



THE BRIDGE

A RESOURCE FOR AUSTRALIAN CATHOLICS
STRIVING TO SHARE THEIR FAITH
DECEMBER 2019



Mary set out at that time and went as quickly as she could to a town in the hill country of Judah. Lk 1:39

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IN GRATITUDE

Now in its 60th year, the Catholic Enquiry Centre responds to enquiries about our faith by phone, mail and email. It offers information and free materials and connects enquirers to their local church.

As a measure of our sincere gratitude to all who support our work, please be assured of our regular prayers for you and your families. We hope and pray that your giving is richly rewarded, both in this life and in the life to come.

For more information about how to make a bequest please contact us directly.

ADVENT PRAYER FOR EVANGELISATION

Ever faithful God,
Your prophets foretold the coming of the Light.
In Your Name they promised
that the eyes of the blind would be opened.

Through our words and actions
may we too open the eyes of the blind in this Advent season.
With Mary our Mother we confidently await the coming of your Son,
and the day when he will gather all people
to live in your light, for ever and ever. Amen

Adapted from *The Glenstal Book of Prayer*

If you love your printed copy, that's great. But if you'd like to use less paper then email us today and we will email your next issue.



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COVER IMAGE: 'Mary goes to the hill country' by Frank Mesaric.
Commissioned for the Australian Marist Schools Association National Conference, Melbourne, 2005. Original painting now hangs in Marcellin College, Bulleen, Victoria.

VOL 1 No.10 DECEMBER 2019 ISSN 2209-7287
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To aid the Catholic Enquiry Centre in its mission in Australia

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DECEMBER 2019

GOD IS NOT MAD AT YOU



WHEN JOY IS OUR ANSWER TO WHY JESUS CAME, WE BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND WHY THE ANGELS DECLARED THEIR MESSAGE AS GOOD NEWS.

The advent season is celebrated on the church calendar in the five weeks leading up to Christmas. It is a time of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of our coming King. Even for people who aren't church-goers, Christmas is a season of joy, or at least that's the hope – the reunion of family, the giving of presents, the longed-for holiday break.

One famous Christmas Carol that captures this mood was penned in 1719 by Isaac Watts - the opening line reads:

*Joy to the World, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King.*

A fitting question to ask during the advent season is "Why did Jesus come to earth?" One of the most common responses to this question is Jesus came to save us. While this is indeed true, it isn't the only answer to the question.

Jesus came for more than undertaking a rescue mission, sent to earth to save people from their sins. Jesus came from heaven as good news, sent to preach the good news.

The Gospel of Luke tells about an angelic message given to the shepherds around the time Jesus was born. The angels declare here that God took great joy in sending his Son to a people that brought him joy.

And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" Luke 2:12-14

Did you catch that last line? God didn't come because he's mad at you, but because he's pleased with you. Jesus indeed came to save us, but he saves us from the one who steals, kills, and destroys - not the Father in heaven.

The thief [Satan] comes only in order to steal, kill, and destroy. I have come in order that you might have life—life in all its fullness.

John 10:10

Jesus desires that his joy would become our joy. God wants each of us to have the full measure of his perfect joy. He doesn't simply want us to be happy—an emotion that comes and goes based on circumstances. He wants us to have joy—an enduring state of being that remains regardless of circumstances.

This joy is found even on the cross, which was both horrific and shameful for Jesus to endure. The cross revealed the perfect love of the Father.

Since God is love, we can think of it like this: the more loving one is, the more joy one finds in pouring themselves out for another. The cross was a joy to Jesus, as it resulted in the ultimate pouring out of the perfect love of God. When joy is our answer to why Jesus came, we begin to understand why the angels declared their message as good news. A Father of perfect love desiring to give his children his perfect joy is very good news—it is the best news!

As we begin to know the truth of a beautiful God who is perfect love, we will begin to grow in the joy he wants to give us. Satan has deceived us with ideas about God that are actually demonic—lies of a God so angry that the only thing capable of appeasing his wrath was the death of his only son. The truth is God is not angry at you, but God is pleased with you and pleased to give you his joy. While believing Satan's lies about God leads us to fear him and hide our sin, knowing the truth about God leads us to transparency in our relationship with him and transformation in our lives. The joy God desires for us is found by knowing the God who is perfect love. As we do this the good news becomes the life we live, rather than a belief we hold.

How do you experience God's love? St. Paul talks about the veil being removed from our imaginations as we contemplate Jesus. (2 Cor 3:14 – 4:6.)

One prayer-method you can try to help you focus on Jesus is called **imaginative prayer**: you contemplate who Jesus is and what he does because that's what God is like.

As we experience Jesus's love, we become more loving. As we see God's joy toward us, we become more joyful. What we see determines what we become. This is how we're transformed.

Joy to the world indeed!



MARCUS AMANN

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MISSION PROJECTS WILL THEY FIND JOY?



A few weeks ago I spoke at the Victorian RCIA State Conference. It was a great joy to be with people who generously give of their time and talent to share the faith through the RCIA process.

Across the world, in 1000's of parishes, there are people who are taking the first steps towards full initiation into our Catholic faith. It can be a surprise to many of us, given the bad press that our Catholic Church receives, that any adult would freely choose to become a Christian.

What is it that draws people to Jesus, and to want to belong to the Catholic community? Well, we can be cynical and suggest that some people have ulterior motives. However, my gut tells me that in many cases they have seen something that is very attractive about a person of faith – and I don't mean good looks!

In *Evangelii Gaudium* (#15), Pope Francis quotes Benedict XVI saying, "It is not by proselytising that the Church grows, but 'by attraction'". I think joy-filled people are attractive. People, who to their core, and despite what terrible sadness they may be experiencing, exude a sense of real joy. This is not a superficial or naïve joy, but a real and palpable joy. It is a joy that comes from knowing God loves them, and walks by their side, day by day.

There are many people out there seeking something that the secular world can't provide. The question is, will they find joy if they come knocking at our door, or the door of our parish? Will they find a joy that comes from knowing the love of Christ?



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INSPIRATION

BISHOP MICHAEL MCCARTHY



In Rockhampton Diocese's July newsletter is found an article describing three priests travelling many hundreds of kilometres to three baptisms in the diocese's Central West Region, 600 kilometres inland. Although not present, Bishop Michael McCarthy is close to the occasions as he remembers the (outdoor) 'Bush Chapels' used and the people gathered: the families and Godparents, friends and neighbours coming to the "special day" for the "special event". He recalls:

"At such times when I am present at a baptism - or a burial which is another such sacred time - somewhere in these rural and remote places of our "wide brown land" I recall someone speaking of sanctifying the land. I am also reminded of Jesus' words, "I came to bring fire to the earth and how I wish it were already kindled" (Luke 12:49). I think of these events as lighting a spot fire, so to speak!"

Michael McCarthy has been Bishop of Rockhampton since May, 2014. He grew up in a country parish, Cambooya, Greenmount, near Toowoomba in south-eastern Queensland, in a faith filled family that prayed together. After four years as an industrial chemist with BHP, he studied at the newly opened St Paul's National Seminary in Sydney. A holiday in the Solomon Islands, and visits in subsequent years, provided seminal experiences seeing men and women engaged in ministry, faith, and life sustained by leaders, catechists, and teachers. Since ordination he has often been a parish priest and closely involved in the formation of priests.

The people of his diocese are constantly in his thoughts, present to him. The North Rockhampton Catholic Community wrote that he "presided at each of our Masses that weekend and joined with us to celebrate the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist", and that he then went to each parish to cut the celebration cakes. With appreciation they added, "He spent time with all of us as we celebrated with a sausage sizzle."

Part of Pope Francis' 'field hospital,' Bishop Michael is conscious of the bruised and battered. He remembers "the hard work of the first settlers to this beautiful part of Queensland who farmed the rich soils of Mackay and surrounds, who came from the lands of Europe, including from Italy and Malta". He recalls desperate farmers, wondering if the rains will ever come, walking off their farms; the women's craft group at Longreach giving them a sense of company. "The Christmas story gives us hope – hope that we can stand together and live our faith through all adversity and be encouraged by our brothers and sisters who generation upon generation stood up and were counted as life-affirming followers of Jesus."

For Bishop Michael evangelisation is the Church present: "As I travel around the Diocese, I meet good folk going about their daily lives living their Christmas message knowing that God is with us." It may be Marist Sr Mary visiting and supporting families, or families who travel long distances to attend baptisms; the Bishop says that it's the people who keep the faith alive. "It's amazing the number of young connecting with the church through the presence of the people of God."

Mass remains the challenge. From the Central Highlands region Jenny says, "we could go with Mass once a month, but two would be better". While Loretta says, "we'll keep the Church open, but we need the eucharist for our life." "Our doors are still open, we're still open for business," says Bishop Michael. "Celebrating Mass there – speaking with faith filled people, keeping nourished by the Mass, keeps their faith alive." He is deeply appreciative of the commitment of his brother priests and visits their families when he can, even interrupting a recent Ad Limina visit to Rome to stop off in Kerala for the families of Indian priests.

To his diocese he now says, "Through my five years with you, I have had one objective...to share with you a passion for the mission of Jesus."

HOW DO I SHARE MY FAITH?

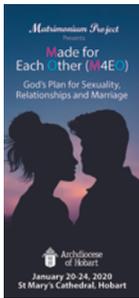
ABOUT THE REAL MEANING OF CHRISTMAS?



- Is there someone at your parish who will be alone on Christmas Day? Could you invite them to Christmas lunch?
- Are you able to advertise Christmas Mass times at your workplace, or on the community billboard at your local shopping centre?
- When you are doing your Christmas shopping, could you affirm the staff on the check-out? Let them know they are doing a brilliant job.
- Will you be alone on Christmas day? If you are up for it, could you volunteer to help at a homeless shelter or nursing home? Bringing some Christmas cheer to other lonely people might bring joy to your own heart.
- Are you carrying a hurt or grudge with a family member? Is there any chance you can find some way to be reconciled? If this would be really tough, then pray through the season of Advent that God will help you find the right words and the right time to make your peace.
- When was the last time you celebrated the sacrament of Reconciliation? If you are carrying a burden then why not give it up to God in this beautiful sacrament? A heart that's at peace will no doubt be reflected in your actions.
- Would you feel comfortable inviting someone you know who has stopped going to Mass to Christmas Mass? Offer to pick them up maybe.

BUT IS THIS THE HOLIDAY THAT GOD LIKES? WHAT KIND OF CHRISTMAS WOULD HE WANT, WHAT GIFTS AND SURPRISES? POPE FRANCIS, DECEMBER 19, 2018.

FORMATION



MADE FOR EACH OTHER SUMMER SCHOOL

20 - 24 January 2020
St Mary's Cathedral in Hobart

A unique event for young Catholics aged 18-35 to explore the depth of the Church's teaching on relationships, sexuality and marriage. It includes a range of lectures, discussions, Holy Mass, other prayer times, excursions to places of natural and historical significance, free time for reflection, social outings and a mountain range bushwalk.

Speakers: Katrina Zeno MTS, Archbishop Julian Porteus, Dr Christine Wood, Tomasz Juszcak, The Culture Project, Palavra Viva community, Caitlin Byrne, Ben Smith

SEE <http://bit.ly/33jQufJ>



CAMPION COLLEGE SUMMER PROGRAM

5 - 9 January 2020 OR 13 - 17 January 2020
Campion College, Toongabbie, Sydney.

A unique opportunity for young people between 16-20 to experience college life. The five-day immersion programs provide the opportunity for students to reside on campus, sample lectures from history, literature, philosophy and theology professors, and engage in a range of fun activities. The program is open to local and interstate high school students and recent high school graduates especially those considering studying at Campion in 2020, 2021 or 2022.

see <https://www.campion.edu.au/summer-program/>



IMMACULATA MISSION SCHOOL

1 - 10 January, 2020
The Glennie School, 246a Herries Street, Toowoomba QLD

You are invited to spend the first ten days of the New Year with us GOING DEEPER in faith, prayer and community - to know God, to love God and to make God known!

For 15-35 year olds. Family option available.

See <https://sistersoftheimmaculata.org.au/ims>

RENEWAL



Being The Community Christ Calls Us To Be

National Pastoral Ministry Conference

9 - 11 July 2020
St Mary Star of the Sea College, Wollongong

The Conference, coordinated by the NSW Association of Pastors, Pastoral Associates and Parish Workers (NAPPA) collaborating with the Christian Initiation Australia Network (CIAN), and the Oceania Mission Planners Network (OMPN) invites all people working in Pastoral Ministry to explore: What gives life in the Spirit and renewal in our Church • Invigorating RCIA within parishes • Plenary 2020.

Richard McMahon, co-chair of NAPPA, is enthusiastic about this national initiative and the collaboration of networks. "The Conference brings together different networks across Australia who are all working towards bringing Christ's mission to life in our faith communities. It really is trying to model Pope Francis' call to work in synodality – to walk together in this mission."

Registrations for the Alive in the Spirit Conference will open in February 2020

Contact Lisa Bright: lisa.bright@parracatholic.org or 0448 652 720



415 Douglas Park Drive, Douglas Park NSW. Phone 02 4630 0233

Our manner of living today is generally noisy and busy. From time to time we need to give ourselves the space to enter into the silence and be in the presence of our loving God.

Prayer Weekends 2020

You are always welcome to come and visit St Mary's Towers Retreat Centre for a weekend of prayer.

Visit <https://towersretreat.org.au/22-prayer-weekends-2020/file>

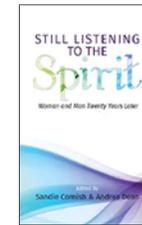
Longer retreats 2020

- 30 Day Retreat. 29 Dec - 31 Jan 2020
- Praying with Jesus. 31 Dec - 8 Jan
- Life Healing Journey. January 10 - 19
- The Gift of Ageing. March 6 - 12. Sr Kerin Caldwell SGS
- Paul's Letter to the Galatians. March 20 - 26. Michael Fallon msc
- Visit <http://bit.ly/PaulsLetterGalatians>
- Men's Prayer Weekend. March 27 - 29 Dominic Gleeson msc

For all 2020 retreats visit:

<https://www.towersretreat.org.au/downloads/retreat-programs>

FOR THE CHRISTMAS SEASON



STILL LISTENING TO THE SPIRIT

A collection of essays marking the twentieth anniversary of the publication of 'Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus', which reported the results of research undertaken by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference in partnership with the Australian Catholic University and the Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes (now known as Catholic Religious Australia) concerning the participation of women in the Catholic Church in Australia.

It brings together a diverse range of perspectives on issues concerning women in the Church and in society, providing food for thought and prayer in the discernment phase of preparation for the Plenary Council of the Catholic Church to be held in 2020. The contributors offer the fruit of their listening to the Spirit as internationally recognised scholars, women in leadership roles, young women, pastoral workers and mothers.

Available from the [ACBC Shop](#)



CHRISTMAS DAY MASS

From St Peter's Basilica, Rome
EWTN Wednesday 25 December, 7.30 am

Urbi et Orbi: Pope Francis from Rome
EWTN Wednesday 25 December, 10:00 pm

From St Stephen's Cathedral, Brisbane
Wednesday 25 December, 10:00 am (AEST)

Check the web cast schedule at
<http://bit.ly/2XMssZA>



CHRIST LIVES - CHRISTUS VIVIT

This first ever Vatican document on young people is the result of Francis' reflection following the recent Synod on Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment.

"With great affection, I address this Apostolic Exhortation to all Christian young people. It is meant to remind you of certain convictions born of our faith, and at the same time to encourage you to grow in holiness and commitment to your personal vocation" (paragraph 3).

Visit <http://bit.ly/ChristusVivitPopeFrancis>