



St Brendan's & St Mary's Parishes are child safe communities. We promote the safety, wellbeing and inclusion of all and a zero tolerance to child abuse.

Fourth Sunday of Advent, Year A

21 December 2025

First Reading Is 7:10-14

The virgin will conceive.

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".'

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 Rom 1:1-7

Jesus Christ, a descendant of David, is the Son of God.

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.

Gospel Acclamation Mt 1:23

Alleluia, alleluia!

A virgin will give birth to a son;

his name will be Emmanuel:

God is with us.

Alleluia!

Gospel Mt 1:18-24

Jesus was born of Mary, the betrothed of Joseph, a son of David.

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.

OFFICIAL POPE'S PRAYER PROFILE

december 15, 2025

For the victims of the terrorist massacre in Sydney

Let us pray together for all those who suffer due to war and violence. Today I particularly wish to entrust to the Lord the victims of the terrorist massacre carried out yesterday in Sydney against the Jewish community. Enough with this antisemitic violence! Let us eliminate hatred from our hearts.

Leo P.P. XIV

Reflection by Greg Sunter

We will see throughout the coming liturgical year that the gospel of Matthew places a great deal of emphasis on the importance of the Law and upon its proper application. Indeed, the gospel writer casts Jesus in the role of the 'new Moses' – Moses was the great Law-giver of the Old Testament and Jesus is portrayed in this gospel as bringing a new Law to the people of Israel. In this gospel, the proper application of the Law is as important as the Law itself. In today's passage, Joseph provides an example of the proper application of the Law. His betrothed wife was pregnant; she would have been subject to the Law against adultery and probably would have been stoned to death. Under the Law, Joseph was obliged to divorce her, and yet he determines that he will do so quietly and protect Mary from too much shame and possibly save her life. Joseph did not intend to ignore the Law, but he sought to carry it out in such a way as to bring the least shame and the least hurt to all involved.

The role of Joseph is often overlooked. There is no mention of him during the public ministry of Jesus. In fact the latest mention in any of the gospels is the account of Jesus in the Temple at the age of 12. After that, Joseph disappears and we can only assume that he has passed away by the time Jesus takes up his ministry. Yet Joseph is truly a man of great faith. By rights he should have divorced Mary and walked away. But he trusts in the word of the God that is addressed to him in a dream and from that point on he goes to great lengths to protect and care for his family.

**There will be no 9:15 am
Mass on Christmas Eve
(Wednesday, December 24)
and Boxing Day
(Friday December 26).**

ST BRENDAN'S PARISH

121 Knight Street, Shepparton

Phone: 5821 2633

Email: shepparton@sandhurst.catholic.org.au

Website: catholicparish.app/shepparton

Facebook: [sheppartonicatholic](https://www.facebook.com/sheppartonicatholic)

Parish Administrator: Fr Ronald N. Masilang, RCJ

Assistant Priests:

Fr Adi Indra

Fr Ruel Desamparado, RCJ

Fr Addin Doe, RCJ

Office Manager: Diane Teitzel

Pastoral Associate: Anthony Kilmartin

Sacramental Coordinator: Jess Doyle

Administration Support: Laura Thompson

Youth Worker: Emma Christy

Housekeeper: Mailyn Sombbrero

Maintenance Officer/Gardener: Gavin Doherty

Visiting Psychologist: Estela Hutchings

Safeguarding Officer: Kathy Hunt Ph: 5821 2633

Office Hours: Mon to Fri 9am - 2pm

Weekend Mass Times

Saturday Vigil 6pm

Sunday 8am & 11am



Syro Malabar Rite: Wednesday 6.00pm,

Saturday 8.30am & Sunday 5.30pm

St Mary's Dookie, Sunday 10 am

Weekday Mass Times

Tuesday to Friday 9.15am

Reconciliation

Saturday 9.45am to 10.30am (in the Church)

Rosary— The Rosary is prayed in the Marian Chapel after weekday Masses and after the 8am Mass on Sunday.

Holy Hour with Adoration of the Blessed

Sacrament: Thursdays 7pm to 8pm and

Fridays 4.45pm - 5.45pm

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We turn our hearts and minds to the people of the Yorta Yorta nation, who have occupied this country for thousands of years.

We pay respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging, and commit to walking alongside Aboriginal Australians in truth and justice.

Readers & Commentators Dec 27 & 28 2025

6pm	Sr Bing	Chris Segrave
8am	David Keenan	Di Teitzel
11am	Mary-Ann Demase	Emma Christy

Anniversaries: Johanna Steeghs, Imogen Neesen, Petronella Van Dillen, Pellegrino & Vittoria Meola and other members of the Meola family, Andrew Cannizzaro, Patricia (Pat) O'Sullivan, Mary Gangi, Mary Vescio, Alan Appleton, Marietta and Mario Ginevra.

2026 SACRAMENTAL PROGRAM

For children in grade 3 and above

Enrolment Mass's
February 28- March 1
Sacramental Weekend
August 22 -23

For more information
shepparton.sacramental@sandhurst.catholic.org.au



Reconciliation



Eucharist



Confirmation

Our Parish Office will be closed on
Thursday, December 25 &
Friday, December 26.



Christmas Eve REHEARSAL Dates and Times



Christmas Eve Nativity re-enactment Dec 24th at 5.30pm-6pm
and Family Mass Dec 24th at 6pm-7pm

Dear families,

This year, children across our Parishes are invited to participate in the Christmas Eve Mass at St Brendan's Church.

If your child is interested in actively participating in the 5.30pm re-enactment of the Nativity or the 6pm Christmas Eve Mass, they are most welcome to come along and attend the rehearsals and join us in celebrating this very special and holy night. Mrs Ange Collins and Leanne Pellegrino for St Brendan's PS will be at each of the rehearsals.

CHRISTMAS EVE Rehearsal dates and times:

•Friday, 19 December at 3:00pm

•Monday, 22 December at 4:00pm

We look forward to this wonderful Parish led event.

Kind regards,

Leanne Pellegrino

(St Brendan's PS Catholic Identity Leader)

Fourth Sunday of Advent – Daring to trust in God
Let's reflect and learn.

“... and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means ‘God with us’” (Matt 1:23). On this last Sunday of Advent, we might have expected the familiar story of the annunciation to Mary, so often associated with this season. In this year of the Sunday Gospel cycle, however, we follow the Gospel of Matthew who provides the account of Joseph, the soon-to-be husband of Mary. In this Sunday's Gospel, Joseph faced a crisis that made him fearful but also required that he make a decision so he could play an important role in the coming of Christ. As if to credential Joseph as worthy of this vocation, Matthew precedes Joseph's story with a lengthy recitation of those in the line of King David, Israel's greatest ruler and an ancestor of Joseph.

A careful examination of that list of forebearers ought to give one pause, however. Many in that ancestral line were hardly worthy of praise or of being counted as veterans of virtue. Even David himself had many shortcomings that one has to look past in order to describe him as the “greatest” king of Israel.

King Ahaz, for example, named in that genealogy, is the ruler whom the prophet Isaiah addresses in this Sunday's first reading. King Ahaz was faced with a difficult political situation. Like Joseph, he was confronted with a crisis, was riddled with fear and had to make a decision that would impact his life and the life of his people. In the face of foreign conflict he faced two options. He could ally himself with a small group of threatening nations or he could have turned for help to the powerful and equally threatening Assyrian Empire.

Instead of doing either, the prophet Isaiah urges Ahaz to trust God and even to ask God for a sign. The king refuses, thinking that such a request would be a dangerous insult to the Lord. The prophet assures him that the sign already has been given and it is this: “The virgin (Hebrew: ‘almah = marriageable young girl) is with child and will give birth to one called Emmanuel, and that is a name that means God saves.”

Isaiah was assuring the king that his own offspring, the next one in line to ascend the throne, was already conceived and soon to be born. It was a sign that with trust in God, Israel would be saved.

Ahaz, however, thought it more expedient to trust in a superpower that he could see — Assyria — rather than a spiritual power — the God of Israel — whom he could not see.

As a result, Israel and its people came under Assyria's harsh rule. There are others of Joseph's ancestors that we don't hear about in this Sunday's readings who also did not choose to trust in God. Joseph's ancestry, which leads ultimately to Jesus, demonstrates that our God remains ever eager to include all, even those who fail to measure up or who often make the wrong decisions.

And what about Joseph? He does get it right even though he too felt fear when faced with what could have been a most embarrassing situation. Mary, his betrothed, was found to be with child before they had begun to live together. Instead of describing Joseph as a man who was now betrayed, insulted, or even personally humiliated by these circumstances,

Matthew gives us our first glance of the man's character.

Matthew describes Joseph as “a righteous man” and illustrates that righteousness by sharing Joseph's initial response and plan. He would “dismiss Mary quietly” from the betrothal agreement so she would not face disgrace. We hear nothing about Joseph's concern for himself or any worry for the public or personal affront this situation might mean for him.

His plan suggests only a concern for preserving the integrity of this woman Mary, whom he could easily have judged as betraying him.

And not unlike Ahaz, who is urged by a divine messenger, a prophet, to trust in God, an angel of the Lord urges Joseph in a dream to trust in God. The angel tells Joseph to name the infant Jesus and that this child will be a savior for his people.

In Paul's letter to the Romans, from which this Sunday's second reading comes, Paul makes clear who are the “people” whom Jesus came to save. With Matthew, he defines them as “all those who belong to Christ,” Jews and Gentiles alike.

It is fitting that the Gospel writer concludes this story of Joseph by reminding us again of the prophet Isaiah. The promise of a sign once made to a king named Ahaz echoes again in the circumstances of a man named Joseph. “The virgin shall conceive and bear a son and they shall name him Emmanuel.”

Despite the shortcomings of David's descendants and Joseph's ancestors, despite the wrong decision of Ahaz, despite the difficult decision facing Joseph and even despite some of the most difficult challenges we face, this God whom Jesus reveals to us is completely and unconditionally “with us” always. Prophets, messengers, dreams, angels, good friends, and even strangers often are divine envoys of Emmanuel, of “God with us.”

We need only learn to recognize them and heed their message. Their guidance is clear. Trust in Jesus, Emmanuel, whose birth we celebrate this week.

- Gina Hens-Piazza

A Christmas Message – from Fr Brian Boyle

Fr Brian invites us to look beyond the familiar scenes of manger and star — to the soaring vision of the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona. In stone and light, Gaudí's great basilica speaks of faith still being built: unfinished, reaching upward, shaped by patience, imagination and hope. Fr Brian's Christmas message reflects on what this might say to us today — about God dwelling among us in ways that are unexpected, ongoing and quietly transformative.

Friendly reminder that Children's
Liturgy of the Word will
recommence at the beginning of the
2026 school term.



**Please join us in welcoming
Mailyn Sombrero, our new
Presbytery housekeeper.**





**CATHOLIC PARISHES OF
ST BRENDAN'S, SHEPPARTON &
ST MARY'S, DOOKIE**

2025 Christmas Mass Times

MISA DE GALLO DAWN MASSES (9 DAY NOVENA)

- 6.00 am Tues 16 December until Wed 24 December

WEDNESDAY 24 DECEMBER
CHRISTMAS EVE MASSES

- 5.30 pm - Christmas Re-enactment followed by the 6pm Family Mass, St Brendan's Church
- St Mary's Church Dookie - 7.30 pm
- 8.00 pm - Syro-Malabar Mass, St Brendan's Church
- 11.00 pm - Late Mass (10.30 pm Carols), St Brendan's

THURSDAY 25 DECEMBER - CHRISTMAS DAY MASSES

- 8.00 am & 11.00 am

**St Brendan's Shepparton and
St Mel's, Shepparton South invite you all to
the Alpha program in 2026!**
(Dates to follow)

The Alpha Course has been running around the world for nearly 50 years and will begin in early 2026.

Alpha is a series of 10 weekly sessions held on Monday nights at St Brendan's Parish Centre.



While it will be hosted by St Brendan's and St Mel's, it is open to the wider community and people from all parishes. Each session includes a video presentation, a short talk, and small-group discussion in a friendly, relaxed setting.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact the Parishes Alpha Team via the parish office: shepparton@sandhurst.catholic.org.au

CHRISTMAS EVE AND CHRISTMAS DAY MASSES FOR SURROUNDING PARISHES

St Mel's, South Shepparton

Christmas Eve (24 December):
6:00pm & 9:00pm

Christmas Day (25 December): 9:30am

St Mary's, Mooroopna

Christmas Eve (24 December): 7:00pm
Christmas Day (25 December): 10:30am

St Malachy's, Nagambie

Christmas Eve (24 December): 6:00pm
Christmas Day (25 December): 8:45am

CLEANING OF HIGH AREAS IN THE CHURCH

You may recall that the funds raised from the Melbourne Cup Sweep this year is going towards the cleaning of the high areas in the church.

Its been 20+ years since this has been done and so you can just imagine a lot of dust has accumulated.

Happy to report we made a PROFIT of \$3,130 from the Melbourne Cup Sweep.

Recently we awarded the quote to undertake this work to Uso's Protection Service Pty Ltd for the cost of \$3,355. Lots of scaffolding will need to be put up so that the workers are safe when doing the cleaning. The work is scheduled for Monday 12 January and Monday 19 January.

The church will be closed on these days. We will keep you up to date in the new year regarding this maintenance schedule.

THANKS again for your financial support in this endeavour.

