



Anglican Church of Australia

Diocese of Melbourne

ST BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH

PARISH OF BURNLEY

ph: 9943 8442

stbartsburnley 'at' gmail.com

www.stbartsburnley.org.au

Worship Bulletin



Third Sunday of Advent

11th December 2022

10.00am Sung Mass

Welcome to St Bart's!

We are an inner-city Anglican church in the progressive catholic tradition welcoming people of any race, language, culture, age, ability, gender or sexual orientation.



We recognize and give honour to the first peoples of Australia, and especially of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nations, past, present, and emerging, the traditional custodians of the land on which this parish has its mission and ministry.

ST BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH, BURNLEY

Our Vision

To live as citizens of, and invite others into, God's Kingdom.

Our Mission

The Mission of St Bartholomew's Anglican Church, Burnley, is to be a community who values the blessings and trust in the promises of God's Kingdom within the cultural and social context of Richmond, Melbourne:

- To live humbly before God and with all people
- To be dependent on God's comfort
- To be gentle with people and all Creation
- To hunger and thirst for the right ways of God
- To show mercy and compassion toward others
- To live with purity in motive and deed
- To be passionate for peace
- To persevere in the face of opposition

Based on the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-10) Adopted by the 2015 Annual Meeting

CHILD SAFETY COMMITMENT

St Bartholomew's Anglican Church, Burnley commits to meeting all of the standards of the Child Safety Code of Conduct of the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne, and the Victorian Government's mandatory Child Safe Standards (Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015, Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Oversight and Enforcement of Child Safe Standards) Act 2016). The parish community seeks to promote the cultural safety of all children, including Aboriginal children, who come to us from a culturally or linguistically diverse background. We also seek to ensure the safety of any child with a disability. The parish community affirms that all children who come to St Bartholomew's have a right to feel and be safe. We are committed to ensuring that children's best interests are met within our parish. We have zero tolerance towards child abuse. The parish community actively works to listen to and empower children within our community.

Facilities including disabled and baby change room are located in the front entrance of the main hall. Enter via the main door of the hall. For all able access see welcomer.



If you want to ensure regular giving to St Bart's, but find you never have the right amount in cash, or are sometimes unable to attend on Sundays, then

St Bart's Direct Transfer may work for you.

Account Name: St Bartholomew's Anglican Church Burnley

BSB: 703 122

Account Number: 05009430

As a reference you can use your own name, or you can use 'Offering' & your name will remain anonymous with your personal details not appearing on the St Bart's bank statement.

10:00am SUNG MASS

Presider:	<i>Bp Alison Taylor</i>
Deacon & Preacher:	<i>Rev James Brady</i>
Sub-Deacon:	<i>Cynthia Nyholm</i>
Organist:	<i>Linda Kent</i>
Cantor:	<i>Dr Muriel Porter</i>
Mass Setting:	<i>Christ Church Mass – Philip Matthias</i>

GATHERING

Choral Introit: I look from afar

Palestrina, arr. Richard Shephard

The Introit is sung as the Sacred Ministers enter to commence the liturgy.

HYMN (AM 32) Come, thou Redeemer of the Earth
(Tune: Pure Nobis Nascitur)

INVOCATION & GREETING

✠ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

SENTENCE

Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, 'Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God.' Isaiah 35.3–4

LIGHTING OF THE CANDLE

Jesus, light of the world, you come from the family of David, the ancient king of your people.

Be our king too: a king who is fair, a king who is peaceful. Amen.

ADVENT WREATH ANTHEM

ADVENT CANDLES TELL THEIR STORY (AM 26)

**Prophet voices loudly crying, making pathways clear,
glimpses glory, self-denying, calling all to hear.
Through their message – challenged, shaken –
hearts awaken: God is near.**

INVITATION TO CONFESSION

As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us call to mind our sins.

CONFESSION

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, confident in God's forgiveness.

Merciful God, our maker and our judge, we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, and in what we have failed to do: we have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves; we repent and are sorry for all our sins. Father, forgive us. Strengthen us to love and obey you in newness of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

ABSOLUTION

Almighty God, who has promised forgiveness to all who turn to him in faith: ✠ pardon you and set you free from all your sins, Confirm and strengthen you in all goodness and keep you in eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

COLLECT

Sustain us, O God, with the power of your love on our journey to meet the One who is coming: strengthen our weak hands, make firm our feeble knees, and open blind eyes to the dawning of your kingdom, so that our hearts may rejoice as we behold the majesty of our God. We ask this through your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

THE WORD

FIRST READING

Isaiah 35: 1 – 6a, 10

Here is your God, who will come and save you.

A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah.

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you." Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Hear the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

PS 146: 6 – 10

Response

Response:

Come O Lord, Come and save us.

It is He who keeps faith for ever, who is just to those who are oppressed. It is He who gives bread to the hungry, The Lord, who sets prisoners free.

R/-

It is the Lord who gives sight to the blind, who raises up those bowed down. The Lord, who protects the stranger and upholds the widow and orphan. R/-

It is the Lord who loves the just but thwarts the way of the wicked. The Lord will reign for ever, Zion's God, from age to age. R/-

SECOND READING

James 5: 7 – 10

Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.

A Reading from the Letter of James.

Be patient, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. You also must be patient.

Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

Hear the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (AM 374)



The Spirit of the Lord now upon me has sent me to bring good news to the poor. Luke 4.18 (see Isaiah 61.1)



GOSPEL

Matthew 11: 2 – 11

Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

✠ A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples who said to Jesus, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" Jesus answered them, "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. And blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me."

As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces.

What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'

"Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Christ.

SERMON

Fr Jim Brady

THE CREED

Let us together affirm the faith of the Church.

We believe in one God, the Father, the almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again 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. We 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 worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the Resurrection of the dead, and the ✠ life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Let us pray for all people and for the Church throughout the world.

Almighty God, your Son Jesus Christ has promised that you will hear us when we ask in faith: receive the prayers we offer:

After each petition:

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

And at the end:

✠ Rest eternal grant to them, O Lord:

And let light perpetual shine upon them.

Almighty God, you have promised to hear our prayers.

Grant that what we have asked in faith we may by your grace receive, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE PEACE (*Stand*)

We are the Body of Christ.

His Spirit is with us.

The Peace of the Lord be always with you
and also with you.

The Peace is shared

Notices and announcements

THE SACRAMENT

OFFERTORY (AM 669) I heard the voice of Jesus say

(Tune: Kingsford)

During the Offertory Hymn the altar is prepared. Gifts of bread, wine and the collection are gathered and brought to the front of the church. At the end of the hymn, the celebrant invites all present to prayer.

PRAYER OVER THE GIFTS

Lord God, by this holy exchange of gifts, you share with us your divine life. Grant that everything we do may be directed by the knowledge of your truth, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

All glory and honour, be yours now and always, mighty Creator, everliving God. We give you thanks and praise for your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, who was looked for by the prophets, heralded by the Baptist, announced by an angel, born of the Virgin Mary, and revealed at last to men and women of every race. By his death on the cross and rising to new life, he offered the one true sacrifice for sin and obtained an eternal deliverance for his people. Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we proclaim your great and glorious name, for ever praising you and saying:

Ho - ly, Ho - ly, Ho - ly Lord,
 God of pow'r and might, Heav'n and earth are full of your glo - ry, Ho -
 - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who
 comes in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

And now, Father, we pray that we who receive these your gifts of bread and wine according to our Saviour's word may be partakers of his Body and Blood.

The Celebrant takes the bread in his hands and says:

For on the night he was betrayed he took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, his almighty Father, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'TAKE, EAT. THIS IS MY BODY WHICH IS GIVEN FOR YOU. DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME.'

The Celebrant takes the cup in his hands and says:

After supper, he took the cup and again giving you thanks he gave it to his disciples, saying, 'DRINK FROM THIS ALL OF YOU. THIS IS MY BLOOD OF THE NEW COVENANT WHICH IS SHED FOR YOU AND FOR MANY FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS. DO THIS, AS OFTEN AS YOU DRINK IT, IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME.'

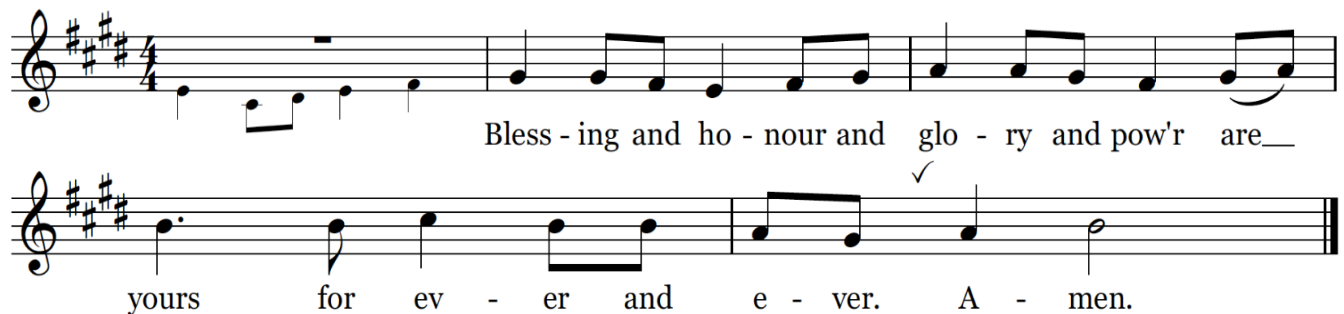
Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:



Therefore, in obedience to his command, we commemorate and celebrate his saving passion and death, his mighty Resurrection and Ascension into heaven and we eagerly await his coming again in glory.

We thank you that by your grace alone, you have accepted us in Christ; and here we offer you a spiritual sacrifice, holy and acceptable in your sight. Through Christ, receive this our duty and service, and grant that we who eat and drink these holy gifts may, by your Holy Spirit, be one body in Christ, and serve you in unity and peace.

In your grace and mercy, bring us to the joy of your eternal kingdom with all the company of the redeemed. May we praise you in union with them, and give you glory, through your Son, Jesus Christ. Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, we worship you, Father eternal, in songs of never-ending praise:



RITE OF HOLY COMMUNION

THE LORD'S PRAYER

As our Saviour has taught us, we are confident to pray:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

FRACTION

We who are many are one body in Christ,
for we all share in the one bread.

FRACTION ANTHEM

Je - sus, Lamb of God, have
 mer - cy on us. Je - sus, bear - er of our sins, have
 mer - cy on us. Je - sus, re - deem - er of the world,
 grant us your peace, grant us your peace.

THE INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

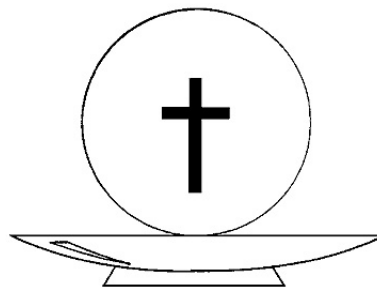
✠ This is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. Happy are those who are called to his supper.

Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word, and I shall be healed.

Holy Communion is administered with these or similar words:

The Body / Blood of Christ. **Amen.**

All communicant members of any Christian Church are invited to receive the Sacrament. All others are very welcome to come forward for a blessing.



COMMUNION SENTENCE

Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, 'Be strong, fear not.' Isaiah 35.3,4a

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

We praise and thank you, O Christ, for this sacred feast: for here we receive you, here the memory of your passion is renewed, here our minds are filled with grace, and here a pledge of future glory is given, when we shall feast at that table where you reign with all your saints for ever. **Amen.**

Father . . . **we offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice through Jesus Christ our Lord. Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory. Amen.**

HYMN (AM 41) Lo, he comes with clouds descending
(Tune: Helmsley)

BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

The Lord be with you
And also with you.

Christ, the Sun of righteousness shine upon you and make you ready to meet him when he comes in glory; and the blessing of God almighty, ✠the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you always.

Amen.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ. Amen.

CHORAL POSTLUDE: People Look East

Prayer at the Time of Choosing an Incumbent

Bountiful God, give to this parish a faithful pastor who will faithfully speak your Word and minister your Sacraments; an encourager who will equip your people for ministry and enable us to fulfil our calling. Give to those who will choose, wisdom, discernment and patience, and to us give warm and generous hearts, for Jesus Christ's sake. **Amen.**

PRAYER DIARY

For the sick, suffering, frail with age, and those who grieve: Peter Bryce; Joy Turner, Mira Krslovic, Milenka Skoblar, Bruce Kelsall, Hank, Howard; Nilani; Vivien, Neville, Bp John Parkes; Fr Barry Brown; Fr Ken Hewlett; Fr Stephen Miles; and Fr Robert Whalley.

Recently Departed: Richard Cacopardo; Jean-Pierre Pavillon; Jeremy Ashton, Bishop; Dan Octigan, Priest; Jill Jolliffe, Danny Power.

and for those whose Anniversaries of death occur in Years mind: Francis Mason (13th), Tilley Czech (14th), Glen Clement, Cynthia Garner & Timothy Conboy (17th)

A Prayer for Ukraine

Lord of all the earth, be present with the people of Ukraine at this time of danger, fear and conflict. Grant that wise and peaceable counsels may yet prevail, and give to all suffering nations the freedom they desire and deserve. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

St Bart's Vicarage Renovation Appeal



The last major capital expenditure on St Bart's Vicarage was in 1990, some 32 years ago. That work has proven long-lasting in conjunction with some updating of areas in the house over the past 10 years, including: a new kitchen, areas with new flooring, renovated ensuite shower, new carport, paving, and new back garden. There are now other areas of the

house that require attention to maintain a reasonable living standard, including: a new family bathroom, new flooring, back veranda work and a complete interior redecorating. We won't be able to achieve it all at once but we do need to get the major items fixed as a matter of urgency so to house an additional priest in 2023. If you could consider donating to the Vicarage Renovation Appeal, it would be much appreciated. You can donate via a specific EFT (below), by cheque (payable to St Bartholomew's, Burnley) or by cash.

Account Name: St Bartholomew's Anglican Church, Burnley

BSB: 703 122 **Account Number:** 05009979

FOR YOUR DIARY

Sunday, 11 December 2022 – Third Sunday of Advent

10.00am Sung Mass

5.00pm Mass

Monday, 12 December

10.00am to 12noon Richmond Churches Food Centre

Tuesday, 13 December

7.30pm St Bart's Book Club in the Café: Truman Capote, *A Christmas Memory*

Thursday, 15 December

10.00am Mass

7.30pm Parish Council Meeting in the Guild Room

Sunday, 18 December 2022 – Fourth Sunday in Advent (Year A)

10.00am Sung Mass

5.00pm Mass

Wednesday, 21 December

7.30pm Festival of Nine Lessons & Carols

Saturday, 24 December: CHRISTMAS EVE

5.00pm Family Carols

11.00pm Vigil of Carols & Midnight Mass

Sunday, 25 December: CHRISTMAS DAY

10.00am Mass & Carols

Sundays 1, 8, 15, 22 January 2023

10.00am Mass *and refreshments*

Sunday 29 January 2023

11.00am Mass *followed by Summer Garden Party*

FESTIVAL OF LESSONS & CAROLS – DON'T MISS IT!



Lots of your Favourite Carols on Wednesday evening, 21st December, at 7.30pm. Sing your heart out. **But be seated early!** Followed by drinks in the Guild Room. **Bring a plate of nibbles.**

Anglican Church of Australia ~ Diocese of Melbourne

ST BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH

PARISH OF BURNLEY

ph: 9943 8442

stbartsburnley 'at' gmail.com

www.stbartsburnley.org.au

2022/2023 PARISH MINISTRIES

Bell Ringers

Captain: Jonathon Harrison

- jmharrison 'at' iinet.net.au
0490 450 974

Book Club

Second Tuesday of the month @
7.30pm in St Bart's Café

Co-ordinator: Ann Brady

- ajbrady 'at' cobwebs.id.au
0423 723 009

Social Enterprise Café

Committee Chair: Glenis Heath
glenisheath 'at' gmail.com

Climate Action Group

Convenor: Kathy Kozlowski
kathykoz45 'at' yahoo.com.au

Richmond Churches Food Centre

(Mondays, 10.00am to 12noon)

Manager: Francis Flood

- rfoodcentre 'at' gmail.com
0493 104 144

Opportunity Shop

Temporarily closed for refitting

Sanctuary Guild



Sacristan: Jonathon Harrison

- jmharrison 'at' iinet.net.au
0490 450 974

St Bart's Close

*(1-4/2 Canterbury Street,
Richmond)*

Guardian:

- stbartsburnley 'at' gmail.com 0473 493 153

2022/2023 PARISH GOVERNANCE



Churchwardens:

- Helen McDonald (People's)
- Cynthia Nyholm (People's)
- Glenis Heath (Vicar's)

Parish Council:

(meets 3rd Tuesday 7.30pm)

- Trevor Blake
- Glenis Heath
- Helen McDonald
- Cynthia Nyholm
- Dr Muriel Porter
- Tom Ransom

Parish Administrator:

Warren Collins

- 03 9943 8442
- 0408 020 446
- stbartsburnley 'at' gmail.com

Parish Honorary Treasurer:

Tom Ransom

- 0400 187 584
- transom2000 'at' gmail.com

Parish Honorary Secretary:

Dr Muriel Porter

- 0430 575 874
- murielporter5 'at' gmail.com

Incumbency Committee:

- Don Heath
- Dr Muriel Porter
- Helen McDonald
(Churchwarden)

53rd Diocesan Synod Representatives:

Ann Brady & Jonathon Harrison
Dhakshini Saravanamuttu
(alternate)

Child Safety & OHS Compliance

Churchwarden with Oversight:
Glenis Heath

Compliance Officer:

Jonathon Harrison

- 9943 8442
- stbartscompliance 'at' gmail.com

WORSHIP SUNDAY

10.00am SUNG or SOLEMN MASS

5.00pm MASS

MID-WEEK

Thursday 10.00am Mass

MINISTRY TEAM

To prevent internet spamming 'at' replaces the @ symbol

Locum Tenens:

- ❖ Rev Graeme Brennan
0427-321-744 g.j.milpara 'at' gmail.com

Associate Clergy:

- ❖ Rev Canon (Emeritus) Jim Brady
0422-566-184 fjhbrady1 'at' gmail.com
- ❖ Rev Barry Brown
0478-767-728 brbrown1910 'at' gmail.com
- ❖ Right Rev Alison Taylor
0417-593-833 amtaylorms 'at' outlook.com

Honorary Lay Reader:

- ❖ Dr Muriel Porter
0430-575-874 murielporter5 'at' gmail.com

Candidate for Holy Orders:

- ❖ Tim Collison
0420-954-601 tcollison 'at' gmail.com

Organist and Director of Music::

- ❖ Linda Kent
0423-240-464 lkent56 'at' me.com

Weekly Bulletin, Prayer Diary & Rosters:

- ❖ Warren Collins
0408-020-446 stbartsburnley 'at' gmail.com

Icon of the Virgin of the Sign – Dr Alison Asquith

The cover of our Worship Bulletin depicts the lovely and meaningful image of the *Virgin of the Sign*. The focus, as Rowan Williams tells us*, is that the icon presents Christ praying *in* Mary. Mary becomes a '*sign*' in virtue of the action of Christ within her. And a sign to us of what is to come.

The icon shows Mary at the time of the Annunciation when she says, '*be it done to me according to your word*' (Luke 1:38). The Virgin is depicted frontally, half-length in this icon with her hands raised in a praying position with the child Jesus within a roundel upon her chest. The term '*Virgin of the Sign*' is a reference to the prophecy of Isaiah (7:14), '*therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call him Emmanuel*'.

Mary's son is depicted not as a foetus but rather vested in divine robes, holding a scroll symbolic of his life as a teacher. The robes in this icon appear to be gold although sometimes they can be shown in white, thus symbolizing divine glory. The infant's face is that of an old man which indicates the Christian teaching that he was at one and the same time both fully human infant and fully the eternal God. His right hand is raised in a gesture of blessing.

The Virgin is shown with much beauty, dignity, and grandeur, and although she may sometimes be portrayed in grief she is always filled with spiritual strength and wisdom as she is in this icon. Mary's head is covered with a veil which is in accordance with the tradition of Jewish women at that time. Her veil is coloured red and beneath her veil her clothing is blue, blue symbolizing her humanity. Three golden stars, one on her forehead, one on each shoulder are symbols of her virginity, before, during and after the birth of the Christ child.

Since early times, Williams tells us, Christians had imagined the Church in the form of a woman; and this stood for the whole believing community considered as Christ's bride. However, the icon of the *Virgin of the Sign* depicts much more than just a Church as the bride of Christ. Already it has been shown that by virtue of the action of Christ within

Mary, we are pointed towards one of the mysterious pieces of our belief in God's coming in flesh among us; for nine months God was incarnate on earth and was human but in a hidden way as a foetus growing within the Virgin.

Williams further elaborates that what we see in the icon of the Virgin of the Sign is a church that can cope with the hiddenness of God in its life – that is, a Church that does not need constantly to be reassuring itself of its success or even its total purity. It knows that *Christ* is the living centre. It is a Church that teaches people to see the world truthfully. *With 'hands open to God, eyes open to the world; and within the hidden energy that soaks the Church with divine action, divine love. This is the Church that the Virgin of the Sign shows us'* (Williams 2002: 55).

Finally, our icon for today metaphorically depicts the ability of any of us with the help of God, to bring forth something wonderful from within.

(* Williams, Rowan, *Ponder these things: Praying with Icons of the Virgin*. Canterbury Press, 2002)

Weekly Reflection

When we grasp at happiness, thinking that we have a '*right*' to it, we are often disappointed: the more we chase it, the more elusive it seems to become. At best, happiness is a fleeting reality, easily shattered by accidents, disappointments, illness and death.

We all want happiness, but that does not guarantee that we will live '*happily ever after*'. After all, it's only in fairy tales that the glass slipper is a perfect fit, that foolish younger sons acquire great fortunes or that a comatose princess is awakened by a prince's kiss.

Joy, on the other hand, according to Isaiah in today's first reading, is attainable. It is a state of being inwardly delighted by the presence of God; it involves experiencing the spirit of freedom, justice and healing; it includes knowing oneself to be loved by God and giving thanks for all one has received. Even in the presence of great suffering, joy can prevail. May the Lord rekindle his joy in you this Advent that you may truly celebrate his coming at Christmas.

Wishing you His grace and peace,

Fr. Graeme (Locum Tenens)