

PARISH NEWSLETTER FOR THE 4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Weekend of the 21/22 December 2024

First Reading: Micah 5:1-4 Second Reading: Hebrews 10:5-10 Gospel: Lk 1:39-44

Embracing the faith communities of St Mary's Buderim, St Peter's Coolum, Stella Maris Maroochydore and St Catherine of Siena, Sippy Downs.

STELLA MARIS CATHOLIC PARISH

Our Parish has zero tolerance for all forms of abuse and is committed to safeguarding everyone involved in its activities, ministries and services. The safety and wellbeing of children and adults-at-risk are paramount.

We welcome visitors and families on holidays and we are honoured that you would join us to celebrate Mass with us while on the Sunshine Coast. In two short days it will be Christmas Eve and we will be inundated with the crowds that somehow only appear at Christmas. For all of us, regular Mass goes or not, Christmas is an important time. The incredible numbers of people of all ages who will join us over Christmas speak volumes for the significance of Christmas in their lives. Before all of that happens, I recently came across an article in the *Commonweal Magazine* called the *Jingle Bell Mass* which reminded me that here in our Sunshine Coast Parish, over these next couple of days, everyone has a role to play as we celebrate our Christmas Masses.

Almost every parish I know has a Jingle Bell Mass. It's the one celebrated late in the afternoon on Christmas Eve. It might also be referred to as the Christmas Vigil, the Family Friendly Mass, or in some places, the Children's Mass. However, I've called it the Jingle Bell Mass ever since the time I walked over to the church and caught a lady (whom I had never seen before) roping off two entire pews with festive red ribbon, all the while grinning and humming *Jingle Bells*. When I asked her what she was doing, she matter-of-factly explained that she was saving seats for her family. It was three hours before Mass time!

This is the Mass where you try to cram eight hundred people into a church that seats four hundred and pray that the Fire Department doesn't close you down. This is the Mass where you politely ask people to finish their skinny latte and cappuccino and cans of Redbull outside. This is the Mass filled with children who are sugar-high with excitement and adults who are dazed from holiday prep work, where teens are texting their friends who are sitting on the other side of the church—while on their way to Communion. This is the Mass attended by the famous bi-annually faithful. Most of all, this is the Mass that presents a pastoral opportunity like no other all year.

On this occasion the church is like an untouched field of snow. We have a chance to make an impression at the liturgy, a chance to either offer a reason to come back, or (at the very least) not feed anyone's determination to stay away. Priests, cut your homilies. This isn't the time to break out your seminary-trained brilliance, but a chance to make a simple, clear point with a minimum of words. Trust that people have watched enough Hallmark specials to understand symbol. And, please address yourself to the adults, not the kids. If you've done your job, both will understand you, but only those carrying a valid driver's license will make the choice to return to your parish some other Sunday. Be sensitive, too, to the many faiths embraced by those who are sitting in front of you. Remember that some folks are there out of love for their families, not the Church. Finally, do not say how you wish attendance could be this good every Sunday. You don't. Plus, it won't be guilt that brings people back!

Liturgy committees, hold off on the schmaltz. Leave the "Happy Birthday Cakes for Jesus" in the second-grade Religious Education classrooms. Be careful with secular symbol. Many years ago I was in a parish where a certain "visual meditation" would set my teeth on edge. After Communion, in dead silence, Santa Claus would slowly walk down the main aisle, carrying a huge sack. He would stop at the crèche, kneel for a moment, and then walk out the side door of the church. No matter what you're thinking right now, trust me: it's creepier in person. Plus, it confuses the kids – "what's he doing here? Why isn't he delivering toys somewhere in the world? My iPhone app says that Norad is tracking him over Europe right now."

Congregations, give welcome to the strangers. I know that you occupy pew 35 left side every week of the year and, at this Mass, an entire family from outside the parish has taken up residence there. Be gracious with your real estate, generous with your hospitality. Look for a seat somewhere else. Also, refrain from casting dirty looks at the mother of the crying baby. That small act of asceticism will go a long way towards establishing world peace. Try to do your part. When Mass is over, if you should see a candy cane stuck to a hymnal or a bulletin folded into an origami hat, please help to put things back in order. That would be most appreciated and, after all, you're a "regular". *You own the place!*

Not every parish can turn Christmas Mass at Midnight into an exquisite production, featuring a choir singing carols in four-part harmony and five languages. But every parish can turn their Jingle Bell Mass into an extraordinary opportunity for hospitality, where there is room for everyone, *even Jesus*.

So get ready parishioners of our Sunshine Coast Parish, we have a job to do, strap yourself in and get ready for a great adventure because here at Stella Maris, St Peter's, St Catherine's and St Mary's, everyone has a part to play this week as together we celebrate the birth of the Christ Child.

The Week Ahead

We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which our communities celebrate liturgies and live out our faith.

We pay respects to leaders past, present and emerging. May their example of stewardship be reflected in our lives.

Monday, 23 December

- ◆ **Christmas Novena Mass** (6:00am Stella Maris)
- ◆ **Communal Rite of Reconciliation** 5:00pm (Stella Maris Church, Maroochydore)

Tuesday, 24 December

- ◆ **Christmas Novena Mass** (6:00am Stella Maris)

Christmas Eve Masses:

- ◆ **Mass** (4:00pm Stella Maris Church)
- ◆ **Mass** (5:00pm St Peter's Church)
- ◆ **Mass** (5:00pm St Catherine of Siena Church)
- ◆ **Mass** (6:00pm Stella Maris Church)
- ◆ **Mass** (Midnight Stella Maris Church)

Wednesday, 25 December *Christmas Day*

- ◆ **Mass** (6:30am Stella Maris Church)
- ◆ **Mass** (7:30am St Peter's Church)
- ◆ **Mass** (9:00am Stella Maris Church)
- ◆ **Mass** (9:30am St Mary's Church)

Thursday, 26 December

- ◆ **No Mass**

Friday, 27 December

- ◆ **No Mass**

Saturday, 28 December

No Saturday morning Reconciliation

- ◆ **Vigil Mass** (4:30pm St Peter's Church)
- ◆ **Vigil Mass** (6:00pm Stella Maris Church)

Sunday, 29 December

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

- ◆ **Mass** (6:30am Stella Maris Church)
- ◆ **Mass** (7:30am St Peter's Church)
- ◆ **Mass** (8:00am St Catherine of Siena Church)
- ◆ **Mass** (9:00am Stella Maris Church)
- ◆ **Mass** (9:30am St Mary's Church)
- ◆ **Mass** (5:00pm Stella Maris Church)

Gluten-free hosts are available. To arrange, simply contact the sacristan or Mass coordinator before Mass. The priest will always distribute the gluten free host at communion.

Why Not ???

Reconciliation should be part of everyone's journey during Advent as we await the birth of the Christ Child. Here in our Sunshine Coast Parish everyone is invited to celebrate God's mercy and forgiveness by joining together and celebrating our **Communal Rite of Reconciliation** this Monday evening, December 23rd, at Stella Maris beginning at 5pm. We are grateful for the generosity of the priests from our neighbouring parishes for assisting us on Monday.

Handing on the Faith

The imminent start of another New Year means the start of another Sacramental Programme. Handing on the faith is the most important mission of our community and assisting parents with their task is something we take seriously as a Parish Family. All baptised children in grade 3 or above are welcome to join our Confirmation programme and all children in grade 4 or above, who have celebrated their Confirmation are invited to join our First Holy Communion programme. Parents are invited to go to our parish web page (maroochydoreparish.com.au) for more details about when the programmes start and to access the registration forms.

It has been a busy week for our Junior Ministers and younger members of our Parish Family. Last Monday our Advent holiday programme "Advent Adventures" took place in the Bliss Room and then, after several strenuous rehearsals, the nativity play was performed on Thursday evening to a rousing applause. On behalf of the entire Parish, thank you to Bernie Ballie and the adults who coordinated these activities. Our Junior Ministers programme resumes next year with the resumption of school.



Catholic Missions Appeal ~ 2024

On behalf of the Missions Office, thank you to all parishioners who generously supported this year's appeal. We deposited **\$4751.00**. This is truly a phenomenal effort by our Parish. Once again, on behalf of all those who directly benefit from your generosity, "Thank You".

ON THE JOURNEY—WHERE LIFE MEETS FAITH

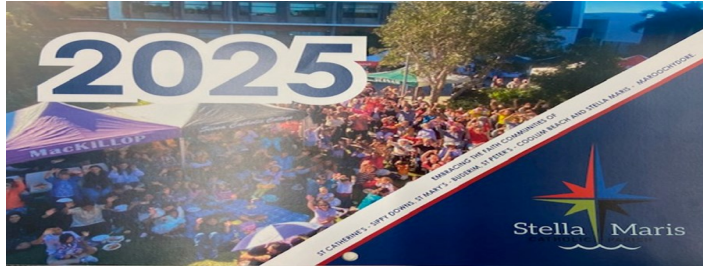
With great joy we welcome into our Catholic Family

Billie Pearl Prince, Banjo Corrie Qualischefski, Luke Colin Robinson and Isla Alyce Speer who were fully received into the Catholic Church this weekend.

At the same time we mourn and pray for **Stephen David Littlejohn** whose funeral will be celebrated this Monday at Stella Maris.

For many in our Parish Family this year will be different as they celebrate Christmas without a loved one. That is why today as a parish we especially pray for the souls of all our deceased priests, religious and family members and fellow parishioners, through the rich mercy of God, they may all, **Rest in Peace**.

Available this weekend is our 2025 Parish calendar which contains all the important dates for the coming year. All parishioners, especially registered parishioners, are welcome to take a calendar as you leave Mass today.



Christmas Appeal

The members of our two St Vincent de Paul conferences at Coolum and Maroochydore would like to thank all parishioners for once again supporting the annual **Christmas Appeal**. All money raised by the appeal will remain locally enabling Vinnies to support those on the fringe of our community this Christmas – thank you. Over these days leading up to Christmas hampers will be delivered to individuals and families in our community and this is only made possible through your generosity. On behalf of your fellow parishioners, the members of our St Vincent de Paul conferences, thank you once again.



Looking to the Future

The completion of the cottage at Buderim and the landscaping that accompanies it will make a dramatic difference to St Mary's. With this momentum I think it would be good to turn our attention to the interior of St Mary's and making some improvements to the aesthetics of our place of worship. As previously mentioned, the goal is to replace the carpet, new seating and new sanctuary furniture. Only with your help can this be achieved and we need to raise \$98,000. The invitation is to support this project – perhaps as an individual, a couple, a family or a group might get together and “buy a pew”. Any support is welcome and appreciated. If you would like more information please contact Fr Peter on brannellyp@bne.catholic.net.au. We have a designated account for this project so if you would like to make a direct deposit through on line banking the account details are:
Commonwealth Bank Buderim Project BSB 064-786
Account Number: 100021388 *Thanks for your support!*

Stella Maris Parish Office

Adjacent to the Stella Maris Church
 Office Hours 9am—2pm Weekdays
 Telephone: 5443 3488
 Email: suncoast@bne.catholic.net.au
 Website: maroochydoreparish.com.au



At Your Service

Fr Peter Brannelly
 Fr Isaac Falzon
 Deacon Michael Khoury
 Bishop Brian Heenan
Bishop Emeritus



The churches, schools, parish infrastructure of our Stella Maris Parish are a living legacy of the vision, sacrifice and determination of those who *handed on the faith* to us. They created the foundation for our Catholic Community through the generous sharing of their talent, time and treasure. Without their vision and determination, our parish would look completely different!

One of the challenges we face today is how we honour and build upon the sacrifices and vision of those who *handed on the faith* to us and gifted us the resources and ability to be who we are today as a Parish Family. If we are honest, most of us have a deep fear that if we make any substantial gift to the parish it will not be appreciated or valued and in the end be squandered! *It is a legitimate fear!*

In other parts of the world, especially in the United States, endowment funds have been established to precisely address this concern. An endowment fund accepts and invests any contribution and only uses the interest as income. In practical terms for a parish endowment fund, the parish uses the annual interest and income for the mission of the church, while the initial contribution remains in place. So, a person or family has the confidence that their financial contribution will still be working for the mission of the Church and Parish ten, fifty, a hundred years from now!

With the support of the Parish Finance Council, the Stella Maris Endowment Fund has been established. This fund, independently and professionally managed, will support the work and mission of the parish in perpetuity. It is a option for anyone, or any family wishing to make a contribution to the long term mission and maintenance of Stella Maris. **There are information envelopes at the entrance to the church.**

By inviting you to consider supporting the Stella Maris Endowment Fund by remembering the fund in your will or making a pledge today, our hope is that the fund will continue to grow. In this way, we all have the opportunity to *hand on the faith* and provide a lasting legacy.

Parish Office

Our Parish Office will be closed from Christmas Eve and will reopen on Monday, January 6th, 2025. This will allow our parish staff some well earned rest after the Christmas rush.

Our Christmas Novena is quickly drawing to a climax with our final Mass on Christmas Eve morning, 6am, this Tuesday, December 24th. Since we have started our Christmas Novena last Monday many different groups within our Parish Family



have been involved and helped us celebrate.

Thank you to

the Filipino, Gaelic, South Pacific, Croatian, South African, Aussie and Indian communities for contributing to our celebrations. A special thank you to all our coordinators and musicians and technical advisors who have been part of our Christmas Novena journey—we could not journey without your generosity! Everyone is welcome to join us on this Tuesday morning for Mass as our Christmas Novena concludes and we are guaranteed that the celebrations that follow will truly prepare us for the birth of the Christ Child!!!



It has never been so easy to get in touch and keep up to date with the many ministries and activities of our Sunshine Coast Parish. Why not start by visiting our Parish Facebook page? You will receive updates on what's happening within the parish, religious articles and content of interest. It is also a way we contact you with urgent news. **“Like”** our Facebook and Instagram page.



Parishioners were amazed at the amount and variety of items that our Craft group had on display last Sunday after the Stella Maris Masses. Our Craft Group currently meets on the fourth Friday of each month at the Bliss Room and next year plans to meet twice a month. New members are always welcome to join them. The proceeds from last week sales will help subsidize some of our younger parishioners attend the Ignite Junior Retreat in January On behalf of the members of our Craft Group – thanks for your support and purchases.

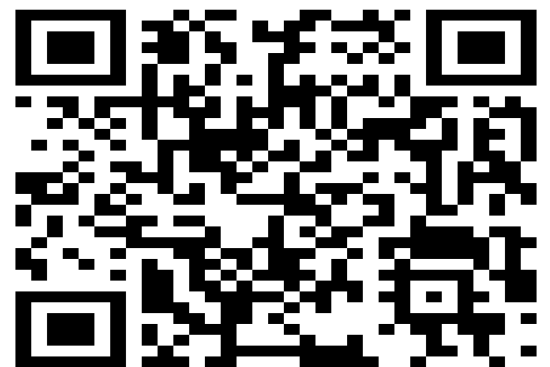
Available at the entrance of all our four churches, we have new information envelopes containing details about our **Parish Planned Giving** programme and the many ways you can support your Parish and our **Endowment Fund**, which will provide your Parish Family with financial security into the future. For new and returning members of our Parish, there is a **Welcome Pack**. It contains valuable information about your new Parish Family. Please feel free to take an envelope home with you today.



To our visitors & friends – thanks for your generous financial support.

Register Today

Over two thousand parishioners have already signed up and become registered members of our Sunshine Coast parish – **have you?** It is easy, simply use your phone and this QR code will take you directly to the parish sign-up page. You will receive a confirmation code, which will allow you to securely enter your family details. Option two is to go on your computer and follow this link: maroochydore.flocknote.com/register as it will also take you to our Parish Flocknote data page. Finally, if all else fails, at the entrance to the church there is a hard copy of the registration form – please complete it and return it to the parish so that we can register you. However you register, thank for taking the time and becoming a registered and known member of your Catholic Parish.



Thinking About It ???

The **Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA)** is the journey of enquiry and discernment we invite individuals to go on to discover more about who we are and what we believe as Catholics. This year 25 adults were involved in our RCIA programme and at the end of their journey made the decision to be baptised and join the Church – their own faith journey brings an additional depth and richness to our Parish Family. There is already a group preparing to be received into the Church next Easter and in a couple of weeks' time we will invite anyone else who is not baptised or who is not would like to join the Church to join a new RCIA group.