

Responsorial Psalm Response Lord, make us turn to you, let us see your face and we shall be saved.		Gospel Acclamation Alleluia, alleluia! I am the servant of the Lord; may his will for me be done. Alleluia!				
WEEKEND MASSES CHRISTMAS MASS TIMES ON THE COVER OF THE BULLETIN OR ON PAGE 3						
Epping	5pm 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	12:15pm	9:15am	12:15pm	12:15pm	9:15am
CARLINGFORD	9:30am	No Mass	9:30am	9:30am	9:30am	No Mass
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: Anna Ortner, Mary Anne, Anthony & Hugh Mulligan, Frank Holmes, Sr. Agnes Chong ocd, Robert Tan, Eddie Tam., Michael Appadurai, Emmanuel (Toto) Fernando, George Guanzon. <i>Please pray for Francis Xavier Erapiepillai who died last week.</i> <i>The funeral Mass will be held at St Gerard's on Monday 24th December at 10:30am</i>						
Anniversaries: Maryanne Whealing, Also for: Ivan & Edith Almeida & deceased family members, Joanne Elchah, Bert Saul, Sylvia & Victor Carlon, Lilian & Joseph Saul, Dorgen & Joe Saul, Hurney & Waddell Families, Agnes Hu, Mato Matijasic, Tomo& Kata Medved & family, Vjekoslav & Julijana Medved, Karlo Puskaric. 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, Rose Prior, Mark Di Palma, Anthony Conlon, Andrew Hannam, The Craig Family, Fr Mick Court, Margaret Maher, Cooper Rundell, Anna & Leo Bruzze, Gerhard Stieger, Fred Saad, Ron Jenkins, Mike Van Werdt, Tammy Birch, Dorothea Ellis, Veronica Hartwich, Rebecca Lawler, Ben Thornton, Elaine Finlayson, Jan Doherty, Brian Walsh, Greg Walsh, John Gilberti, Stella Nathan, Catherine Walsh, Brendan Stone, Melanie Loudoun, Mary Wijewardana, Pam Taig, Elaine Hunt, Arnold Day, Maureen Carlon, Fr Adrian Borst, Ausustine Hong, Luba Charlton, George Khouri, Martin Sill, Antony Hogan, Ingrid Connor, Steve Toth, Rob Neil, Josie Scully, Martin & Gay Flood, William Jones, Kath McCarthy, Nicholas Rajanayagen, Maria Lee, Joyce Fewtrell, Patricia Muschalik, Ernest Lau, Sr. Pauline Wicks rsj, Delma Soria, Sn Atanasia Lee, Maria Llave, Maria Belisario, Fe Llave, Stella Edwards, Boyet Llave, Fara Vargas, Kathy Walsh, Theo Stevens. <i>Due to privacy laws, names of the sick and deceased can only be put in the bulletin with the permission of the immediate family.</i>						

Date	Mass	Epping	Mass	Carlingford
24/12/18	6:00pm	Fr Joey Frez	5:00pm	Fr Peter Dowd
25/12/18	Midnight	Fr Joey Frez	10:00pm	Fr Peter Dowd
25/12/18	8:30am	Fr Peter Dowd	7:45am	Fr Joey Frez
25/12/18	10:15am	Fr Peter Dowd	9:30am	Fr Joey Frez

Date	Mass	Epping	Mass	Carlingford
29/12/18	5:00pm	Fr Peter Dowd	6:00pm	Fr Joey Frez
30/12/18	8:30am	Fr Peter Dowd	7:45am	Fr Joey Frez
30/12/18	10:15am	Fr Peter Dowd	9:30am	Fr Joey Frez
30/12/18	6:00pm	Fr Peter Dowd		


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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

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Ph.: 9876 2853
Email: peter@eppcarl.org.au

Assistant Priest: Fr Joey Frez
Ph.: 9872 3400
Email: joseph@eppcarl.org.au

Email: parish@eppcarl.org.au

Parish Website: www.eppcarl.org.au

Parish Office: 9876 2853

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 C

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

23-12-18

Micah 5:1-4

Hebrews 10:5-10

Luke 1:39:44

Dear Parishioners,

As we stand at the peak of our Advent preparation and 'watchfulness' for the coming Christmas Feast, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who are assisting with the preparations for our Christmas celebrations here in the parish. A lot of work goes into ensuring we have as prayerful and awe-inspiring as possible Masses which are inclusive and hospitable for everyone who gathers. On behalf of the entire parish, I assure you we are deeply grateful to you all for your generosity of time and service!

I also have some 'good news' regarding youth ministry here in the parish. I am pleased to announce Joanna Mak will serve as our parish Youth Minister from January 2019. Joanna has had extensive involvement in various aspects of youth ministry in our parish, including Antioch, and was part of the steering committee which organised various activities associated with our hosting of the Pilgrim Cross earlier this year. Most importantly, she has a deep faith and love for our Church as well as a deep passion for assisting young people to grow in their faith. In welcoming Joanna as part of our parish team, I would also like to thank Ashleigh Belic who has looked after our Cana group for a number of years now and has done a magnificent job ministering to our younger parishioners! May God continue to bless our ministry to our young people that they may find a 'home' within our Church and grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ who is given to us in a special way this Christmas!

Fr Peter



CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS

Christmas Eve Evening, 24th December

Christmas Vigil Mass

5:00pm at St Gerard's

6:00pm at Our Lady Help of Christians

These are both Children's Masses. If possible the children are invited to bring a small gift to place under the tree. We invite you to provide your child with a gift wrapped card containing a small monetary donation towards the St Vincent de Paul Christmas Appeal. The children will be invited to place their gifts under the tree during the procession of gifts in the middle of the Mass.

St Gerard's, Carlingford

Night Mass: 10:00pm Mass

Preceded by Carols at 9:30pm

Our Lady Help of Christians, Epping

Midnight Mass

Preceded by Carols at 11:30pm.

Christmas Day 25th December

St Gerard's Carlingford

7:45am, 9:30am

Our Lady Help of Christians' Epping

8:30am, 10:15am **NO** 6:00pm Mass



2018 CHRISTMAS APPEAL

Commencing 8th December

**Make this a Christmas Filled With Joy.
We need your help.**

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 Could Change Lives

CHRISTMAS OFFERING ENVELOPES

Are available near the bulletin boxes in both our churches.

The contributions via the Christmas Offering supplements the funds raised via the First Collection for the support and upkeep of priests. The fund it goes to depends very much on these special contributions at Christmas and Easter, without which it struggles to meet its commitments.

This diocesan fund not only provides the living allowance and household costs for the priests of the parish, but also provides funds for health care for priests and maintains priests in their retirement. Please support the Christmas Offerings. The envelopes can be placed on either plate.

PARISH OFFICE HOURS BETWEEN CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR

Our Parish Office will be **CLOSED from Midday 24th December until Monday 7th January.**

For emergency sick calls or in the event of the need to make funeral arrangements please ring 9876 2853 (the phone is always diverted to Fr Peter's or Fr Joey's home outside of office hours.



Celebrations this Week Fourth Week of Advent

Tuesday: Solemnity, The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)
Wednesday: Feast, St Stephen
Thursday: Feast, St John
Friday: Feast, The Holy Innocents

A thought on Night and Midnight Mass . . .

One of the most beautiful things in the treasury of our Church is the tradition of Night and Midnight Mass. 'The people that walked in darkness has 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 Night and 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 Night/Midnight Mass this Christmas.

A Plenary Council Christmas opportunity!

What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?

It is essential for ALL Catholics to respond to this question for the future of our Church. There will be an opportunity at the Christmas Masses for family or friends who have not 'Had their Say' to write their response on one of the Christmas message cards on the seats. It can then be placed in the Plenary Council box in the Church or posted at their convenience.

If you would like to contribute or ask questions you too can place your response in one of the boxes or
Contact:

**Lynne Slocombe 0407138992 or
Email lynne.slocombe@gmail.com**

**Carole Wilson 9869 1036 or
Email carole.wilson@optusnet.com.au**

For further information visit the Plenary Council website and explore:
www.plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/resources/have-your-say



Plenary Council 2020

'Listen to what the Spirit is saying...'

An Advent Reflection . . .

Every year Your Church celebrates the holy season of Advent, my God. Every year we pray those beautiful prayers of longing and waiting, and sing those lovely songs of hope and promise. Every year we roll up all our needs and yearnings and faithful expectation into one word: "Come!" But now a light is slowly beginning to dawn. I'm beginning to understand something that I have known for along time: You are still in the process of Your coming. Your appearance in the form of a slave was only the beginning of Your coming, a beginning in which You chose to redeem us by embracing the very slavery from which You were freeing us. So actually You haven't come - You're still coming. From Your incarnation to the end of this era is only an instant, even though millennia may elapse and, being blessed by You, pass on to become a small part of this instant. It is said that You will come again, and this is true. But the word again is misleading. It won't really be "another" coming, because You have never really gone away. In the human existence which You made Your own for all eternity, You have never left us. But still You will come again, because the fact that You have already come must continue to be revealed ever more clearly. It will become progressively more manifest to the world that the heart of all things is already transformed, because You have taken them all to Your heart. You must continue to come more and more. What has already taken place in the roots of all reality must be made more and more apparent. The false appearance of our world, the shabby pretence that it has not been liberated must be more and more thoroughly rooted out and destroyed. Behold, You come. And Your coming is neither past nor future, but the present, which as only to reach its fulfilment. Now it is still the one single hour of Your Advent, at the end of which we too shall have found out that You have really come. O God who is to come, grant us the grace to live now, in the hour of Your Advent, in such a way that I may merit to live in You forever, in the blissful hour of Your Eternity.'

Karl Rahner (Karl Rahner, a German Jesuit, was one of the greatest theologians of the 20th century).

I Believe He Came Down from Heaven

God never forces himself on us. He never makes us listen. He leaves us free. He comes to us as one of us. He 'came down from heaven.'

Jesus left his glory behind, the glory that he had with his Father, He 'emptied himself' - we call this the kenosis or 'emptying of himself' - to assume the form of a servant, taking on our human condition.

Jesus came down from heaven to become one of us. Like any immigrant, he brought with him the culture, language and lifestyle of his home in heaven. And what is at the core of the language and culture of the 'immigrant' Son of God, who comes from the very heart of the mystery of the Trinity?

Quite simply, that God is a lover who gives himself to us totally with boundless self-sacrifice. That to be divine is to become a servant of others.

As the great Anglican New Testament scholar and bishop, N. T. Wright, has noted: God became flesh not to stop being divine. It was a decision about what it means to be divine!

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,
At the words that follow, up to and including 'and became man', 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.

The Truth Justice and Healing Council

www.thecouncil.org.au Ph.: 6234 0900

This decision has enormous implications for our discipleship. As Pope Francis has eloquently shown, in his pastoral ministry, washing the feet of those who are in need is an imperative and a test of our being authentic and true to our Credo. It is our way of imitating him who 'came down from heaven.'

For Jesus chose to come as one of us. He chose to come as one of the working poor, living in an occupied territory, surrounded by scandal and accusation, living in relative obscurity in the middle of nowhere.

You could say the Credo is therefore calling us to a spirituality of emptiness and service. Jesus emptied himself to serve humanity and, as Paul says in Philippians we therefore have to empty ourselves of all rivalry and conceit and all thinking of ourselves as better than others.

Such a spirituality of emptiness prompts us to think of what is inside us that we need to empty out. Is it being judgemental? Is it a tendency to sidestep the call of the Gospel to share generously with others? Could it be an arrogance which looks down and refuses to accept others in all their difference? Might it be a subtle racism?

Whatever it is for each of us personally, this spirituality of emptiness demands our inner conversion.

Being close to God is not about going up the 'escalator' of life. Rather, it is all about following a God who is always 'descending' and constantly bending down to serve. That is how we live our way into the mystery of God.

Reflection on this Sunday's Gospel—Spaciousness

During Advent we have been celebrating our emptiness.

I suppose this sounds odd, and yet give it a thought. If we were completely filled up we would have no room to let anyone or anything in. We would be like a clump of mud or a great thick mountain. (Maybe nice to look at, but not so good at relating.)

Somewhere in scripture the people ask God to take their hearts of stone and make them into hearts of flesh. Throughout Advent we have been asking especially for that. A time to become aware of God and then thank God for the spacious emptiness that a human heart has within it. Living hearts, not stone ones.

Increased dark allows human beings to hunker down inside their shelter, cozy and patient, waiting for the light to come back.

Increasing our own emptiness and our own darkness can be frightening. The shade spreads out its kingdom every day here in the Northern hemisphere as Christmas comes nearer. We see less by natural light, and our body systems squirm to readjust. I used to be resentful as the daylight hours got shorter and shorter—and especially when "daylight savings time" collapsed and the dark settled in an hour sooner in the afternoon. It was dark well before I left the office. Depressing.

Finally, a few years ago, I saw some wisdom in deprivation and darkness. Increased dark allows human beings to hunker down inside their shelter, cozy and patient, waiting for the light to come back. This helps them reflect upon themselves:

Such small creatures within so vast a night.

God says as much to Bethlehem in the First Reading,

You, Bethlehem-Ephrathah,
too small to be among the clans of Judah, ...
the Lord will give [you] up, until the time
when she who is to give birth has given birth.

Light had already come from that darkness, of course. King David traced his origins to Bethlehem, centuries before (see 1 Samuel: 17:12). And of course, Jesus was to be born in the same town. This strange, wide place in the road could produce Kings?

It is the same way within our souls. Our darkness and our emptiness are where Jesus is to be born on Christmas. The places in us that are gloomy, angry, or jealous, these form our darkness. The friends who leave us behind, they have a high, family time while we feel so alone—this is where the child will be born.

Watch Mary hasten to her cousin's house, a long trip, on foot, over dirt and sand and rocks, under the hot, hot sun (Gospel). She does not have a need to be coddled and queenly in order to bring forth The Holy One. She does not spend a second worrying whether the way is too hard. Her soul somehow knows about the soft light that will shine from within her. Everything else is in second place.

Maybe emptiness can speak humbly from within us too. For a minute or two we could quit trying so hard to make everything alright in our admittedly arduous worlds.

Let go and let God. That way we will get to know the one whose "origin is from of old" (First Reading). We might even let him take up his home in us. He can make himself whatever size is needed for our souls.

What better Christmas could there be?

John Foley, SJ

*Fr. John Foley, SJ, is a composer and scholar at Saint Louis University.
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BAPTISM IN THE PARISH THIS SUNDAY

Welcome to: Clarence Dizon
Son of Julius & Jeanette Dizon
Please hold this child and her family in your prayers.



Awesome service. Amazing results.

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

McGrath

PARISH DIARY FOR THIS WEEK

Day	Date	Time	Event
Sun.	23/12/18	9:30am	No Kidz Word at St Gerard's—School Holidays
		10:15am	No Kidz Word at OLHC—School Holidays
			Antioch on a break until mid Jan 2019
Mon	24/12/18	9:00am	No Little Engines Playgroup—School Holidays
		9:30am	No Gerry's Playgroup—School Holidays
		9:30am	Mass at St Gerard's Church
			No SVdP Meeting
			No Rosary Group in C'ford Church
		5:00pm	Children's Christmas Vigil Mass at St Gerard's
		6:00pm	Children's Christmas Vigil Mass at OLHC Epping
		9:30pm	CH Carlingford Christmas Carols
		10:00pm	CH Carlingford Night Mass
		11:30pm	CH Epping Christmas Carols
		12:00pm	CH Epping Midnight Mass
Tue.	25/12/18	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 Epping
		9:15am	Mass at Our Lady Help of Christians' Church
		9:30am	Mass at St Gerard's Church
Thur.	27/12/18	9:30am	Mass at St Gerard's Church
		12:15pm	Mass at Our Lady Help of Christians' Church
Fri.	28/12/18	9:30am	Mass at St Gerard's Church
		10:00am	NO Scripture Reflection until the end Jan. 19
		12:15pm	Mass at Our Lady Help of Christians' Church
		4:40pm	CH Epping Rosary for the Immaculate Heart of Mary
Sat.	29/12/18	7:00pm	CANA on a break, will resume on Friday 1st Feb.
		9:15am	Mass at Our Lady Help of Christians' Church
		9:45am	Exposition and Reconciliation
		10:15am	Benediction
		5:00pm	Reconciliation at St Gerard's
		5:00pm	Mass at Our Lady Help of Christians' Church
		6:00pm	Mass at St Gerard's Church

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

PARISH STAFF

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AFTER HOURS SICK CALLS— 9876 2853

Outside office hours our office phones divert to Fr Peter and Fr Joey 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.

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.

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.

Safeguarding Message

During this Advent Season let us be reminded that childhood itself has a direct relationship with God. In their openness to God, children communicate that divine love to all whose hearts and minds are open (Karl Rahner).

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 the 9:30am Mass at St Gerard's and the 12:15pm Mass at Epping.

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.

