

# St Joseph's Catholic Parish

The Nativity of the Lord  
Year A, 25 December, 2022

Embracing the communities of  
Cherbourg, Goomeri, Murgon,  
Proston and Wondai



*Unity in diversity ... being one in Christ through Baptism!*



## Thank You

When I trekked out to join your parish three years ago, I could not foresee our journey together. We were in drought and things were becoming direr. Over that first two years the drought was getting deeper and deeper. By end of October last year the BP dam was down to under 4%. While we were ensuring that, COVID hit and hit us hard. We had to readjust our lives and move forward in a new direction. Then the rains hit and COVID receded.

Through it all as a faith community we came together and joined in prayer. Instead of sticking our heads in the sand, you were resilient and our parish grew. You reached out to each other and supported each other. The Spirit was truly present in our parishioners.

Each of the six parish communities are different, but what unites them is faith and inclusion. From my first day I felt welcomed and accepted as priest and friend. Your warm hospitality was a delight as was the many meals and bottles of wine I shared.

As John arrives to take over as your priest, I wish him all the best and know that you will embrace him. My only regret is that although you are blest with another man of God (Victorian) he is a lesser being in that he is a Hawthorn supporter.



## Simbang Gabi

Thank you for your support in our celebration of the novena for Christmas, this year. It is a long haul having nine 6.00am Masses in a row and your dedication and sense of community was wonderful. Thank you to all who helped to increase my waist line. The food was great and enjoyed by all. I especially wish to thank Yvette, Edith, Paul and our choirs. Without musicians and voices our Masses would not have the same feel or impact. We worked hard and I thank you.

## Mass Schedule

There will be no Masses between Christmas day and Sunday the first of January. But on the weekend we will be back to normal with Proston and Wondai resuming with their vigil Masses.

## New Parish Telephone Number for 2023

**0428 471 848**

As of 1 January, 2023 the Parish will have a new telephone number. The old number will cease to exist after 1 February 2023.

## December is the month of the The Immaculate Conception

Pope's Prayer Intention –  
**For volunteer not-for-profit organisations:**

We pray that volunteer non-profit organisations committed to human development find people dedicated to the common good and ceaselessly seek out new paths to international cooperation.

## Masses Next Week

### Saturday, 31 December

Proston, 9.00am  
Wondai, 5.00pm

### Sunday, 1 January

Murgon, 8.00am  
Gayndah, 10.30am  
Goomeri, 6.00pm

## Today's readings

Isaiah 62:1-5; Acts 13:16-17, 22-25;  
Matthew 1:1-25

*Response:*

For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.

*Gospel Acclamation:*

Alleluia, alleluia! Tomorrow the wickedness of the earth will be destroyed: the Saviour of the world will be our king. Alleluia!

Next Sunday: Numbers 6:22-27;  
Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:16-21

# Reflection – Pope Francis

The prophecy we heard in the first reading was fulfilled in the Gospel: as shepherds kept watch over their flocks by night, “the glory of the Lord shone around them” (Lk 2:9). In the midst of our earthly night, a light appeared from heaven. What is the meaning of this light that shone in the darkness? Saint Paul tells us: “The grace of God has appeared”. The grace of God, “bringing salvation to all” (Tit 2:11), has shone on our world this night.

But what is this grace? It is divine love, the love that changes lives, renews history, liberates from evil, fills hearts with peace and joy. Tonight the love of God has been revealed to us: it is Jesus. In Jesus, the Most High made himself tiny, so that we might love him. But we can still ask ourselves: why does Saint Paul describe the coming of God into our world as “grace”? To tell us that it is utterly free. Whereas on earth everything seems to be about giving in order to get, God comes down freely. His love is non-negotiable: we did nothing to deserve it and we will never be able to repay it.

The grace of God has appeared. Tonight we realise that, when we failed to measure up, God became small for our sake; while we were going about our own business, he came into our midst. Christmas reminds us that God continues to love us all, even the worst of us. To me, to you, to each of us, he says today: “I love you and I will always love you, for you are precious in my eyes”.

God does not love you because you think and act the right way. He loves you, plain and simple. His love is unconditional; it does not depend on you. You may have mistaken ideas, you may have made a complete mess of things, but the Lord continues to love you. How often do we think that God is good if we are good and punishes us if we are bad. Yet that is not how he is. For all our sins, he continues to love us. His love does not change. It is not fickle; it is faithful. It is patient. This is the gift we find at Christmas. He is born in utter poverty in order to win our hearts by the wealth of his love.

The “great joy” proclaimed tonight to the shepherds is indeed “for all the people”. We too, with all our weaknesses and failures, are among those shepherds, who were certainly not saints. And just as God called the shepherds, so too he calls us, for he loves us. In the dark night of life, he says to us as he did to them, “Be not afraid!” (Lk 2:10). Take courage, do not lose confidence, do not lose hope, do not think that to love is a waste of time! Tonight love has conquered fear, new hope has arrived, God’s kindly light has overcome the darkness of human arrogance.

Mankind, God loves you; for your sake he became man. You are no longer alone!

Dear brothers and sisters, what are we to do with this grace? Only one thing: accept the gift. Before we go out to seek God, let us allow ourselves to be sought by him. He always seeks us first. Let us not begin with our own abilities but with his grace, for he, Jesus, is the Saviour. Let us contemplate the Child and let ourselves be caught up in his tender love. Then we have no further excuse for not letting ourselves be loved by him. Whatever goes wrong in our lives, whatever doesn’t work in the Church, whatever problems there are in the world, will no longer serve as an excuse. It will become secondary, for faced with Jesus’ extravagant love, a love of utter meekness and closeness, we have no excuse. At Christmas, the question is this: “Do I allow myself to be loved by God? Do I abandon myself to his love that comes to save me?”

So great a gift deserves immense gratitude. To accept this grace means being ready to give thanks in return. Often we live our lives with such little gratitude. Today is the right day to draw near to the tabernacle, the crèche, the manger, and to say thank you. Let us receive the gift that is Jesus, in order then to become gift like Jesus. To become gift is to give meaning to life. And it is the best way to change the world: we change, the Church changes, history changes, once we stop trying to change others but try to change ourselves and to make of our life a gift.

Jesus shows this to us tonight. He did not change history by pressuring anyone or by a flood of words, but by the gift of his life. He did not wait until we were good before he loved us, but gave himself freely to us. May we not wait for our neighbours to be good before we do good to them, for the Church to be perfect before we love her, for others to respect us before we serve them. Let us begin with ourselves. This is what it means freely to accept the gift of grace. And holiness is nothing other than preserving this freedom.

A charming legend relates that at the birth of Jesus the shepherds hurried to the stable with different gifts. Each brought what he had; some brought the fruits of their labour, others some precious item. But as they were all presenting their gifts, there was one shepherd who had nothing to give. He was extremely poor; he had no gift to present. As the others were competing to offer their gifts, he stood apart, embarrassed. At a certain point, Saint Joseph and Our Lady found it hard to receive all those gifts, especially Mary, who had to hold the baby.



## Parish Directory, Saint Joseph’s Parish

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PO Box 60 Murgon 4605  
Parish website:  
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## Safeguarding

If you have experienced abuse or misconduct, you can ring the help line, **1300 304 550**. Information can be shared anonymously.

### We pray for those who are sick:

Bevan Barsby; Cira; Renee Elliott;  
Justine Forde; Val Iacono; Jill Maclure;  
Annette McCorry.

## Collections

11 December..... \$513.00  
18 December..... \$1,082.00

**Direct Debit** BSB 064-786  
Account 100011987

Seeing that shepherd with empty hands, she asked him to draw near. And she put the baby Jesus in his arms. That shepherd, in accepting him, became aware of having received what he did not deserve, of holding in his arms the greatest gift of all time. He looked at his hands, those hands that seemed to him always empty; they had become the cradle of God. He felt himself loved and, overcoming his embarrassment, began to show Jesus to the others, for he could not keep for himself the gift of gifts.

Dear brother, dear sister, if your hands seem empty, if you think your heart is poor in love, this night is for you.

The grace of God has appeared, to shine forth in your life. Accept it and the light of Christmas will shine forth in you.

