

I was invited to bring symbol(s) of my faith journey and place them on the table in



the sanctuary. I have chosen my altar server's medal, a photo taken about 1955 of the St Stephen's Guild members. Also, our wedding Apostolic Blessing, presented to us by Fr McCarthy and photo with Fr McCarthy.

### **Message for Peace Sunday**

Today, is known as Peace Sunday and certainly our troubled world desperately needs to turn to the Prince of Peace, our Lord Jesus Christ. We pray for peace in Ukraine, Palestine, Gaza, Sudan and other places where wars are being fought. Remembering the words my father often said to my sister and I, when we would argue over some silly thing: *"How can we expect nations to agree over worldly matters when you two can't agree over little things"*. Thank you for listening to my journey. May we all be instruments of peace in our world."

### **Sunday morning - Nativity: Raquel Scott 7.12.202**

"Good morning my name is Raquel. Today, I want to share my faith journey and how God's peace has guided me through life. I was born in Philippines, the 3rd of nine



to a deeply catholic family. From an early age the Rosary was central to my life, it has always been my source of strength and peace. I was nineteen when my father suddenly died with a heart attack. Our family life changed overnight. It was turned upside down. It was so difficult for us. I had to care for my younger brothers while

my mother travelled a long way to Manilla and home many times for a year to process her military pension from my father because he was on active service when he died. We didn't have much to provide for the family; but prayer gave me peace. At that time, I began speaking to God as an adult; I said to Him: "there must be a reason why you have taken him so early". I never gave up; instead, we continued praying, asking for guidance and trusting his plan.

At twenty-three, I faced another trial. I became pregnant after being forced by a co-worker which is 10 yrs older than me. In my culture this was very shameful and got a lot of criticism but I wasn't affected by what they accused to me. I just kept praying and asked forgiveness for those who do not know what they're doing. Abortion was never an option; I prayed for strength and chose to give life. My beautiful Carol was born; she was truly a blessing to me and I thank God for her every day. When Carol started her school at the age of 3 in Day Care, I was pursuing my dream as my father told me and all of us to do. I worked and studied hard, eventually earning my Accounting Degree. Working in Philippines didn't really have much of opportunity for me to afford Carol's higher education; I had to venture Overseas.



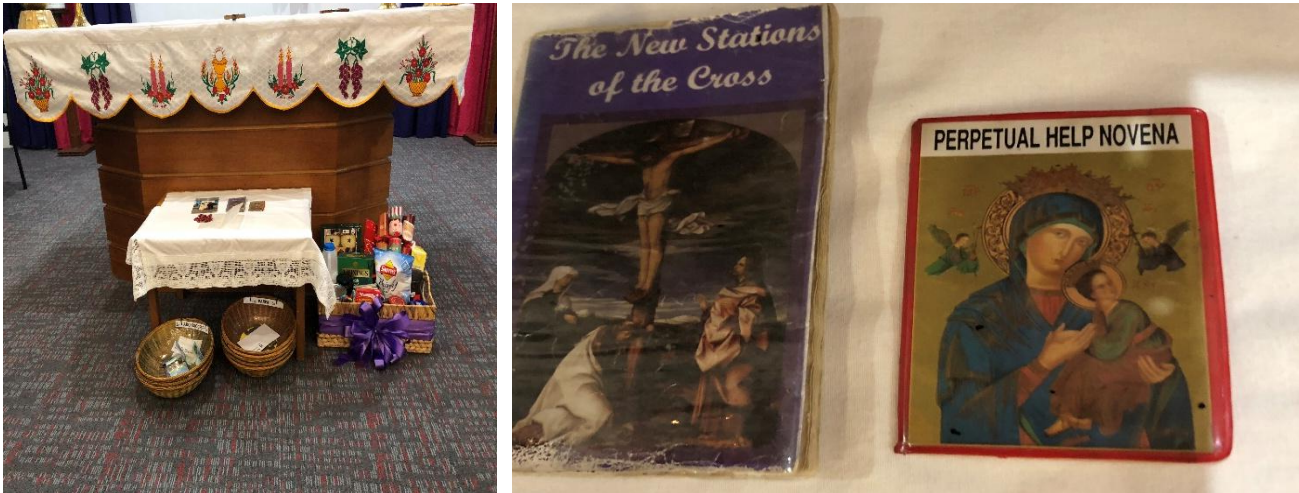
I spent 10 years working in Saudi Arabia as a Patient Attendant. It was the hardest time of my life. There, were no churches, no public Christian faith and no family. It was totally different culture. I carried my Rosary everywhere, as my weapon and for my protection. I prayed every day; that gave me so much comfort in who I am. When I was there, I felt completely alone. It was 7 years before I went back to the Philippines on holiday. In late 2019, after many years of praying, God answered. I met my Trevor through a friend Susan, that I had worked with so many years ago. Trevor is a widower who understood me and loves me. He gave me freedom and a stable future. It was just before COVID and I was able to get

back to the Philippines. We had to wait to meet for 3 years and married civilly in 2022 in Philippines. I came here 3 months later.

Just this October we had our sacramental marriage in this Church with the help of Father Paul. I had prayed for this to happen because I really wanted to receive the 'Sacrament of Marriage'. My daughter came over from Philippines for the wedding. Having my Family together before God, filled my heart with deep peace and joy and completeness. And Trevor is here with me today. As I was getting older, I realized that I needed someone to be with for the rest of my life just for companionship. I prayed that it is His will, that I would love to have a man who will accept me and understand me and love me.

### ***Symbols of my journey***

I have my Rosary beads, my old prayer book and our wedding photo. These remind me that peace is not the absence of trials but the presence of God in our Hearts. This Advent I thank God for guiding me through every storm and for the gift of peace that comes from trusting Him. Thank you and may God bless us all.”



### REFLECTING ON THE SHARINGS

Fr Paul in his introduction to each of the masses reminded and challenged all of us to keep on with our “Advent plan”. Deacon Tee Ping reiterated the peace message in the readings and the sharings. Charlotte’s unfolding journey as a student in a catholic school, to becoming a teacher in one, the RCIA and her continued journey of seeking and discovery of the firefly light of her bracelet, to remind her of the Light of Christ within. A further sharing by another teacher Simon, of the unfolding acorn in young people that brings strength and optimism for the future. Michael then warmly and lovingly described consistent Christian formation in the faithfulness of a committed, Catholic family life and that was followed by Raquel’s powerful sharing about the trauma of the sudden death of her father, the incredible isolation and hardship of working in Saudi Arabia, the power of prayer, migration and the importance of a Sacramental Marriage. God is good; prayer is centrally important when our seeking seems to be in the dark, that is then enlightened by commitment in faith that brings peace.

### THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT – JOY – at all masses: Cascia and Hannah Smailes.

These two young women committed themselves to serve as missionaries with the Disciples of Jesus community in Sydney (Cascia) and Rockhampton (Hannah) from Christmas last year to now. Their family and our parish supported them in this gift of their lives to our church over this year. They share their faith journeys and the deep joy this brought them and many others during this year.





### **Hannah and Cascia Smailes 13 and 14.12.2025:**

“Good morning! I am Hannah and this is Cascia, and in case you didn’t know, we are sisters. We both grew up in this parish and feel very blessed to call this place home. Last year, both of us felt a call from the Lord to step out in faith and say Yes to a year of mission, sharing the love that Jesus has given us with young people around Australia.

### **Cascia’s mission:**

I have spent the last year living in Sydney serving on Youth Mission Team as a full-time youth ministry volunteer. As part of this we commit to a certain lifestyle, including living in households, daily prayer and daily mass where possible, being single for the year, living simply, limited alcohol and limited personal technology. Our main mission was to bring hope to young Australians through running high school retreats with a focus on providing a relevant and dynamic encounter with the Gospel.

### **Hannah’s mission:**

I spent the year serving with National Evangelisation Team (NET) ministries on the inaugural Rockhampton Diocesan team. Our team was based in Rockhampton but our ministry took us all over Central Queensland, from outback to coastal towns,

national parks, and everywhere in between. We ran retreats, youth groups, classroom sessions, parish ministries, and visited so many school and Church communities — with the mission of inspiring young people to love Jesus and find a home in the Church.



### **Cascia's experience:**

When I was reflecting on my experience of joy this year, I was thinking about whether joy was a disposition you could choose or simply an emotion that arose spontaneously. I could not come up with any profound answers alone. However, when I went through my prayer journal from this year, I noticed I had written an answer to this exact question. This is what I had written: “Can you choose joy? No, because joy is an emotion.” However, emotions are attached to objects; meaning they are a result of an object. For example, you feel excited because you have a Christmas present or you feel sad because you fell into the mud. The object that brings perfect joy is Jesus Christ. You can choose Jesus Christ and joy will be a resultant fruit.”

I was blessed enough this year to be provided with a number of objects that gifted me with joy. I experienced joy through living within the Disciples of Jesus Community. I experienced joy through the love, witness and humour of the other young people I served with in my team. I experienced joy through the devotion of



new converts and those on fire with their faith; through witnessing young people encounter the love of God in life changing ways. These are all dependent joys; temporary and fleeting. Ones I did not choose. My ultimate source of joy was dependent on choosing Jesus Christ. By saturating myself in prayer each morning, by being filled completely by him, I was also filled with joy. A joy that didn't outwardly make sense. A joy that was unceasing and complete. A divine joy that could only be found in abiding in Christ. What I chose this year was not a cheat way to grow close to the Lord and experience his joy, but a constant and daily "Yes" to allowing the Lord to reign in my heart, and so let his love, joy and peace overflow.

### **Hannah's experience:**

I was once taught that joy is the greatest tool for evangelisation, and this year I experienced this firsthand. On NET, we're not teachers or theologians, we're simply young people sharing with other young people the true joy we have each found in Jesus. Wherever we ministered, we were met with such radical openness and this incredible hunger in the youth for more than what the world offers. Through our witness and our ministry, we were able to invite the young people to a life of joy, not just the fleeting moments of happiness that they've experienced from the world, but true joy. Endlessly deep and relentlessly enduring joy in the knowledge that no matter what, they are deeply, tenderly Loved by God Himself and that freedom has been won for them through Jesus Christ. This is the joy that does not depend on good circumstances and nice feelings, but the joy that is cemented in knowing the perfect Truth of perfect Love. I experienced that when I allowed myself to live and minister not out of my own weakness, but with the joy of the Lord as my strength. The young people I encountered were so naturally attracted to the Gospel, and Jesus was able to be made known and glorified in the most wonderful ways.

### **Our Symbol - "Surfie Jesus":**



The symbol we brought forward is an image of Jesus; we like to call it "Surfie Jesus". This was an image that both of our teams brought with us into each school, as a focus for the



prayer experiences that we led. It was also the centre of our daily team prayer in our NET home, and we love how human, inviting, and loving Jesus feels in this image.

### **Conclusion:**

This year was a radical year for both of us, but no more radical than any other year. All we did was follow the Lord's will for our lives. That is what the Christian life is; saying a daily yes to following him and whatever he asks from us. For us, that looked like following him to another state on mission, but let us not think that the Lord only works through what appear to be grand 'yesses'. For God does not desire us to become complacent and satisfied with living a normal life. What Christ desires for us is not mediocrity or the mundane, but a radical life filled with his perfect, divine joy. A joy that is found only in him; in following his will."

### **REFLECTION ON THE SHARINGS**

It was with great love and affection that all our worshipping communities welcomed Cascia and Hannah and were in turn inspired by their joy, passion and love for "Surfie Jesus". Living life to the full; inspired by the Spirit and filled with joy. These remarkable young women have many more stories to tell; mission at home in Australia to our secular, cynical world has been turned around, wherever they have gone; mission accomplished for this year – at least. Watch this space!

### **FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT – LOVE**



## **Saturday evening - Nativity: Rochelle D'Souza 20.12.2025**

“Good evening, my name is Rochelle, and I feel truly blessed to be here today to share a little of my faith journey and the ways God’s love has been revealed in my life.

### ***My early life and school***

I was born and raised in Mangalore, India, in a family where faith and love were the cornerstones of daily life. My parents were deeply religious, and every day we said the rosary together as a family, a practice that nurtured both our faith and our love for one another.

Both my parents worked, and our home was far from school. To attend a good school, my sister and I had to walk over a hill every day, often in the rain. After crossing the hill, we would wait for the bus or other transport to take us the rest of the way. On those long walks, we sang hymns and called on Mother Mary for protection.

Looking back now as an adult, I realise how treacherous that road was. It was narrow, steep, slippery in the monsoon rains, and with just one wrong step we could have injured ourselves badly. At the time, we did not think much of it — we were simply



going to school. But now I can see how God’s love quietly protected us every single day. What could have been a tiring and dangerous journey, became something

sacred and faith-forming. Those daily walks taught me resilience, trust in God, and the power of prayer from a very young age, all rooted in love — love for God, for my parents, and for each other as sisters. Growing up as a Catholic in Mangalore shaped my understanding of God's presence in everyday life. It instilled in me compassion, a sense of service, and the importance of community. These lessons of love became my foundation as I navigated life's challenges and joys.

### ***Tertiary studies and marriage***

At the age of twenty-one, I moved to another city for my studies. At twenty-four, I met my husband, Allen. During our first meeting, we spoke for three hours, felt an instant connection, and got married just six months later. Like me, he was deeply religious, and we shared similar values and faith. Life seemed to be going well, and after a year of marriage, we hoped to have our first child.

### ***Infertility and illness***

That hope, however, was met with many challenges. I underwent numerous tests and procedures and was told that my fallopian tubes were severely blocked. Every time we hoped for good news, the results were negative. We cried, we prayed, and sometimes we felt despair. The doctors suggested IVF and IUI, warning that if we did not follow their advice, conception might not happen.

Through it all, we continued to pray, trusting that God's love would guide us. Every day, we prayed the Divine Mercy Chaplet nine times — asking for the gift of a child, that it be healthy, and for strength as we navigated these challenges. We believed that if God wanted us to have children, He would bless us in His time. Our prayers were persistent, and finally, after three years, we conceived our first daughter. We named her Hannah, after the biblical Hannah who prayed for the gift of Samuel — a reminder of God's faithfulness and love in answering prayers.

But our journey did not end there. When Hannah was just three weeks old, a routine check, revealed holes in her heart. The paediatric cardiologist told me she was too small for surgery and advised us to return when she was six months old. My world collapsed, yet I and we, continued to pray silently, including praying the Divine Mercy Chaplet daily, trusting in God's love and promises. It was a difficult time for Allen and me — Hannah was so full of life and energy, and every time she cried, I would panic, frightened that her heart would stop. Nevertheless, we continued to pray, relying on the love that sustained us through uncertainty.

### ***Sarah, a miracle and migration***

Shortly after, I discovered I was pregnant again. It was a testing time — Hannah was still small, her heart condition made each day uncertain, and we were preparing for migration to Australia. Life felt overwhelming, yet I continued to trust in God's love. When Hannah turned eight months old, I returned to the paediatric cardiologist. I was nervous and scared, yet at peace, trusting that God would not let us down. After



examining her, the paediatric cardiologist cried out, “God is great! She is healed!” The holes in her heart had closed. We were overjoyed — once again, God’s love had shone through in our lives, reminding us of His faithfulness and care.

When Hannah turned one, our younger daughter Sarah was born. I was overjoyed. I felt our family was now complete. But even in that joy, life moved quickly. We had to prepare to migrate to Australia. Allen left first when Sarah was only one month old. It was a very emotional and difficult time. I was still recovering from childbirth, caring for two very young children, and preparing for a completely new life.

Three months later, I followed him with my mother-in-law. I remember that journey clearly — two tiny children, many bags, and a heart full of worry, yet full of faith and love. I did not know what waited for us on the other side, but I knew that God’s love was going before us.

## **A new home**

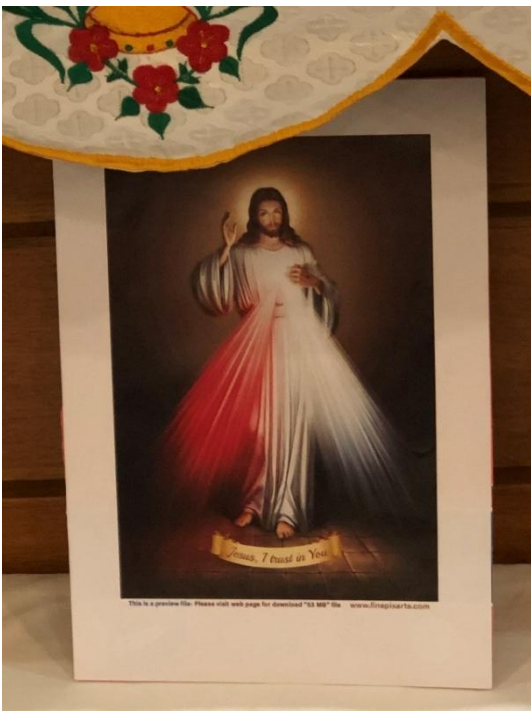
We moved to Australia — an unknown country with no friends, relatives, or acquaintances. It was a challenging and uncertain time, yet God blessed us by placing wonderful people in my life who guided and supported us along the way. Slowly, with patience, faith, and love, we built a home away from home, creating a community and a sense of belonging in this new land.

This journey has taught me perseverance, trust in God’s timing, and the power of prayer. It reminded me that God’s blessings often come in ways that surpass our understanding and expectations. It also deepened my faith and strengthened my desire to serve others through the gifts God has given me. Most importantly, it revealed that love — from God, from family, and from our community — sustains us through every challenge and triumph and Love is the theme of this the fourth

Sunday in Advent.

Being part of the Parish of the Holy Family has been another blessing in my life. It has provided a community where faith and love are shared, nurtured, and celebrated. My hope is that this parish continues to be a welcoming space for all, where love, joy, peace, and hope are lived and experienced every day.

As I reflect on my journey, I see God’s hand guiding me through every challenge and every moment of joy — from walking over that hill as a child in Mangalore, invoking Mother Mary’s protection, to witnessing miracles in my own family, and finally building a new life here in Australia. These experiences remind me that love — God’s love and the love shared between people — is alive, powerful, and present in our daily lives.



### **My Symbols**

The pictures of our Wedding and the Divine Mercy Chaplet are symbols of my faith journey that remind me how God's love is mediated and sustained in my life; through Allen and the girls every day and Our Mother Mary through my prayers, even at the darkest times.

Thank you for allowing me to share my story. I am truly grateful to be part of this parish and to contribute, in whatever way I can, to its life, spirit, and the love it nurtures."



### **Birthday blessings for Hannah and Sarah**

It was Hannah's 10<sup>th</sup> birthday on 20<sup>th</sup> December and her blessing was missed by the cameraman but Sarah's 9<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 22<sup>nd</sup> was captured.

What a wonderful gift to witness their mother's sharing and participating in her sharing by bringing up the bread and wine at the Offertory procession.

Especially on their birthdays!

### **Sunday Morning - St Paul of the Cross: Damian Borda 21.12.2025**

"I sometimes think '**Love**' is one of the most misunderstood words. The secular world is so confused about love. Even though we hear things like '*love is love*' and similar phrases, what we see in the world is mass confusion and outright anti-love. It's a bit like the truth narrative where we hear things like '*your truth*' versus '*my truth*'. Truth and love are not abstract; they are not ideologies. They are not ideas we can customise and manipulate.

Love is right ordered and sacrificial, desiring the best for the other.

As a teacher I often talk to children about being virtuous. I find it helpful to look at the virtues in terms of balance and extremes. What does this virtue look like in excess or in deficiency and how do we find what Aristotle calls the 'Golden Mean'? If we look at the world, do we see a 'Golden Mean' of Love? Do we see a deficiency? I'm not even sure.



What I think we do see is an overcompensation, a distortion, a kind of false love. How can we lie to each other and call it love. 1 Corinthians 13 tells us that we can do lots of things and have lots of things, but without love it all amounts to nothing.

*If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.*

**Jesus Christ** is the greatest example of love that we will ever know. Everything God wants us to know about love is revealed in the life and death of Jesus. The reason we are in this church this morning is because we believe that. That is what makes us Christians.

As I was considering a symbol that represents love, a few things came to my mind. I was going to display a family photo, or an image of the Holy Family. Family is extremely important to me. Mother Teresa has been quoted many times saying things like,

*'Peace on Earth begins with Love in the Family'; 'Our Love for each other must start in our homes'; 'If you want to bring happiness to the whole world, go home and love your family.'*



Families are at the front line of the Spiritual Battle. We need to get love right within our families. I believe this and do my best to love my family. Husbands, we need to love our wives like Christ loved the church. I'm not always good at showing it, but I love you Natalie and pray for you all the time. I often wish I was a better husband.

I didn't bring a picture of my family, but many of them are here. I did bring a picture of Jesus. It is one of the most powerful images I have ever seen. The title of the image is **'Forgiven'**. Forgiveness and love are very closely linked.



I have spent a lot of time gazing at this picture. Everything about it imagines love. I can clearly see Jesus, standing upright. Strong, Holy, Firm. He is embracing the man, holding him up, taking his weight. The man looks physically strong but completely exhausted, he looks like he is 'done'.

It took me a while to really see the image properly. I'm not sure why, but it took me a while to notice what was in the man's hands. What is he holding? Why is he holding a mallet and a nail? I slowly realised I am the man, the mallet is my sinfulness, and the nail is my sin. And Jesus still raises me up. This is Love.

The other symbol presented is called

**'The Pieta'**. Mary is holding the broken body of her son. I cannot even fathom the sorrow of this moment. My greatest fear is losing a child; my deepest hurt is watching my own child have to suffer.

Mary said "Yes" to God not knowing fully what was going to happen. Though she would have had some sense, she had absolute faith and trust in God's will.

At the Presentation of our Lord, Simeon told her that *'a sword would pierce her soul'*. Marys "Yes" was **pure love**. Mary embracing the dead body of her son is **pure love**.



God's love is not abstract. It is **incarnate** – *taking on the flesh of Jesus*. Seen in Mary's "Yes" and God's faithful action toward us. Seen in Jesus' death on the cross and His words '*Forgive them Father, they know not what they do.*'

**God is Love.** Jesus loves us in our sin – We repent – Then we sin again – God continues to love. It's all He can do, because **He is Love.**

My love for my family is similar, maybe not as pure, and limited by my humanity, but I would die for them. They are sometimes rude and hurtful, but I cannot not love them. They share my image. They share my blood. Just as we are made in the image of God our creator. As He shed His blood out of love and forgiveness for us.

**May we LOVE as He FIRST LOVED; The ultimate symbol of LOVE is right before us (Damian indicating the crucified Christ above the altar)."**

### **Sunday Morning - Our Lady of the Way: Jurgen Sawon 21.12.2025**

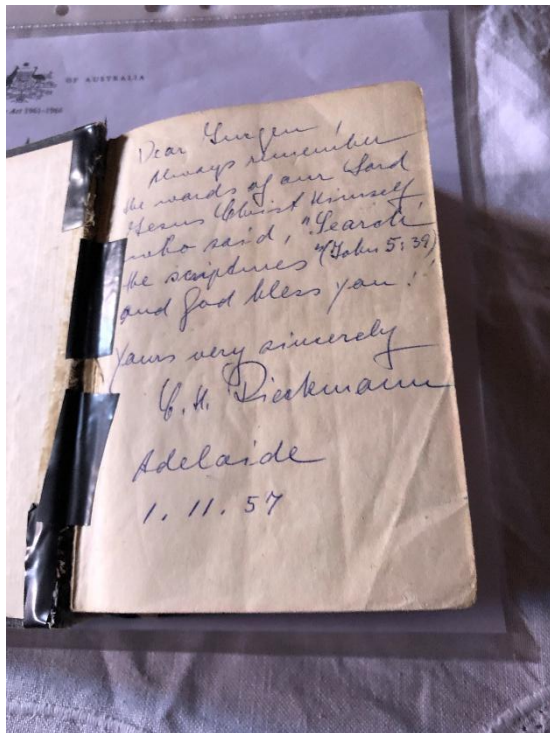
"Good morning, my name is Jurgen Sawon and I have been asked to share something of my faith Journey. Today is the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent and the theme is that of Love.





I was born in Germany- Christened Catholic; in 1949 we moved to Australia with HOPE for a better life enjoying the PEACE after the war. My mother grew up and spent her formative years under the NAZI yoke. So, for her, there was a JOY in this new start.

However, this was not to last, as she had to face a terrible tragedy. My father was knocked off his bike one night when collecting ice. He spent a few nights in hospital, before succumbing to his injuries – leaving my mother with 3 small children in a foreign land. She had limited English, no supportive family near her and, of course, there didn't exist any social services.



### **My symbol**

But fortunately, the Nuriootpa Lutheran church, rallied to our aid and provided support. The Bible dated 1957, that is on the table there, is a gift from the Lutheran priest – a Pastor Richman. I regard this gift as a symbol and memento of his LOVE. Inside is inscribed 'Search thy scriptures'. I can tell you that I promised myself that I would read it from start to finish one day! I've tried about 15 times but I gave up.

The history is hazy around here- my sister and I were introduced to a man that we were instructed to call 'uncle' who later was to be called 'dad'. We moved to the city.

My 'dad' was not a religious man, but my mother did encourage me to go to church,

but we didn't go as a family. Hence my religious instruction was rather piecemeal. I attended the nearest church., which usually offered 'youth activities-' the Church of Christ was over the railway line, and later in high school I attended the Baptist Church –these were 'fire and brimstone' times- remember Billy Graham!

As a teenager, my schoolmates would discuss existential questions. I was always interested and intrigued by matters of existence, origin and size of the universe, so when I went to Uni, I studied many Physics subjects- Greek for study of the nature of things! There were many believers among the scientists – Isaac Newton, Einstein, Werner Heisenberg, and Gregor Mendel – a Catholic priest the father of Genetics.

After leaving home, I started teaching in the country where my mother's wise words rung in my ears- Mum, how will I know I'm in love? "YOU'LL KNOW". Well, I must have been a slow learner, because I had been teaching for about 20 months with this person, before I realized the arrow had hit me and I had met the "Love of my life".



She was a Catholic girl, with staunch Catholic parents AND Polish! What more can you want. That's when my real education began. Fish on Fridays, no food or drink before taking the host, and in Poland, vodka with my breakfast.



We started a family and that's when feelings of love are overwhelming both for the fact of my new children and the fact that Krys came through safely. Krys went through a very long labour for our eldest. Daniel being 10 pounds, Justin 9 and the twins 8 pounds each.

In the 70's, I was confirmed by a wonderful man – some of you might know him Father Hugh O'Sullivan: Humble and accepting, self-deprecating – I played footy with him- I was very sad when he died at a fairly young age. He would give our children a ride on his shoulders when he came around to visit.

And I can recall Father Milburn – who would give a very short sermon just before Melbourne Cup Day it went like this: "Father, Son and Holy Ghost, Let Toby Boy be first past the post."

So, what is love? Cliches and "daffynitions" abound in songs, literature, plays. Here are some:

- Love is a flower, you've gotta let it grow,
- Love is the answer, and you know that for sure,
- Love remains after the initial 'in love' feeling subsides,
- Love is temporary insanity curable by marriage,
- Nothing to do with what you are expecting to get, only what you are expecting to give,
- Love is watching "Better Homes and Gardens" when you'd rather be watching the 'footy',
- Love is not all Kale juice and quinoa salad AND;
- Nat King Cole- "the greatest gift you'll ever learn, is just to love and be loved in return."

LOVE is an intense feeling of:

- Deep affection,
- Care,
- Commitment,
- Desire for the wellbeing of another person,
- Sacrifice,
- Acceptance.

LOVE spreads from a circle of 0.5 m radius to include more than just myself.

I know that I'm not perfect- have flaws. I'm still grappling to understand many of God's mysteries! Current Political climate a case in point. But all of the previous

speakers, and the faithful work of so many of you, are encouraging to me. Never underestimate the value of the example that you yourself are setting. I'm not special, but then again – I am! We're all special. The reason is that we see people every time we're in this church together.

Two stories from scripture remind me of the acceptance implied in Love: The Prodigal Son story – the jealous son after his brother squandered his inheritance. "He was lost and now he's found." And, the fallen woman whom no one was prepared to condemn and neither did Jesus; "He without sin let him cast the first stone."

I've been greatly gratified by the acceptance of the community since coming here; I call this love. I.e. acceptance, care, desire for the wellbeing and growth of another person; Is that not love? It has encouraged me to volunteer in my small way to give to this community as so many of the wonderful volunteers do to make the mass special.

I'll finish with a quote from George Harrison:

"What is life – without your love? And tell me – Who am I? without you by my side? And that's my 'Faith Journey'; thanks for listening!"



### **The 65<sup>th</sup> Wedding anniversary of Peter and Jyette Smailes**

As a surprise, Peter and Jytte were asked to come forward at the end of mass for a special blessing. One from Fr Paul, one from Archbishop Patrick O'Regan and one from Pope Leo XIV. A truly blessed moment that completed a magnificent Eucharistic celebration at Our Lady of the Way worshipping community.

### **Sunday morning - Nativity: Marina and Javin Chua 21.12.2025**

"M: Thank you, Fr., It is our pleasure to share our story, as our interracial marriage was all about the power of LOVE, the theme for today. LOVE has been the thriving force in our interracial marriage all these years. Today we have brought Javin's baptismal Bible which has served our family since then. It is the symbol of God's love for us.

This video clip is from SOMETHING IN THE RAIN. It shows how we bumped into each other after high school and going off to study in different countries. We might have just missed each other, even if for a few seconds.

J: That's how Marina and I met again. It was at night; I rode past her and when I realised it was her, I made a turn to stop her in her tracks. I vividly remember she was wearing a flowy light blue dress (like an angel) but she said she didn't own one. Maybe there was something in the air that night; maybe it was the Holy Spirit.

M: It was New Year's Eve, also my birthday and I invited him over to a mutual friends' house.



J: We started going out with our friends when we were back in our hometown over the weekends; I developed feelings for her

M: and I did too.

J: I thought she would only go for an Indian boyfriend.

M: I thought he would only have a Chinese girlfriend. We kept our feelings to ourselves but it was obvious to our friends. I prayed about it.



J: One of our friends called me and told me, "BE A MAN!" and not to leave her wondering. Like the couple in the video clip you just saw, our relationship was full of challenges, theirs was their age gap. I laid it all out to Marina, the challenges and our future together, and still she said YES. It was a long talk. We were of different races and religions and were up against the world.

M: But I knew we had Jesus with us, above all.

J: Eventually my family found out about us. We lived in a small town and people talk. My family members are staunch Buddhists. It was tough. One of my aunties said she would not attend my wedding if I was to marry Marina, but in the end, she came.

M: It was the same for my parents too. When my parents wanted to be married, my maternal Chinese grandfather refused to come. My paternal grandfather was a Hindu priest. Both my parents defied all odds by the power of prayer and in the end had every family member attend their wedding.

J: When we got married, my mother told me I must not convert, ever or at least until she's no longer with us. But I decided to attend RCIA for the sake of a united family, it was only a rational decision, not one driven by faith. The RCIA should have taken a year but it took me 4 attempts instead.

M: I was his sponsor for those 4 years. As I attended the RCIA with Javin, I found my faith being questioned. I was losing hope of him ever being baptised. The frustration left me feeling that I might just have a family divided by two religions. I felt I had failed. I had continued praying that he would find a friend in Jesus. Somehow, by introducing Javin to our eternal, faithful friend who never fails us, He had come fully into our lives. In the middle of all these times of family division I prayed for Jesus to shine right through me. Our first child was forbidden from being baptised, but as a Catholic who vowed to bring up our children in the faith, I was thankful that Javin agreed to Elena's baptism.

J: Our three children Elena, Ethan and Evan now serve in this church in a choir they formed for the young adults and Evan is an altar server. Marina raised our children with love and prayers. She would spend time with them before bed, individually, if possible, to talk about faith, Bible verses, and to pray. She pushed for praying together as a family. I truly believe in the power of prayer now.

M: I prayed that Javin would have a well-paying job which would not take time away from the family. Since 2008, he has been working from home and the kids saw him whenever they were back from school. Praise The Lord.

J: She also prayed for my ex-boss to know Jesus. It was a miracle when he converted. He didn't just convert, he started evangelising, not just in social/personal encounters, between friends, but also in the management meetings, at the company's annual

trip but also to MUSLIMS, which I witnessed personally. In Malaysia, a person can be charged and put in prison for evangelising a Muslim. I didn't start out to be converted as I was searching (for FAITH) but I found FAITH along the way. Like



Marina, I started praying too.

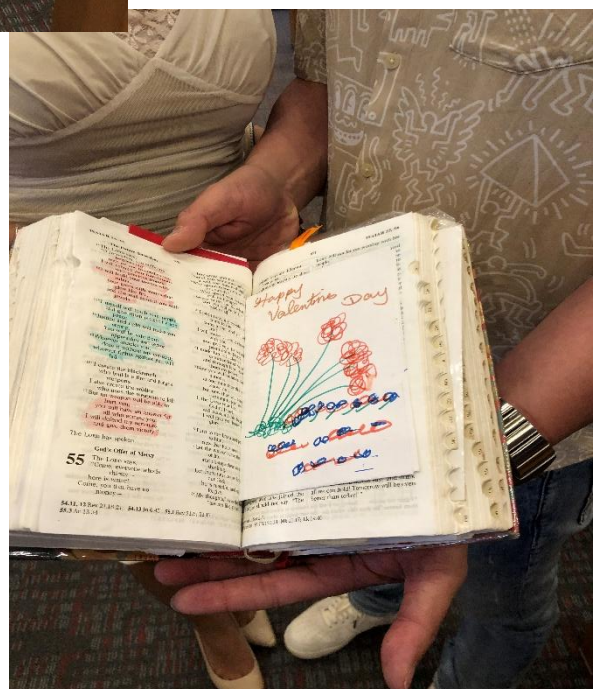
M: Prayers are our most powerful armour and weapon too. If I pray for our family because I love my husband and children, how much more is Mother Mary's love for us, her willingness to intercede for us; and Our Father's love for us, to answer our prayers.

### ***Our Symbol***

M & J: Charity starts at home and praying for our loved ones is an act of charity, it's an act of love. GOD IS LOVE. We remind you simply about St Paul's words to the Corinthians about Love: (1 Cor 13)

*"Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, love is not pompous, it is not inflated. It is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury. It does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. Love never fails. So, faith, hope and love remain, these three but the greatest of these is love."*

The symbol we have chosen is the Family Bible which has many bookmarks of the children's catechism works, Javin's little love notes, important photos, blessings from my parents and sisters, all filled with LOVE. We use it every day.



### **Four Baptisms at Nativity**

In the mass at Nativity there were 4 children baptised. It was a wonderful welcome to the families who shared a celebratory Baptismal cake with us all, after the mass.

### **REFLECTION ON THE SHARINGS**

The sharings on the fourth Sunday of Advent on Love were an absolute highlight. Each sharing was incorporated into the homilies by Dcn Tee Ping and Fr Paul. It was amazing how it all seemed to come together in different ways in each of our worshipping communities: Rochelle and Allen's journey of courage, faith, persistence in prayer and the wonder of healing, capped off in the challenge of migration; the deeply thought-out loving sharing of Damian whose symbol of the exhausted "Forgiven" held up by the Loving Christ was confronting and challenging; Jurgen's vision of Love in the ordinary, everyday on the one hand and deep scientific thought on the other, the gift of the Bible in 1957 from the Lutheran Pastor, his marriage and family made it powerfully present for all and finally Marina and Javin shared their falling in love and then the hard work of coming together within their inter-racial and inter-faith marriage through the 4-year RCIA journey. Fr Paul brought it all together in his appeal to us to complete our Advent plans.

### **NATIVITY SCHOOL COMMUNITY - ADVENT 2025**

Our Assistant Principal, Rachel Baulderstone kindly provided this synopsis of the many faith-filled activities undertaken within the school community

### **Celebrating a Joyful and Hope-Filled End to 2025 at Nativity**

As we move toward the end of our school year, our Nativity community has been blessed with many opportunities to gather, celebrate, pray, and serve together. Each event has reflected our school values of belonging, compassion, gratitude, courage, forgiveness, and justice, and our Josephite heart reminds us to lead with love in all things.

### **Carols Night & Nativity Play**

Our annual Carols Night once again brought families together for a beautiful evening of song, storytelling, and community. The Nativity Play, such an important tradition for our school, was presented with joy and reverence by our students, reminding us of the humble birth of Jesus and the hope He brings to the world. Each class performed with enthusiasm, bringing Christmas cheer as families shared picnics, laughter, and the magic of the season. It was a wonderful celebration of faith,





community, and the gifts our children share so generously.

### Godly Play Advent Session



To deepen our spiritual preparation for Christmas, some of our students engaged in

a Godly Play Advent session. Through stillness, storytelling, and wondering questions, our school explored the themes of hope, peace, joy, and love.

The session invited us to slow down, listen with our hearts, and reflect on the true meaning of Advent. Students responded with thoughtful insights and a beautiful sense of reverence, an experience that helped prepare us for the celebrations to come.

### Year 6 Graduation Dinner

We were delighted to honour our graduating Year 6 students and their families at the 2025 Graduation Dinner. This special evening celebrated the friendships, achievements, leadership, and growth of each student as they prepare to continue their learning journey in secondary school. The night was filled with laughter, memories, speeches, and gratitude for the Class of 2025, young people who have led with courage and kindness, and who will continue to shine brightly in the years ahead.



### End of Year Thanksgiving & Graduation Mass

Our End of Year Thanksgiving and Graduation Mass was a prayerful and moving celebration of all that God has blessed us with throughout the year.

Together we gave thanks for the learning, relationships, challenges, joys, and growth experienced by every member of our Nativity community. We also acknowledged and blessed our graduates as they prepared to take their next steps, reminding them of Mary MacKillop's words: **"In all things love."**

It was a beautiful morning of faith, gratitude, and community.



### Vinnies Christmas Appeal

Throughout the term, our community has once again demonstrated extraordinary generosity through our annual Vinnies Christmas Appeal. Students and families donated a wide range of non-perishable foods, treats, new toys, and gifts to support local families who may be finding this time of year

difficult.

Thanks to the kindness of our Nativity families, St Vincent de Paul will be able to share hope, dignity, and joy with many people in our wider community this Christmas. This is faith in action, living out the Gospel through compassion and service.

### Christmas Cards for the Elderly

Another beautiful outreach initiative this term has been our Christmas card project for local nursing home residents. Some classes have spent time creating thoughtful, handmade cards filled with colour, messages of hope, and Christmas cheer. Our



students were reminded that many elderly people may not have family who can visit them at this time of year, and that a simple act of kindness can brighten someone's whole day. Working in partnership with our parish, these cards were delivered to nursing homes in our community. This small gesture has already touched hearts; we even received a handwritten letter from one resident who was so moved by the students' messages that she wanted to write back and thank them. It was a powerful reminder of the joy and connection our young people can bring to others.

## **WHAT ELSE HAVE WE DONE AS A COMMUNITY TO "MAKE STRAIGHT THE ROAD AND FILL IN THE VALLEYS": LUKE: 3: 1-6?**

Most people do not really know all the many things that we as a community do that is part of our everyday Christian lives and during this Advent. We simply want to acknowledge all the work that we do as "Jesus's arms, legs, mind and heart." Then this compilation can become a symbol for our community offering at our Christmas masses by reflecting on the end of the year in 2025.

### ***Some highlights***

#### *Christ the King Sunday and Multicultural lunch*

It really started a week earlier with the wonderful whole of Parish Eucharist on the feast day of "Christ the King" at which we had the Vinnies stall with the *Knit and natter group* display and sales of the products made during the year. This culminated in the wonderful "*Multicultural lunch*" celebrating our diversity as a parish.

#### *Our musicians and choirs*

The National Liturgy and Music conference was attended by 9 from our parish and has injected considerable energy. An integrated choir of some 40 members drawn for all mass centres participated in the Christ the King mass. More than 50 people regularly contribute in our 3 worshipping centres,



*Nativity junior music group:* Originally formed by Dan Ryan. They now play fully on their own.





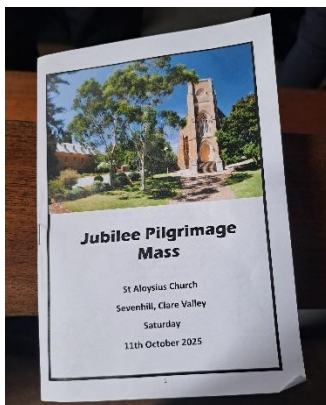
*Nativity Youth choir and group:* This has been formed for the 6.00pm mass at Nativity. Many of the members do not live in the parish.



*St Paul of the Cross:* Has multiple musicians that play together; Vespers is a standout. So also, at Our Lady of the Way. Unfortunately, no pictures have been taken at the times they were playing at masses.

*Combined Choir:* The Liturgy and music conference in September was attended by 9 from our parish and has injected considerable energy. An integrated choir of some 40 members drawn for all mass centres participated in the Christ the King mass. Formation and practice for the *musicians and choirs* continues.

*Holy Family Care group:* This has been amalgamated across the communities with expanded membership. This ministry provides spiritual care for elderly in nursing homes (7) monthly masses, visitation of the sick with communion, *Funeral support*



services including ministry, liturgy, sacristan, welcome and hospitality, including booklet preparation (e.g. Barbara Baggoley). Tuesday "cuppa n 'chat" and 6 weekly lunchtime gathering for older and housebound. Funeral services and chaplaincy to our hospitals through Fr Paul, Dcn Tee Ping and our Pastoral Associate.

*The Jubilee year pilgrimages* to the Cathedral and to Sevenhills historical churches for the Jubilee year involved nearly a combined 100 parishioners.

*Vinnies Christmas:* This has been part of Advent, Parish and school, with the "Giving Tree" as a part of providing for those in need. The Blackwood and Aberfoyle Conferences have amalgamated. *Vinnies hampers*, visits and care; *Knit and Natter*; Barbecue and trading table.



*Formation has occurred in the following areas:*

- Safeguarding on line training for all volunteers
- Extraordinary *ministers of the Eucharist* for communion under both kinds, those *visiting the sick* and conducting communion services.
- RCIA team
- Music and liturgy conference

*Sacramental program:* The ongoing formation for the children and families during the Sacramental Program jointly with the school and our PA Bianca for children jointly with the school; presented to the community; Baptismal program-coordinated by our PA Bianca.

*Laudate Si 10-year study group* of the encyclical chaired by Barbara Colla.

Mitcham Hills ministers fraternal ongoing activities through the *Earth care group* - Mercy Grove ecumenical service recently. Also support for *Support for Pastoral Care Workers in state schools* in Mitcham Hills and Aberfoyle Park.

*Gospel discussion* group chaired by Margaret Lindford.

*Opportunities for worship:* Our prayers, weekly adoration, candle votive offerings, Mercy Chaplet and *Rosary groups*, monthly *vespers* at SPC.

*Reconciliation* opportunities in Advent with the second rite across the community.

*Formation:* baptism and confirmation and Marriage preparation, and our recent *men alive weekend*. Alpha programs.

Walking groups.

The Christmas Vigil children's mass and practice for this liturgy. All the Children's liturgy sessions at Nativity masses. *Ministry to young families*; and "*Thank God it's Friday*" TGIF. Families doing *home schooling*.

*Nativity Church garden* where Sharyn and Mark Black & Clem & Derek from the school have spent a lot of time on the garden, watering, crosses, and QR code stands. This is in addition to our ongoing *health and safety, gardening and maintenance* efforts

*Advent working bee.*

Servers, sacristans; readers and commentators, cleaners, flowers.

Welcomers and morning cuppa at all three churches

Charlotte Hejka member of the Diocesan Synod 2026; Rene Pols member of writing group on Missionary Disciples.

*Nativity staff*, principal Mrs Erika Dixon and Mrs Rachel Boulderstone, APRIM, Nativity School Board.

*Parish Leadership Team: Fr Paul PP, Dcn Tee Ping Koh, Bianca Cotton PA, Paul Ridings Chair PPC and Tony Ward, Chair PFC. Ongoing development of the 5-year pastoral plan*

The PPC, PFC, WH&S, *office volunteers*. Our *Sunday Bulletin* editors (Gemma and Anne) do an enormous job.

**Christmas message from Fr Paul Mwaura PP:**

December 23rd 2025

Dear Friends of the Holy Family Parish,

Blessings to you all during this most Holy celebration.

May Jesus be reborn in your heart and life during Christmas 2025 and every day of the New Year 2026. May He radiate His presence from within you with sharing love, unconditional forgiveness, humble service, a compassionate heart and overflowing generosity.

I would like to give thanks to the many volunteers within our Parish community who have assisted in many ways to continue the work and mission of Christ in the Blackwood, Belair, Glenalta, Craighburn, Coromandel, Aberfoyle Park and Flagstaff Hill areas, their surrounds, especially the Nativity school community and all who come to join our worshipping centres. This year we have had many new people added to our Rosters for the Church and office support. Your ongoing commitment to sharing your gifts as an offering of love is truly appreciated.

Through the season of Advent, we have witnessed personal sharing and testimonies from some of our Parishioners at all our mass centres. This was an example of faith and representation of us all on our journey in preparation in sharing the joy of Christmas. You will recall that I challenged each of you, all our people, to consider developing and carrying out an Advent Plan. It is a time to celebrate the Faith we share, the Hope that we have and the Love that we seek to spread in our homes and in our community.

With the horrific antisemitic massacre in Sydney only last week we need to remember that Jesus was a practicing Jew; there is no place for racial hatred and particularly antisemitism anywhere. This time of year, can also bring many stresses and sadness for some families that may be facing difficulties and for those who have lost loved ones. My thoughts and prayers remain with you.

May the Holy Baby Jesus of Bethlehem bless you with health in body and soul and grant you a peaceful and blessed New Year. I assure you of my special prayers during my Christmas Holy Masses and every day in the New Year.



Fr Paul Mwaura Parish Priest

**Christmas offering from the People of God in the Holy Family Parish:**

Dear Lord Jesus; born in poverty, with few supports and to a teenage mother, may we be very aware of the good fortune that we enjoy in Australia and particularly here in Adelaide. Lord, hear us.

We thank you for the abundant generosity of your people; the work that all our volunteers undertake is astounding. Please accept these efforts as part of our collective, Advent plans, carried out in preparation for your coming into the world. May we welcome you with commitment and Joy. Lord, hear us

Thank you for the year just completed at the School of the Nativity; for those representing us at the Diocesan Synod in 2026 and on the Diocesan Pastoral Council. We remember especially all those who have died this year and give thanks for all they have contributed. Lord, hear us.

We ask for Your blessing on us and we offer you our successes and challenges, the record of the personal gifts of sharing of their lives, with us, their families and those who have supported them. May we join with them, as they have prepared for your coming this Christmas and offer all that we as the Nativity community have also done for you and those, we serve. Lord, hear us.

We offer this booklet as a sign of our mission; as Your eyes, ears, hearts and minds to our community; We ask this in Your name. Amen

**Fr Paul Mwaura PP, Dcn Tee Ping Koh, Mr Paul Ridings Chair PPC, Mrs Bianca Cotton PA**

**Holy Family Catholic Parish, Leadership Team Christmas 2025.**