

ST MARTHA'S PARISH STRATHFIELD



Dear Parishioners, Families and Friends,

As we come together at this time of year – a time for family and friends – it is good for us to also spend some time reflecting on the “reason for the season” – Jesus Christ, the Lord! It is important that we welcome Him to our homes and to our celebrations, remembering that, as Christians, we celebrate Christmas not as a secular holiday, but as a proclamation of our faith that God so loved the world He sent His only Son.....and that the Word became flesh of the Virgin Mary and dwells among us. In a world that wants to make Christmas only about presents, and food and Santa Claus and self-indulgence, we, as Catholics are not ashamed to profess our Faith: Christmas is about the Incarnation of the Lord and our salvation history. We are not ashamed to say “Merry Christmas.” We are not ashamed to send out “religious” Christmas cards, which celebrate his birth to our friends and family members and we are not ashamed to have a Nativity in our homes. We are not ashamed to give witness to Jesus in the midst of so many counter-testimonies. We are proud to be disciples of Jesus and we want all to rejoice with us as we celebrate His birth!

As we celebrate the Nativity of Jesus, we remain eternally grateful to God for all the blessings, especially for the gifts of life, family, friends and faith community. My special gratitude goes to all the volunteers across all the different ministries who do such a wonderful job. I thank you for your enthusiasm and commitment. To our Acolytes, Altar Servers, Catechists, Children's Liturgy, Choir & Musicians, Counters, Readers, Sacristan & Altar Ladies, Safeguarding Officers, Special Ministers, Staff, Teachers & Wardens. Thank you to everyone that helped & contributed to our Christmas celebrations. May the Joy & Peace that were present at the birth of Christ be present in your homes this Christmas Season.

Together with Fr Liem Duong, I wish you all a blessed Merry Christmas.
God Bless, Fr John.

Today is born our Saviour, Christ the Lord!

Wishing you a Blessed Christmas and a 2026 rich in health, happiness and grace to you and your families! Thank you for all the lovely cards & gifts ... Fr John & Fr Liem



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

We share the joy of the angels and the shepherds as we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Saviour of the world. He is one with us, in times of darkness and hardship, in joy and celebration. We acknowledge those members of our Parish Community that have lost loved ones during 2025.

May the Birth of Jesus give you comfort and strength during this Christmas Period.



A Christmas Reflection

Let us pray:

Lord, fill us with the wonder of Blessed Virgin Mary, the obedience of St. Joseph, the song and the joy of the angels, the eagerness and gladness of the shepherds, the determination and the worship of the magi, and the peace of infant Jesus in the Manger.

The Christmas story is very simple: it tells of a birth, the birth of a first child to poor parents with an uncertain future. So what is it about the story that holds such appeal, that has allowed so many other stories and traditions to grow up around it? Why does it have such a place in our hearts? Perhaps it has to do with the way it taps into our deepest longings, those things we desire that can help us cope with just about anything: love and trust. There is much generous love in the story, and with it a sense of wonder that God could be so intimately involved with something so simple. Shepherds are amazed, wise men are humbled and a young woman treasures all these things in her heart. In the midst of the love we are all invited, just like the people in the story to trust that God is here and cares deeply as each of us deals with the joys and sorrows, the hopes and disappointments of everyday. This story affirms that we all have a value and a unique dignity that lifts us up and empowers us to move beyond ourselves and to take the risk of reaching out to others, always trusting that God is present in the simple stuff.

Family Connection: At Christmas we celebrate the great mystery that God became flesh and dwelt among us. We call this mystery the Incarnation (the word means "to take on flesh"), and it changes everything. Today's Gospel reminds us that we can also look upon the Nativity from God's perspective to better appreciate the significance of the Incarnation. The mystery we proclaim at Christmas is that God, the very God who created all things from nothing and who is light itself, took on our humanity in order to transform us. Through his birth among us, we have seen the face of God and have become nothing less than God's own children. At this awesome mystery, we adore. Gather as a family around your Nativity set. Keep this image before you and talk about how familiar we are with this scene. Invite members of the family to recall the details of Jesus' birth that we hear in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Observe that the Gospel of John invites us to consider Jesus' birth from a different perspective. Read together today's Gospel, John 1:1-14. John's Gospel reminds us that the image we see in our Nativity set is a most remarkable sight: God made himself at home with us by taking on flesh and becoming a human person. We call this mystery the Incarnation. What are some of the things that John's Gospel says happened for us because Jesus came to dwell among us? (Light overcame darkness; we see God's glory in Jesus; we became children of God.) Together thank God for this mystery of the Incarnation and the salvation that we received because Jesus was born among us. Sing together a Christmas hymn, such as "O Come, All Ye Faithful" or "Silent Night."

We Are Not Alone by Henry Nouwen



God came to us because he wanted to join us on the road, to listen to our story, and to help us realize that we are not walking in circles but moving toward the house of peace and joy. This is the great mystery of Christmas that continues to give us comfort and consolation: we are not alone on our journey. The God of love who gave us life sent his only Son to be with us at all times and in all places, so that we never have to feel lost in our struggles but always can trust that he walks with us. The challenge is to let God be who he wants to be. A part of us clings to our aloneness and does not allow God to touch us where we are most in pain. Often we

hide from him precisely those places in ourselves where we feel guilty, ashamed, confused, and lost. Thus we do not give him a chance to be with us where we feel most alone. Christmas is the renewed invitation not to be afraid and to let him—whose love is greater than our own hearts and minds can comprehend—be our companion.

A Christmas Prayer

O Lord, how hard it is to accept your way. You come to me as a small, powerless child born away from home. You live for me as a stranger in your own land. You die for me as a criminal outside the walls of the city, rejected by your own people, misunderstood by your friends, and feeling abandoned by your God. As I prepare to celebrate your birth, I am trying to feel loved, accepted, and at home in this world, and I am trying to overcome the feelings of alienation and separation which continue to assail me. But I wonder now if my deep sense of homelessness does not bring me closer to you than my occasional feelings of belonging. Where do I truly celebrate your birth: in a cozy home or in an unfamiliar house, among welcoming friends or among unknown strangers, with feelings of well-being or with feelings of loneliness?

I do not have to run away from those experiences that are closest to yours. Just as you do not belong to this world, so I do not belong to this world. Every time I feel this way I have an occasion to be grateful and to embrace you better and taste more fully your joy and peace. Come, Lord Jesus, and be with me where I feel poorest. I trust that this is the place where you will find your manger and bring your light. Come, Lord Jesus, come. Amen.

