

Anniversary's in December

Johannes Hoogenboom (Snr), Claire Weir, Pauline Gordon
Angela Fleming, Kevin Stowe,
Bridget Cameron, Charles McCloskey (Mac), Mick O'Sullivan,
Mollie Saxon, Molly Fergusson

Giving the Gift of Hope - When I was little, I thought the best gifts came in big boxes. If they were both taller and wider than me then I knew with certainty there was a great gift inside. Once I discovered shiny trinkets, I felt quite the opposite. It was tiny boxes that magnified the glimmer of something costly and precious that I most coveted. Nowadays, I just buy my own gifts and I am not very particular about the shape or size of the box. I give them to my husband to wrap so he has an inkling of what he bought me, giving him special instructions to put any clothes in a gift bag in case I happen to need to wear them before Christmas. I don't pretend that any of this is romantic or that the Three Wise Men would be impressed with my self-giving. It just seems like a practical solution to the pressures of gift-giving. And, there's so much pressure. So much of gift-giving feels transactional. Christmas lists have been replaced with links that specify everything from size to colour. We ask people what they want so they won't be disappointed or so we don't waste money on something that would otherwise end up in the top shelf of the hall closet. Just as often, we give money as a gift because we've been conditioned that it's the one-size-fits-all solution to the woes of the world. We look to material things to convey the genuineness of our love and affection, and inevitably they feel inadequate. Perhaps that's what the Grinch realized when he said, "Maybe Christmas doesn't come from a store. Maybe Christmas ... means a little bit more." Yet it isn't a little green man that I think about at Christmas, no matter how wonderful it is that he converted from greed and grumpiness. It's a Baby in the manger. It's easy to forget about gifts altogether when you ponder the poverty of Jesus's birth amid farm animals and piles of hay. Yet even in this most austere setting, what's so remarkable about Christ's birth isn't what's lacking. Instead, it's the abundance of hope that tiny manger holds. Even the gifts of the Wise Men don't com-

pare to the glory of his perpetual light. Neither does anything you buy for yourself or others. Yet, it's hard to give a gift like hope without looking like a cheapskate. Most of us can't begin to understand what a gift like that looks like. Intangible as it may be, the hope of our Savior is priceless and it's not only possible to share Him with others, it's pivotal. Hope is a gift that many desperately need: the hope of a Savior whose mercy, generosity, and unparalleled capacity to love unconditionally and indiscriminately changes not only this life but our eternal lives too. Hope gives us and others a chance to do things differently: to experience our own rebirth. To choose love instead of hate. To choose time together over distraction. To choose tolerance over discrimination, service over self, and peace over violence. These choices are the great mercy of our lives. It's the power we have to change the trajectory of this world by imitating Christ's love and mercy. Jesus came to show us a different way. It's the way of love and it's the only thing that will unify us. Hope tells us this is possible. I can think of no greater gift for mankind. I recognize the joy and generosity in gift giving but it pales in comparison to the true meaning of Christmas—to what we are really being asked to give. There will still be plenty of presents under our tree, but I know that the most important thing I have to give doesn't come from a store. It's hope, and it means so much more.

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Merry Christmas

The Holy Trinity Parish *Rātini Kupu*

24th Hakihea, 2023
4th Sunday of Advent



Christmas Dues Special Collection

Many thanks to parishioners who in the past have contributed to the Christmas Dues/ Offerings Special Collection. The Special Collection planned giving envelopes gifted on Christmas Day are for this collection. The money is sent given to the Clergy Trust Fund to support the priests of the Diocese. There are also specially marked envelopes in the foyer, or alternatively please pay by direct credit (parish bank account number) your name as payee, and 'Dues' as reference. Your support and help is always appreciated! Fr. Brian Walsh (Chairman of the Clergy Trust Fund)

Choosing that special person

If you were to ask a married couple how they came to fall in love, or asked two good friends how they came to be friends, they may have difficulty answering and might say something like, "It just happened." In one sense that may be true. In another sense it didn't just happen. If two people are in a significant relationship with each other, be it marriage or friendship, it is because they have chosen each other. Why does someone choose one person rather than another as a spouse or friend? Why does someone choose to share his or her life with someone else? This is the mystery of human freedom, human preference. The more significant relationships cannot be forced. Love is freely bestowed by one person on another; the other freely receives what is bestowed and freely reciprocates, and a new relationship is born. There is a depth about all that. If there is mystery in the relationship of one human being with another, even more so in the relationship between God and us. Why did God choose Mary to be the mother of his Son? Why this particular woman in this small village at this particular time of human history? It was the mysterious freedom and preference of God. Yet, there is a difference between God's choice of Mary and the choice any one of us might make of another. When any one of us chooses another to love or to befriend, there is always, of necessity, an exclusive element to that choice. We choose this person rather than any number of others. Although

**New Years Day—Mass 9.00am
@ St Joseph's**
**No week day Masses during
the month of January.**
**Sunday Masses will remain the
same**

we choose several people in the course of our lives in each case our choice of one excludes others. God's choice of Mary was not exclusive in that sense. In choosing Mary, he was choosing all of us. He chose Mary for all our sakes. God chose her to carry God's Son on behalf of us all, because her future child was God's gift to us all. That is why how Mary responded to God's choice of her was not just a matter that concerned herself. It concerned us all. We all had a vested interest in how she responded. Her response would also be our response. In a sense we looked to her to make an appropriate response on behalf of us all to God's choice of us. The good news is that Mary did not let us down. Although initially disturbed and perplexed by the message, she eventually surrendered fully to that mysterious choice of God. Having been graced in this mysterious way, she responded wholeheartedly, "Let it be to me according to your word." God freely chose her, and she in turn chose to place her freedom at God's service. God's choice of Mary, and her choice of God in response had the most wonderful consequences for all of us. She went on to sing, "the Almighty has done great things for me." And because of her response to God's choice, we can all sing, "the Almighty has done great things for us." We have all been graced through Mary's response to God's choice of her. associationofcatholicpriests.ie



Crib Appeal –this year our Crib

Appeal will be supporting Caritas in their work in the Holy Land supporting vulnerable communities where it is crucially needed.

Caritas Jerusalem—Sadly, one year ago, we warned in our last year's message of the deteriorating humanitarian conditions in Gaza and the West Bank. We conveyed the tremendous hardship the Palestinian People experience daily. This year, with Gaza now reduced into ruin, increased raids and incursions in the West Bank, and heightened security posturing in East Jerusalem, we are witnessing signs of desperate people. Caritas Jerusalem lost two of its Gaza staff in the current ongoing war on Gaza. All our staff in Gaza are currently internally displaced and many of their houses were destroyed. We are witnessing collapsed civil society organizations begging the international community for an immediate ceasefire. It is heartbreaking to witness the deaths, especially among children, women, the elderly, and people with disabilities. Caritas Jerusalem reaffirms its dedication to serving people of all faiths in the Occupied Palestinian Territories on this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Our commitment to fostering hope, compassion, and peace remains unwavering. We pray for divine guidance, believing that the leaders of this world have the intelligence and integrity to envision unbiased, rational solutions. Together, we should work to end this ongoing distress and create conditions for both countries to prosper in peace and justice. *End of statement. sg 292-11/23 November 27th, 2023*

Gaza's entire population is experiencing severe shortages of electricity, water, fuel, food, and medicine.

Over a million people in Gaza have been displaced.

Over 100,000 people are in need of humanitarian assistance.

Over 60 percent of the fatalities were children and women.

Christmas Mass Times

Christmas Vigil – St Joseph's @

6pm, Carols @ 5.30pm

Christmas Day – St Patrick's @

9.30am, Carols at 9.00am

Simbang Gabi – Starts 16th December @ St Joseph's at 8pm



Prayer for the Holy Land

Jesus, protect the innocent and vulnerable, comfort the suffering, and give courage and wisdom to leaders in the Holy Land. Amen.

Notices from Titipounamu Study & Joy

- Christmas Story with Prof Thomas O'Loughlin:

<https://www.studyjoy.nz/2021/12/23/the-christmas-story/>

YouTube Recordings

YouTube and Muffin Talk recordings are available online at:

<https://www.studyjoy.nz/category/resources/muffin-talk/>

Our next Zoom sessions will be in February/ March on the theme of Miracles.

For more information: www.studyjoy.nz

Office Hours

22nd December—Office closes
reopens on the 16th January, 2024