

'PREPARING FOR CHRISTMAS'

First Sunday of Advent - 2 Dec 2018

This weekend we begin the *Season of Advent*.

The Archdiocesan Advent Pastoral Letter is [online](#) and copies are available at church.

FIRST ADVENT CANDLE LIT IN PREPARATION

**The first of the four Advent Candles are lit
and we place before God our preparations for Christmas.**

Preparing for Christmas can be even earlier in the Southern Hemisphere, with so much to do during the last week before the annual summer School Holidays. Last Tuesday night, St Joseph's Primary School celebrated *St Joey's Joyful Carols*. And on Friday morning St Joseph's School celebrated the *Mass of Thanksgiving*. We pray for all the schools in this area as they prepare for school holidays.

With the Queensland Bushfires and heatwave at present, some Queensland schools and communities in the fire zones have been evacuated, and some have reopened to complete the school year. During the past week, many in our parish family undertook **to pray for those affected by the bushfires.**

In our community some are preparing for School holidays and family holidays. *St Joey's Vacation Care* begins next Friday afternoon after school breakup. Some will be preparing for Christmas travel and family reunions. Some will be away, some will be at home, and some will be working over Christmas. Some will connect by social media and others can be physically present and enjoy each other's company and stories and memories.

It is a season when community and church choirs visit hospitals and nursing homes and aged care facilities. It is a time when community and church groups deliver Christmas presents and joy to children in hospital and children's homes.

During Advent we prepare and organise ways to make Christmas a more joyful time for others.

- This Tuesday morning our Seniors gather to celebrate.
- On Sunday 16th December we host one of the nine Filipino celebrations of *Simbang Gabi* before Christmas with carols, Eucharist and a meal.
- On Saturday 22nd December we host a Carols Night at 7.30pm at our parish. (after 6pm Mass).

And our three Christmas Masses will be:

24th Dec Christmas Eve Family Mass 6pm,

24th Dec Christmas Eve Night Mass at 9pm (replacing midnight Mass, though same liturgy)

(In reality we bring forward the midnight mass three hours earlier to 9pm).

and 25th Dec Christmas Day Morning Mass at 9am.

GOSPEL OF LUKE 21:25-28, 34-36

Chapter 21 of Luke's Gospel brings an awareness of the wider world.
Jesus is not distant. He names reality and some of the challenges that we face.
Jesus gives life examples of earthquakes and famines and plagues.
And wars and insurrections, nation against nation, kingdom against kingdom.

We do not live in a ghetto.
We are connected to each other.
We are family.

Jesus points to the evacuation of Judea
and fall of the Temple and of Jerusalem to come.
He speaks of the persecutions of Christians to come.
Jesus implores us not to be trapped
by dissipation and drunkenness and life's worries.

And in today's Gospel passage from Chapter 21, Jesus says

***'Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down
with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life,
and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, like a trap.
For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth.
Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength
to escape all these things that will take place,
and to stand before the Son of Man.'***

Earlier in Chapter 21, Jesus promises his presence
and his gift of wisdom to sustain us in persecution

***'for I will give you words and a wisdom
that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict.'***

SOLIDARITY

As Christians we are to be aware how natural disasters affect the human family,
as we reach out in solidarity.
As Christians we are to be aware of the disasters caused by human actions
as we reach out in solidarity.
As Christians we are to be aware
of the personal and family tensions within this part of Brisbane
as we reach out in solidarity.

We thank God this Advent for the opportunity to be with others
and to be of some assistance to

- water wells in villages in one part of South Sudan
- our sister parish Blackall / Tambo and the continuing drought
- St Vincent de Paul members who reach to those in need in our suburbs

- Caritas and Catholic Missions earlier in the year
- Centacare and church agencies through the September appeal
- Donations in the last two weeks from Parish members to Christmas hampers for families of prisoners
- The donations by St John Fisher College and St Joseph's Primary School students and parents and staff to the Christmas hampers that our local St Vincent de Paul members deliver in the local suburbs
- Supporting in practical ways the ACU scholarship partnership with the Archdiocese of Erbil in Iraq
- Visitations of newly arrived families

and the many individual ways people help their neighbour.

We thank God for the initiatives during the *2018 Year of Youth* by our children and youth and young adults' parish groups **BLITZ**, **ROCK** and **SALT**. We thank God for all our parish ministry groups. And we thank God for the blessings we have each received in our parish family.

We remember the advice of Jesus in today's Gospel

'Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength'

Let us be alert this Advent and pray for strength for others and ourselves.

Each week during Advent, we will be invited to pray in solidarity with our sisters and brothers in need wherever they are.

This weekend we continue our prayer for those affected by the **Queensland Bushfires**.

We pray:

We pray to you O God, for our sisters and brothers in Central Queensland and other parts of Queensland suffering from the many bush fire threats and disasters.

We pray for those who have lost property, those who have been evacuated from their homes and towns, those conducting the evacuations and those on standby to evacuate if needed.

We pray to you O God, for the local firefighters battling the fire from the air and the ground.

We pray for all the local SES workers, police and community members helping.

We pray for the interstate firefighters and army personnel joining their efforts.

We pray to you O God for all involved in the enormous human effort to contain the fires and to extinguish them.

We pray for those monitoring the speed and direction of the fires

and the unexpected changes at times.

We pray to you O God for rain
and for the heatwave to subside
and for the winds to decrease.

O God hear our prayers for our sisters and brothers.
And for the land.
Amen.

Fr. Gerry

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/120218.cfm>]

[Parish Facebook: <http://bit.ly/parishFacebook02122018>]

[Prayer for Queensland <http://bit.ly/PrayerQueensland29112018>]

Image: Preparing for Christmas - Jesus Christ is coming, created 1 December 2018 www.stjosephsbrackenridge.com

