



The Catholic Parishes of Branxton and Singleton are part of the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle

**Third Sunday of Advent, Year B**

**17 December 2023**

**First Reading**      **Is 61:1-2, 10-11**  
*A reading from the prophet Isaiah*

The spirit of the Lord has been given to me,  
for the Lord has anointed me.  
He has sent me to bring good news to the  
poor,  
to bind up hearts that are broken;  
to proclaim liberty to captives,  
freedom to those in prison;  
to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord.  
'I exult for joy in the Lord,  
my soul rejoices in my God,  
for he has clothed me in the garments of  
salvation,  
he has wrapped me in the cloak of integrity,  
like a bridegroom wearing his wreath,  
like a bride adorned in her jewels.  
'For as the earth makes fresh things grow,  
as a garden makes seeds spring up,  
so will the Lord make both integrity and  
praise  
spring up in the sight of the nations.'  
The Word of the Lord  
**Thanks be to God.**

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

*(R.) My soul rejoices in my God.*

My soul glorifies the Lord,  
my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.  
He looks on his servant in her nothingness;  
henceforth all ages will call me blessed. **(R.)**

The Almighty works marvels for me.  
Holy his name!  
His mercy is from age to age,  
on those who fear him. **(R.)**

He fills the starving with good things,  
sends the rich away empty.  
He protects Israel, his servant,  
remembering his mercy. **(R.)**

**Second Reading**      **1 Thes 5:16-24**  
*A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the  
Thessalonians.*

Be happy at all times; pray constantly; and for  
all things give thanks to God, because this is  
what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus.

Never try to suppress the Spirit or treat the  
gift of prophecy with contempt; think before  
you do anything – hold on to what is good and  
avoid every form of evil.

May the God of peace make you perfect and  
holy; and may you all be kept safe and  
blameless, spirit, soul and body, for the  
coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. God has  
called you and he will not fail you.

The Word of the Lord  
**Thanks be to God.**

**Gospel Acclamation**      **Is 61:1 (Lk 4:18)**

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

**Gospel**      **Jn 1:6-8, 19-28**  
*A reading from the holy Gospel according to  
John.*

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.

The Gospel of the Lord  
**Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.**

## GOSPEL FOCUS

### Same but different

*Having the same gospel passage from  
two different gospels used in the liturgy in  
consecutive weeks is an ideal opportunity  
to highlight the different focus adopted  
by the different gospels. The language of  
John's gospel is remarkably different from  
that of the three synoptic gospels (synoptic  
= 'seen together'). The synoptics share a  
fairly common narrative style, while John  
relies much more on metaphor and  
imagery – it is a more poetic language.  
In the gospel account of John the Baptist  
we see in John's gospel greater emphasis  
on the conversation around what was  
occurring, while the Markan version  
emphasises recording the event.*



### REFLECTION BY FR MICHAEL TATE

#### *Witness to the Light*

St John's Gospel never calls John, 'the  
Baptist'. No, he is John the Witness: 'a  
witness to speak for the Light'. We discover  
in this Gospel that this light is embodied in  
Jesus Christ, most graphically portrayed in  
the Transfiguration when Christ's body is  
radiant, translucent, with Divine Light.

Jesus Christ is the light of the world, the  
One who came to liberate human beings  
from the many dark captivities which  
imprison them, the One who vanquished  
the inky blackness of the tomb.

We can become partakers in the life of this  
Divine Light. At baptism, this is symbolised  
by the lighting of a small candle from the  
great Easter candle which is sung into the  
church on the Easter Vigil as 'Christ our  
Light', the Conqueror of Death.

As a baptised people our allegiance to 'The  
Light' is not to be a private matter between  
'me and God'. No, like John, we must bear  
witness to 'The Light' by being instruments  
of His power to dispel the darkness which  
can enshroud people's lives.

We could pause for a moment to commit  
ourselves to fulfil the promise of our  
baptismal candle so that we might more  
authentically celebrate the birth of the  
Divine Light come into human history

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<b>ENTRANCE ANTIPHON:</b> Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice. Indeed, the Lord is near.
<b>COMMUNION ANTIPHON:</b> Say to the faint of heart: Be strong and do not fear. Behold, our God will come, and he will save us.
<b>NEXT WEEK'S SCRIPTURES</b> Fourth Sunday of Advent, Year B <b>1st Reading:</b> 2 Sm 7:1-5, 8-12, 14, 16 <b>2nd Reading:</b> Rom 16:25-27 <b>Gospel:</b> Lk 1:26-38
<b>MYSTERY OF FAITH</b> When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death O Lord until you come again.

## Prayer Requests

**Sick:** Lorraine Cooper, Phuong Ho, Ron Hebbe, Austin Hoffman, Warren Markham, Jen Phillips, Olga Roberts, Cecilia Rosenthal, Selene Maree Stanholm-Atkins, Patricia Wilson and Sharon Wood. **Bring healing, comfort, and peace to their bodies. Send strength to their carers.**

**Anniversaries:** Mary Cox, Dulcie Standing, Marjorie Bendeich, Lucian Gorczyca, Boleslaw and Victoria Szumilas. **Having returned to the Father, may they rest in peace.**

**Recently Deceased:** Jim Kirkman and Scott Andrews. **May they rest in peace and light perpetual shine upon them.**

**Baptisms:** Patrick Hassett and Eli Quinn (Branxton). Hunter, Archer and Grace Hunter (Singleton). **Called by name to be a child of God.**

*Due to Privacy Laws, names of the sick and deceased can only be put in the bulletin with the permission of the immediate family.*

## PARISH CONTACTS

<b>Parish Priest</b>	<b>Rev Thomas Chirackal</b>	Presbytery: 6578 9651	Email: <a href="mailto:Thomas.chirackal@mn.catholic.org.au">Thomas.chirackal@mn.catholic.org.au</a>
<b>Parish Secretary</b>	<b>Mrs Erica Janssen</b>	Parish Office: 02 5507 4048 (Tues-Fri, 9am-3pm) Unit 5, 16 Cambridge St, Singleton	Email: <a href="mailto:singleton.branxton@mn.catholic.org.au">singleton.branxton@mn.catholic.org.au</a> Web: <a href="http://www.singletoncatholicparish.org.au">www.singletoncatholicparish.org.au</a>
<b>Facebook</b>	Catholic Parishes of Singleton and Branxton	<b>Promoters of Safeguarding</b> Contact via the Parish Office	Singleton Parish: Niamh Marzol Branxton Parish: Lydia Gorczyca
<b>St Patrick's Parish PLEASE PHONE THE PARISH OFFICE FOR BOOKINGS OF PARISH CHURCHES (5507 4048)</b>			
<b>Singleton</b>	<i>St Patrick's Church</i>	Queen Street Singleton 2330	
<b>Broke</b>	<i>Immaculate Conception Catholic Church</i>	Wollombi Street, Broke	
<b>Glendon Brook</b>	<i>St. Paul's Catholic Church</i>	874 Glendonbrook Road, Glendon Brook	
<b>St Brigid's Parish PLEASE PHONE THE PARISH OFFICE FOR BOOKINGS OF PARISH CHURCHES (5507 4048)</b>			
<b>Branxton</b>	St Brigid's Catholic Church	Station St, Branxton 2335	
<b>Greta</b>	St Catherine's Catholic Church	Branxton Street, Greta 2334	

## Schools in our Parishes

<b>St. Catherine's Catholic College</b>	<b>Principal: Mrs Niamh Marzol</b>	K-12 Office: 02 6578 9600	Email: <a href="mailto:admin@singleton.catholic.edu.au">admin@singleton.catholic.edu.au</a>
<b>Rosary Park Catholic School</b>	<b>Principal: Miss Sallyanne Stanbridge</b>	K-6 Office: 02 4938 1541	Email: <a href="mailto:admin@branxton.mn.catholic.edu.au">admin@branxton.mn.catholic.edu.au</a>
<b>St Nicholas Early Education Singleton</b>	<b>Director: Ms Madison Keevill</b>	Office: 02 4015 2860	Email: <a href="mailto:singleton@stnicholasmn.org.au">singleton@stnicholasmn.org.au</a>
<b>St Nicholas Early Education Branxton</b>	<b>Director: Ms Alex Stafford</b>	Office: 02 4931 1220	Email: <a href="mailto:branxton@stnicholasmn.org.au">branxton@stnicholasmn.org.au</a>

## MASS ROSTER – SUNDAY 24 DECEMBER 2023 (4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT)

	<b>Branxton Saturday 6pm</b>	<b>Greta Sunday 8am</b>	<b>Singleton Sunday 7am</b>	<b>Singleton Sunday 10am</b>	<b>Singleton Sunday 6pm</b>	<b>Counters 9.30am Tuesday</b>
<b>Welcomer</b>	E Bendeich	D & J Clarke		J Dries		G McMillan
<b>Commentator</b>		L Harrison		<b>VOLUNTEER NEEDED</b>		
<b>Readers</b>	J Stafa S Stafa	A Humphreys		R James D Cantrall		
<b>Prayers</b>		L Harrison				
<b>Offertory</b>	S McAlister S Trunk	C Miller N Ernst		<b>VOLUNTEER NEEDED</b>		
<b>Rosary Leader</b>		D Clarke				

*Faithful and compassionate God, your Spirit guides the Church and makes it holy; hear the prayers we offer, that in the ministry to which you have called us, may we serve you faithfully, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.*

## WEEKLY MASS DIARY

<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Sunday</b>
<b>18 December</b>	<b>19 December</b>	<b>20 December</b>	<b>21 December</b> <i>St Peter Canisius</i>	<b>22 December</b>	<b>23 December</b> <i>St John of Kanty</i>	<b>24 December</b> FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT, YEAR B
<b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	<b>OFFICE OPEN</b>	<b>OFFICE OPEN</b>	<b>OFFICE OPEN</b>	<b>OFFICE OPEN</b>		
<u>8.00am</u> <b>Mass</b> <i>St Patrick's Singleton</i>	<u>6.00pm</u> <b>Mass</b> <i>St Patrick's Singleton</i>	<u>9.20am</u> <b>Mass</b> <i>St Patrick's Singleton</i>	<u>6.00pm</u> <b>Mass</b> <i>St Patrick's Singleton</i>	<u>9.20am</u> <b>Anointing Mass</b> <i>St Patrick's Singleton</i>  <u>11.00am</u> <b>Mass</b> <i>Elizabeth Gates</i>	<u>9.00am</u> Novena <u>9.20am</u> <b>Mass</b> <i>St Patrick's Singleton</i>	<u>10.00am</u> <b>Mass</b>  <u>6.30pm</u> <b>Mass</b> <b>Christmas Vigil</b> <u>12.00am</u> <b>Mass</b> <b>Midnight</b> <i>St Patrick's Singleton</i>
	<u>9.20am</u> <b>Mass</b> <i>St Catherine's Greta</i>		<u>9.20am</u> <b>Mass</b> <i>St Brigid's Branxton</i>		<u>6.00pm</u> <b>Mass</b> <i>St Brigid's Branxton</i>	<u>8.15am</u> <b>SCAE</b> <i>St Catherine's Greta</i>  <u>6.00pm</u> <b>Mass</b> <b>Christmas Vigil</b> <i>St Brigid's Branxton</i>

***St Brigid, St Catherine, St Patrick, and St Paul – pray for us***

# Weekly Notices

## **WELCOME TO OUR PARISH**

We welcome visitors from all faith communities to our Parish Mass. If you are new members of our Parish, we ask that you take a Welcome Pack from the back of the church, complete and return the Member forms and one of our welcoming team will contact you.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians, the Wonnarua people, who have walked upon and cared for this land for thousands of years. We acknowledge the continued deep spiritual attachment and relationship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to this country and commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of Reconciliation.

## **SAFEGUARDING OUR CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS**

The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle has an abiding commitment to promote the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults. Information brochures are available in the entrance to the church. If you have any concerns for a child or vulnerable adult, contact the Office of Safeguarding 02 49791390 or [childprotection@mn.catholic.org.au](mailto:childprotection@mn.catholic.org.au) or visit [www.officeofsafeguarding.org.au](http://www.officeofsafeguarding.org.au) for more information and resources.

## **St Brigid's Caritas Group**

St Brigid's Caritas Group thank you for your support in 2023. May this Christmas season fill your home with joy and peace.

## **Christmas Offering Envelopes**

Christmas Offering envelopes are available at each church and are also included in planned giving envelope sets. These offerings are sent to the Maitland Central Clergy Fund. Please place your offering on either collection plate at Mass.

## **Christmas around the Diocese**

Are you thinking about attending mass this Christmas? If you're not sure where to go, we've put together a list of services happening across the Diocese! Access it here: [www.mn.catholic.org.au/news-events/christmasmasstimes2023/](http://www.mn.catholic.org.au/news-events/christmasmasstimes2023/)

## **Parish Bereavement Teams – Expression of Interests**

Interested persons are invited to contact the Parish Office to submit an Expression of Interest for either the Singleton or Branxton Parish Bereavement Teams. Members of the Bereavement Teams tirelessly support and service people of our parish in their time of loss. They liaise with the Parish Funeral Directors when funeral arrangements are required. Ministers in the team will undertake the Stepping Stones formation program.

## **Hope Tree Project 14 – Martha's Piggery**

Thank you to everyone who has donated to the Hope Tree Group Project 14 – Martha's Piggery. A total of \$3251.25 was collected from our church donation boxes, St Brigid's Caritas Group, the Legion of Mary Greta and generous personal donations. We are pleased to report that the first load of bricks has been delivered to Martha's house to begin building the piggery. We will post further updates as they come in.



## **Hope Tree Group Updates**

Assistance to the value of \$400 has been provided to Alikutty Kuriakos to assist with her medical and hospital expenses. A special thank you to St Catherine's Catholic College who have been collecting and recycling cans and bottles during the year and raised \$1078.20 which will go towards the Christmas appeal. A copy of the *HOPE TREE GROUP ANNUAL REPORT* will be available at each Mass centre and on our parish website.

## **2024 God's Word – Daily Reflections**

Designed to help you to keep the Word of God close to your heart in your daily life. A companion on the journey to pray, to share, to grow in God's love and be nourished by the Word of God. Includes the Bible readings set down for each day, with a reflection. Limited copies are available at the Parish Office. Please bring \$15 cash for payment.

## **Caritas – Global Gifts Change Lives**

Caritas Australia's Global Gifts Christmas cards are a great way to spread joy and hope this Christmas season and to make a life-changing impact. Each gift represents a donation that will support vulnerable communities to create a brighter future. Order now to receive in time for Christmas at [www.globalgifts.org.au](http://www.globalgifts.org.au)

## The Nativity of the Lord



### **CHRISTMAS VIGIL MASS**

**St Brigid's Branxton 6.00pm**  
**St Patrick's Singleton 6.30pm**

### **CHRISTMAS MIDNIGHT MASS**

**St Patrick's Singleton 12.00am**

### **CHRISTMAS DAY MASS**

**St Catherine's Greta 8.00am**  
**St Patrick's Singleton 10.00am**



## **Parish Office Holiday Hours**

The Parish Office changes for the rest of the month:

**OPEN** Tues 19 Dec -to Fri 22 Dec

**CLOSED** 25 Dec to 5 Jan (Bulletins for this period will be published on 22 December).

## **2023 Christmas Message – God is with Us**

"May our contemplation of the Christ child this Christmas fill our hearts and souls with hope, peace and joy because we know that God is with us. God bless you all and Happy Christmas."

Listen to Bishop Michael Kennedy's Christmas message using this link! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jnZ6A-35mcl>

## **Do you have the Mass App?**

Whether you're at home or travelling, the Diocese's mobile app shows you Churches and Mass times near you. If you're looking to attend Christmas Mass in your Parish, or you're just not sure about upcoming Mass times near you, simply searching in the app by your location allows you to find service times in your area. You can download the app for free from the **Apple App Store** and **Google Play Store**. Just search for 'Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle' and click install on your mobile or tablet!

## **Donations for Christmas Decorations**

If you would like to contribute to the decorating of the churches for Advent and Christmas, please leave your donation in an envelope with the collections marked "Christmas Decorations".



# The Lighting of the Advent Candles

## Third Sunday of Advent: The Joy Candle

**During the third week of Advent, we focus on good news for all through the birth of Christ.**

*(Lighting of the third candle (pink) of the Advent Wreath – the Joy Candle)*

**Leader:** We light the 3rd Advent Candle as a sign of joy – a testimony to the Light of God coming into our world that will shatter the darkness and bring healing to all who suffer and mourn.

**All:** **Loving God, we thank you for the joy you bring us. Help us prepare our hearts for this gift. Bless our worship. Help us to hear and to do your word. We ask it in the name of the one born in Bethlehem, Jesus our Lord. Amen.**

## Who is John the Baptist?

Indicate whether each answer is either true or false



The cousin of Jesus

True  
 False



A pharisee

True  
 False



Elijah

True  
 False



The son of Elizabeth

True  
 False



A preacher

True  
 False



The Messiah

True  
 False



## Gaudete Sunday

The third Sunday in Advent is called Gaudete Sunday; the Sunday of Joy!

What are three things you can do to bring joy into the lives of others during this week of Advent?

1

2

3