

**WISHING YOU ALL A SAFE,
JOYFUL AND
PEACE FILLED CHRISTMAS!**



“Today is Born Our Saviour, Christ the Lord!”





ST MARTHA'S PARISH STRATHFIELD

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Thank you for all the lovely cards & gifts ... Fr Jack

BOXING DAY MASS ON THURSDAY 26TH DECEMBER WILL BE CELEBRATED AT 9.10AM



A Humble Christmas Prayer

by Rev. Willetts

"God, our Creator, we offer this humble prayer on Christmas Day. We come to worship with a song of thanks in our hearts, a song of redemption, a song of hope and renewal. We pray for joy in our hearts, hope in our God, love to forgive, and peace upon the earth. We ask for the salvation of all our family members and friends, and we pray your blessings on all people. May there be bread for the hungry, love for the unlovable, healing for the sick, protection for our children, and wisdom for our youth. We pray for the forgiveness of sinners and abundant life in Christ. Holy Spirit, fill our hearts with your love and power.

In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen."

Merry Christmas
Wesołych Świąt
Buon Natale
Milad Majid
Sretan Bozic
Joyeux Noel
Selamat Hari Natal
Buone Feste Natalizie
IL-Milied It-tajjeb
Maligayang Pasko
Chuc Mung Giang Sinh
Feliz Navidad
Kala Christouyenna
Sung Tan Chuk Ha
Sheng Dan Kuai Le
Gesëende Kersfees



THANK YOU TO EVERYONE THAT HELPED
& CONTRIBUTED TO OUR CHRISTMAS
CELEBRATIONS.

IT HAS BEEN WONDERFUL SHARING THIS
JOYOUS FEAST WITH YOU!





A Message From Father Jack

The lights in the neighbourhood, the carols, the cards, the cookies, the smiles on peoples' faces, children's excitement, all of these and so much more make this the most special time of our year. I love all the traditions that have evolved around Christmas, all of them have this element of truth: they present the joy of the world at the birth of its Saviour.

Today we meet at this festive table while our land is struck by drought and bushfires in the vast area of the state. Many people have lost their livelihoods because of them. Many have lost their homes, beloved animals and their communities. May those so badly affected by fire and drought be close to our hearts and may baby Jesus bring peace and hope to their lives at this difficult and devastating time.

In this time, we sing beautiful carols... not all will feel like they want to sing. Words such as war, never ending threats of terrorism, asylum seekers trauma, injustices towards underprivileged and indigenous peoples, famine in so many countries and a lot of uncertainties across our globe hit our lives constantly. For so many, this Christmas will carry gaping holes and deep emptiness, a visit to the graveside and an empty place around the festive table.

However in the midst of our sad stories we must voice the good news of redemption and peace, and the power of love and draw inspiration from the Christ Child our greatest hope.

Dear Friends of St. Martha's faith community. It's been almost 3 years since my first arrival to Strathfield. Three very meaningful years... For all the support and journeying together through life, thank you. Thank you for being good companions and good friends along the road. I pray that you may have a happy and holy Christmas I also pray that countless blessings be yours in the year to come.

Father Jack



*Blessing
The Family Christmas Tree*

Before Christianity came to be, trees that remained green all year round warded off evil spirits and were special to people during the winter. It wasn't until the sixteenth century in Germany that trees were brought inside and decorated. Continue the tradition by gathering together and blessing this special symbol.

When you are ready to do the blessing, gather everyone around the tree and designate someone to lead the following prayer.

***Leader:** Loving God, we stand before you once again ready to celebrate the birth of your son, Jesus.*

(Have everyone extend a hand in a gesture of blessing)

***Leader:** Bless this tree, this sign of life and freshness and perseverance in our midst. It stands as a reminder that you are born anew in us each day. Bless our family and friends as we celebrate this joyous season. Keep us safe in our travels, kind in our conversations, and gracious in our giving and receiving. We ask you this in confidence, because we know you love us.*

***All:** Amen.*

Join in singing a favourite Christmas Carol such as "O Christmas Tree" or "Joy to the World."



Pope Francis laughing outside of St. Peter's Basilica during the general audience on April 1, 2015. Credit: Bohumil

Pope Francis' Three Christmas Ingredients: Joy, Prayer, & Gratitude

The Season of Advent, gives weight to the hope of the People of God, bringing into the Pope Francis said three simple attitudes can help prepare us to welcome Jesus Christ. "Saint Paul invites us to prepare for the coming of the Lord by assuming three attitudes: constant joy, persevering prayer and continual thanksgiving," the Pope said. "Joy, prayer and gratitude are three attitudes that prepare us to live Christmas in an authentic way." Pope Francis' remarks to the crowds gathered in St. Peter's Square came ahead of the Angelus for Gaudete Sunday, the Third Sunday of Advent, which this year coincided with Pope Francis' 81st birthday, Vatican News reports. He said the liturgy in recent Sundays has focused on how to be vigilant and how to prepare for the way of the Lord. For Gaudete Sunday, the liturgy invites Christians to joy.

The Pope cited St. Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians, "always be happy." "That is to say, always remain in joy, even when things do not go according to our desires," Francis explained. "Anxieties, difficulties and sufferings permeate our lives, and so many times the reality around us seems to be inhospitable and arid, like the desert in which the voice of John the Baptist resounded, as the Gospel of today recalls." John the Baptist's voice in the desert reveals that Christian joy rests on "the certainty that the desert is inhabited." This is Jesus, who in the words of the Prophet Isaiah comes "to bring the good news to the poor, to bind the wounds of broken hearts, to proclaim the freedom of slaves, the release of prisoners, to promulgate the year of grace of the Lord." Jesus' mission in the world consists of "liberation from personal and social sin and the slavery that it produces." "He came to earth to give back to men the dignity and freedom of the children of God, which only He can give," said Pope Francis.

Unceasing prayer helps us enter into relationship with God, the source of true joy. "The joy of the Christian comes from faith and from the encounter with Jesus Christ, the reason for our happiness," the Pope continued. "The more we are rooted in Christ, the more we find inner serenity, even in the midst of everyday contradictions." The Christian who has met Jesus cannot be "a prophet of misfortune" but must be "a witness and a herald of joy," said Francis. This is "a joy to share with others; a contagious joy that makes life's journey less tiring." St. Paul also stressed "the grateful love of God," his generosity, mercy, patience and goodness. Christians are to be "living in an endless state of thanksgiving." Pope Francis closed his remarks before the Angelus by entrusting the congregation to the intercession of the Virgin Mary. "She is 'the cause of our joy,' not only because she is the Mother of Jesus, but because she continually leads us to Him," he said.

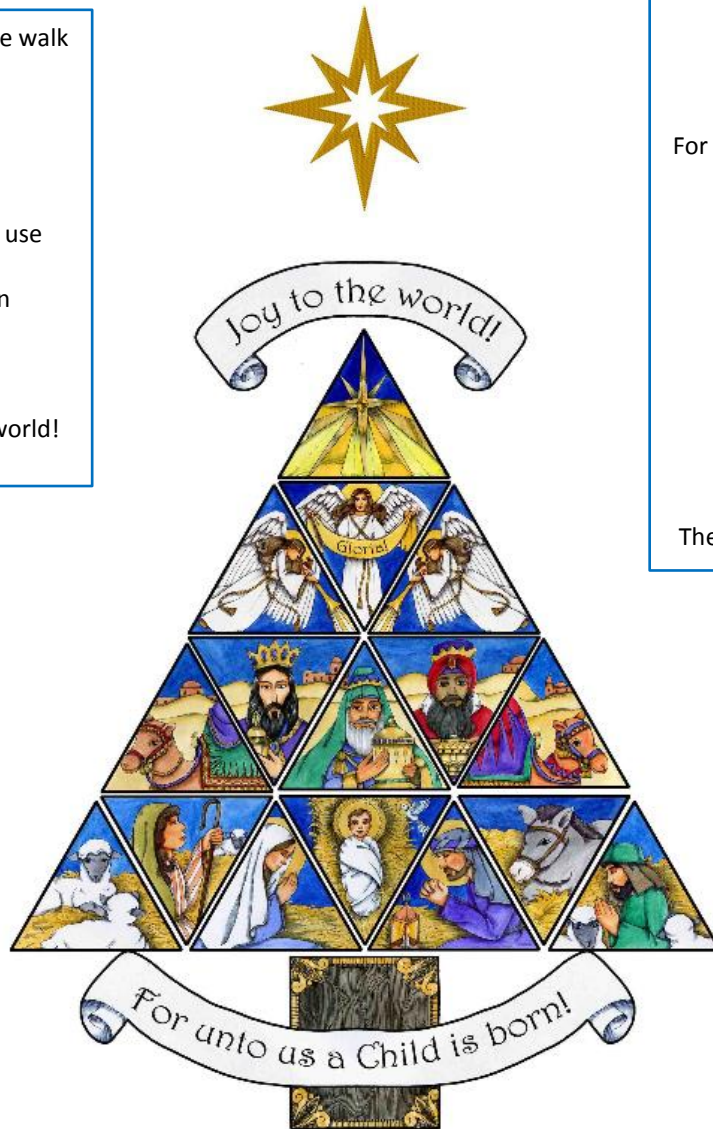
After the Angelus, the Pope called for the release of six women religious kidnapped in Iguoriakhi in Nigeria's southern Edo State. On Nov. 13 gunmen abducted the sisters, three professed women and three aspirants, from their convent. There have been no claims of responsibility for the crime in a country where kidnapping for ransom has become common. "I unite my heart to the appeal of the bishops of Nigeria for the liberation of the Sisters of the Eucharistic Heart of Christ," he said. "I pray with insistence for them and for all the other persons who find themselves in this painful condition," he continued, adding "may they all, on the occasion of Christmas, finally return to their homes."



PRAYERS

For the desert places in which we walk
The streets we roam
The paths we cross
Guide our feet
Take us to places
Where you would go
Give us words that you would use
That in this Advent season
Of promise and preparation
We might point the way
with John the Baptist
To the Lamb of God,
who takes away the sin of the world!

You gave your all
to the world
in the bleakness
of that stable.
Love was born that day
Pure love
Undiluted
Poured out for all
who call on Your name
Such Grace
Undeserved
deserves a response
in the life that we lead.
Forgive our ingratitude
for all you have done,
draw us to your Word,
give us a new song to sing,
that will resonate throughout
this world.
And begin with us today.
Amen



Shout for joy
the whole earth,
and everything within.
Rejoice!
For Light has come into the world
The mountains sing,
the seas resound
to the praise
of your name.
Salvation
once promised
is here on earth
The angels' song
rings in the air,
a child has been born.
Hallelujah!
The Saviour of the world is here.

We worship
the birth of a baby,
and in doing so
acknowledge God
reaching down to touch
the earth
and bless it once again;
to walk within the garden
as once he did in Eden.
We worship
the birth of a Saviour,
an infant in whose
fragility lay
all the signs of sacrifice;
born in humility,
growing into his kingdom
as Scripture's Promised
One.
We worship Jesus,
Saviour and King.

From the very beginning was
Your Word
Which spoke this world into being
Your Word
Which thunders from the skies
Your Word
Which flows like mountain streams
Your Word
Which whispers in morning breeze
Your Word
Revealed through kings and prophets
Your Word
Revealed through Angels' praise
Your Word
Revealed in humble service
Your Word
Revealed through a tiny child
Your Word
Alive from the beginning of all things
And to eternity.

O sweet Child of Bethlehem,
grant that we may share with all our hearts
in this profound mystery of Christmas.
Put into the hearts of men and women this peace
for which they sometimes seek so desperately
and which you alone can give to them.
Help them to know one another better,
and to live as brothers and sisters,
children of the same Father.
Reveal to them also your beauty,
holiness and purity.
Awaken in their hearts
love and gratitude for your infinite goodness.
Join them all together in your love.
And give us your heavenly peace.
Amen.

