

The other reason this presentation and conversation is important is that it will make it clear how best we might formulate both a Pastoral Council and a Finance Committee (as I have previously mentioned here). These two bodies are also something that will emerge over the first half of this year, and your prayerful discernment about how and who would be most gratefully received.

And having said all of that, I wish you a happy and holy year ahead.

Have a blessed week.

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.

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.

2023 Columban Art Calendar

Lyn Barham has ordered some copies of the 2023 Columban Art Calendar. If you would like to purchase a copy (\$10), please contact Lyn.

Prayers for Benedict XVI

As most people would be aware by now, the health of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI (Joseph Ratzinger) is declining and he is approaching the end of his earthly life.

Pope Francis has invited all Catholics, and all people of good will, to join him in praying for Benedict XVI at this time.

Living the Gospel

A Peaceful New Year?

It is traditional around New Year's Day to make resolutions for the upcoming year: changes that affect the way you live; the way you treat others; setting goals to aim for and work towards. In this context, it is interesting that the Church marks this day as a World Day of Peace. Perhaps, in amongst the self-promises to give up smoking, get a bit more fit, work and study harder and treat little sisters better, we might find time to consider ways in which we can bring about a more peaceful world – even just my little bit of it.

Pope Francis' Prayer Intention for January:

"We pray that educators may be credible witnesses, teaching fraternity rather than competition and helping the youngest and most vulnerable above all."

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)

The Week before Epiphany

Monday—2 January

Memorial of Sts Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen

Tuesday—3 January

Tuesday before Epiphany

Wednesday—4 January

Wednesday before Epiphany

5.30pm Mass @ Dungog

Thursday—5 January

Thursday before Epiphany

9.30am Mass @ East Gresford

Friday—6 January

Friday before Epiphany

9.30am Mass @ Dungog

11am Mass @ Lara Aged Care

Saturday—7 January

Saturday before Epiphany

Sunday—8 January

Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord

8am Mass @ Clarence Town

9:30am Mass @ Dungog

11.30am Mass @ Summer Hill

Today's Liturgy:

1st Reading Numbers 6:22-27

Psalm Ps 66:
May God bless us in his mercy.

2nd Reading Galatians 4:4-7

Acclamation Hebrews 1:1-2
Alleluia, alleluia!

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

Alleluia!

Gospel Luke 2:16-21

Memorial Acclamation

Save us, Saviour of the world,
for by your Cross and Resurrection
you have set us free.

In Your Charity, Please Pray for:

Those Who Have Died:

Those Whose Anniversary of Death Is In January:

Bob Copus, Josie Gibson, Bill Taylor, Donald & Hope Lord, Kevin Byron, Noreen Lucas, Joan Riches, Michael Curry, Mary Neilson, Michael Bede Holstein, Maureen Reynold, Len Trappel, Patrick Dooley, Rufie Bunt, Eileen Moore, Andrew Whelan, Merv Clayden, Norah Studdert, Jack Gehrig, George Maurer, Eileen Lane, John Smith, Fr Allan Curry, Reginald Peter Wilson, Joseph Watson, Aveen Watson, Edith Thomas, Pauline Thomas, Fr Martin Jackubas (England).

*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, Kathie Maynard, Kevin Ward, Brian Holstein, David Loudon, Michaela Brown, Phillip Hartup, Bella Duggan, Ella Rusak, Peter Byron, Colleen Primrose, Bert Preece.

from the perspective

of the Shepherds

What must the shepherds have made of the events surrounding the birth of Jesus? Shepherds occupied a very lowly status in Jewish society - they were generally regarded as thieves and cutthroats. Suddenly, these very lowly characters were thrust into great events: visions of angels; prophecies; the birth of the Messiah; and powerful experiences of the greatness of God. The gospel says they went back to their sheep glorifying and praising God. They must have been changed by this experience. Perhaps they never really made sense of what happened to them but more likely it was the beginning of a whole new life experience.

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