



Dungog & Gresford Parishes

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF MAITLAND-NEWCASTLE

Incorporating worshipping communities at **St Mary's Church**, Brown Street, Dungog, **St Patrick's Church**, Rifle Street, Clarence Town, **St Helen's Church**, Park Street, East Gresford, **Sacred Heart Church**, Summerhill Road, Summer Hill via Vacy, and serving the surrounding districts.

SUNDAY 18 DECEMBER 2022

4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT, YEAR A

Parish Staff

Fr Andrew Doohan (*Administrator*)
Kerry Copus (*Parish Secretary*)

Presbytery & Parish Office

55 Brown Street, Dungog
PO Box 24, Dungog NSW 2420

P: (02) 4992 1477

E: dungog.parish@mn.catholic.org.au

W: www.dungoggresfordcatholic.org.au

Office Hours

The Parish Office is staffed on Tuesdays from 10am until 2pm & Fridays from 10am until 1pm.

Parish Bulletin

Items for inclusion in the Parish Bulletin should be received at the Parish Office by 5pm on Wednesdays.

Bulletins can be downloaded from the website.

Other Contacts

Clarence Town Val Preece—0403 251 434,
 (02) 4996 4474, or email
 vip_1@bigpond.com

Gresford Faith Banister
 0427 536 248

Parish School

St Joseph's Primary School
49 Brown Street, Dungog NSW 2420
Mrs Lisa McNeilly (*Principal*)

P: (02) 4992 1377

E: admin@dungog.catholic.edu.au

W: www.dungog.catholic.edu.au

A Pastoral Note...

Following on from my comments last week, we are now in what some refer to as the 'Christmas Novena'. As I alluded to, we are now in the immediate preparations for the celebration of the Nativity of the Lord or Christmas.

One of the changes that takes place during the days of preparation is unknown to many people, though anyone who is familiar with the *Liturgy of the Hours* (also known as the *Divine Office*) will be aware of what I mean.

The *Liturgy of the Hours* is that liturgical prayer that all clergy, religious, and many members of the laity each day as a means of sanctifying the course of the day. The two primary 'hours' are Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer, referred to as the two hinges of the whole *Liturgy of the Hours*.

I mention this by way of background because the primary point I would like to make concerns one of the antiphons that is used during Evening Prayer. During these days of preparation, the antiphons for the Gospel Canticle used during Evening Prayer are known as the Great 'O' Antiphons,

These seven antiphons all begin with 'O' and draw on one of the Messianic titles that are found in the Hebrew Scriptures (the "Old Testament"). These titles, and thus the antiphons, are wonderfully powerful, and something worthy of prayerful reflection during this last week before Christmas Day.

And lest you think you don't know these Great

(Continued on page 2)

The Catholic Parishes of Dungog & Gresford recognize that they sit upon the traditional country of the Worimi people. We acknowledge their cultural heritage, beliefs and continuing relationship with this land. We pay our respects to their Elders—past, present, and emerging—and commit ourselves to working together for reconciliation and justice.

'O' Antiphons at all, they were brought together in 1861 to form a popular and well known Christian hymn, *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*.

If you would like to listen to these Great 'O' Antiphons being sung by the Benedictine Monks of St John's Abbey, Collegetown, you can find YouTube presentations of each of them by visiting bit.ly/3htwaWy—I highly recommend them!

Have a blessed week.

Fr Andrew

Dungog Christmas Hamper Raffle—DRAW

The Dungog Christmas Hamper will be finding a new home this Sunday with the draw for a winner taking place. Congratulations to the deserving winner, and thanks to all who contributed to the hamper, sold/purchased tickets, or contributed to the organisational side of things.

Fr Andrew

GOSPEL FOCUS

What's in a name?

It appears from the passage that Mary's child is to be called both Jesus and Emmanuel. Emmanuel is not intended as a different name for Jesus but rather one of the many titles that will be applied to him. The title means God-is-with-us. That one word, Emmanuel, sums up the essence of Jewish and Christian belief. The Jewish people's faith in God was built on the basis that God travelled with them and through their lives. Christians believe that God took on an even closer sense of being with us through God's incarnation in the life of Jesus.

Safeguarding in our Parishes means ...

The Parishes of Dungog & Gresford hold that children, young people and vulnerable adults are a gift from God with an intrinsic right to dignity of life, respect and security from physical and emotional harm. They are to be treasured, nurtured and safeguarded.

In line with the Safeguarding Policy of the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, our parishes have zero tolerance for all forms of abuse and are committed to safeguarding all who interact with the parishes through our activities, ministries and services, especially children and adults at risk.

Parish Office Closure

The Parish Office will close for the week between Christmas and New Year.

Messages left on the answering machine and emails sent to the Parish email address will be checked regularly during the week.

Fr Andrew

Baptisms This Weekend

We welcome **Harriet Merrick**, together with her family and friends, as we celebrate her Baptism at St Patrick's this Sunday.

Reconciliation During Advent

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.

Sending Ceremony for John Bradley

As parishioners would be well aware, one of our own—John Bradley—will be embarking as a PALMS volunteer in early January (see the article on the opposite page).

As a parish community, we will celebrate a 'Sending Ceremony' with John during the 9.30am Mass on Sunday, 1 January 2023. It is important for us, as a parish, to support John in this way as he starts his experience.

Hopefully we will be able to sharing a morning tea after Mass. All welcome.

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.

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.

Announcing the Damascus Spiritual Leaders Program!

Part-time in Feb-Nov 2023 - either in person or online - through Heart of Life Centre for Spiritual & Pastoral Formation. This program is designed for people in various positions of leadership, spiritual formation and parish or outreach ministries.

The program will equip individuals to lead with integrity, vulnerability and resilience, and will focus on the inner spiritual journey in order to create fully-formed leaders who listen, learn and accompany others with strength and sensitivity.

'Damascus' can be studied as a Graduate Certificate in Divinity through the University of Divinity (Yarra Theological Union/Catholic Theological College), or as an audit student to receive a Certificate in Spiritual Leadership from Heart of Life.

Attendance on Monday mornings and some Saturdays. Read more about the program on the [Heart of Life website](#) or contact us on (03) 9890 1101. Applications close on 6/1/23.

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.

Diocesan Lenten Program Is Coming

Although it seems a little 'odd' to be speaking of Lent even before we begin celebrating Christmas, the following information may be of interest to parishioners as they look forward to 2023:

Pastoral Ministries has prepared a Lenten resource for our diocese, Finding Light within the Darkness. Every Lent there is a fresh invitation to retreat from the noise and busyness of daily life. To listen with our heart, to contemplate our humanness so we can actively focus on humanity. We are invited to turn to God dwelling within us and consider how we can find light in the darkness and how we can be light to others. This resource provides opportunities for prayer, faith-sharing, and outreach in our local community.

This resource will be available at the end of January.



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 Esma 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 week ahead)

4th Week of Advent, Year A

Monday—19 December

Tuesday—20 December

Wednesday—21 December

5.30pm Mass @ Dungog

Thursday—22 December

9.30am Mass @ East Gresford

6pm 2nd Rite of Reconciliation @
Dungog

Friday—23 December

9.30am Mass @ Dungog

Saturday—24 December

10am Reconciliation @ Dungog

5.30pm Mass @ East Gresford

Sunday—25 December

Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)

8am Mass @ Clarence Town

9:30am Mass @ Dungog

Today's Liturgy:

1st Reading Isaiah 7:10-14

Psalm Ps 23:

Resp: Let the Lord enter; he is king of glory.

2nd Reading Romans 1:1-7

Acclamation Matthew 1:23

Alleluia, alleluia!

A virgin will give birth to a son;
his name will be Emmanuel: God is with us.
Alleluia!

Gospel Matthew 1:18-24

Memorial Acclamation

When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup,
we proclaim your Death, O Lord,
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."

SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT

Today's first reading is from the prophet Isaiah and contains the prophecy that is quoted in the gospel passage. The book of Isaiah was written at a time when the people of Israel were under threat and had once again fallen away from their covenant with God. Isaiah's prophecy is one of the 'Messiah' prophecies but despite the future-focus is a promise to the people of the time that God-is-with-us. The promise is that God-is-with-us now, despite the conditions we find ourselves in, and God-will-be-with-us in the future when God's Messiah is born of a young woman.



In Your Charity, Please Pray for:

Those Who Have Died:

Those Whose Anniversary of Death Is In December: 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, Narelle Ritte, Anne Faber.

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.