

CATHOLIC PARISH OF ST MARY'S MACLEAN



ST JOHN'S CHURCH



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ST JAMES CHURCH

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THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT, YEAR A: 14 DECEMBER 2025

Dear brothers and sisters, the third Sunday of Advent is called Laetare Sunday. Laetare is the Latin word for the injunction to rejoice. St Paul says in his letter to the Philippians: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I say to you, rejoice. Indeed, the Lord is near."

We are exhorted to rejoice always but especially from this third Sunday of Advent onward, as the celebration of the Feast of our Lord's Birth is fast approaching. This is expressed in the Collect in which we ask God our Father to enable us, who await the feast of our Lord's Nativity, "to attain the joys of so great a salvation and to celebrate them always with solemn worship and glad rejoicing."

Joy is, on the one hand, a result of God's presence and saving action in our lives. It is a fruit of letting ourselves be loved by God, of opening our hearts and minds to his divine life, love and light. Communion of life and love with God is our true life. Only when we are in a relationship of pure love with God do we experience the fullness of being human and of human life. We are social beings and we are complete only when we are united with God and with our fellow human beings in the family of God. Love, that is, selfless mutual gift of self, makes us whole. Joy is the fruit of love.

On the other hand, joy requires the exercise of our free will. As such it can be and is commanded. Rejoice in the Lord, always! Let him love you totally. Let him dwell in you so that you can participate in his holiness and happiness. Let him enable you to love and obey his prompting so that you may have true joy.

In the first reading Isaiah exhorts the people and all of creation to rejoice and sing for joy. The cause for this joy is the "coming of the Lord." When he comes, he will make people who are experiencing different forms of deprivation and suffering whole again. "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, the ears of the deaf unsealed, then the lame shall leap like a deer and the tongues of the dumb sing for joy, for those the Lord has ransomed shall return." In other words, there is joy when God is present and when he heals and makes us whole again.

The gospel (Matthew 11:2-11) affirms that Jesus is the Lord who has come. As such, "the blind see again, and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised to life and the Good News is proclaimed to the poor." The Lord whose coming had been pre-announced by Isaiah has come. Jesus, the Christ, the Anointed One, is the Lord in the flesh. He came to make us whole again by reconciling us with God. God can live in us again. We can enter into a communion of life and love again with God, thanks to his presence and saving deed of Jesus Christ. We can be truly happy again. We can experience deep and lasting joy again.

However, the first coming of the Son, his coming in the flesh to save us is only the beginning of the process of renewal, healing, and being made complete and holy. The process begun is still to be completed. While we can now experience inner healing and joy as a result of our living faith, all of this remains incomplete. Salvation that was begun in the first coming will be completed in the second coming. As such, St James, in the second reading encourages us to be patient. We should be like farmers who patiently wait for their crops to grow.

Let us rejoice in the Lord always! He is with us always offering his friendship and help. He is with us in a special way in the Mass where by means of visible signs, he communicates with us and fills us anew with divine life, love and light.

Fr Roland

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON (*Iluka*)

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice.
Indeed, the Lord is near.

COLLECT

O God, who see how your people faithfully await the feast of the Lord's Nativity, enable us, we pray, to attain the joys of so great a salvation and to celebrate them always with solemn worship and glad rejoicing. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

FIRST READING*Isaiah 35:1-6, 10*

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

Let the wilderness and the dry-lands exult,
let the wasteland rejoice and bloom,
let it bring forth flowers like the jonquil,
let it rejoice and sing for joy.

The glory of Lebanon is bestowed on it,
the splendour of Carmel and Sharon;
they shall see the glory of the Lord,
the splendour of our God.

Strengthen all weary hands,
steady all trembling knees
and say to all faint hearts,
'Courage! Do not be afraid.

'Look, your God is coming,
vengeance is coming,
the retribution of God;
he is coming to save you.'

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
the ears of the deaf unsealed,
then the lame shall leap like a deer
and the tongues of the dumb sing for joy,
for those the Lord has ransomed shall return.

They will come to Zion shouting for joy,
everlasting joy on their faces;
joy and gladness will go with them
and sorrow and lament be ended.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM *Ps 145:6-10. R. see Is 35:4*

R. *Lord, come and save us.*

1. It is the Lord who keeps faith for ever,
who is just to those who are oppressed.
It is he who gives bread to the hungry,
the Lord, who sets prisoners free. (R.)
2. It is the Lord who gives sight to the blind,
who raises up those who are bowed down,
the Lord, who protects the stranger
and upholds the widow and orphan. (R.)
3. It is the Lord who loves the just
but thwarts the path of the wicked.

The Lord will reign for ever,
Zion's God, from age to age. (R.)

SECOND READING*James 5:7-10*

A reading from the letter of St James

Be patient, brothers, until the Lord's coming. Think of a farmer: how patiently he waits for the precious fruit of the ground until it has had the autumn rains and the spring rains! You too have to be patient; do not lose heart, because the Lord's coming will be soon. Do not make complaints against one another, brothers, so as not to be brought to judgement yourselves; the Judge is already to be seen waiting at the gates. For your example, brothers, in submitting with patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

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*

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

John in his prison had heard what Christ was doing and he sent his disciples to ask him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or have we got to wait for someone else?' Jesus answered, 'Go back and tell John what you hear and see; the blind see again, and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised to life and the Good News is proclaimed to the poor; and happy is the man who does not lose faith in me.'

As the messengers were leaving, Jesus began to talk to the people about John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swaying in the breeze? No? Then what did you go out to see? A man wearing fine clothes? Oh no, those who wear fine clothes are to be found in palaces. Then what did you go out for? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and much more than a prophet: he is the one of whom scripture says: Look, I am going to send my messenger before you; he will prepare your way before you. I tell you solemnly, of all the children born of women, a greater than John the Baptist has never been seen; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he is.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May the sacrifice of our worship, Lord, we pray, be offered to you unceasingly, to complete what was begun in sacred mystery and powerfully accomplish for us your saving work. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PREFACE A; EUCHARISTIC PRAYER III

COMMUNION ANTIPHON (*Iluka*)

Say to the faint of heart: Be strong and do not fear. Behold, our God will come, and he will save us.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We implore your mercy, Lord, that this divine sustenance may cleanse us of our faults and prepare us for the coming feasts. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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SCRIPTURE COMMENTARY

As with the earlier Advent Sundays, the First Reading today, Isaiah 35:1-6, 10, gives expression to the messianic hope. The main point of the passage is to reassure the exiles returning from Babylonian captivity not to be afraid of the journey they have to make across the desert. Their homecoming will be accompanied by a complete transformation of the natural world, recalling the original harmony of Eden. This lends an 'ecological' aspect to the messianic hope.

But the chief reason for the choice of this passage as First Reading lies in the references towards the end concerning the opening of the eyes of the blind, the unsealing of the deaf, the leaping of the lame and the singing of the dumb. Jesus' response to the envoys from John the Baptist as told in the Gospel, Matthew 11:2-11, picks up this description and adds a few more marvels (cleansing of lepers, raising of the dead, and the good news preached to the poor). ...

John's question is really asking whether Jesus is the coming and long-awaited Messiah. Perhaps John himself was having some doubts. The way he described the future ministry of the Coming One and the way Jesus actually behaved were not entirely consistent. Jesus had not turned out to be the fiery preacher of judgment that John had proclaimed (as we may recall from last week's Gospel). Instead, Jesus had embarked upon a ministry of healing and of celebration of God's mercy. Such was the context of his summons to conversion of heart.

On the other hand, John, sensing that his own ministry was coming to an end (necessarily in view of his imprisonment), may have been gently recommending to his disciples that they transfer

allegiance to Jesus. Like all good teachers he knows that it is best if they discover something for themselves. So he sends them off with a question. Jesus, again like a good teacher, does not give a simple Yes or No answer. He points to his activity and implies, 'In the light of your understanding of the promises in Scripture concerning the messianic age, draw your own conclusions. If my activity is "messianic", then what is that saying about who I am?'

The miracles of Jesus are not perhaps the easiest parts of the Gospel tradition to handle in preaching. How nice for the afflicted people who managed to get access to Jesus and his healing power during the brief compass of his life. But where does that leave the vast mass of the afflicted down the centuries to our own day? Once again I think we confront here the 'already-not yet' aspect of the onset of the Kingdom. The messianic age has dawned in the first coming of Jesus but it is by no means fully arrived. For that we have to await the second coming in the sense of the 'two-ways' facing Advent hope, as I explained in the commentary for the First Sunday.

Jesus' concluding commendation of John the Baptist is unstinting. Yet 'the least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he.' They are 'greater' not necessarily in moral stature but in being privileged to be actually the ones who receive the invitation to the banquet of the Kingdom that Jesus is offering. As so often, Jesus is striving to communicate to his hearers a sense of the incredible richness to which he is calling them in God's name.

The miracles are a sign of God's ultimate will for humankind – a kind of 'beachhead' of the Kingdom to give us hope. The Christian tradition has derived from Jesus a vision of the afflicted that sees them not as people punished by God – the conventional view, all too prevalent even amongst 'religious' people – but as people particularly open to be receptacles and instruments of God's power. The same goes for the poor. The 'good news' preached to them is of a piece with the first Beatitude proclaimed by Jesus at the opening of his great Sermon (Matthew 5-7). The poor are 'blessed'

because God has adopted their cause and one day will see that it prevails.

Anyone who has a farm or cultivates a garden will agree with St James in the Second Reading from his letter today (5:7-10). You can't 'push' crops or plants to grow. You just have to let them take their time. So it is with our waiting for the Lord. © *Fr Brendan Byrne*



ONLINE GIVING

Internet donations to assist our parish are always welcome. Details for donating online via Electronic Funds Transfer BSB: 032582 Account Number: 810033 [Surname, parish envelope no]

PRAYER REQUESTS

Prayers for the Sick: Miriam Scherger, Tony Murphy, Kathy Leseberg, Ava Blay, Donna Ellis, Mark Thurbon, Alma Bailey, Mary Wiseman, Sue Gravolin, Ron Weekes, Margaret Donges, Pam Lewis, Matthew & Paul Gallagher, Chris Naismith, Trevor Nicolola, Graham Courte, Peter Burns, Matthew Tierney, Matt Mohorovic, Sharon Grayson, Dennis Cathedral, Allan Dick. **Recently Deceased:** Fran Eckersley, Anita Gooley. **Anniversary:** Ron Crittenden, Norman Young, Pat Shortt, Colin Campbell, Les Sinderberry. **Pray for:** Gordon & Kym Eckersley, Ruben Rollon, Edith Young, Mary Shortt, Anmary Wood, Epifanio Sesaldo, Lenaiola Guerrero. All the suffering souls in Purgatory especially the dec'd members of F.O.S.S.

MASS TIMES:

Sunday Masses: Yamba: 5:30pm (SAT); Maclean: 8:30am (SUN); Iluka: 10:30am (SUN).

Weekday Masses: Wednesday, 9:30am: Yamba; Thursday, 10:00am: Iluka; Friday, 12:00nn, Maclean; First Saturday: 11:30am, Maclean.

RECONCILIATION TIMES

Saturday, 11:00am, Maclean; 5:00pm, Yamba
Sunday, 8:00am, Maclean
Wednesday, 10:00am, Yamba
Thursday, 10:30am, Iluka

EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION:

First Wednesday: 10:00am, Yamba
First Saturday: 12:00pm, Maclean

MINISTRY ROSTER: 20/21 DECEMBER 2025

Readers: Yamba: F Robertson/P Edgar; Maclean: J Moloney/R Harvey; Iluka: D Speirs. **Commentators:** Yamba: B Cullen, Maclean: J de Roos, Iluka: A Speirs. **E Communion:** Maclean: S Winter. **Count team:** Davies.

READINGS: 20/21 DECEMBER 2025

First: Isaiah 7:10-14; **Second:** Romans 1:1-7; **Gospel:** Matthew 1:23.

NEWS & EVENTS

Emergency contact: In case of emergency outside of parish office hours, contact Fr Roland 0401 508 812.

POSTPONED Renovation work to St James

Church: Further updates will be provided as more details become available.

St James Primary School End of Year Mass: St James Primary School will be celebrating their End of Year Mass on Tuesday, 16th December at 10:00AM at St James Church. All parishioners are warmly invited

to join as we give thanks for the blessings of this school year.

Parish Pastoral Council update: The Parish Pastoral Council held its first meeting this week to discuss its role and begin planning for the year ahead. Starting in February, the Council will meet monthly on the 4th Thursday at 5:00 PM. Council members will be announced in the new year.

Halle McClymont update: Thank you to everyone who has given, and supported Halle over the past few months. Together we have fundraised a total of \$5,595. This could not have been done without your support and prayers. Halle would like to extend her deepest gratitude to you all and asks that you continue to pray for her and her mission as she continues to prepare and embarks on her mission year at the beginning of January.

St Vincent de Paul Christmas Appeal: Envelopes are now available at each Church. Your gift helps bring hope and joy to families in need in our community this Christmas.

St Vincent de Paul – Christmas Closure Notice: **Maclean Conference** – Office will close midday, 12 December and reopen at 11am, 23 January.

Yamba Conference – Last day of assistance will be Friday, 19 December (distributing Christmas hampers). General assistance calls will resume from 6 January. Please phone 0498 960 630 for help.

Emergency contact during closure - For urgent assistance, please call **13 18 12**. This number will direct you to the appropriate area for support.

Parish Secretary position: With Lucia and her family relocating to Sydney in mid-January, our parish is seeking a new Parish Secretary. This is a permanent part-time role, hours negotiable, and is based at the Maclean Parish Office. For more information, speak to Fr Roland or Lucia E: office@stmarysparish.org.au P: 02 6645 1188

Did You Know? – 1st & 2nd Collections: The First Collection supports our priests and the clergy of the Diocese. The Second Collection contributes to the upkeep and running of our parish, including expenses such as electricity, insurance, building maintenance, and church equipment. A sincere thank you to all who continue to support our parish through planned giving and weekly collections. Your generosity sustains the mission and pastoral life of our parish community.

Christmas Masses:

24 December Christmas Vigil Masses:

4:00PM St John's Iluka, 5:30PM St Mary's Maclean, 7:00PM St James' Yamba

25 December: Christmas Day Masses

8:00AM: St Mary's Maclean,
9:30AM: St James' Yamba