

# FOCUS

*The Parish Magazine  
of  
St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Wembley*



*Christmas 2021*



## ST JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

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Tuesday	Mass: 9.30am and 6.30pm
Wednesday	Mass: 9.30am
Thursday	Mass: 9.30am and 6.30pm
Friday	Mass: 12.00noon
Saturday	Mass: 9.30am 6.30pm Vigil Mass of Sunday
Sunday	Mass: 9.00am, 10.45am, 12.30pm and 7.30pm

All services are streamed live on ChurchServices  
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### Schools

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## A message for Christmas



We have come to another Christmas, and the end of another year; another very trying year for everyone to say the least. Amid the Covid-19 pandemic, lockdowns and restrictions, we are all trying to find reason and meaning to celebrate. This year's celebrations may not be as we would wish with all our families and friends, our normal parish Christmas parties, or our Seniors Christmas lunch. But our Catholic faith beckons us to remember that it is the birth of Jesus Christ and our hope of salvation that Christmas celebrates.

A preparation for this wonderful celebration is so important during the 4 weeks of Advent when we should seek repentance, receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation and pray and prepare to receive Our Blessed Saviour in the Eucharist.

Our Christian faith calls us to remember that whatever we are doing this Christmas this is because Jesus Christ became one of us. The letter to the Hebrews 13:8 reminds us that "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*" So, our reason for celebration yesterday should not change today, and will not ever change. Therefore, let us rejoice and give thanks to Lord for the opportunity to celebrate the birth of Christ once more.

On the same note of rejoicing and thanksgiving, I would like to thank all our parishioners at St Joseph's for the generous love and support that we have all shared in these strange times. Our kindness towards each other has been our sustaining strength. Let us continue to witness Christ's love for one another.

I thank all our volunteers who have assisted in our parish ministries, committees and the numerous essential parish duties this year; you gave, and continue to give, of your time to ensure that our church community remains active and vibrant, especially through this difficult year yet again. Also, in the spirit of Christmas joy, a word of congratulations goes to all who received sacraments this year: Baptism, First Holy Communion, Confirmation, and Marriage and a special thank you to all our catechists.

Finally, dear friends, let us remember in our prayers all our sick and housebound parishioners and those facing challenges at this time. Our condolences go to all those who lost loved ones during this year. Christmas is always difficult for bereaved families. Let us remember these families, be there for them and share our love with them.

May you all experience the presence of Christ during this Christmas season, and forever, for He is the same yesterday, today and forever.

A very happy, holy and blessed Christmas and best wishes for 2022 to all our parishioners.

Fr Joseph



## What is Advent?

Sunday, November 28, 2021 - Friday, December 24, 2021



Beginning the Church's liturgical year, Advent (from, "ad-venire" in Latin or "to come to") is the season encompassing the four Sundays (and weekdays) leading up to the celebration of Christmas.

The Advent season is a time of preparation that directs our hearts and minds to Christ's second coming at the end of time and to the anniversary of Our Lord's birth on Christmas. From the earliest days of the Church, people have been fascinated by Jesus' promise to come back. But the scripture readings during Advent tell us not to waste our time with predictions. Advent is not about speculation. Our Advent readings call us to be alert and ready, not weighed down and distracted by the cares of this world (Lk 21:34-36). Like Lent, the liturgical colour for Advent is purple since both are seasons that prepare us for great feast days. Advent also includes an element of penance in the sense of preparing, quieting, and disciplining our hearts for the full joy of Christmas.

As we prepare for Christmas, the General Instruction of the Roman Missal notes some differences to the Mass that should be observed during the season. For instance, the priest will wear violet or purple during Advent, except for the Third Sunday of Advent (Gaudete Sunday) when rose is worn (GIRM, no. 316). Aside from what the priest wears, other aesthetic changes in the Church can include a more modestly decorated altar.

In the final days of Advent, from December 17 to December 24, we focus on our preparation for the celebrations of the Nativity of our Lord at Christmas. In particular, the "O" Antiphons may be sung during this period and have been by the Church since at least the eighth century. They are a magnificent theology that uses ancient biblical imagery drawn from the messianic hopes of the Old Testament to proclaim the coming of Christ as the fulfillment not only of Old Testament hopes, but of present ones as well.

Advent devotions including the Advent wreath, remind us of the meaning of the season. An Advent calendar can help you fully enter into the season with daily activity and prayer suggestions to prepare you spiritually for the birth of Jesus Christ.

## The Christmas Season in the Catholic Church



The adoration of the shepherds is depicted in this 17th-century painting by Bartolome Esteban Murillo. The feast of the Nativity of Christ, a holy day of obligation, is celebrated on Dec 25.

A catchy caption seen in a US journal read: "Unwrap The True Meaning Of Christmas." This is a worthwhile invitation at this time of year when we are surrounded by rampant commercialism, which robs Christmas of religious meaning.

Christmas commemorates that God entered this world in human form. It is the celebration of the Birth of the Saviour. God has taken on human flesh. Nothing like that had ever taken place previously. Oh, yes, God was very active in the creation of the world and in forming man and woman; further, in the making of a covenant with Israel, God promised to be with and to save them. Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promise. He is God's Word who saves all humanity from the tragic consequences of sin.

At His birth in Bethlehem the Infant Jesus was placed in a wooden manger by His loving Virgin Mother, Mary, and her husband, Saint Joseph. That wood would be replaced at the end of His life by the wood of the Cross on which He accomplished salvation. From the Cross, He rose to life. His Birth was a prelude to His Resurrection.

The true meaning of Christmas is that God so loved us that He gave His only begotten Son; that God shared our human condition even to death; that salvation was accomplished by God within the grittiness of life.

This is why the angel announced to the shepherds, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a Saviour has been born for you who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." To climax this announcement a whole army of angels appeared and sang, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom His favour rests."

Their angelic song awakens in us a deep longing to experience the closeness of God; a desire to live in a peaceful world; a hope to end suffering and a wish to eliminate grudges and hatred in our relationships with our families, coworkers, and communities.

This Christmas we need to unwrap the Saviour, Jesus Christ, whose presence as the Infant of Bethlehem is God's Word to us. God's promise has been kept. "Fear not," the shepherds are reminded. "Fear not," God is with you.

Let us hear this Good, this Very Good News. Let it encourage our faith in God. Let it resonate in our homes and families, among our friends and coworkers.





May it be preached from our pulpits. The Saviour is born and He and ONLY HE can take away fears and free us from sin. No one else can; nothing else can do that for you.

For some, Christmas evokes memories, especially of loved ones who have died. Consider Mary in the years after Jesus' death. She understands your pain. Each year after His death on the Cross she surely remembered the day of His birth, that first Christmas. Talk to Mary about whomever you miss this Christmas. She understands what is going on in your heart.

For many however, the Christmas season ends on December 26th. For faithful Catholics, however, the Christmas season begins at midnight on December 24th and continues well into January. While the rest of the world is winding down their Christmas celebrations, we're just gearing up for ours. We start with the Christmas Octave.

Since the 8th century, the Church has observed octaves – eight days of celebration following a feast or solemnity. Christmas has its own octave, and so does Easter. For Christmas, the octave begins on Christmas Day and ends on January 1, the Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God. Both during and after the Octave of Christmas, there are a number of feasts to commemorate and celebrate:

- December 26 – St Stephen (the first martyr)
- December 27 – The Holy Family
- December 28 – The Holy Innocents (those children murdered by Herod's soldiers in the effort to destroy the Christ Child)
- January 1 – Holy Mary, Mother of God
- January 6 – The Epiphany of the Lord (the visit of the Magi)
- January 10 – The Baptism of the Lord

Throughout these days, we hear in the daily readings the stories of the Nativity, but also of the prophecies of Simeon and Anna at the presentation and the finding of Jesus in

the temple as well as the initiation of St John the Baptist's ministry.

The Christmas season is filled with many exciting scenes and happenings, all pointing to Jesus as the Christ. They all tell us something about the magnificence and mission of the Infant born in Bethlehem that, one day, would be King. That's the whole point of Christmas, isn't it?

The reason we have Christmas at all is because we are grateful and filled with joy that the God-Man has come to earth to bring salvation to all of humanity. He is the Christ; and that's worth celebrating for a good length of time.

According to the Church, the Christmas season officially ends with the Baptism of the Lord, observed in 2022 on January 9. That gives us 16 days to celebrate Christmas, and all of them begin and not end on Christmas Day.

Each year our families should be the counter-cultural ones on our streets. We really ought to keep our decorations up and carry on celebrating throughout the entire Christmas season!

May you unwrap the TRUE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS, Jesus Christ, OUR Saviour and Lord. With wishes and prayers for a blessed Christmas and New Year.



# 5 WAYS TO PREPARE YOUR HEART THIS ADVENT



## 1 **Prepare room at the Inn**

Make room in your heart for Jesus.

## 2 **Clean out the cobwebs**

After an Examination of Conscience, go to Confession.

## 3 **Hang new curtains**

“Decorate” your heart with joy and hope.

## 4 **Get out the fine china and set the table**

Let your attitude be one of enthusiastic expectation.

## 5 **Open the front door and wait**

Wait for Christ’s arrival silently and in a spirit of prayer.

The secret for success of a party is the preparation that is done prior to the party itself. Poor preparation is likely to lead to a mediocre party. The most important birthday party celebrated annually for the last two millennia is that of Jesus the Lord, which we call *Christmas*.

Our primary focus in our preparation for Christmas—the birth of Jesus, Our Saviour—must not be on parties, noise, buying and selling, having and possessing. Rather, we want to focus on that little Baby who was born of the Virgin Mary in the stable of Bethlehem that cold and starry night.

### ***The best Christmas of your life***

It is our hope and our humble but fervent prayer that every Christmas that you celebrate will be filled with more intense longing, love, and welcoming of the Infant Baby Jesus who came into the world to save us. The primary purpose of the Incarnation, Birth, life, Passion, death and Resurrection of Jesus is for our eternal salvation. The name *Jesus* actually means *Saviour*. The Archangel Gabriel told Mary: *His name is Jesus because He will save the people from their sins.*



Therefore, it is up to each and every one of us individually to make a concerted effort to prepare for Christmas—the birthday of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. How can we do this? We will offer ten brief, concrete, and practical steps we can take so that Jesus will be born not only in the stable of Bethlehem, but also in the very depths of your heart.

### **1. Clean the stable of your heart**

Advent, the time of preparation for Christmas, is a very propitious time to clean our heart, mind, soul and total being by means of making a good Sacramental Confession. Even with only a few days of Advent, it's still a great way to prepare for the Lord. Sin sullies or dirties the inner beauty of our soul; a good sacramental confession sweeps out the dirt and makes us clean. The Prophet Isaiah expresses this clearly: *Though your sins be as scarlet they will be made white as the snow.* (Is. 1)

### **2. Seek silence**

Strive to cultivate a silent and recollected heart. Try to avoid all unnecessary noise. When we have moments of silence it is then that God's Holy Spirit can speak to us, give us certain lights or insights, and send heavenly inspirations. In a world filled with so much noise — you might even call it *Noise-pollution*— we really need more silence. Saint Pope Paul VI in one of his reflections for the Christmas Season states that the Holy Family prayed, worked, and appreciated silence. So should we!

### **3. More frequent and fervent prayer**

Saint Paul states that we should pray constantly and give thanks to God in our hearts. Jesus also said that it is necessary to pray always without giving up hope. (Lk. 18:1) However, offering fervent and frequent prayers is even more necessary in the strong seasons of the year—both Advent and Lent. Set aside more time to talk to the Lord, Mary, and Saint Joseph in the depths of your heart.

### **4. A Christmas Carol**

To set the stage for a fruitful Christmas viewing a good movie or two can be exceedingly fruitful. One of the greatest classics is a movie that came from a novel written by the great English novelist Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*.

### **5. Find joy in giving more than having**

The essential message of *A Christmas Carol* is that true joy can only be attained inasmuch as we learn the art of giving freely, generously, and continually to others. Scrooge lived a really miserable life until he dreamed of his mortality — one day he would surely die — which rocked his comfortable and materialistic existence. Let us seek out ways that we can give to others, especially those most in need. Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta asserted: *Give until it hurts!*

### **6. Live out the Mass in your life**

In a real sense, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is a *daily Christmas*. How you might ask? Very simply: the priest consecrates the Host which is transformed into Jesus. He is really born in the hands of the priest. Then, when you approach to receive Holy Communion with a pure and loving heart, Jesus is





born in your heart. Your soul becomes a real *Bethlehem—House of Bread*. Therefore, try to attend Holy Mass as often as possible and let Jesus be born in your heart in the worthy reception of Holy Communion.

### **7. Help the poor, the aged, the sick, and abandoned**

Living out the Gospel of love is a perennial task. However, to really live out Advent to the fullest extent possible and experience the joy of the Lord Jesus born in Bethlehem, we should seek out helping those in our society who suffer most. Remember the words of Jesus: *Whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers, that you have done to me.*

### **8. Reconcile**

The great English poet Alexander Pope wrote: *To err is human, to forgive is divine*. Christmas is not a time in which we should be at enmity with others, especially members of our own family. Two of the most difficult but important phrases that should issue from our hearts and lips are: *I am sorry... and... I forgive you!!!* If you are angry, resentful, bitter, and even hateful towards anybody, now is the time to reconcile. Be humble! Take the initiative and reconcile. Even though possibly very difficult, this gesture of reconciliation is very pleasing to God and will fill your heart with a deep peace that maybe you have not experienced in years!

### **9. Kind words and a word of cheer**

In our social dealings one of the most important things we can do is to be kind to others. Get into the habit of saying kind words to others, especially to your family members. A *compliment*, a *thanks*, a word or two of *encouragement*—all of these can change a sad and desolate heart into one of joy and exultation! Remember the Golden Rule and apply it to your speech: *Do to others what you want them to do to you... say to others what you would like them to say to you!*

### **10. Mother Mary & Christmas**

Of course, Christmas would not have taken place if it were not for the generous *Yes of Mary!* Stay close to Mary. Pray the Rosary, especially the Joyful Mysteries. Accompany Mary in her journey to Bethlehem. Be with her in the stable as she brings forth Jesus for your salvation. Place Mary in Advent and Christmas and Jesus will be born in the depths of your heart.

Loving God,  
Help us remember  
the birth of Jesus,  
that we may share  
in the song of the angels,  
the gladness  
of the shepherds,  
and worship of  
the wise men.



~ Robert Louis Stevenson

# Origins of the Christmas Star are a scientific mystery

by Ayleen Barbel Fattal, Florida International University



December is a month of celebration throughout the world and across cultures and religions. Perhaps one of the most widely observed religious holidays in December is Christmas. Bright stars top many Christmas trees symbolising the Star of Bethlehem, more commonly called the Christmas Star. It is mentioned in the Bible as the star which led the three wise men to

the small town of Bethlehem where Jesus was born.

But was the Christmas Star really a star or some other astronomical occurrence?

Florida International University astronomy Professor Caroline Simpson provides scientific insight into what may explain the Christmas Star phenomenon.

**Likely a stationary object.** For an object in the sky to be useful for navigation over a period of days or weeks, it needs to be relatively stationary in the sky from night to night—disregarding the apparent motion of the sky from east to west due to the Earth's Rotation. This rules out transient objects like meteors, or what most recognize as shooting stars, which last for mere seconds.

**Not a comet.** Although a comet could appear motionless over days, comets were well known at the time and usually well documented by various cultures. More importantly, comets were generally regarded as harbingers of ill omen during the time of Jesus. It's safe to say any wise man would not have followed a comet. More likely, they would have gone the other way.

**A nova or supernova?** A nova suddenly brightens for a few days then slowly returns to its original state. A supernova is an explosion of a massive star that is visible for weeks. Both could have been possible, but these also tended to be well-documented and the only one noted at the time was in the wrong direction of the sky for the wise men to follow.

**A planetary conjunction.** The most likely explanation is a planetary conjunction—when one or more planets appear very close together in the sky. If it involved Mars, Jupiter and Saturn, it would be visible for a few days or longer if it involved only Saturn and Jupiter as they move more slowly through the sky. There were some conjunctions during the right time period and in the right direction in the sky.

Simpson cautions these are all just likely scenarios. There is no indisputable scientific proof or evidence for a definite conclusion. Until such discovery occurs, the Christmas Star will continue to be a mystery that only faith can explain.

Simpson studies how galaxies and the universe evolve over time.



## Riddles

Q. What do you get when you combine an elephant with a fish?

A. *Swimming trunks!*

Q. Do fish go on vacation?

A. *No, because they are always in school!*

Q. Why don't oysters share their pearls?

A. *Because they are shellfish!*

Q. What do you call a snowman in July?

A. *A puddle!*

Q. What's black and white and red all over?

A. *A zebra with a sunburn!*

## Bible Word Search: Birth of Jesus

	D	C	J	O	S	E	P	H	
Angles	L	O	R	D	Y	R	A	M	Joseph
Faith	R	F	A	T	H	E	R	T	Lord
Father	O	A	N	H	V	S	I	A	Love
God	W	I	G	O	U	R	R	E	Mary
Great	G	T	L	S	I	I	S	R	Spirit
Hope	O	H	E	P	O	H	T	G	Stable
Jesus	D	J	S	T	A	B	L	E	World

## Bible Story Jesus Is Born at Bethlehem



The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a young woman named Mary in Nazareth, a town of Galilee. She was to be married to a man named Joseph of the family of David. When he came to her the angel said: "Hail, highly honoured one! God is with you!"

She was startled by his words and wondered what such a greeting might mean. But the angel said to her, "Fear not, Mary, for you have found favour with God. You will have a son and will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High."

Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, for I am not yet married." The angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will

come upon you and the power of the Most High will cover you; therefore your child will be called holy, the Son of God." Mary said: "I am God's servant. May it be with me as you say." Then the angel left her.

In those days the Emperor Augustus commanded that everyone should be registered. So all went to be registered, each to his own town. Joseph, because he was of the family of David, went to be registered with Mary, his wife, from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem in Judea where David was born. While they were there Mary's first son was born. And she wrapped him in swaddling-clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

In that country there were shepherds living in the fields and keeping watch over their flocks by night. And an angel from God stood by them and a heavenly light shone around them, and they were frightened. But the angel said to them:

"Fear not, for behold I bring you good news  
Of great joy which shall be for all the people.  
For to you is born this day in the town of David.  
A Saviour who is God's Anointed.  
This will be a sign to guide you:

You will find a baby in swaddling-clothes lying in a manger."

Then suddenly there was with the angel a great number of the heavenly ones singing praise to God and saying:

"Glory to God on high,  
And on earth peace, good-will among men."

When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem to see this which God has made known to us." So they went quickly and found Mary and Joseph; and the baby was lying in a manger.

When they had seen him, they made known what had been told them about this child. All who heard the words of the shepherds wondered, but Mary kept these things to herself and often thought about them. And the shepherds returned, thanking and praising God for what they had heard and seen, as it had been foretold.

### *Christmas Prayer for Families*

**Loving God,**

**During this holy season of Christmas, we ask for  
your blessing on all families.**

**Let Mary's openness to your wondrous ways be an  
inspiration to place all trust in you.**

**Let Joseph's courage provide hope during times of  
anxiety and uncertainty.**

**Let Jesus' life ignite all families with a spirit  
of light and love.**

**May the grace that encircled the Holy Family widen  
to embrace all families.**

**For this we pray.**

***Amen.***



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## The Epiphany of the Lord

Thursday January 6, 2022



**On entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.**

**Matthew 2:11**

“Epiphany” means manifestation. And the “Epiphany of the Lord” is Jesus’ manifestation not only to these three Magi from the East, but it’s also a symbolic but real manifestation of the Christ to the whole world. These Magi, travelling from a foreign and non-Jewish nation, reveal that Jesus came for all people and all are called to adore Him.

These Magi were “wise men” who studied the stars and were aware of the Jewish belief that a Messiah was coming. They would have been versed in much of the wisdom of the day and would have been intrigued by the Jewish belief in the Messiah.



God used what they were familiar with to call them to adore the Christ. He used a star. They understood the stars and when they saw this new and unique star over Bethlehem they realized that something special was happening. So the first lesson we take from this for our own lives is that God will use what is familiar to us to call us to Himself. Look for the “star” that God is using to call you. It’s closer than you may think.

A second thing to note is that the Magi fell prostrate before the Christ Child. They laid their lives down before Him in complete surrender and adoration. They set a perfect example for us. If these astrologers from a foreign land could come and adore Christ in such a profound way, we must do the same. Perhaps you could try literally lying down prostrate in prayer this day, in imitation of the Magi, or at least do so in your heart through prayer. Adore Him with a complete surrender of your life.

Lastly, the Magi bring gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These three gifts, presented to our Lord, show that they acknowledged this Child as the Divine King who would die to save us from sin. Gold is for a King, frankincense is a burnt offering to God, and myrrh is used for one who would die. Thus, their adoration is grounded in the truths of who this Child is. If we are to adore Christ properly, we must also honor Him in this threefold way.

Reflect, today, upon these Magi and see them as a symbol of what you are called to do. You are called from the foreign place of this world to seek out the Messiah. What is God using to call you to Himself? When you discover Him, do not hesitate to acknowledge the full truth of who He is, lying prostrate before Him in complete and humble submission.

*Lord, I love You and adore You.*

*I lay my life before You and surrender all.*

*You are my Divine King and Saviour.*

*My life is Yours.*

*(Pray three times and then prostrate yourself before the Lord)*

*Jesus, I trust in You.*



## Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

In the liturgical calendar, the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord signifies the end of the Christmas season. The Baptism of the Lord is notable because it marks the beginning of Jesus' ministry and confirms his identity as the Son of God. This event is documented in all the gospels except John.



The Trinity Displayed in the Baptism of the Lord.

The Gospel of Mark describes the event: *It happened in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptised in the Jordan by John. On coming up out of the water he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."* (Mark 1:9-11)

Christ's baptism remarkably shows all three Persons of the Trinity at the same time: the Son being baptised, the Holy Spirit descending, and the Father speaking from the heavens. In this event, the Father and the Holy Spirit confirm the deity of

The Baptism of the Lord portrayed in mosaic tile in the chapel of Our Lady of Pompei.



Christ, and Jesus submits to his Father's will.



### Why is Jesus Baptised?

When Jesus comes to John, John hesitates to baptise him. John's is a baptism of repentance, and Jesus has nothing for which he needs to repent. Why then does Jesus insist on being baptised? By choosing to be baptised, Jesus fulfills all righteousness – preparing himself to be a perfect sacrifice for us.

The account in Matthew demonstrates this:

*Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptised by him. John tried to prevent him, saying, "I need to be baptised by you, and yet you are coming to me?" Jesus said to him in reply, "Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed him. (Matthew 3:13-15)*



### What Does Baptism Mean for Us?

As we reflect on Christ's baptism, we are reminded of our own baptism. Pope Benedict XVI said on the Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord:

*[Baptism] is communion with the One who conquered death and holds in his hand the keys of life. Belonging to this circle, to God's family, means being in communion with Christ, who is life and gives eternal love beyond death.*

Thanks be to God, who has redeemed us from our sins and given us eternal life through Jesus Christ.

*At the Basilica, the Baptism of Christ is depicted in the Rosary Walk and Garden and the Chapel of Our Lady of Pompei.*

The Baptism of the Lord portrayed in mosaic tile in the Rosary Walk and Garden.



## ***Laughter the best medicine***

One Christmas eve, Pete and Jane were driving their Russian friend Rudolph back to his house. The weather outside was frightful. Jane asked Pete, "Do you think that's sleet or rain out there?"

"It's rain, Jane" said Pete.

"I think it's sleet, Pete," said Jane.

Rudolph chimed in, "It's definitely rain, Jane."

"No, I really think it's sleet, Rudolph" said Jane.

"Don't argue with the expert, Jane," said Pete.

"What do you mean, Pete?" asked Jane.

Pete replied, "Rudolph the Red knows rain, Dear."

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During an impassioned sermon about death and final judgement, the priest said forcefully, "Each member of this church is going to die and face judgement." Glancing down at the front pew, he noticed a man with a big smile on his face. The minister repeated his point louder. "Each member of this church is going to die and face judgement!" The man nodded and smiled even more. This really got the preacher wound up. He pounded the pulpit emphatically when he came to the ultimatum: "Each member of this church is going to die and face judgement!!!" Though everyone else in the congregation was looking sombre, the man in front continued to smile. Finally the preacher stepped off the platform, stood in front of the man and shouted, "I said each member of this church is going to die!" The man grinned from ear to ear. After the service was over, the preacher made a beeline for the man. "I don't get it," the preacher said in frustration. "Whenever I said, 'Each member of this church is going to die,' your smile got bigger. Why?" "I'm not a member of this church," the man replied.





## CULINARY QUARTER



### Mince pies

#### *Ingredients:*

##### **For the pastry**

375g/13oz plain flour  
250g/9oz butter, softened  
125g/4oz caster sugar, plus  
extra for sprinkling  
1 medium free-range egg

##### **For the filling**

2 x 400g/14oz jars mincemeat  
2 tangerines, zest grated and flesh chopped  
1 apple, finely diced



#### *Method:*

Preheat the oven to 200C/400F/Gas 6. To make the sweet pastry, rub the flour, butter, sugar and egg together with a splash of cold water until it just comes together as a dough. Do not over work the dough. Wrap the pastry in cling film and set aside to chill in the fridge while you make the filling.

To make the filling, turn the mincemeat out into a bowl, grate the zest of the tangerines into the mincemeat, then peel and chop the fruit. Throw the tangerine and apple pieces into the bowl and blend by hand.

Roll out the pastry to a 3mm/1/8in thickness. With a round pastry cutter, cut out 6 x 9cm/3½in discs of pastry. Press the pastry into the muffin cups and fill each one with a good helping of the mincemeat mixture, so that it reaches three-quarters of the way up the side of the pastry-lined cup.

With a fluted pastry cutter, cut out 6 x 8cm/3¼ in pastry circles for the lids (slightly bigger than the top of the muffin cups). Place a lid on top of each pie and gently push down. Sprinkle with caster sugar.

Bake for 20 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to cool. Dust with icing sugar and serve warm with fresh cream.

Equipment and preparation: You will need a deep muffin mould with 12 holes, a round pastry cutter and a fluted pastry cutter.

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UPON HIM AND  
HE IS NAMED  
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