

Reflection by Greg Sunter

We have reached the final Sunday in the season of Advent – a time of preparing ourselves to recognise and celebrate Christ's presence in the world, both historically and in an ongoing, timeless way. This week's gospel account of the Annunciation is an ideal culmination to this season as we recall Mary's emphatic 'Yes' to all that was being asked of her. At the end of the Advent season of reflection and preparation to recognise Christ's presence in the world and in our lives, what better response could there be than to simply say, 'Yes'?



In a world that is driven by selfishness and the drive to push one's self ahead of others, Mary's selfless act stands as a challenge to our modern society. Even in her own time, Mary's decision must have been an enormously difficult one – one that had the potential to bring great shame on herself and Joseph. Yet, her decision is made swiftly and in faith. She trusts God absolutely and gives her life over into God's hands. That is perhaps the supreme act of faith; to say 'Yes' to God so completely that you are prepared to hand over direction and control of your own life.

Few of us tend to be visited by angels who lay out God's plan for us as clearly as Gabriel did for Mary. For most of us, it is a challenge to discern God's desire for us; to realise what it is that we are called to do and then give ourselves fully to that call. In the hustle and bustle of life, it is difficult to hear anything that God may be trying to ask of us. Perhaps the example of Mary's 'Yes' is a reminder to be still enough to hear the question in the first place!

PARISH HAPPENINGS

LOOKING AHEAD

Monday 25 December – Christmas Day

- 7.00am Christmas Mass
- 9.00am Christmas Mass
- 10.30am Italian Christmas Mass

Tuesday 26 December – Boxing Day

- 8.00am Mass ONLY

Monday 1 January – New Year's Day

- 8.00am Mass ONLY

Please note that the Parish office is closed from Friday 22 December 2017 to Tuesday 2 January 2018. See you next year!

Let us remember in prayer all those who are sick: Bill Cummins and those whose anniversaries occur around this time: John Long, Molly Carl, Patricia Fisher, Dominic Pizzica, Annamaria Pizzica, Nunzia Zapala, Salvatore Zappala, Annette Gatt (nee. Aitkinson) and the recently deceased Kathleen Burns, Nita Creber, Peter Gaundry and Bishop John Gerry.

Volunteers 2018

Several positions in a number of ministries have become available for new volunteers to join. Each ministry requires a once-a-month commitment for whichever ministry you join.

We also have multiple committees/councils who are looking for new members. These groups also require a once-a-month commitment however, when there are some events we ask those members to also get involved.

The 2018 rosters will be sent out in the second week of January along with other documents in which volunteers need to fill out.

If you are interested, please fill out the following and return it to the office.

My Details

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Please tick the following options that apply

I would like to join/interested in:

- Minister of Communion
- Reader
- Altar Server
- Musician
- Data Projector Operator
- Children's Liturgy
- Cuppa n Chat

I normally go to the following Mass:

6pm 7am 9am 5.30pm

I would like to join/interested in a committee:

- Parish Pastoral Council
- Parish Finance Council
- Liturgy Committee
- Social Justice Committee

From the Parish Office

Thank you to all of our parishioners and visitors of Our Lady of Graces for another great year! There have been many changes, with the departure of Fr Tom and Kellie and the arrival of Fr Alex and Shelly. Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year.

I Am the New Year

I am the New Year. I am an unspoiled page in your book of time.

I am your next chance at the art of living. I am your opportunity to practice what you have learned about life during the last twelve months. All that you sought and didn't find is hidden in me, waiting for you to search it but with more determination.

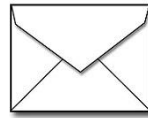
All the good that you tried for and didn't achieve is mine to grant when you have fewer conflicting desires.

All that you dreamed but didn't dare to do, all that you hoped but did not will, all the faith that you claimed but did not have—these slumber lightly, waiting to be awakened by the touch of a strong purpose.

I am your opportunity to renew your allegiance to Him who said, "Behold, I make all things new."

Bible Illustrator

Planned Giving Envelopes 2018



A reminder to parishioners who give via envelopes to Planned Giving and have not picked up their 2018 envelopes, they are now available to collect from the Parish

office. **Please note when 2018 arrives, please only use 2018 envelopes and discard any envelopes from previous years as the system is changed over. Thank you.**

SVDP

The next St Vincent de Paul meeting will be on Monday 15 January at 6pm in the Aquinas Room. We welcome anyone interested or wanting to join.

Last Week's 2nd Collection

Loose	\$605.00
Planned Giving	\$3,241.05
Total	\$3,846.05

Thanks - Planned Giving Program

Fr Alex and the Parish Finance Council would like to express their thanks for your contributions throughout the year to the parish finances.

A full income and expenditure report for 2017 will be given early in the New Year.



A big THANK YOU from the Parish

Last Saturday we had our annual Advent Working Bee. The work done was tremendous. It included - putting lights in the tree in front of the church, vacuuming leaves around the church, trimming hedges and vines, treating bull ant nests, cleaning outside, some walls were gurneyed and more. Thank you to those who came to help make our grounds look beautiful.

From Archbishop Mark Coleridge

A response to the Royal Commission's final report

The Royal Commission's examination of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church and the response to it by leadership is now done. The final report is vast and its recommendations are many. So there'll be much to digest and act upon in the coming years as the full impact is felt in the Church and beyond.

The report reveals not only the appalling extent of the abuse but also the gross failure of Church leaders to deal properly with allegations, to deliver justice for victims and to co-operate with civil authorities. It shows that those who were abused within Catholic institutions were far too often not believed and that they were neither justly treated nor provided with adequate redress. For too long, the Church denied the extent of the abuse and its devastating impact on its victims, their families and their friends.

These years have been an agonising journey for everyone, not least for the victims who bravely came forward to tell their stories. We now know how difficult it is for those who've been abused to reach a point where they can tell their story; it can take decades. And one of the real achievements of the Royal Commission is that it's provided a safe space for survivors to be heard and to be believed.

For the Catholic community, it's been a deep humiliation, and I can only hope that humiliation will give birth to humility in a Church which accepts vulnerability beyond any attempt at justification or rationalisation, a Church willing to listen and learn, especially from the survivors of abuse themselves.

Sexual abuse of the young in Catholic institutions and its handling by Church leaders has been a colossal failure; and I can only express an acute sense of shame and apologise profoundly to all who have suffered. What has happened has done incalculable damage to those who were abused. It's also shaken the Catholic Church in this country to the core.

Everything possible must be done to heal the wound, to right the wrong and to ensure that the future is very different from the past. Now that the Royal Commission is over, it can't just be back to business as usual.

The Church has to commit to change – not only personal change as each of us learns to see and hear differently, but institutional change as well. This will mean an ongoing transformation of our procedures and protocols in the area of safeguarding. Much has been done already, but there's no room whatever for complacency.

We'll also need cultural change – saying no to a Church that seeks its own protection and self-preservation at all costs, that turns in on itself rather than reach out to the wounded and distressed. This will also mean changes to incorporate greater transparency and accountability in the governance of the Church. I will establish one working-group to examine every aspect of governance in the Archdiocese and another to review how our current proactive policies fit in with the Royal Commission's recommendations and what more the recommendations will require of us.

We've begun to address the need for reform and renewal, recognising that confidence in the Catholic Church and trust in Church leadership are at an all-time low. The rebuilding of confidence and the restoration of trust will take a long time and there's no short-cut. It will be achieved only by a greater authenticity which is serious about reform and renewal and serious about the call of the Gospel.

The Royal Commission has been a searing experience for everyone, but for believers it's been an experience of searing grace – a grace we neither expected nor wanted but grace all the same. Church leaders have broken faith, but Jesus remains faithful: that's the grace. Faith asks the question, Where is God in all this? The abused God of Calvary is with us in the darkness. This is the God who took flesh in Jesus, and who still takes flesh in the mess of human life now. It's also the God who broke the power of darkness by raising Jesus from the dead. The resurrection isn't just an event of the past. It's an experience here and now for those who put their trust in the power of God's love, as we do now, confessing our sin and sharing our hope.

As one journey ends and another begins, I invite you to look with me on the face of Jesus Christ to see there both the sorrow of Calvary and the joy of Easter, to understand the past and to glimpse the future that the God in whom we hope is already preparing.

+ Mark Coleridge - December 2017

Become a part of the parish Planned Giving Program to help your Parish grow.

We thank, sincerely, all Parishioners who contribute to Planned Giving. Your ongoing commitment and contribution assists the parish to budget for operating expenses (wages, rates, electricity, phones, maintenance etc) as well as parish pastoral planning (faith education, sacramental preparation, resources etc). To obtain Planned Giving Envelopes or to contribute by direct debit, complete this form and place on the plate, or contact the Parish Office. Planned Giving contributions are not Tax Deductable.

Surname: _____ **Given names** _____

Address _____ **P/code** _____

Phone _____

Email _____