

Responsorial Psalm Response

Ps 23:1-6 R: v. 7.10

Let the Lord enter;
he is king of glory.**Gospel Acclamation****Alleluia, Alleluia!**A virgin will give birth to a son;
his name will be Emmanuel: God is with us.
Alleluia!**WEEKEND MASSES****Epping** 5:00pm Vigil, 8:30am, 10:15am, 6:00pm**Carlingford** 6:00pm Vigil, 7:45am, 9:30am**WEEKDAY MASSES**

	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thur.	Fri.	Sat.	
EPPING	No Mass	No Mass	9:15am	12:15pm	12:15pm	9:15am	Christmas Mass Times
CARLINGFORD	9:30am	No Mass	9:30am	9:30am	9:30am	No Mass	on cover of bulletin

HEALING MASS Carlingford—1st Thursday, Epping — 3rd Wednesday**EXPOSITION OF THE EUCHARIST:** Epping Saturday 9:45-10:15am, Carlingford, 4th Thursday 10:00am**SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION:** Epping Saturday 9:45-10:15am Carlingford Saturday 5:00—5:30pm
OR BY APPOINTMENT**BAPTISMS AND WEDDINGS: BY APPOINTMENT****PARISH OFFICE:** 29 Oxford Street, Epping NSW 2121 **PH:** 9876 2853 **Email:** parish@eppcarl.org.au**ST GERARD MAJELLA PRIMARY SCHOOL:** **PH:** 9871 1633 **Email:** sgc@dbb.catholic.edu.au**OUR LADY HELP OF CHRISTANS PRIMARY SCHOOL:** **PH:** 9868 3322 **Email:** olhc@dbb.catholic.edu.au**Lord, in Jesus your Son, you restored to us the gift of Everlasting life. Grant that life to:****Recently deceased:** Luisa Guareschi, Monica Courtenay, Marlangela Ferragina, Alexander Steuerwald, Patricia Frear, Kathleen Prust (sister of Alan Ryan), Helen McKeon (mother of Fr Jim McKeon), Colin Randazzo (Bishop Anthony's father), Alan Hartman, Fr Martin Lam (brother of Bernadine Jamieson), Bob Harmer, Marie Breen Cousew,*Please pray for Geoffrey Ranson (Father of Rev Fr David Ranson who died last Sunday
The funeral Mass will be held in Launceston Tasmania**Please pray for Roderick "Rod" Michie who died on Monday, 8th December
The funeral service will be held on Monday 23rd December at 11am at the Divine Word Chapel***Anniversaries:** Maryanne Whealing,**Also for:** Young Hwan Ho, Yong Min Ho, Young Seok Seo, Maria Hur, Soo Woog Jin, Patrick & Mary Goodwin, Aileen Goodwin, Katherine Whitfield, Sr. M Mark, Annette Cammon, Deceased members of the Hurney & Waddell families, Mark Hillier, John, Elizabeth & Kathleen McEearney, Richard, John & Noon Barry, Ivan & Edith Almeida and family members, Bert Saul, Sylvia & Victor Carlon, Joseph & Lilian Saul, Doreen & Joe Saul, Tony Moses.**Please pray for those who are sick:** Sean Huhse, Joel Steinberg, Patricia Rumble, Dean Pan, John Davies, Nicole Greenfield, Michael Furlong, Saulius Dovydas Balsys, Residents of Wesley Rayward Nursing Home, Mark Di Palma, Anthony Conlon, Andrew Hannam, The Craig Family, Fr Mick Court, Margaret Maher, Anna & Leo Bruzze, Gerhard Stieger, Dorothea Ellis, Rebecca Lawler, Ben Thornton, Elaine Finlayson, Jan Doherty, Brian Walsh, Patricia O'Connor, Kathy Noonan, Alice Eng, Peck Quah, Dorothy Bonaccorso, Narelda & Alan Ryan, Kit Smith, Margaret Floyd, Peter Baker, Bev Aliprandi, Barbara Madafiglio, Greg Walsh, John Gilberti, Stella Nathan, Catherine Walsh, Brendan Stone, Melanie Loudoun, Mary Wijewardana, Elaine Hunt, Arnold Day, Maureen Carlon, Fr Adrian Borst, Augustine Hong, Luba Charlton, George Khouri, Antony Hogan, Ingrid Connor, Steve Toth, Martin & Gay Flood, William Jones, Nicholas Rajanayagen, Maria Lee, Patricia Muschalik, Delma Soria, Sr Abanasia Lee, Maria Belisario, Stella, Edwards, Fara Vargas, Theo Stevens, Monica Weeden, Thomas Woodward, Wai Chun Wong, Heather Stoodley, Sr Pauline Wicks rsj,

Date	Mass	Epping	Mass	Carlingford
24/12/19	6:00pm	Fr Peter Dowd	5:00pm	Fr Bogdan Skupien
25/12/19	Midnight	Fr Peter Dowd	10:00pm	Fr Bogdan Skupien
25/12/19	8:30am	Fr Bogdan Skupien	7:45am	Fr Peter Dowd
25/12/19	10:15am	Fr Bogdan Skupien	9:30am	Fr Peter Dowd
25/12/19	6:00pm	NO MASS		

Date	Mass	Epping	Mass	Carlingford
28/12/19	5:00pm	Fr Peter Dowd	6:00pm	Fr Bogdan Skupien
29/12/19	8:30am	Fr Peter Dowd	7:45am	Fr Bogdan Skupien
29/12/19	10:15am	Fr Peter Dowd	9:30am	Fr Bogdan Skupien
29/12/19	6:00pm	Fr Peter Dowd		

**AFTER HOURS SICK CALLS—
9876 2853**

Outside office hours our office phones divert to Fr Peter and Fr Bogdan at home. In the event that they are unavailable, their answering machines will record your message or ring the number given in the message. However, if possible please restrict routine enquiries to office hours.

**The Catholic Parish of Epping and Carlingford
Diocese of Broken Bay****Our Lady Help of Christians' Church**
31 Oxford Street, Epping and**St Gerard Majella Church**
543 North Rocks Road, Carlingford**Parish Priest: Fr Peter Dowd,**
Ph.: 9876 2853
Email: peter@eppcarl.org.au**Parish Office: 02 9876 2853****Assistant Priest: Fr Bogdan Skupien**
Ph.: 9872 3400
Email: Bogdan.Skupien@bbccatholic.org.au**Email:** parish@eppcarl.org.au**Parish Website:** www.bbccatholic.org.au/epppingcarlingford**Welcome to our Parish of Epping and Carlingford** consisting of our two worshipping communities of St Gerard Majella's at Carlingford and Our Lady Help of Christians at Epping. If you are new to the area or visiting today we are glad that you are with us, and we hope that our celebrations of the Eucharist together will provide both nourishment and challenge on your Christian journey.**YEAR A****FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT****22-12-19****Isaiah 7:10-14****Romans 1:1-7****Matthew 1:18-24**

Dear Parishioners,

The Advent season's anticipation and longing for the celebration of the coming feast of Christmas reaches a crescendo as we enter into these final few days of preparation! With all the hustle and bustle which this time brings, I encourage you between now and Christmas Day to try and find some quiet 'God moments', time to pause, breathe in the freshness of the God's world around you and to take seriously the injunction of the psalmist to "Be still and know that I am God!" Christmas is not just about remembering what occurred in Bethlehem over 2000 years ago; more importantly is how we receive and respond to that gift of the 'God made Flesh' into our lives and those of our families and loved ones **today!** For that to happen we need to be able to first stop and then listen to how God is speaking God's Word in the seemingly ordinariness, humdrum and at times chaos of life. After all, it was into such a reality that our Saviour Jesus Christ was born on the very first Christmas Day!

Finally, as we come towards the end of the year I would like to offer a big 'thank you' for all your generosity of time, talent and treasure! The contributions to the Angel Tree and St Vincent de Paul Christmas Appeal, for example, are greatly appreciated and reflect a deep compassion and concern for those in need on the part of you all.

Fr Peter

**Christmas Mass Times****CHRISTMAS EVE: TUESDAY, 24 DECEMBER**

Family Masses in both our Churches
Carlingford 5pm Vigil
Epping 6pm Vigil

As part of our support for Vinnies Christmas Appeal we invite the children to consider bringing a monetary gift rather than foodstuff to the Mass. The children will be invited to bring their gift forward and place it in a box near the Christmas tree during the Mass.

Carlingford:
Night Mass will commence at 10:00pm preceded by Carols at 9:30pm.**Epping:**
Midnight Mass preceded by Carols at 11:30pm.**CHRISTMAS MORNING: WEDNESDAY, 25TH DECEMBER****Carlingford:**
7:45am Mass & 9:30am Mass**Epping:**
8:30am Mass & 10:15am Mass
NO 6pm Mass**THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

Please note that the scheduled date for Reconciliation before Christmas is on:

Monday **23rd December** after the **9:30am Mass** at Carlingford.

Parish Mission Statement

We are a diverse Catholic community centred in the Eucharist. We gather for worship to serve and reach out to others as we grow in relationship with God and each other.

Safeguarding Message December 2019

We the people of the Catholic Parish of Epping and Carlingford are committed to fostering communities of safety and care for all people, especially for children and others in the community who are vulnerable. Our commitment is underscored by our faith in Jesus Christ

A thought on Midnight Mass . . .

One of the most beautiful things in the treasury of our Church is the tradition of Midnight Mass. 'The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light.' Advent reminds us of something that's true of all life – that we search and look for God sometimes in darkness, sometimes full of our human uncertainties. We discover God in that darkness – we glimpse those moments of light and peace which enable us to continue on the journey. The timing of Midnight Mass is beautiful. Our gift to God is to stay awake on this great feast till those still night hours, that time of deep darkness which symbolises the darkness in which we wait for God to enter our lives. And then the celebration of the light of God's coming is even more symbolic: light and joy break into the stillness and darkness of that midnight hour. It's a beautiful way to keep vigil and to usher in the celebration of the birth that changes the world. We do it at a time free from all the frantic preparations of Christmas Eve and before the busyness of Christmas Day itself. Please try to come along to the beautiful celebration of Midnight Mass this Christmas.



A reflection for the fourth Sunday of Advent...

The Fourth and last Sunday of this beautiful season has always been dominated by the figure of Mary, and by the figure of Mary as a sign of hope. Mary has a crucial importance in our Catholic faith: she is one of us, a model of what God wishes to do in us and a model of what can happen when we respond to God's grace. The Mary we meet in Advent is Mary pregnant with hope: she is to give birth to God made flesh, to be the bearer of God's life and love to the world. And in that Mary stands as both a sign of hope and a challenge for us: as a sign of hope she reminds us that God's love is lavished on us in Jesus; as a challenge she reminds us that we too are called to be „God-bearers“, to recognise that we are pregnant with God, and that our call through baptism is to bring God to birth in our own lives and the lives of others.



Government-funded Home Care Packages
Catholic Healthcare's local Care Advisors can work with you to create a customised support plan. Their in-home services include gardening, shopping, meal preparation, transport and nursing. **Get a quote on 1300 734 350**

Alpha begins Tuesday 3 March 2020—Parish Hall Epping



Our first task ~ please pray for all who will be blessed by Alpha for Alpha relies on the Holy Spirit to guide and inspire. Nothing happens without the Holy Spirit and everything happens with the Holy Spirit. Fr Peter asks us to

pray to the Holy Spirit for us to be missionary, to go out to others and invite them to Alpha. We also pray for the Holy Spirit to move the hearts of people to come.

The Holy Spirit works through a team of people committed to their guests. These hosts and helpers and the hospitality Task Force are being called to join the team that makes Alpha available at Epping. Alpha begins on Tuesday 3 March in 2020.

Come Holy Spirit, fill us with your love, use us to witness to your love and show us who to invite to experience your love.

Solemnity/Feast Days this Week

Wednesday 25th December:

Solemnity The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas Day)

Thursday 26th December:

Feast St Stephen, the first martyr.

Friday 27th December:

Feast St John, apostle, evangelist

Saturday 28th December:

Feast The Holy Innocents, martyrs.

NEXT SUNDAY 29th December:

being the Sunday with the Octave of Christmas, is the Feast of the Holy Family

Parish Office Hours Between Christmas and New Year:

Our Parish Office will be CLOSED from **12 noon on Christmas Eve** until **Wednesday 8th January**. For emergency sick calls or in the event of the need to make funeral arrangements please ring 9876 2853 as usual (the phone is always diverted to Fr Peter's home outside of office hours). Please leave a message, which will be returned promptly.

However – NO office or routine enquiries during that time please.



National Drought Prayer

Eternal God,
in wisdom and love
you created our earth
to sustain us and give us life.

We turn to you now
in faith, hope and love,
asking you to look with favour
on our drought-stricken land,
on our starving animals,
on our failing crops.

Strengthen, sustain and give
new heart to our farmers
and to all who are affected
by drought:
be with those who support them.

In your loving providence,
send abundant rain and
restore our parched earth.

Father of all compassion,
hear our prayer
through Jesus Christ your Son,
in whom the promise of new life
has dawned, and through the
power of the Holy Spirit,
the Lord the giver of life:

Renew your faithful people:
Renew the face of the earth.

Our Lady of the Southern Cross,
Mary, help of Christians –
Pray for us.
St Mary of the Cross MacKillop –
Pray for us.

The Truth Justice and Healing Council

www.thecouncil.org.au

THE NICENE CREED

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven, (all bow)
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored and
glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the world to come.
Amen.

ECUMENICAL RELATIONSHIPS

Our parish is strongly committed to ecumenism and a formal Covenant has been signed with the Anglican Parish of Epping, Epping Uniting Church, West Epping Uniting Church and Epping Baptist Church.



Awesome service. Amazing results.

Betty Ockerlander
bettyockerlander@mcgrath.com.au
0408 505 080

McGrath

Have You Told Us? If you have recently changed your address, phone number or email. For parishioners who give by credit card, does your credit card expire in the near future? Please give the parish office a call on 9876 2853 if you have received a new credit card and/or a new expiry date.

Admitted to Hospital

A reminder that if you are admitted to hospital, please try to ensure that you write down your religion as Catholic on the admission form, so that you can receive Catholic services during your stay.



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Reflection on this Sunday's Gospel—Joseph's Fidelity

There are countless persons, basilicas, churches, shrines, seminaries, convents, and even towns and cities named after St. Joseph. My native country, Canada, has him as its patron.

Who exactly is this Joseph? He is that quiet figure prominently named in the Christmas story as the husband of Mary and the stepfather of Jesus, and then basically is never mentioned again. The pious conception of him is that of an older man, a safe protector to Mary, a carpenter by trade, chaste and holy, humble and quiet, the perfect patron for manual laborers and anonymous virtue, humility incarnate.

But what do we really know about him?

In the Gospel of Matthew the annunciation of Jesus' conception is given to Joseph rather than to Mary: Before they came together, Mary was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. Joseph, her husband, being an upright man and unwilling to shame her, had decided to divorce her quietly, when an angel appeared to him in a dream and told him not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife, that the child in her had been conceived through the Holy Spirit.

What does one do when God breaks into one's life in new, previously unimaginable ways? What can we learn from this text?

Partly it is symbolic: the Joseph of the Christmas story is clearly reminiscent of the Joseph of the Exodus story, he too has a dream, he too goes to Egypt, and he too saves the family. Likewise King Herod is clearly the counterpart of the Egyptian Pharaoh; both feel threatened and both kill the Hebrew male children only to have God protect the life of the one who is to save the people.

But, after that, the Joseph of the Christmas story writes his own history: he is presented to us as an "upright" man, a designation that scholars say implies that he has conformed himself to the Law of God, the supreme Jewish standard of holiness. In every way he is blameless, a paradigm of goodness, which he demonstrates in the Christmas story by refusing to expose Mary to shame, even as he decides to divorce her quietly.

What actually happened here?

The background, in so far as we can reconstruct it, to the relationship between Joseph and Mary would have been this: the marriage custom at the time was that a young woman, essentially at the age of puberty, would be given to a man, usually several years her senior, in an arranged marriage by her parents. They would be betrothed, technically married, but would not yet live together or begin sexual relations for several more years. The Jewish law was especially strict as to the couple remaining celibate while in the betrothal period. During this time, the young woman would continue to live with her parents and the young man would go about setting up a house and an occupation so as to be able to support his wife once they began to live together.

Joseph and Mary were at this stage of their relationship, legally married but not yet living together, when Mary became pregnant. Joseph, knowing that the child was not his, had a dilemma: if he wasn't the father, who was? In order to save his own reputation, he could have demanded a public inquiry and, indeed, had Mary been accused of adultery, it might have meant her death. However, he decided to "divorce her quietly," that is, to avoid a public inquiry which would leave her in an awkward and vulnerable situation.

Then, after receiving revelation in a dream, he agrees to take her home as his wife and to name the child as his own. Partly we understand the significance of that: he spares Mary embarrassment, he names the child as his, and he provides an accepted physical, social, and religious place for the child to be born and raised. But he does something else that is not so evident: he shows how a person can be a pious believer, deeply faithful to everything within his religious tradition, and yet at the same time be open to a mystery beyond both his human and religious understanding.

And this was exactly the problem for any Christians, including Matthew himself, at the time the Gospels were written: they were pious Jews who didn't know how to integrate Christ into their religious framework. What does one do when God breaks into one's life in new, previously unimaginable ways? How does one deal with an impossible conception? Here's how Raymond Brown puts it: the hero of Matthew's infancy story is Joseph, a very sensitive Jewish observer of the Law. ... In Joseph, the evangelist was portraying what he thought a Jew [a true pious believer] should be and probably what he himself was.

In essence what Joseph teaches us is how to live in loving fidelity to all that we cling to humanly and religiously, even as we are open to a mystery of God that takes us beyond all the categories of our religious practice and imagination.

Isn't that one of the ongoing challenges of Christmas?

Ron Rolheiser

Used with permission of the author, Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser. Currently, Father Rolheiser is serving as President of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio Texas. He can be contacted through his web site, www.ronrolheiser.com.

MEMORY INNOVATIONS CENTRE OPENING 27 JANUARY 2020 IN WAITARA

Professionally run courses designed for seniors to enhance memory and wellbeing.

Courses available in cooking, exercise, brain function, art and dance!

Have fun, connect with others and use emerging technologies.

Carers welcome! Limited places.

Please call Jessica on 9481 2659 or visit <https://www.catholiccaredbb.org.au/aged-care/>.

PARISH DIARY FOR THIS WEEK

Day	Date	Time	Event
Sun.	22/12/19	9:30am	No Kidz Word—School Holidays at St Gerard's
		10:15am	No Kidz Word—School Holidays at OLHC
		7:00pm	PMR Epping Antioch Meeting
Mon.	23/12/19	9:30am	Mass at St Gerard's Church
		7:30pm	CH Epping Music Practice—M Lewis
		7:30pm	PMR Carlingford SVdP meeting
		7:30pm	CH Carlingford—Rosary Group
Tue.	24/12/19	12:15pm	NO Mass at Our Lady Help of Christians' Church
		5:00pm	Christmas Vigil Mass at St Gerard's
		6:00pm	Christmas Vigil at OLHC Church
		10:00pm	Night Mass at St Gerard's Church
			Carols commence at 9:30pm
			Midnight Mass at OLHC Church
Wed.	25/12/19		Carols commence at 11:30pm
		7:45am	Mass at St Gerard's Church
		8:30am	Mass at Our Lady Help of Christians' Church
		9:30am	Mass at St Gerard's Church
		10:15am	Mass at Our Lady Help of Christians' Church
		6:00pm	NO Mass at OLHC Church
Thur.	26/12/19	9:30am	Mass at St Gerard's Church
		12:15pm	Mass at Our Lady Help of Christians' Church
Fri.	27/12/19	9:30am	Mass at St Gerard's Church
		10:10pm	No Scripture Reflection
		12:15pm	Mass at Our Lady Help of Christians' Church
		4:30pm	No Rosary for the Immaculate Heart of Mary
Sat.	28/12/19	7:00pm	NO Cana Meeting—School Holidays
		9:15am	Mass at Our Lady Help of Christians' Church
		9:45am	Exposition and Reconciliation
		10:15am	Benediction
		5:00pm	Mass at Our Lady Help of Christians' Church
		5:00pm	Reconciliation at St Gerard's Church
	6:00pm	Mass at St Gerard's Church	

PH—Parish Hall, CH—Church, PMR—Parish Meeting Room

PARISH STAFF

Parish Secretary:
Dennis Porteous Ph.: 9876 2853
Email: dennis@eppcarl.org.au

Asst. Parish Secretary:
Maree Balzalat Ph.: 9876 2853
Email: maree@eppcarl.org.au

Pastoral Care Assistant:
Maree Balzalat Ph.: 9876 2853
Email: maree@eppcarl.org.au

Parish Support Worker (PSW) Sacramental Programmes and Children's Ministries
Lynn Siau
Ph.: 0407 255 593
Email: lynn@eppcarl.org.au

Sacramental Programme Assistant:
Lisha Abraham
Ph.: 0407 255 593
Email: kids.sacrament@eppcarl.org.au

Pastoral Support Worker (PSW) Youth:
Joanna Mak
Ph.: 0404 710 588
Email: joanna@eppcarl.org.au

Missionary Discipleship Coordinator:
Denis McNamara
Ph.: 0410 041 944
Email: denis.mcnamara@eppcarl.org.au

Parish Pastoral Council
If you have any questions, comments or feedback for the Parish Pastoral Council then please send an email to ppsecretary@eppcarl.org.au

Advent Wreath For Those Who Mourn

The link is:
bereavement support
[@catholiccemeteries.com.au](http://catholiccemeteries.com.au)

The Legion of Mary

As I mentioned some weeks ago now, one of our parishioners has requested we consider re-establishing a Legion of Mary group within our parish. The Legion of Mary founded in 1921 by Frank Duff, has been in Australia since 1942. Members meet each week with rosary and prayers and discussion of Legion work performed during the week. Our closest group at present is in Dundas. The principle work other than weekly meetings includes the visitation of homes. The Legion is worldwide and has a strong underground presence in China. The Legion sees as it's priority the spiritual and social welfare of each individual.

After consultation with the PPC we are keen to gauge what sort of interest there may be in the Legion. If anyone is interested in becoming part of such a group please send your details to Fr peter at peter@eppcarl.org.au.



2019 CHRISTMAS APPEAL

HELP A FAMILY PUT FOOD ON THE TABLE AT CHRISTMAS

Our Lady Help of Christians Epping: Envelopes on the pews and at Church entrances to be returned to the paper table or placed on the second collection.

St. Gerard Majella Carlingford: Envelopes on the pews to be returned to the Piety Store or on the second collection.

Receipts will be available for tax purposes.

Your Gift Can Help End the Pain of Poverty!



Children's Sacramental Journey Within Our Parish

Here at the Epping and Carlingford Parish, the preparation of children for the completion of the Sacraments of Initiation – Confirmation, Reconciliation and First Holy Communion is parish-based and family-centred. We hope to encourage and nurture parents in the preparation of their children through group sessions. The group sessions facilitate parent-child interaction utilising activities to help children explore the key concepts of the sacraments in an age-appropriate and fun way. Parents' companionship and witness speak volumes to the children as they pass down their faith to their children.

In our Diocese of Broken Bay, the order of the Sacraments for children after Baptism, begins with Confirmation, then First Reconciliation, followed by receiving First Holy Communion to complete their initiation into the Church.

Our 2020 Sacramental Programme brochure is now available at the back of both churches and on our parish website, www.bbcatholic.org.au/eppingcarlingford. This brochure outlines the key dates of the celebration of Sacraments for children in 2020.

Please take note of the next enrolment period in January 2020 for First Reconciliation. We will begin advertising closer to the date.

In the meanwhile, if you are wanting to find out more about your child's sacramental journey within our parish, please feel free to contact me.

Lynn Siau
Sacramental Programmes & Children's Ministries
0407 255 593
lynn@eppcarl.org.au

Can you help please?

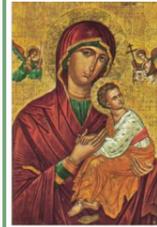
The **Hospitality Team at Carlingford** is in need of more volunteers to provide morning tea after the 9.30 am Mass on Sunday. Some of our Team are no longer able to continue and our sincere thanks go to them for the generous time and service they have given.

Even though it is for a short time, morning tea provides a friendly space in good company, to catch up and have a quick chat. We have our regulars – our oldest being 93 years of age – and of course, the littlies who don't even reach the height of the table and for whom it is a treat.



Please consider joining the Hospitality Team. There are just a few of us at present, but we are a hospitable lot - even if it wasn't our job.

NEW YEAR'S DAY – the blessing of our images of Our Lady



One of the special feast days of this Christmas Season is the greatest and most ancient of the feasts of Mary – 1st January, New Year's Day: (the solemnity of Mary as Mother of God) – we highlight it by annually inviting everyone to bring their images of Mary to be blessed during 11:00am Mass at Epping (no Mass at Carlingford that day).

New Year's Day is the Octave Day of Christmas and celebrates Mary's role in our salvation: that it was through her acceptance of God's call and placing herself at the service of God that the Word was made flesh in and through her. As such this feast celebrates Mary as our model as she challenges us likewise to be 'mother of God' bringing Jesus to birth in our world through our own lives.

Rosary Group

The 4:30pm Friday afternoon Rosary for the Intentions of the Immaculate Heart of Mary is currently on a break and will resume on Friday 7th February 2020.

Christmas Offering Envelopes are available in both our churches on the shelves next to the bulletin boxes. The Christmas Offering collection is an important contribution to the funds which support the priests of the parish and the wider diocese, ensuring that both those in active ministry are provided for and that retired clergy are well looked after. The Christmas Offering envelopes can be placed on either bowl at any Mass over this Christmas Season.

Charitable Works Fund Appeal

Thank you for your generosity in supporting this Appeal.

Ministries in the Parish which need your help!

The **Altar Society** at Carlingford and Epping are desperately in need of people.

The **Music Ministries** in both our communities require musicians and cantors.

Bulletin Collating – Can you help collate the parish bulletin?

There is a roster with a number of groups - 7 groups at Carlingford and 6 groups at Epping. We really do need people to maintain the functionality of these groups.

Morning Teas at Carlingford (see advertisement to the left) and Epping also need people.

Counters of the Collections for both Carlingford and Epping

If you can help in any of the above mentioned groups please contact the parish office 9876 2853 or email maree@eppcarl.org.au

Youth Page

OUR PARISH ANTIOCH COMMUNITY: yr10-22yrs

Our Parish Antioch Community has had an amazing and blessed year!
Thank you for all the support you have given us over the year and know that our prayers and joyful thoughts are with you and yours this Christmas.
In the New Year we will be preparing for our Outreach Weekend!
So if you're in yr10-22yrs get ready!!!

More information Ring Joanne 0416 030 927

"It was at Antioch that the believers were first called Christians." – Acts 11:26

Unlocking the Mystery of Christmas

Our mind has been trained to ask for the facts. We analyse, then come up with possible explanations. When we hear Matthew or Luke tell us about the birth of Jesus, we might think we are watching a video of the event. They wrote their Gospel to show us how God was acting in what happened. They wanted us to **focus on Jesus and what spiritually matters.**

If we were asked to make arrangements for the birth of Jesus, how would we have planned the event? Gabriel said **Hail Mary, Full of Grace** and told her **the Lord is with you..** We would have a few suggestions that did not include giving birth in a stable, placing the child in a manger, being visited by shepherds, then visited by three Wise Men, who said they saw His Star! We are still wondering, where was the five-star maternity ward?

What are the Gospels telling us about God? Why were shepherds important?

We have to go back to when the prophet Samuel anointed David to be King. David, the youngest was not in the family home in Bethlehem. His father Jesse sent for David who was **keeping the sheep** in 1 Sam 16:11. As King, God commanded David **to shepherd my people Israel.** 2 Sam 7:7 God made this promise to David through the prophet Nathan, **Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; your throne shall be established forever.** V 16. That promise of "forever" only God could make. It became a covenant between the people of Israel and their God.

Luke's Gospel is telling us that **Jesus the Saviour and Messiah**, was recognised by shepherds. He was the one that Israel has been waiting for. A descendent of King David **will (and now has) come from Bethlehem to shepherd my people Israel.** Mat 2:6 All that was foretold in the Old Testament is being revealed and fulfilled in the New Testament. The promises made by God to the people of Israel are now being fulfilled in the new covenant with God's people, for Jesus, called Emmanuel is **God with us.**

This is our faith. The baby born of Mary has changed our world and can change our lives. Christmas is about Christ, the one sent from God. Christmas is also about Mass where we hear about Christ. We receive **the Body and Blood of Christ.** We are **in communion with each other.** Let us welcome Jesus the Saviour, into our world and into our lives this Christmas.

Denis McNamara *Supporting Missionary Disciples*

PS *Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible* is one way to grow in your relationship with God. Other ways will be offered in 2020 including **Alpha, Lenten Groups, Catholicism, The Great Journey.**

CANA: OUR Yr. 7-9 YOUTH GROUP

What an awesome year we've had at CANA!!
Topped off with a fantastic Christmas party!

But for now... CANA IS ON A BREAK FOR THE SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

I'd like to thank everyone who has been involved with the group this year, especially the many parent and young adult leaders who helped out. All your help and support has been amazing!! **CAN'T WAIT FOR CANA 2020 ...**

WE'RE BACK FRIDAY 1st FEBRUARY ... write that down

ACYF

We have finished our amazing and faith filled pilgrimage at the Australian Catholic Youth Festival in Perth. Thankyou for all your prayers and support in making this journey possible for young people!

Here are some of our highlights:

Joshua (aged 16)

At ACYF 2019, I was shown a whole new way to appreciate God through praise music, which I found to be the best experience I had at Perth. These often happened during the morning and evening plenaries, with thousands of young people all rejoicing for God. Meeting pilgrims not only from all over Broken Bay, as well as other Dioceses all across Australia was also a great experience, resulting in many new friendships as well as different outlooks on how other people view God. The many talks that were hosted over the 3 days were also very eye opening, with leadership talks being one of my main focuses, as well as managing youth ministries. The extended amount of time that was spent with members of our own Parish also allowed me to gain a deeper friendship with everyone that attended. Overall, the Australian Catholic Youth Festival for 2019 was one of the greatest experiences I have had the privilege of taking upon. I would highly recommend more young people to attend in the coming years, even if they may be a little sceptical, it is truly something you need to try before you judge.

Joanna (aged 23)

ACYF was a fantastic experience. My highlights included hearing from Sister Therese and Sister Judy speak about their experience on the Amazing Race. They shared about what they learnt on the show, including how to trust God fully in times of difficulty and being able to be a witness of their faith with other contestants and praying on live TV. Another highlight was having Adoration on the second night of the festival, where 5000 young people knelt down in unity and in prayer. The music that accompanied this was beautiful and reminded me about the roots of our Catholic faith, which is centred on the Eucharist. I would definitely recommend young people to attend the next ACYF because it gives such amazing opportunities to connect with other people, to grow in your faith and deepen your personal relationship with God.

