

Dear Parishioners

It's our Second Annual Pandemic Christmas (and hopefully our last)! In this email message, I direct your attention to:

- observing Advent at home
- annual Festival of Lessons & Carols: Sunday 12th December 7.00pm
- pre-Christmas Confessions: Tuesday 21st December 6.15pm
- **booking required for Masses of Christmas Eve and Day**
- continuing Pandemic protocols whilst at Mass
- live-streaming: why and when

Observing Advent at home

I love Advent! The word 'Advent' comes from the Latin word *adventus*, which means 'coming'. It marks the beginning of a new liturgical year (in your missals, this is now Year C).

When I was a boy, my brothers and I prepared for Christmas with the opening of another section of the Advent calendar every morning, and the daily lighting of the Advent wreath before the evening meal. We also had an 'Advent jar' of tasks and prayers which enabled us to prepare the manger for Baby Jesus. So we didn't jump right into Christmas with the tree and all the decorations; no, Advent came first – and it helped us to prepare for the celebration of the Birth of Jesus Christ at the first Christmas. But Advent also a time to turn our attention once again to the Second Coming of Christ at the end of time.

I'm preparing a sheet with suggestions for how you can observe Advent in your homes. This will be available in church, and also on the parish website:

www.stpaulsmtlawley.com

Advent Program at St Paul's:

We have a number of events offered at St Paul's to assist people in their Advent preparation for Christmas and I'd like to invite you to participate in whatever you can:

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A Festival of Lesson and Carols – Sunday 12th December – 7 to 8.30pm

Each year we present this traditional service of Scripture readings, carols, prayer and a short homily by a guest preacher. This year the message will be presented by Pastor Joyce Chen of Zion Praise Centre in Willetton. Pastor Joyce and her co-pastor husband Patrick are the parents of two teenage girls; they lead a vibrant community of Christians (many of whom are former Catholics). It's time for all of us Christians to come together in unity insofar as is possible, and these services of Lessons & Carols have been a chance to put that into action. Past preachers have included Pastor Margaret Court and her daughter Pastor Maryka Court, as well as various Catholic women from the parish and beyond.

This year's wonderful parish Christmas choir will include ten professional singers

plus some of our younger parishioners. They'll lead us in singing the carols we all love, plus special music to inspire us with Christmas spirit.

Bookings are not necessary for Lessons & Carols; the service will be live-streamed on the night.

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Advent Confessions – Tuesday 21st December - 6.15 – 7.30pm

Four priests will be available for confessions, beginning immediately after the 5.45pm Mass that evening. There will be no communal service – simply come to church, take a sheet with the examination of conscience and method of confession, and then approach one of the priests to receive the Sacrament of Penance. You are free to leave when you finish.

Bookings are not necessary for Advent confessions.

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Booking for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

We are not limited by COVID capacity restrictions this year, but just like last year, we are **booking allocated seats**, so each parishioner and family group can be confident they have a seat at their preferred Mass time, and I know whether an option for overflow seating is required.

Please consult the timetable below, and then book your seats, by pew and seat number - 7 per pew. (*Husbands and wives, please agree on one Mass time – last year, some husbands and wives booked different Masses without consulting each other, with the result that we had empty pews at some Masses!*) Thank you for booking early so we can plan well ahead of time.

Christmas Masses Timetable

Holy Mass will be offered:

- Christmas Eve Friday 24 December 4.30pm (cantor)
- Christmas Eve Friday 24 December 6.00pm (cantor)
- Christmas Eve Friday 24 December 12 midnight
(choir) - choral carols
program at 11.30pm
- Christmas Day Saturday 25 December 9.00am (cantor)

*NB: There will be **NO** 4.30pm or 6.00pm Mass on Saturday evening on Christmas Day.*

Our regular Sunday observance resumes on Sunday 26 December, Boxing Day. Mass will be offered twice on Boxing Day itself - 9.00am and 4.30pm only. *No booking is required for Masses on Boxing Day.*

I am offering those parishioners on the parish email list first chance to book seats for Christmas Mass seats. This weekend (27-28 Nov) the booking link will be printed in the parish newsletter and announced at Mass. So please book today, or you may not get your preferred Mass time. All four Christmas Masses will be live-streamed for

those not able to attend in person.

We do not want to be in the position where we have to turn people away because there is 'no room in the inn' – so please make sure you and your loved ones are booked in!

Booking link: <https://www.trybooking.com/BVWRC>

Booking Assistance

Everyone has adapted really well with self-booking, but if you need extra assistance with booking tickets to any of the Advent Program events listed above, please contact **Linley Plowman** on linley.plowman@iinet.net.au or **0407 383 914** ; she is available in the evenings to assist you.

Continuing to live with the Pandemic

Although we in Perth have been living fairly normally this past year, minus a couple of snap lock-downs, we in the parish are still expected to observe some Pandemic protocols from the Archdiocese, namely:

- mandatory reporting of attendance (per signed register or SafeWA app)
- no holy water at the door, nor sprinkling of the congregation
- no contactable collections at the Offertory
- no physical Sign of Peace before Holy Communion
- preference given to receiving Communion in the hand for health reasons

I realise that not all parishes have been abiding by these protocols. But since Archbishop Costelloe has not issued a revision of his regulations for our churches, and the Government has not given us specific dates and guidelines for reopening the State, it is my responsibility as Parish Priest to do my best to protect everyone's health while leading the parish out of the Pandemic. So we'll follow the regulations.

Nevertheless, we at St Paul's have done a fantastic job of maintaining a strong sense of community through excellent Mass attendance, support of devotional exercises like Rosary and Novenas, participation in Bible study and RCIA, the return of Youth Ministry, continued live-streaming of many events, and of course, coffee on the Presbytery veranda! And the undercroft is again open for business, so slowly, slowly, we are returning to normal parish life.

Live-streaming streams on!

Some people wonder why we continue to live-stream. Well, most of the rest of the world is not fortunate enough to live as freely as we do in Perth. Many places still have limits on numbers at Mass, and continue to require masks at Mass, or restrict congregational singing, etc.

So we continue to get many 'hits' – from our own parishioners as well as country WA, and foreign countries like Vietnam, India, Italy, the UK and the US. We stream the Saturday 4.30pm Mass every weekend, plus weekday feasts and solemnities, First Friday Mass, and First Saturday Rosary and Mass. Our live-streaming system has also been a huge help in keeping families connected for important events like First Holy Communion, Confirmation and funerals. I'm grateful to our faithful IT operators who give up their time to help the parish stay connected in this way. They

have been unseen and unsung heroes of our efforts to keep everyone connected.

Weekly Collections

Since we don't use collection baskets during Mass, many people have transitioned to **direct debit** for their weekly collection support of the parish. The banking details are available on the parish website and weekly bulletin, if you would like to set this up also. This has been hugely beneficial, and I thank you for your regular and ongoing financial support of the parish. The **Perspex boxes** are still available at the each entrance for those who like to bring cash on the day for the First Collection (priests), Second Collection (parish) and Votive Candles (to foil the banditos who keep breaking into church and robbing the votive candle boxes!).

Let's welcome everyone, old timers and new comers!

Christmas is when people often 'come home' to the Church after being away for a long time. This year, as people continue to search for meaning in another challenging year, please keep an eye out for new faces - make them feel welcome.

Regular Mass and Confession Times

Here are our regular Mass and confession times:

- Saturday evening: 4.30pm (live-streamed) and 6.00pm
- Sunday: 9.00am
- Monday – Friday: 5.45pm (live-streamed on special feast days)
- Holy Hour (Wednesday): 6.15pm (with devotions to St Joseph at the end)
- First Saturday: 10.00am (live-streamed, with Rosary at 9.35am)
- Confessions: 6.15pm during the Wednesday Holy Hour
3.30pm before the Saturday 4.30pm Mass
9.00am before the First Saturday 10am Mass

Please note that Confessions are not live-streamed – ho ho ho!

Novena in honour of the Immaculate Conception

This begins Tuesday 30th November and ends on Tuesday 7th December, before the Solemnity of Our Lady's Immaculate Conception on Wednesday

8th December. Leaflets with the Novena prayers are available in church and also downloadable from the parish website. *Please join us in prayer, whether in church or at home – there are so many things to entrust to the care of our Blessed Mother, who has great influence with her Divine Son.*

Congratulations – you've made it to the end!

Thank you for reading this rather long but important newsletter. Please don't forget that the weekly parish bulletin is available on our parish website, along with special announcements to keep everyone up-to-date and in touch.

Please do bring this newsletter to the attention of parishioners or friends of St Paul's who may not read it online – to avoid having people 'rock up to church' for Christmas and find they needed a booking but 'didn't know'. Thanks for that!

I wish you all a holy Advent season as we prepare to welcome the Infant Jesus on Christmas Day, and I look forward to seeing you in the coming weeks at St

Paul's! Please pray for both me and Fr Mariusz – for me to remain in good health and serve you to the best of my ability; for Fr Mariusz – that he can put up with me!

God bless you all!

Father Tim

(Rev Fr Timothy E Deeter, Parish Priest)