

**Reflection on the Gospel-Advent 3A
(Matthew 11:2-11)**

-Veronica Lawson RSM

The third Sunday of Advent used to be called *Gaudete* (be joyful) Sunday. It provided a mid-term break within a period of austerity or penance in preparation for Christmas. Advent is no longer celebrated as a penitential period, but rather as a reflective time of expectation and hope. The invitation to rejoice nonetheless remains part of the Advent liturgy: it is certainly present in the first reading: "*the desert shall rejoice and bloom ...*" (Isaiah 35:1-6, 10).

Today's gospel passage is full of questions. First John sends his disciples to Jesus with a question: "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another? Jesus responds by directing them to the evidence: "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them." He adds a comment about those who take no offence at him: they are blessed. He then turns to the crowds with a series of rhetorical questions about their motivation for going out to John in the desert. His words to the crowds conclude with an identification of John as God's prophet and messenger, his own precursor. He pays an extraordinary tribute to John, but leaves the reader puzzling about the final statement: the least in the kingdom is greater than John.

John's imprisonment is a sobering reminder of what can happen to those who are faithful to their mission. As Matthew's Jesus will attest, John is no reed shaken by the wind. This could well be a subtle reference to Herod Antipas' choice of the reed as a symbol on the coins commemorating the founding of Tiberias. Herod has arrested and imprisoned John and later will have him put to death on specious grounds. John is not a fickle reed like Herod, but steadfast and strong.

The reader knows that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah or Anointed of God. John is checking it out. He clearly has contact with his disciples whom he sends to Jesus with a question about his identity. Is Advent over or not? The Answer to John's question is to be found in what they hear and see. The restorative and healing activity of Jesus is realising the Messianic dream of the prophet Isaiah (first reading). In a sense, Advent never ends: the women and children brought into our own cities as sex slaves can attest to this, as can those who remain in the limbo of Nauru and Manus Island. We might well pray: "Strengthen our weak hands, and make firm our feeble knees" in the face of such challenges.

BULLETIN FOR THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT, YEAR A



ST ALIPIUS PARISH, BALLARAT EAST

Including St Peter & Paul's, Buninyong

Parish Address: 84 Victoria Street, Ballarat East. 3350

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**MASS TIMETABLE FOR THE WEEK BEGINNING
MONDAY, 12th DECEMBER 2016**

MONDAY:	No Mass
TUESDAY:	No Mass
WEDNESDAY:	12.00 noon- St Alipius School End of Year Mass
THURSDAY:	9.30 am in Parish Church
FRIDAY:	9.30 am- St Francis Xavier School End of Year Mass 12.00 noon - Emmaus School End of Year Mass
SATURDAY:	Sacrament of Reconciliation at 10.00 am

NEXT WEEKEND'S MASSES

ST. ALIPIUS	SAT	6.00 PM
	SUN	9.00 AM
BUNINYONG	SUN	10.30 AM

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT, YEAR A

READINGS -	First:	Isaiah 7:10-14
	Second:	Romans: 1:1-7
	Gospel:	Matthew 1:18-24

ANNIVERSARIES: Anna Ridsdale, Jim Power.

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE SICK: Nell McGettigan, Pamela Hayes, Nathan Cambell, Denise Learmonth, Cath Wheelahan, Barbara Keirl, Mick Kent, Terry McGarry, Kevin Walsh, Peter McDonald (Ocean Grove), Peter Clohesy, Kaye Tuddenham, Frank Nolan (Buninyong), Evie May Laffey, Christine Martin.

COUNTING TEAMS:

This Week: **Team 8:** B. McKeegan ©, M. Ridsdale, K. McKeegan
Next Week: **Team 9:** J. Patton ©, J. O'Brien, B. Brisbane, J. Gibcus



COLLECTIONS LAST WEEKEND:

PARISH:	Envelopes:	\$ 1,446.00
	Loose money:	\$ 300.00
	Direct debits:	\$ <u>1,185.00</u>
		\$ 2,931.00
PRESBYTERY:		\$ 789.00

MAKING A SCENE AT CHRISTMAS

A display of Christmas Nativity scenes will be held in St Patrick's Hall, from Wednesday, 14th December—Sunday 18th December. On display there will be in excess over 300 nativities from over 40 countries. Opening hours are Wednesday 6.00 pm—8.00 pm, Thursday and Friday 10.00 am—5.00 pm, Saturday 10.00 am—5.00 pm and Sunday 9.00 am—7.00 pm. The organising committee would like to hear from anyone who is willing to loan a nativity scene for display, in particular cribs from other cultures, previous eras or which "have a story". Security is guaranteed. If you are able to assist please leave your name at the Cathedral Office on 5331 2933.

CHILD SAFETY OFFICER

Jim Moran has accepted an appointment as Child Safety Officer for the parish. All parish policies and procedures regarding parish child protection will be made public and available as they are developed.

CAROLS IN THE CATHEDRAL

A Festival of Readings & Carols, Friday 23rd December at 7.30 pm at St Patrick's Cathedral. See Notice Board for details.

Ss PETER & PAUL'S LITURGY ROSTER

Please collect your roster from Mike Maloney

PIETY STALL

Columban calendars and Christmas cards are available for purchase.

ADVENT REFLECTION GROUP

Weekly meetings will continue at 10.00 am on Thursdays in the Meeting Room of St Alipius Church.

MERCY CONNECT BALLARAT

Supporting refugee and asylum seeker students in local schools

Mercy Works is currently recruiting volunteers to support refugee and asylum seeker students in Ballarat schools through the Mercy Connect project. The volunteer commitment is for approximately three hours per week for four school terms. Experience working in an educational setting is preferred, but you will receive ongoing training and support. Initial training for new volunteers will be held in February 2017. Contact Paulene Barton—Mercy Connect Project Coordinator on 0417 624 330 or email mercyconnect@gmail.com for information and an application form. Applications close on 2nd February 2017.

INVITATION TO A FUNDRAISER

The Mercy Associates invites you to join them for **Catherine's Christmas Cuppa** (Sr Catherine McAuley—founder of Sisters of Mercy)

When: Friday, 16th December at 5.00 pm

Where: Gathering Room 151 Victoria Street, Ballarat East

At the entrance to the Gathering Room there will be:

- A container and envelopes for donations to Mercy Works
- Lucky entrance prize tickets: \$2 each or 3 for \$5

If unable to attend but wish to make a donation—please do so at the Mercy Convent Office, 151 Victoria Street. Contact: Urusla on 0407 717626 or Monica on 5330 1856

CHRISTMAS GIVING TIME

Christmas is a joyous time when we celebrate the birth of Christ.

Unfortunately, some people are living in very poor circumstances, so this is an opportunity to bring some joy at Christmas time.

The tree is at the back of St Alipius Church. If you can help, please take a card from it and replace it with a star. Purchase a suitable gift, attach a card to it and return it to the church as soon as possible or by Sunday, 18th December.

OLHC CHRISTMAS DAY LUNCH

You are invited to join us on Christmas Day for lunch (no cost).

Time: 12.00 md - 2.00 pm

Where: OLHC Parish Hall
482 Gillies St Nth, Wendouree

Book as early as numbers are limited.

Phone: 0419 975 914