

confess, but that will never stop me from trying to keep Christmas not as a day but as a Season where we can celebrate God's complete and overwhelming love for God's people—for us!

I remain hopeful that one day I will succeed in maintaining my focus both on the Season of Advent and the Season of Christmas that follows it.

Have a blessed week.

Fr Andrew

End of School Term

The 2022 School Year concludes this Friday, 16 December, and we wish all our students and their families a wonderful holiday break for Christmas and January. A special farewell to our Year 6 students who are moving on to high school.

A big thank you to our wonderful school staff, ably led by Lisa McNeilly, for all they have achieved during 2022. We look forward to new and exciting adventures in 2023. Have a wonderful holiday!

Fr Andrew

Prayer for the Appointment of our New Bishop

Shepherding God
you reveal your way of unfailing love
in the image of the Good Shepherd
who seeks the lost,
shows compassion
knows and is known by the sheep
and lays down his life for them.

We your people of Maitland-Newcastle
are without a bishop to shepherd us.

We ask that your Holy Spirit
who moves through this great south land
inspire the choice of our new Bishop,
empower his 'yes'
and open our hearts in hospitality and love.

We make this prayer through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help, pray for us.
Mary MacKillop of the Cross, pray for us.

Cuppa @ Dungog

There will be a cup of tea in the Parish Hall after the 9.30am Mass. Please stay to enjoy company and conversation.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Least and Greatest

Jesus declares that the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater even than John whom he has just finishing praising as greatest of all men. It is an indication that in the kingdom, things are not as they are on earth. The blind, lame, deaf, poor and lepers that Jesus named earlier would have been seen as the very lowest of society. Their afflictions were seen as punishments from God and so it was assumed that they, or their parents, had done something to deserve this punishment. Jesus rejects this interpretation and shows these people to be the most open to responding to his message.

SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT

John the Baptist

Jesus is not recorded as asking the messengers about John's wellbeing. He doesn't appear to express any concern about John's imprisonment. Yet Jesus must have felt this situation very deeply. John the Baptist and Jesus were related; they were cousins. The depth of his feeling is reflected when Jesus speaks so positively and powerfully about John. It reads almost as a eulogy that might be given at a funeral; praising the greatness of the deceased. Yet regardless of John's greatness, Jesus assures his audience that even the least in the kingdom is greater than John.

Waiting for Purpose—Advent Reflection

The Diocesan Advent Reflection, entitled "Waiting for Purpose", is available for everyone by visiting bit.ly/3TvOg7s. The resource uses a process of Mystagogical Reflection to encounter Christ where we are, to pay attention to what Christ reveals in the scripture and the living tradition of our faith, to share this, to connect it to our life now and to be changed by it.

There will be the opportunity for parishioners to gather each **Tuesday** evening of Advent at **7pm**. All are welcome.

For those wanting to connect via Zoom during Advent, there is an opportunity to do so each Monday at 10am. To register go to bit.ly/3yQ0K1Q.

Opportunities Outside The Parish

Become An SRE Volunteer

Did you know that some 50% of Catholic children are in state schools? Have you ever thought of spreading the good news of the gospel and the love of Jesus Christ with children? Have you ever thought about becoming a Special Religious Educator?

This could be an opportunity for you to meet new people, discover new friendships and build quality relationships whilst mastering skills and confidence in Catechetics.

You can make a difference in the schools within your parish! For people of faith, knowing you are participating in Christ's call to share the Good News to all is a great source of joy and meaning.

If you would like to learn more about how you can help, please contact the Pastoral Ministries team on 4979 1200.



Reconciliation During Advent

As part of our Advent preparations, the Sacrament of Penance (Reconciliation) will be available as follows:

The 1st Rite of Reconciliation will be available each Saturday of Advent at St Mary's, Dungog between 10am and 11am.

A 2nd Rite of Reconciliation will be celebrated on **Thursday 22 December** at St Mary's, Dungog commencing at 6pm. At this point I do not believe that there will be a need to invite other priests to join us for this celebration.

Safeguarding in our Parishes means ...

The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle has an abiding commitment to promote the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

If you have any concerns for a child or vulnerable adult please contact the Office of Safeguarding: by phoning 4979 1390 or emailing childprotection@mn.catholic.org.au.

Visit the Office of Safeguarding website for further information www.officeofsafeguarding.org.au

SRE Teachers for Gresford & Vacy

Gresford parishioners currently attend Gresford and Vacy Primary Schools to offer Special Religious Education using the Sydney Diocesan program "Christ is Our Light and Life".

A additional teacher for either or both of these two schools—and especially for Vacy Primary School—would be very welcome.

Training and support are offered for any one interested in taking up this role.

Please contact the Parish Office in the first instance.



Palms Volunteer from Dungog Parish

You will have seen regular notices in the weekly parish bulletin concerning volunteering opportunities overseas with Palms Australia, which enables skill sharing, vocational mentoring and the enhancement of local capacity in overseas communities which have requested assistance.

Dungog parishioner John Bradley has answered the call and will depart in January 2023 to take up a placement at Don Bosco High School and Vocational Training Centre in Saloleloga, Samoa as a Science & Maths Teacher. John is an experienced Science teacher in Catholic high schools and previously volunteered with Palms in Kiribati from 2001 to 2003.

Members of Dungog Parish are invited to support John in his placement by making his mission a prayer intention. Parishioners can also support John's placement financially, either with regular support or a one-off donation, by visiting <https://palms.org.au/project/physics-science-teacher-mentor-in-savaii-samoa/>

John's placement support team includes several members of the Dungog Parish community. Fr Andrew and Esmá Tiernan (who was herself a Palms volunteer in Kiribati) are part of that team, and will receive regular updates from John about his work in Samoa and how the support of parish members is assisting.

To enquire about opportunities with Palms, visit www.palms.org.au or phone 02 9560 5333.

The Parish Diary...(for the weeks ahead)

3rd Week of Advent, Year A

Monday—12 December

Tuesday—13 December

Memorial of St Lucy

Wednesday—14 December

Memorial of St John of the Cross

5.30pm Mass @ Dungog

Thursday—15 December

9.30am Mass @ East Gresford

Friday—16 December

No Mass—Fr Andrew to Newcastle for meetings

Saturday—17 December

10am Reconciliation @ Dungog

5.30pm Mass @ East Gresford

Sunday—18 December

Fourth Sunday of Advent, Year A

8am Mass @ Clarence Town

9:30am Mass @ Dungog

Christmas Mass Timetable

Given that Christmas Day falls on a Sunday in 2022, our Christmas Mass timetable will follow the usual Sunday Mass pattern.

Each of the three Masses will follow a slightly different set of Readings and Proper:

Saturday 24 December, 5.30pm, East Gresford:

Vigil Mass

Sunday 25 December, 8am, Clarence Town:

Mass at Dawn

Sunday 25 December, 9.30am, Dungog:

Mass during the Day

Fr Andrew

Today's Liturgy:

1st Reading Isaiah 35:1-6, 10

Psalm Ps 145:

Resp: Lord, come and save us.

2nd Reading James 5:7-10

Acclamation Is 61:1; Lk 4:18

Alleluia, alleluia!

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me;
he sent me to bring Good News to the poor.
Alleluia!

Gospel Matthew 11:2-11

Memorial Acclamation

We proclaim your Death, O Lord,
and profess your Resurrection
until you come again.

Pope Francis' Prayer Intention for December:

"We pray for volunteer non-profit organisations committed to human development; may they find people dedicated to the common good and ceaselessly seek out new paths to international cooperation."



In Your Charity, Please Pray for:

Those Who Have Died:

Those Whose Anniversary of Death Is In November: Katie Rumbel, Elizabeth Holstein, Keith Schumaker, Margaret Egan, Ella Maher, Alan Robertson, Christine Knight, Margaret Miners, Mollie Smith, George Maurer, Mervyn Trappel, Paul Murphy, Rowland Young, Catherine Reid, Brian Smith, Thora Tindall, Margaret Egan, Valma Osmond, Nancy Dickson.

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them.

May they rest in peace.

Those Who Are Sick: Maryann Smith, Tracy Copus, Daphne Bond, Maree McCulloch, Leonie Young, Lisa Reid, Lyn Barry, Bev Herbert, Denise Wenden, Warren Wade, Irene Robinson, Ray Tonkin (Qld), Luke Barry, Joanne Curry, Kathie Maynard, Kevin Ward, Brian Holstein, David Loudon, Michaela Brown, Phillip Hartup, Bella Duggan, Ella Rusak, Peter Byron, Colleen Primrose, Bert Preece.