

Note to families

Dear friends

Catholic Education invites students, their families and staff to pray this Christmas Family Prayer in your homes during the Christmas season.

Recognising the additional challenges 2020 has presented for our communities, this family prayer is an opportunity to connect in solidarity with our wider faith community during this special time in the Church's calendar, celebrating the birth of Our Saviour Jesus.

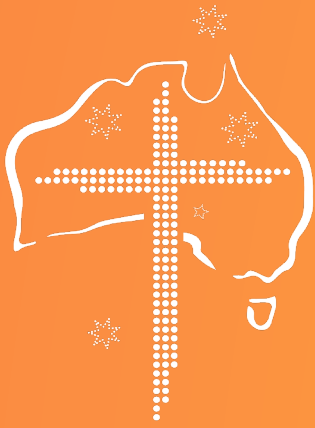
One of the beautiful traditions of Advent is that of the Christmas wreath and each week, lighting a candle that reminds us of a particular element of the preparation for the birth of Christ. As such, we invite families to create their own prayer space with a white candle at the centre, the final candle in the Advent wreath, which is traditionally lit on Christmas day. The white candle is the Christ candle and represents the light of Christ.

We hope it offers you moments for prayerful reflection in your family and connects you to the peace, joy and hope of the Christmas season.

As we head into the celebration of 200 years of Catholic education in 2021, we thank you for your continuing support and partnership in Catholic education and wish you a happy and Holy Christmas and New Year.



Jacinta Collins
Executive Director



Catholic Education
CELEBRATING 200 YEARS
Faith in the future

Christmas Family Prayer



Artwork: Bright Star by Grace Kumbi

The reading we share today is from the Gospel of Luke (2:8-20)

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.”

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!”

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them.

But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.



Artwork: The Journey by Millie Banks, Year 6 St Mary's Catholic School Orange

Reflection

For each member in our family, our birth story is very special and there are moments of joy in the celebration but to be announced by an angel, as this Gospel writer tells us is what happens for Jesus, is really amazing!

The announcement is made to shepherds. Shepherds were what we would today call poor and disadvantaged. Yet the announcement of Jesus' birth is made to them which tells us right from the very start of Jesus' life, that he came for all people, especially those who were having a hard time.

2020 has been a challenging year for each of us. We have not been able to go to school sometimes, to pray together, to play sport together and visit our friends and families, some for long periods of time. What this story reminds us this Christmas is that there is great joy in the birth of Jesus, and it brings us hope.

Each of you might like to share together a joy from this year and hope that the birth of Jesus brings you for 2021.

Prayers of Intercession

Please share the reading of these with those gathered.

As we gather together, we pray:

For the Church and all throughout the world, that as we celebrate Jesus' birth, that together we may grow in holiness, we pray to the Lord.

For all the people, that Jesus' words and values may find a place in their hearts, we pray to the Lord.

As we celebrate 200 years of Catholic education, grant those teaching and learning, planning and leading and the families and community that entrust their young people to Catholic schools a love of learning and a willingness to be the face of Jesus in the world, we pray to the Lord.

For all families, especially our family gathered together today, that we will continue to know the love of our God, we pray to the Lord.

For those who are at work this Christmas, particularly those who have worked so hard in healthcare during this year, we pray to the Lord.

For all those who in have been sick during 2020 and for those who have died, particularly those who have been affected by Covid, we pray to the Lord.

For our own needs, we invite each person to offer their own prayer [at this time each person may like to share something they would like to pray for], we pray to the Lord.

Closing Prayer

Loving God,
In this Christmas season we thank you for the great joy you have sent us in the birth of Jesus.

Help us to be the voice and hands of the angel sharing Jesus with one another this Christmas season.
In Your name, we pray, Amen.