

CATHOLIC PARISH OF ST MARY'S MACLEAN



ST JOHN'S CHURCH



ST MARY'S CHURCH



ST JAMES CHURCH

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FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT, YEAR A: 21 DECEMBER 2025

Dear brothers and sisters, the promise made by God to come and be with us in fulfilled in Jesus.

The eternal Son of the Father became man. He assumed our humanity. We call this the Incarnation of God the Son. The Collect says that this Incarnation of Christ “was made known by the message of an Angel.” St Luke tells us that God sent the angel Gabriel to Mary to ask for her consent to become the mother of Jesus. St Matthew tells us that it was an angel who informed Joseph in a dream that Mary conceived the son he would name Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In the first reading, Isaiah 7:10-14, we read the prophecy of a maiden, a virgin, conceiving. Commenting on this passage Joseph Ratzinger says, “The promise that God made through the prophet Isaiah to the doubting King Ahaz, who refused to ask God for a sign even as the advancing armies of his foes were pressing on him, was still in suspension, its sense closed to any comprehension ... It is impossible to say what this sign might have meant at this historical moment of King Ahaz – whether it was given or in what it consisted. The promise reached beyond that hour. It continued to shine above the history of Israel as a star of hope pointing into an as yet unknown future.” (Mary: The Church at the Source, 85)

Matthew sees this promise fulfilled in the Virgin Mary. “For Matthew, the veil has been lifted with the birth of Jesus from the Virgin Mary: the sign has now been granted. The Virgin who as a virgin gives birth by the power of the Holy Spirit – she is the sign.” “Joseph is the legal father, but Mary is the mother by virtue of her own body: that God has really become one of us depends on her.” (Mary: The Church at the Source, 85-87) Jesus, who as the eternal Son is the only begotten Son of the Father, became man. As such, he is in a unique way, Emmanuel, God with us. In the Nicene Creed we profess: “I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father ... and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.”

The name that Joseph will give to the child at the instruction of the angel reveals his mission. Jesus means “Yahweh saves.” The Son became man to save us from our sins. This consists of reconciling us sinners with God, of revealing God’s love for us and drawing us to this love, to make us children of God, sharers in his divine nature, and to show us how we can live as God’s sons and daughters, moved and directed by divine love. The grace we ask God to pour into our hearts in the Collect is this gift of salvation, God’s offer of himself, accompanied by his divine light and love so that it may bring us to the glory of being in definitive communion of life and love with God.

Joseph is presented to us as a model in cooperating with God. He is described as a man of honour, that is, a righteous man. In the Bible, a righteous person is one who trusts in the Lord, abandoning himself/herself to God. At the same time, he/she lives according to the commandments of the Lord. Joseph listened to God’s word, and with his help, he obeyed. May he inspire us to do the same.

In the Mass, Jesus, God with us, comes to speak to us and be with us in the Eucharist. May we welcome him into our hearts and bodies and be born anew in our lives.

Fr Roland

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON (*Iluka*)

Drop down dew from above, you heavens, and let the clouds rain down the Just One; let the earth be opened and bring forth a Saviour.

COLLECT

Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord, your grace into our hearts, that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ your Son was made known by the message of an Angel, may by his Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of his Resurrection. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

FIRST READING*Isaiah 7:10-14*

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

The Lord spoke to Ahaz and said, 'Ask the Lord your God for a sign for yourself coming either from the depths of Sheol or from the heights above.' 'No', Ahaz answered 'I will not put the Lord to the test.' Then Isaiah said:

'Listen now, House of David:
are you not satisfied with trying the patience of men
without trying the patience of my God, too?
The Lord himself, therefore,
will give you a sign.
It is this: the maiden is with child
and will soon give birth to a son
whom she will call Immanuel,
a name which means "God-is-with-us".'
The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM *Ps 23:1-6. R. see vv 7. 10*

R. *Let the Lord enter; he is king of glory.*

1. The Lord's is the earth and its fullness,
the world and all its peoples.
It is he who set it on the seas;
on the waters he made it firm. (R.)
2. Who shall climb the mountain of the Lord?
Who shall stand in his holy place?
The man with clean hands and pure heart,
who desires not worthless things. (R.)
3. He shall receive blessings from the Lord
and reward from the God who saves him.
Such are the men who seek him,
seek the face of the God of Jacob. (R.)

SECOND READING*Romans 1:1-7*

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans.

From Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus who has been called to be an apostle, and specially chosen to preach

the Good News that God promised long ago through his prophets in the scriptures.

This news is about the Son of God, who, according to the human nature he took, was a descendant of David: it is about Jesus Christ our Lord who, in the order of the spirit, the spirit of holiness that was in him, was proclaimed Son of God in all his power through his resurrection from the dead. Through him we received grace and our apostolic mission to preach the obedience of faith to all pagan nations in honour of his name. You are one of these nations, and by his call belong to Jesus Christ. To you all, then, who are God's beloved in Rome, called to be saints, may God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ send grace and peace.

The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

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*

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

This is how Jesus Christ came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a man of honour and wanting to spare her publicity, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins.' Now all this took place to fulfil the words spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son
and they will call him Emmanuel,
a name which means 'God-is-with-us'. When Joseph woke up he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do: he took his wife to his home.

The Gospel of the Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May the Holy Spirit, O Lord, sanctify these gifts laid upon your altar, just as he filled with his power the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PREFACE A; EUCHARISTIC PRAYER III**COMMUNION ANTIPHON** (*Iluka*)

Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son; and his name will be called Emmanuel.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having received this pledge of eternal redemption, we pray, almighty God, that, as the feast day of our salvation draws ever nearer, so we may press forward all the more eagerly to the worthy celebration of the mystery of your Son's Nativity. Who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

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SCRIPTURE COMMENTARY

On this Fourth Sunday of Advent we arrive at Matthew's account of the birth of Jesus. Preparing the way for the Gospel describing this event, Matthew 1:18-24, is the First Reading, Isaiah 7:10-14 featuring an oracle of the prophet to King Ahaz at a time when Assyria posed a great threat to the Kingdom of Judah. When this far-from-admirable ruler refuses to ask God for a sign that would indicate divine protection, Isaiah responds by describing the sign that God will, nonetheless, give: the pregnancy of a young girl – presumably a princess of the royal house. In the Hebrew text of Isaiah the word used for 'young girl' (*almah*) does not necessarily connote the idea of virginity – simply a young woman of marriageable age. Also part of the sign is the name she is planning to give her child: Emmanuel – 'God is with us'. Taken together, the conception of the child and the name he is to bear constitute a sign that, despite the present troubles, God remains 'with' the People.

The annunciation of Jesus' birth in Matthew (1:18-24) follows straight on from the Genealogy (1:1-17) with which the Gospel begins. Four times within the otherwise relentlessly male list of Jesus' ancestors there are references to women: Tamar, whom Judah violated; Rahab, who had been a prostitute; Ruth, the Moabitess; and the wife of Uriah (Bathsheba), whom King David adulterously took to himself. In each case a note of sexual impropriety or irregularity attends the reference – not so much because of what the women themselves have done but because of what has been done to them. The genealogy shows how the divine thread of salvation has run through much unsavoury human history.

The four references to women in the account of Jesus' ancestry prepare the ground for the situation of Jesus' mother Mary. We, the readers, are told that her pregnancy has come about 'through the Holy Spirit' (v 18). But no one else knows that, including, at this

point, Joseph. Since betrothal was considered equivalent to marriage, Mary's situation is precarious in the extreme; she stands liable to the severe penalties laid down in the Mosaic Law for adultery (stoning: cf. John 8:1-11). Obedience to the Law requires Joseph to divorce Mary but, being, as the text says, a 'righteous person' (JB's 'man of honour' is quite misleading), he wants to do so in a way that will spare her as much public shame as possible. In this he 'models' keeping the Law in the way that Jesus will commend, giving priority to values such as forgiveness, mercy and compassion (the 'weightier matters of the Law' [23:23]).

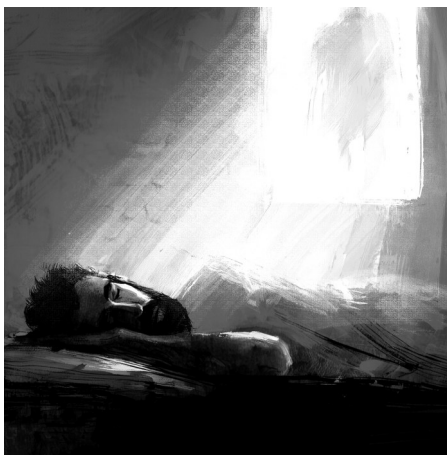
The angelic messenger turns everything around for Joseph. Mary's pregnancy has not come about through infidelity but through the agency of God's Holy Spirit. The child she is to bear is to carry the name and role of Josue – the great 'saviour' figure of Israel. Only, here the saving role will not be a matter of military conquest but that of rescuing the people from sin, freeing them, that is, from all that stands in the way of a vital and life-giving relationship to God. Characteristically, Matthew reinforces the sense of divine purpose by quoting the text from Isaiah that, in retrospect at least, seemed to indicate that this is how

things would run in the messianic age. His quotation of Isaiah 7:14 follows the Greek (Septuagint) translation which in its choice of words – *parthenos* – does convey the sense that the young girl is a virgin. Matthew finds, then, in this text, a clear prophecy that the birth of the Saviour will come about through a virginal conception, worked by the Holy Spirit.

But, of course, no less important for Matthew is the second part of the biblical verse stating that the

child will be called 'Emmanuel – God with Us'. 'Emmanuel' indicates not so much a fresh name but the role the child is to have for Israel and the world. In the person of this child, God will be 'with' the people in a unique way, far outstripping all conventional hopes for the messianic age. People will experience this divine saving presence in their encounters with Jesus throughout his earthly life. After his resurrection, he will continue to be 'with' his Church in its communal life (18:19-20) and world-wide mission to the end of time (28:19-20).

The wonderful thing about Matthew's presentation of Jesus' birth is the way in which, through the genealogy and the public situation of Mary – and later through Herod's violence – it highlights the invasion of God's grace saving power into human society as we so often know it. © Brendan Byrne SJ



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, Mark Thurbon, Alma Bailey, Mary Wiseman, Sue Gravalin, Ron Weekes, Margaret Donges, Pam Lewis, Matthew & Paul Gallagher, Chris Naismith, Trevor Nicolai, Graham Courte, Peter Burns, Matthew Tierney, Matt Mohorovic, Sharon Grayson, Dennis Catheral, Allan Dick. **Recently Deceased:** Fotka Mijic, Donna Ellis, Fran Eckersley, Anita Gooley. **Anniversary:** Anthony Ricaplaza, Ron Crittenden, Norman Young, Pat Shortt, Colin Campbell, Les Sinderberry. **Pray for:** Gordon & Kym Eckersley, Ruben Rollon, Edith Young, Mary Shortt, Anmary Wood, John Drum, Kristen Rooke, Marcus Sims. 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

EUCCHARIST IC ADORATION:

First Wednesday: 10:00am, Yamba

First Saturday: 12:00pm, Maclean

MINISTRY ROSTER: 27/28 DECEMBER 2025

Readers: Yamba: G Drummond/R Tory; Maclean: B McGowen/A Smith; Iluka: C Nilon. **Commentators:** Yamba: M Dee, Maclean: S Winter, Iluka: T Sullivan.

E Communion: Maclean: J Moloney. **Count team:** Davies.

READINGS: 27/28 DECEMBER 2025

First: Sirach 3:2-6. 12-14; **Second:** Colossians 3:12-21;

Gospel: Matthew 2:13-15. 19-23.

NEWS & EVENTS

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

Fr Roland's annual leave: Please note Fr Roland will be on annual leave from December 29 for 4 weeks. During this time, visiting priest, Fr Proencio Bognay will be assisting with weekday and weekend Masses.

Mass Change: Weekday Mass on Thursday, January 1 will be celebrated at St Mary's, Maclean. There will

be no Mass in Iluka on this day.

Baptisms: Welcome to the family of God, Mack, Penny, and Aubrey, who are being baptised in our parish this weekend.

Parish bulletin online: Our bulletin is now uploaded weekly to our website <http://stmarysparish.org.au>

POSPONED Renovation work to St James

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

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.

St James Church Restoration Fund: We have decided to continue with collecting cans/bottles to provide funds for ongoing restoration works in Yamba and throughout the parish. Please remember the cans/ bottles must have the 10c symbol on them and no crushing! For queries, please call Fran 0401 303 522.

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