

St. Monica's Parish

North Parramatta



"Our mission is to build up an active parish community with the Eucharist as the centre, foster deeper prayer and spirituality and reach out as a witnessing community"

THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH - YEAR B

31ST DECEMBER 2023

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

The shepherds went in haste,
and found Mary and Joseph and the Infant lying in a manger.

FIRST READING

A reading from the book of Genesis

Gen 15:1-6. 21:1-3

The word of the Lord was spoken to Abram in a vision, 'Have no fear, Abram, I am your shield; your reward will be very great'.

'My Lord', Abram replied, 'what do you intend to give me? I go childless...' Then Abram said, 'See, you have given me no descendants; some man of my household will be my heir.' And then this word of the Lord was spoken to him, 'He shall not be your heir; your heir shall be one of your own flesh and blood.' Then taking him outside he said, 'Look up to heaven and count the stars if you can. Such will be your descendants,' he told him. Abram put his faith in the Lord, who counted this as making him justified.

The Lord dealt kindly with Sarah as he had said, and did what he had promised her. So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the time God had promised. Abraham named the son born to him Isaac, the son to whom Sarah had given birth.

The word of the Lord

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 104

Response: The Lord remembers his covenant for ever.

1. Give thanks to the Lord, tell his name,
make known his deeds among the peoples.
O sing to him, sing his praise;
tell all his wonderful works! (R.)
2. Be proud of his holy name,
let the hearts that seek the Lord rejoice.
Consider the Lord and his strength;
constantly seek his face. (R.)
3. Remember the wonders he has done,
his miracles, the judgements he spoke.
O children of Abraham, his servant,
O sons of the Jacob he chose. (R.)
4. He remembers his covenant for ever,
his promise for a thousand generations,
the covenant he made with Abraham,
the oath he swore to Isaac. (R.)

SECOND READING

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews

Heb 11:8. 11-12. 17-19

It was by faith that Abraham obeyed the call to set out for a country that was the inheritance given to him and his descendants, and that he set out without knowing where he was going. It was equally by faith that Sarah, in spite of being past the age, was made able to conceive, because she believed that he who had made the promise would be faithful to it. Because of this, there came from one man, and one who was already as good as dead himself, more descendants than could be counted, as many as the stars of heaven or the grains of sand on the seashore. It was by faith that Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac. He offered to sacrifice his only son

even though the promises had been made to him and he had been told: It is through Isaac that your name will be carried on. He was confident that God had the power even to raise the dead; and so, figuratively speaking, he was given back Isaac from the dead.

The word of the Lord

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

In the past God spoke to our fathers through the prophets;
now he speaks to us through his Son.

Alleluia!

GOSPEL

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke

Lk 2:22-40

When the day came for them to be purified as laid down by the Law of Moses, the parents of Jesus took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord – observing what stands written in the Law of the Lord: Every first-born male must be consecrated to the Lord – and also to offer in sacrifice, in accordance with what is said in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. Now in Jerusalem there was a man named Simeon. He was an upright and devout man; he looked forward to Israel's comforting and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had set eyes on the Christ of the Lord. Prompted by the Spirit he came to the Temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the Law required, he took him into his arms and blessed God; and he said: 'Now, Master, you can let your servant go in peace, just as you promised; because my eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared for all the nations to see, a light to enlighten the pagans and the glory of your people Israel.'

As the child's father and mother stood there wondering at the things that were being said about him, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, 'You see this child: he is destined for the fall and for the rising of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is rejected – and a sword will pierce your own soul too – so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare.'

There was a prophetess also, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was well on in years. Her days of girlhood over, she had been married for seven years before becoming a widow. She was now eighty-four years old and never left the Temple, serving God night and day with fasting and prayer. She came by just at that moment and began to praise God; and she spoke of the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem.

When they had done everything the Law of the Lord required, they went back to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. Meanwhile the child grew to maturity, and he was filled with wisdom; and God's favour was with him.

The Gospel of the Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Our God has appeared on the earth, and lived among us.

St. Monica's Catholic Parish

Cnr Church Street and North Rocks Road, North Parramatta

SUNDAY MASSES:	Saturday Vigil - 5pm; Sunday - 9am, 11.30am (Cantonese/Chinese Mass) and 6pm		
WEEKDAY MASSES:	Tuesday-Friday - 9.15am		
EXPOSITION:	Every Thursday 8pm—9pm Every Friday following 9.15am Mass until 10.45am,		
RECONCILIATION:	Friday 10-10.30am, Saturday 4-4.40pm, 3rd Sunday of the month 10:15-11am, or on request		
MARRIAGES:	Please contact the Parish Priest at least 12 months prior		
BAPTISMS:	Please contact the Parish Office for appointment with the Parish Priest. Phone: 9630-1951		
ANointing OF THE SICK/ EUCHARIST AT HOME	Please contact the Parish Office or Fr Ephraim Lam Phone: 9630-1951		
PARISH PRIEST/ CHINESE CHAPLAIN:	Fr. Ephraim Lam	Phone: 9630 -1951	Email: shingmanlam@gmail.com
ASSISTANT PARISH PRIEST	Fr Pio Jang	Phone: 9630 -1951	Email: stmonicanp@bigpond.com
POSTAL ADDRESS:	8 Daking Street, North Parramatta, 2151 Website: http://www.stmonicanp.org.au		
OFFICE HOURS:	Tuesday-Friday 8.30am-2.30pm	Phone: 9630-1951 Fax: 9630-8738	Email: stmonicanp@bigpond.com

St. Monica's School

School Principal: Lisa Crampton

Phone: 8832 4100

Fax: 8832-4199

Email: stmonicasparra@parra.catholic.edu.au

COMMENTARY

The Liberation of Women

In today's Gospel, Mary, having given birth, is regarded as ritually unclean. She could not take part in public worship until she was 'purified'. This involved offering up a couple of pigeons which she and Joseph had to buy.

No wonder that, at the Cleansing of the Temple, Jesus shatters the cages in which the pigeons were kept! He was angry with a Temple system which saw Mary that way, which thought of all women giving birth that way. Indeed, his whole ministry is full of instances when women breach religious and cultural taboos in his presence, because of his presence.

This Feast of the Holy Family gives us the opportunity to thank God for our mothers who, like Mary, helped fulfil God's plan for humankind by birthing us into the world.

We could pause for a moment to pray that the Church changes rules and structures which confine women in cages built from ideologies foreign to the Gospel, lest those rules become swords which pierce Mary's soul.

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The Holy Family Prayer

JESUS, Son of God and Son of Mary, bless our family. Graciously inspire in us the unity, peace, and mutual love that you found in your own family in the little town of Nazareth.

MARY, Mother of Jesus and Our Mother, nourish our family with your faith and your love. Keep us close to your Son, Jesus, in all our sorrows and joys.

JOSEPH, Foster-father to Jesus, guardian and spouse of Mary, keep our family safe from harm. Help us in all times of discouragement or anxiety.

HOLY FAMILY OF NAZARETH, make our family one with you. Help us to be instruments of peace. Grant that love, strengthened by grace, may prove mightier than all the weaknesses and trials through which our families sometimes pass. May we always have God at the centre of our hearts and homes until we are all one family, happy and at peace in our true home with you. Amen.

MASS TIMETABLE

1st January 2024 (Mon)
Solemnity of Mother God
9am (English Mass)

6th - 7th January 2024 (Sat & Sun)
Epiphany of the Lord
All Masses are at usual time

8th January 2024 (Mon)
Baptism of the Lord
9:15am (English Mass)

FEAST DAYS & COMMEMORATIONS

Jan, 1 Mary, the Holy MOTHER OF GOD

Jan 2, Sts Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen, bishops

PLEASE REMEMBER TO PRAY FOR THOSE OF OUR PARISH FAMILY WHO ARE SICK. ESPECIALLY

Peter Handcock, John Hilton, Paul Chiu, John Rodrigues, Dave & Fan Lin Wilson, Francis Lee, Jerry A, Michelle Barnes, Levi Bell, Gesualda Borg, Monica Teresa & Fernanda Carigliano, Margaret Dorahy, Heidi Ellich, Josie Estera, Philippe Kalife, Tim Kelly, Mary Korunic, Lillian Leigh, Monique Malouf, Maria Itang Tagle, Sheila Watts, Tina de Larrazabal, Rosa Santos, Llave Family, Gloria Cherote

MASS INTENTIONS

Please refer to the notice board at the entrance.

PARISH ACTIVITES



Silent Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
Every Thursday from 8pm–9pm.
Every Friday following 9.15am Mass until 10.45am.
All are welcome.



St Monica's Parish Rosary Group Every Wednesday, from 10.00am to 12.00pm in the Parish Centre.
Enquiries : Lynn McBride : 0423 696 961



Christian Meditation It will be resumed on 8 Feb 2024, then every Thursday, from 6.30pm to 7.30pm. Participation via zoom is available.
Enquiries: Nathan Cook, email:cookn4@gmail.com



Catholic Women's League St Monica's Branch
Last Monday at 10.30am in the Parish Centre.
Enquiries : Julie Skulander on 0411 988 361



St Monica's Piety Stall (open alternate weeks)
Stall is open on Saturday 4.40 - 6.15pm
Sunday 8.40 - 10.15am
Contact : Julie Skulander on 0411 988 361



St Monica's Art Group It will be resumed on 13 Jan 2024, then every Saturday, 6pm–8pm. The Art Group will gather at the Parish Centre. Mini workshops are available in Feb 2024. Please contact Vera (WhatsApp 0402936947) for details.



Bible Brekkie It will be resumed on 4 Feb 2024, then every FIRST and LAST Sunday of the month, 10.15am - 11am, at the Blue Room.
Fr. Ephraim will talk about interesting topics from the Bible. All are welcome.



Remember the Deceased There is an open diary and pens next to the Sacred Heart of Jesus statue and you are welcome to write down the names of your deceased loved ones or family members on the day of their anniversaries and we will pray for them.



Tap & Go is now available for donation for ongoing Church building maintenance fund. Machine is placed near the Statue of Saint Joseph. Envelopes are also available on the tables at the entrance to the Church if you wish to donate via cash/credit card. Your donation is greatly appreciated.

Youth + Corner

Youth Corner 31st December

Scripture- The parts of the gospel reading which stood out to me the most were verses 23-24: "For every male opening the womb shall be called holy to the Lord, and in order to offer a sacrifice, according to what is said in the law of the Lord...." and 34-35: "Behold, this one has been set for the ruin and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and as a sign which will be contradicted. And a sword will pass through your own soul, so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

Observation- This reading takes place shortly after Jesus' birth in which Mary and Joseph continue to follow the law of Moses, where purification is required as the Lord states in Leviticus 12. When a woman becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son, she will remain ceremonially unclean for seven days. On the eighth day, the boy must be circumcised in order to be purified. Similarly, the woman must also present a lamb and a bird to the priest, one for the burnt offering and sin offering respectively. It is only through this action will she too be cleansed. The Lord makes an exception for those who are poorer (such as Mary and Joseph), as they can alternatively offer two doves or pigeons instead. Moreover, by presenting Jesus in the temple in Jerusalem, Mary and Joseph honour the command the Lord gave to Israel regarding firstborns- that they must all be consecrated to God as described in Exodus. It is interesting to note how both the Old and New Testament books complement one another, are often referenced throughout and that events in the Bible are interconnected in some way. Simeon's exclamation to Mary foreshadows the ministry, suffering and death of Jesus to come, and how he will be the sacrifice for the entire world.

Application- Mary and Joseph are clear examples of what it means to follow the Lord's commands. They are obedient and faithful servants who recognize the importance of trusting in God. The same could also be said about Anna, the prophetess, as she seemingly knows that the Savior which God had promised, was truly here. It made me question my own faith journey, and how often I choose to follow Christ and his teachings. Let this new year be a time where we reflect on how far we have come in our relationship with God- do we know Him; are we close to Him? Or do you still have many questions? If it is the latter, then fear not; upon reading this passage, I was notably confused because I did not understand the process of ceremonial purification myself. It has therefore made me motivated to continue learning about the Bible and how it remains relevant even (and perhaps, especially) in today's society.

Prayer- Dear Lord, thank you for offering us your son Jesus as our Savior. I would also like to give thanks and praise for the Holy Family in general- particularly Mary and Joseph, who continue to be role models for mothers and fathers around the world that follow (and sometimes struggle) in their path to holiness. I pray for all types of families, that you may bring them love, unity and peace within their homes. I pray this especially for families who are struggling, or who find it difficult to get along- with the new year ahead of us, I hope they find solace in one another, and in you Lord. I offer up these prayers to you, and may 2024 bring the whole world a better year.



6th/7th January ROSTERS

	5pm Vigil	9am	6pm
Readers			
Extraordinary Ministers			
Acolytes			
Cleaning	Group 1 - Chinese Chaplaincy (5th January)		
Children's Liturgy	School Holidays		
Morning Tea	Not provided		
Counting	Group 3 - Maria David & Tibu Corera		

Youth Announcements



- **St Monica's Youth Group (FYRE)**
Youth Group continues for another month in the community room, starting at 10:30AM! Feel free to drop by for some games and friendly chats! 😊
- * **Wishing you and your families a merry Christmas and a happy new year! Thank you to the youth for another great year; we hope you had as much fun as the leaders did**