

**17 December 2023**  
**3rd Sunday of Advent Year B**



**Entrance Antiphon**

Rejoice in the Lord always;  
again I say, rejoice.  
Indeed, the Lord is near.

**First Reading** from the  
prophet Isaiah  
61:1-2. 10-11

**Responsorial Psalm**  
Lk 1:46-50. 53-54. R. Is 61:10

**Response:** My soul  
rejoices in my God.

**Second Reading** first letter of  
St Paul to the Thessalonians  
5:16-24

**Gospel Acclamation**

Alleluia, alleluia!  
The Spirit of the Lord is upon  
me; he sent me to bring  
Good News to the poor.  
Alleluia!

**Holy Gospel** according to  
John 1:6-8. 19-28

**Communion Antiphon**

Say to the faint of heart: Be  
strong and do not fear.  
Behold, our God will come,  
and he will save us.

**Next Week**

**FOURTH SUNDAY OF  
ADVENT YEAR B**

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

Resp: Ps 88:2-5. 27. 29.  
R. see v.2

Second: Romans 16:25-27  
Gospel: Luke 1:26-38

*We acknowledge and respect the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we stand, the elders, past and present and all the Dharawal people. May we too be good stewards of this land.*

## What is Gaudete Sunday?

On this Third Sunday of the Advent season, the theme is traditionally one of joy. The first word of the entrance hymn today is "Rejoice!" This is a tradition coming down from the old pre-Vatican II Latin Mass when the first word of the *Introit* or entrance antiphon was *Gaudete* (rejoice, be glad). And so this Sunday has come to be known as "Gaudete Sunday".

In the past, Advent was a penitential season – there were four fast days during this period – and the celebrant of the liturgy wears vestments with the penitential colour of purple or violet. The atmosphere was deliberately sombre and penitential.

So, in the middle of it all, people needed to be reminded of what they were preparing for – the very joyful occasion of the birth of Jesus. In the midst of all the penance and fasting, this Sunday was conceived as a window of joy and brightness in anticipation of what was to come. On this day, too, the violet vestments in many churches give way to a less penitential colour, a pinkish red, a toned-down violet usually described as "rose". As a reminder, there is a similar break, "Laetare Sunday", during the Lenten season.

### Why rejoice?

And why should we be rejoicing? Because we are soon to remember that the Son of God, Jesus the Christ, came to live among us as a human being and be one of us: *And the Word [who has the nature of God] became flesh and lived [literally 'pitched his tent'] among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.* (John 1:14)

And further, we rejoice because he the Lord brings such good news. The Scriptures, written at a time when poverty and suffering were the lot of the majority, certainly speak of those who are materially poor, of those who are really rotting (often unjustly) in prisons, those who are physically afflicted – the blind, the disabled and those suffering with diseases like leprosy (with its concomitant alienation and marginalisation from ordinary society). And there are still all too many places in our high-tech world where the situation of hundreds of millions has not yet changed in this regard.

## Christmas Mass & Reconciliation times



**Parish Reconciliation Service:** Friday 22 Dec at 7.30pm  
Reconciliation is available every Saturday at 11am.

**Sunday 24 December is the 4th Sunday of Advent;**  
Mass will be at 6pm vigil on Saturday and  
9.30am on Sunday morning.  
There will not be a 5pm Sunday Mass this day.

### Christmas Pageant and Christmas Vigil Mass

As Sunday 24 December is also Christmas Eve the Christmas Pageant to be held inside the Church and will start at 6pm and the Christmas Vigil Mass will start at 7pm.

### Christmas midnight Mass

**Christmas morning Mass will commence at 9am.**  
There will be no evening Mass on Christmas Day.

## Worship: Mass and Devotions

Sunday Mass	Weekday Mass	Devotions
Saturday Vigil: 6pm	Mon, Tues, Wed Mass at 9am	Adoration with the Rosary: Saturday 9.30am
Sunday: 9.30 am and 5pm	Thursday - Mass at 7.30pm	Divine Mercy Devotion: Third Sunday at 3pm
Filipino Mass: Third Sunday at 11.15am	Fri and Sat Mass at 9am	Alliance of the 2 Hearts Mass and Devotion: First Friday of each month from 7.30pm
Samoan Mass: First Sunday of December at 12 noon	Healing Mass on the first Saturday of each month at 9am	
Maori Mass: First Sunday at 2pm		Reconciliation: Saturday 11 am—12

### Contact us

Office Hours: **Tuesday-Friday 9.30am-12.30pm**

Phone: **9603 7373 / 0434 705 176**

Email: **varroville@dow.org.au**

Website: **varroville.dow.org.au**

Parish Priest:  
**Fr. Shane Kelleher OCD**

Parish Associate:  
**Sr “Jill” Girlie Sudario, CM**

### Prayer intentions

**For the sick and homebound:** Baby Matthew , Terry Maroun, Myka Mangos, Kevin Cloran, Karen Browne, Amanda and John Meredith, Reg Gardner, Sr Heather Burke, Marie and Barry Atkins, Carol and Gabriel Gonzales, Amelia Jimenez, Joe Spinnato, Susan Mella, Sean Finnerty, Rose Levoune, Francisco Carmona, Doris Wahhib, John Kajdrys..  
*May they experience the saving power of the risen Lord amidst their pain and affliction.*

**For our recently dearly departed:** Fr John Landy, Anne McDowell, Antonio Manalo, Polly Aukusitino

**Those whose anniversaries occur at this time:** Leticia Gonzalez De Patino, Lily Pereira, Mary Bergstedt, Giuseppe Cuomo,  
*Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, may perpetual light shine upon them.*



### Our Community: Rosters

24 December	Saturday 6pm	Sunday 9.30am	Sunday 5pm
<b>Welcomers</b>	Richard, Tracey & Estela	Gabriel, Ofa & Volunteer	No 5pm Sunday mass,
<b>Altar Servers</b>	Cody, Christian & Ralph	Orly, Luisa & Carlos	Christmas vigil at 7pm
<b>Readers</b>	Loretta & Gerard	Tess & Aida	
<b>Refreshments</b>	Josephine & Glenda	Volunteers x 3	
<b>CLOTW</b>		School holidays	
<b>Flowers</b>	Sr Ines & Katalina	<b>Church Vacuuming</b>	Feiloakitohi Family
<b>Counters</b>	Richard & Michael	<b>Foyer Cleaning</b>	Feiloakitohi Family

### Our Community Notices: Upcoming Events

**Hospitality Helpers are needed for each of the Christmas masses next week.** It is an opportunity for the parish to offer hospitality to visitors and parishioners. Please contact Sr Jill or leave your name at the information desk in the foyer.

**RCIA helpers needed:** Appeal for parishioners willing to assist in supporting adults and children new to the Catholic faith in our parish. There are many small ways that you can make a

difference. To have a conversation about this contact Diane Redmayne RCIA coordinator via the parish office or leave your contact details with Sr Jill.

**Christmas Pageant preparation;** Please check on the parish calendar on our website for pageant preparation times during December or call the parish office for more information about how to join in.



# Bulletin Notices

**This summer the Children's Ministry Team will hold a Bible Camp** on 19 – 20 January 2024 here in the Parish grounds. Children aged from 8 to 14 years old are invited to participate. Adult support is also encouraged for facilitators and helpers. For more details contact: Sr. Jill Sudario: 0481 373 124

**Christmas Carols at Carmel House (345 St Andrews Rd, Varroville)** on Thursday 21 December at 6pm. Join the MGL Sisters for a picnic dinner and carols and praise. Bring your picnic and a picnic blanket or chair.

**Church Renovations:** Construction of alterations and additions to our church building have been approved and construction will commence early in 2024. Watch this space for updates.

**The diocese's newest 'It's Who We Are' video** has been launched. Narrated by our beloved Bishop Brian, this uplifting sub-three-minute clip illuminates the remarkable people and everyday works within our diocese. To view, please visit our website <https://www.dow.org.au/about-us/> and/or our FB page <https://fb.watch/oOktv0G8-6/> and if so, it would be appreciated if you could like and share it!

**Holy Family Fellowship Prayer Group** We gather at, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Varroville, on the 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday every month after the Vigil Mass. We have a short time of Praise and Worship followed by a time of fellowship and sharing of a light meal. Contact : Ryan - Mob:0430 404 575.

**Summer School of Evangelisation (Sydney): 7-14 January**  
Mount Carmel Retreat Centre: Summer School is a week-long, live-in, life-changing retreat featuring praise and worship, inspiring talks, engaging liturgy, time to chill and learn and more in the midst of a community of 150+ young people aged 16-35. Registrations open 31st October. Register and more info: [contact@summerschool.org.au](mailto:contact@summerschool.org.au). Bookings: [summerschool.org.au](http://summerschool.org.au)

**A New Vision for Parishes:** Bishop Mascord has supplied multiple copies of Come and See Go and Make - A vision for Parishes in the Diocese of Wollongong for distribution amongst the faithful. Further to this, • A short introductory video message from Bishop Mascord may be viewed/ downloaded at <http://dow.sh/CSGMvision>  
Come & See, Go & Make: A Vision for Parishes resources may be found at <http://dow.sh/CSGMresources>

**CatholicCare are currently looking for Community Support Workers.** Becoming a CatholicCare Community Support Worker will give you a career that you love, whilst providing a valuable connection to people living with a disability or the aged in our Diocese. If you want to find out more about becoming a Community Support Worker go to [catholiccare.dow.org.au/get-involved/careers/or](http://catholiccare.dow.org.au/get-involved/careers/or) call 4227 1122.

**On The Journey This Week:** Fr William Loh asks: have you ever felt like someone crying out in a spiritual wilderness? Mother Hilda has a prayer tip that will put love into the world right now. Plus, Fr Tony Percy and more Advent reflections. The Journey podcast available at [www.jcr.org.au](http://www.jcr.org.au).

**Caritas Australia's Gaza Crisis Appeal** Please donate to Caritas Australia's Gaza Crisis Appeal. You can donate online [www.caritas.org.au/gaza](http://www.caritas.org.au/gaza) or phone 1800 024 413. An estimated 1 million people have been displaced in Gaza with immediate food, shelter, health, and psychosocial needs. 'This is a period of incredible turmoil and sadness. The escalation of violence has only exacerbated needs for the people in Gaza and West Bank, who already live in dire conditions. We are working with our partners on the ground to provide comprehensive and critical support to over 17,000 families affected by this devastating conflict.' With your support, we will be able to help our partners on the ground to assist people displaced and affected by the current conflict.

**A vocation view:** God gives you a mission. How will you respond? Rejoice in the Spirit who is at work in you. (Isaiah 61: 1-2,10-11) If you want to talk about your vocation, please contact the diocesan vocations director, Fr Duane Fernandez at [vocations@dow.org.au](mailto:vocations@dow.org.au)

**Social Justice Points;** [The] challenge ... is "appealing", stimulating and achievable: to move away from the throwaway culture towards ways of living marked by a culture of respect and care; care of creation and care of our neighbours, whether they be near or far from us either geographically or through time. We are facing an educational journey for transforming our society, a conversion that is at the same time both personal and communal. -- *Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Participants in the Green and Blue Festival, on the occasion of the 2023 World Environment Day, Monday, 5 June 2023*

**Pilgrimage of Mercy 11 – 21 June 2024;** Father Christopher Sarkis, Parish Priest of Rosemeadow, will be the Chaplain accompanying Harvest Journeys Eastern Europe Pilgrimage of Mercy in June 2024, visiting Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic. It includes the Shrines of Divine Mercy, the Black Madonna of Czestochowa and the Infant of Prague. It visits places of importance to St John Paul II, St. Faustina and St. Maximillian Kolbe, among others. Enquiries: 4628 1385 or directly at [harvestjourneys.com/tour/pilgrimage-of-mercy](http://harvestjourneys.com/tour/pilgrimage-of-mercy). Bookings only through Harvest Journeys.

**St Patricks College Registrations are open now!** Don't miss your opportunity to register today. We invite you to join us to celebrate our College Open Day on 24 February 2024. We look forward to sharing with the community our stunning College campus and why we are specialists in girls' education. Have you considered St Patrick's College for Girls for your daughter?

**4th Annual St Joseph Motor Pilgrimage 15 -17 March 2024;** Have you saved the Date yet for this unique, men only, Spiritual Encounter venerating St Joseph for his great example of Fatherhood and a Virtuous life. Come for part or the full pilgrimage, it's your choice. 3 days of cars, bikes, men's gatherings, prayer, worship, mass, keynote speakers, small group discussions and fellowship across the (Arch) Diocese of Bathurst/Orange, Canberra/Goulburn and Sydney! Supported by Parousia Media, MenAlive and Maximus Men's Ministry Network. Once registered you will receive updated information and be added to the Zoom pre-drive/ride briefing.

## Holy Gospel according to John 1:6-8.19-28

*There stands among you, unknown to you, the one who is coming after me.*

A man came, sent by God.  
His name was John.  
He came as a witness,  
as a witness to speak for the light,  
so that everyone might believe through him.  
He was not the light,  
only a witness to speak for the light.



This is how John appeared as a witness. When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' he not only declared, but he declared quite openly, 'I am not the Christ.' 'Well then,' they asked, 'are you Elijah?' 'I am not,' he said. 'Are you the Prophet?' He answered, 'No.' So they said to him, 'Who are you? We must take back an answer to those who sent us. What have you to say about yourself?' So John said, 'I am, as Isaiah prophesied: a voice that cries in the wilderness: Make a straight way for the Lord.'

Now these men had been sent by the Pharisees, and they put this further question to him, 'Why are you baptising if you are not the Christ, and not Elijah, and not the prophet?' John replied, 'I baptise with water; but there stands among you – unknown to you – the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo his sandal-strap.' This happened at Bethany, on the far side of the Jordan, where John was baptising.

### HOMILY OF POPE ST JOHN PAUL II 15 December 1996 (Excerpt)

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.... The Lord is at hand" (Phil 4:4-5). It is from these words taken from St Paul's letter to the Philippians, that this Sunday takes the liturgical name "Gaudete". Today the liturgy urges us to rejoice because the birth of the Lord is approaching: in fact it is only 10 days away.

In his Letter to the Thessalonians, the Apostle exhorts us thus: "Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances.... May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thes 5:16-18;23).

This is a typical Advent exhortation. Advent is the liturgical season that prepares us for the Lord's birth, but it is also the time of expectation for the definitive return of Christ for the last judgement, and St Paul refers, in the first place, to this second coming. The very fact that the conclusion of the liturgical year coincides with the beginning of Advent suggests that "the beginning of the time of salvation" is in some way linked to the "end of time". This exhortation typical of Advent always applies: "The Lord is at hand!".

John the Baptist is one of the most significant biblical figures we meet during this important season of the liturgical year. In the fourth Gospel we read: "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came for testimony, to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light" (Jn 1:6-8). To the question "Who are you?", John the Baptist responds: "I am not the Christ", nor Elijah, nor any other of the prophets (cf. Jn 1:19-20). And faced with the insistence of those sent from Jerusalem, he says: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord'" (Jn 1:23).

John the Baptist's witness re-echoes in the Advent verse: "The Lord is at hand!". The different perspectives of the night of Bethlehem and the baptism in the Jordan converge in the same truth: we must shake off our inertia and prepare the way of the Lord who comes.

The prophet's joyful proclamation is echoed in what St Paul writes in the passage from his Letter to the Thessalonians we have just heard. Isaiah affirms: "I rejoice heartily in the Lord" (Is 61:10), and Paul exhorts: "Rejoice! The Lord is at hand!" (cf. Phil 4:4-5; 1 Thes 5:16, 23).

The Lord Jesus is at hand at every moment of our life. He is at hand if we consider him in the perspective of Christmas, but he is also at hand if we look at him on the banks of the Jordan when he officially receives his messianic mission from the Father; lastly, he is at hand in the perspective of his return at the end of time.

Christ is at hand! He comes by virtue of the Holy Spirit to announce the Good News; he comes to cure and to set free, to proclaim a time of grace and salvation, in order to begin, already on the night of Bethlehem, the work of the world's redemption. Let us therefore rejoice and exult! The Lord is at hand; he is coming to save us. Amen!