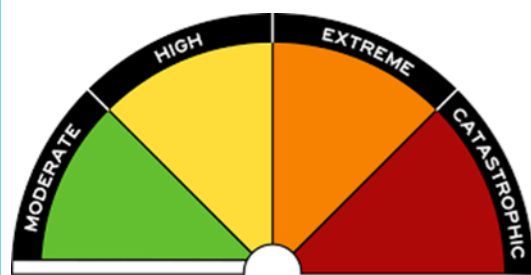


<b>Date:</b>	<b>9th/10th Dec 2023</b>	<b>Second Sunday of Advent</b>	
<b>Mass Time:</b>	<b>VIGIL 5:00PM</b>	<b>8.00AM</b>	<b>9.30AM</b>
<b>Acolyte:</b>	Ian Miles	Randall Noney	Bernard Ellis
<b>Commentator:</b>	Felix Kobus	Tanya Graham	Anne Ellis
<b>First Reading:</b>	Tanya Baldwin	Cecilia Hunt	Katherine Mahns
<b>Second Reading:</b>	Wilhelmina de Raadt	Jim Gresser	Margaret Hickey
<b>Music:</b>	Chris Wilson		Streeters
<b>Date:</b>	<b>16th/17th Dec 2023</b>	<b>Third Sunday of Advent</b>	
<b>Mass Time:</b>	<b>VIGIL 5:00PM</b>	<b>8.00AM</b>	<b>9.30AM</b>
<b>Acolyte:</b>	Ed Junis	Marek Grus	John Belfanti
<b>Commentator:</b>	Colleen Baker	Kim Crawford	Peta Sparkes
<b>First Reading:</b>	Anne Maureen Scarff	Tom Horsfall	Anne Edwards
<b>Second Reading:</b>	Lynette Boyd	Tanya Graham	Brian Edwards
<b>Music:</b>	No One		Chris Wilson



As we are currently in the 2023 – 2024 bushfire season, it is most important to keep you informed about the arrangements for **St Thomas Aquinas Parish** should we need to manage a bushfire emergency and how our parishioners receive this information. To ensure the health, safety and welfare of staff and parishioners on days when a Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating is issued in our area, the parish will temporarily close for the day(s) the rating is current. You will be notified by way of our Facebook and Website pages as soon as possible after the Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating notification is received. Please make sure that you have access to our Facebook and Website pages. A Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating is likely to occur on a very small number of days during the bushfire season, if at all. On the days when the Church is not open during a Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating, there will be no staff on site. The STA parish community will be advised of a return to normal services or alternative arrangements as soon as possible. Up to date bush fire information is available to you on the NSW RFS Fire Danger Rating website and the Hazards Near Me App. If a bushfire threat develops during a church service, the current bushfire plan is one of **Sit and Stay and Shelter (Bushfire Lockdown)** unless otherwise advised by authorities. **STA Facebook: St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Community Springwood; STA Website: www.stachurchspringwood.org.au**

**ST THOMAS AQUINAS CHRISTMAS GIVING TREE:** This year our parish is again supporting Wimlah Women’s Refuge Outreach and Women’s Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service, a specialist domestic violence service located within the Blue Mountains. We have been notified by Wimlah that they are currently housing:

20 women  
 3 years – 7 years : 9 boys and 11 girls  
 15 years – 17 years : 4 boys and 1 girl  
 6 months – 2 years : 5 boys and 7 girls  
 8 years – 14 years : 7 boys and 12 girls

That is 20 women and 55 children who are relying on this refuge at this given time. Please leave your gift under the Christmas Tree from Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> December which will be located at the back of the church next to our St Thomas Aquinas statue. The gifts will be hand delivered on Monday 18th December to the women and children who are relying on the refuge this year for a safe haven – a place to call home.



<b>STA CHRISTMAS MASS TIMES 2023</b>	
<b>Christmas Eve, Sun 24th December:</b>	8:00am Fourth Sunday of Advent Mass 9:30am Fourth Sunday of Advent Mass 5:00pm Children’s Mass 12:00am Midnight Mass
<b>Christmas Day, Mon 25th December:</b>	8:00am Christmas Morning Mass 9:30am Christmas Morning Mass
<b>Boxing Day, Tues 26th December:</b>	9:30am
<b>Wed - Fri, 27th - 29th December:</b>	9:30am
<b>Saturday 30th December:</b>	9:30am Saturday Morning Mass 5:00pm Saturday Vigil Mass
<b>Sunday 31st December:</b>	8:00am and 9:30am

*St Thomas Aquinas Parish*

168 Hawkesbury Road, Springwood, NSW, 2777  
 PO Box 4410, Winmalee, NSW 2777  
 Phone: 02 4754 1052; Emergency ONLY: 0474 631 168



**Parish Email:** email: [springwood@parracatholic.org](mailto:springwood@parracatholic.org)  
**Parish Website:** [www.stachurchspringwood.org.au](http://www.stachurchspringwood.org.au)  
**Parish Facebook Page:** St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Community Springwood  
**Parish Administrator:** Rev Christopher del Rosario (E: [christopher.del-rosario@parracatholic.org](mailto:christopher.del-rosario@parracatholic.org))  
**Parish Pastoral Council:** Email suggestions to [springwoodparishpc@gmail.com](mailto:springwoodparishpc@gmail.com)  
**Parish Office Hours:** Tuesday to Friday 8.30 am - 3.30 pm

**Weekend Masses:** Saturday Vigil Mass 5:00 pm, Sunday 8:00 am and 9:30 am  
**Weekday Mass:** Monday - Saturday 9:30 am  
**Reconciliation:** Saturday after 9:30 am Mass and 4-5 pm before the Vigil Mass  
**Rosary & Devotions:** Monday-Saturday, 9:00 am  
**Children’s Liturgy:** 3rd Sunday of every month, 9:30 am  
**Eucharistic Adoration:** 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of every month, 7:30 - 8:30 pm  
**Baptisms:** 2nd and 4th Sundays of every month - 11 am and by appointment  
**Weddings:** By appointment  
**Funerals:** Please Contact the Parish Office



Support us!  
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*We respect the Darug people and their elders both past and present, as the traditional custodians of this land on which we celebrate the Eucharist.*

**Robin to Batman: St. John the Baptist**



One of my favourite superheroes growing up was the legendary Batman. This character created by artist Bob Kane and writer Bill Finger in 1939 centred around Bruce Wayne, a wealthy American playboy, philanthropist and industrialist who resides in Gotham City. His origin story features him swearing vengeance against criminals after witnessing the murder of his parents Thomas and Martha as a child, a vendetta tempered with the ideal of justice. He trains himself physically and intellectually, crafts a bat inspired persona, and monitors the Gotham streets at night. Over the course of his career he is accompanied by a variety of supporting characters like Alfred Pennyworth, James Gordon, Bargirl and many more. One of the more iconic supporting characters is the boy-wonder Robin. Donning his trademark green, red and yellow outfit Robin fights crime alongside Batman, eventually transforming into another character known as Nightwing or Red Hood. As Robin grows so does his pride and ego; in some occasions he even finds himself face to face with death at the hands of the Joker. In those moments Robin is quick to recognise his limitations and undergoes a journey of healing and discovery, acknowledging his power but also his inferiority to Batman; a humbling moment for sure.

Now you’re probably wondering why this reflection begins with Batman and Robin, well our Gospel for this Sunday centres around the ‘biblical Robin’: John the Baptist. John is an interesting character as he seems to exhibit all the marks of the foretold Messiah. His birth is foretold in the Old Testament, the Archangel Gabriel announces his miraculous birth, he is of priestly lineage as evident through his father Zechariah administering in the Holy of Holies, and as evident in our Gospel ‘All Judaea and all the people of Jerusalem made their way to him, and as they were baptised by him in the river Jordan they confessed their sins.’ John isn’t just another prophet, it seems he is much more. Unlike Our Blessed Mother John wasn’t free from the effects of Original Sin; he was harassed and tempted by the Devil and his fallen angels just like us. With this in mind he would have been tempted to pursue the path of the Messiah as the people continued to flock to him. He could have proclaimed himself as the Messiah... but he didn’t. John was aware of his limitations and that he was simply the precursor; a voice crying in the wilderness to prepare the way for the true Messiah. His humility is exemplified when he says: ‘Someone is following me, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to kneel down and undo the strap of his sandals. I have baptised you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.’ John lowers himself in order to proclaim the coming Messiah - he decreases so that the Christ may increase.

Dear friends, as we continue our Advent preparation we encounter the beautiful example of John the Baptist: humility. This virtue is key in our pursuit for Christ as the path of the disciples isn’t about us proclaiming ourselves, rather, like John the Baptist, we are tasked to proclaim the Christ whose we have encountered. It is Christ who shines in our lives and transforms us and those around whom we experience. May we seek this virtue and so follow the example of the greatest of all men: John the Baptist.

With every blessing in the week ahead.

Fr. Chris



### Entrance Antiphon

O people of Sion, behold,  
the Lord will come to save the nations,  
and the Lord will make the glory of his voice heard  
in the joy of your heart.

### First Reading [Isaiah 40:1-5. 9-11](#)

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

*Prepare the way for the Lord.*

‘Console my people, console them’  
says your God.  
‘Speak to the heart of Jerusalem  
and call to her  
that her time of service is ended,  
that her sin is atoned for,  
that she has received from the hand of the Lord  
double punishment for all her crimes.’

A voice cries, ‘Prepare in the wilderness  
a way for the Lord.

Make a straight highway for our God  
across the desert.

Let every valley be filled in,  
every mountain and hill be laid low,  
let every cliff become a plain,  
and the ridges a valley;  
then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed  
and all mankind shall see it;  
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.’

Go up on a high mountain,  
joyful messenger to Zion.  
Shout with a loud voice,  
joyful messenger to Jerusalem.  
Shout without fear,  
say to the towns of Judah,  
‘Here is your God.’  
Here is the Lord coming with power,  
his arm subduing all things to him.  
The prize of his victory is with him,  
his trophies all go before him.  
He is like a shepherd feeding his flock,  
gathering lambs in his arms,  
holding them against his breast  
and leading to their rest the mother ewes.

### Responsorial Psalm [Ps 84:9-14. R. v.8](#)

(R.) Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your  
salvation.

1. I will hear what the Lord God has to say,  
a voice that speaks of peace,  
peace for his people.  
His help is near for those who fear him  
and his glory will dwell in our land. (R.)
2. Mercy and faithfulness have met;  
justice and peace have embraced.  
Faithfulness shall spring from the earth  
and justice look down from heaven. (R.)
3. The Lord will make us prosper  
and our earth shall yield its fruit.  
Justice shall march before him  
and peace shall follow his steps. (R.)

### Second Reading [2 Peter 3:8-14](#)

A reading from the second letter of St Peter

*We wait for new heavens and a new earth.*

There is one thing, my friends, that you must never  
forget: that with the Lord, ‘a day’ can mean a thousand  
years, and a thousand years is like a day. The Lord is  
not being slow to carry out his promises, as anybody  
else might be called slow; but he is being patient with  
you all, wanting nobody to be lost and everybody to be  
brought to change his ways. The Day of the Lord will  
come like a thief, and then with a roar the sky will vanish,  
the elements will catch fire and fall apart, the earth and  
all that it contains will be burnt up.

Since everything is coming to an end like this, you  
should be living holy and saintly lives while you wait and  
long for the Day of God to come, when the sky will  
dissolve in flames and the elements melt in the heat.  
What we are waiting for is what he promised: the new  
heavens and new earth, the place where righteousness  
will be at home. So then, my friends, while you are  
waiting, do your best to live lives without spot or stain so  
that he will find you at peace.

### Gospel Acclamation [Luke 3:4. 6](#)

Alleluia, alleluia!  
Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths:  
all people shall see the salvation of God.  
Alleluia!

### Gospel [Mark 1:1-8](#)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark

*Make straight the paths of the Lord.*

The beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ, the  
Son of God. It is written in the book of the  
prophet Isaiah:

Look, I am going to send my messenger before  
you;  
he will prepare your way.  
A voice cries in the wilderness:  
Prepare a way for the Lord,  
make his paths straight,

and so it was that John the Baptist appeared in the  
wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the  
forgiveness of sins. All Judaea and all the people  
of Jerusalem made their way to him, and as they were  
baptised by him in the river Jordan they confessed their  
sins. John wore a garment of camel-skin, and he lived  
on locusts and wild honey. In the course of his preaching  
he said, ‘Someone is following me, someone who is  
more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to kneel down  
and undo the strap of his sandals. I have baptised you  
with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.’

### Communion Antiphon [Baruch 5:5; 4:36](#)

Jerusalem, arise and stand upon the heights,  
and behold the joy which comes to you from God.



**Recently Deceased:** *Robyn Annette Tomczak*

**Sick:** Fr Bob Bossini, Deirdrie Madden, Dane San Pedro, Marama Watson, Margaret Munro, and all Private Intentions.  
*Due to the strict privacy laws, names of the deceased and sick can only be included in the Bulletin with the express permission of the immediate family. Thank you.*

## PARISH AND DIOCESAN NEWS

### HOW TO SUPPORT OUR PARISH FAMILY FINANCIALLY:

We are beyond grateful to those who continually drop envelopes each week and make use of our Tap & Go machines. You may also continue to offer support by making a direct deposit into our account, details follow:

**Bank Account Name:** Springwood

**BSB:** 067-950; **Bank Account Number:** 00000560

**Reference:** YOUR NAME IN FULL

Or you may opt to scan our new STA QR Code, which is now shown on the front page of our bulletin. You may also choose to avail of direct debit services. Just call our parish office to discuss. All contributions are greatly appreciated and will help meet the upkeep needs of our parish.



**CHILDREN'S LITURGY:** Next weekend at our 9:30 am Mass, we invite children aged between 4-12 to attend our Children's Liturgy. The children are called forward and sent

with a blessing over to our parish rooms for a Gospel lesson. The children will return to their families in church after the Creed, as the Offertory and Liturgy of the Eucharist begin.

**WANTED:** Do you have an outdoor cabana or shade cover that you no longer need? We would ideally like to have at least 2 or 3 which will be used every first and third weekend of the month for our parish morning teas. We are moving the morning tea area to over by the parish buildings and to make it more comfortable for everyone, especially on hot days, we would like to shade this area. Please contact the parish office if you have one you would like to donate to our parish. Thank you.



You are warmly invited to come and enjoy an hour of Christmas Carols presented by St Thomas Aquinas Parish Choir on Tuesday night 19th December, 2023 at St Thomas Aquinas Church, 168 Hawkesbury Road, Springwood NSW. Free entry. Please be seated by 7.30pm. All welcome!



### EPIPHANY PILGRIMAGE 2024 PRAYER REQUESTS:

In preparation for the pilgrimage, you are invited to write any prayer requests on the cards provided and place them in the Epiphany Pilgrimage prayer box at the back of the church to be prayed each day by the pilgrims. To participate in some or all of the pilgrimage including walks, Mass, Adoration / prayer sessions and meals. Visit: [www.epiphanypilgrimage.org](http://www.epiphanypilgrimage.org), or to assist with hospitality when the group visits our parish, please contact the parish office.

**ALTAR CRUCIFIX AND CANDLE HOLDERS:** All your donations have been such a blessing! And we would also be appreciative of those who will continue to meet our needs and provide financial resources to help cover our cost in the purchase of a new Altar Crucifix coming from Spain and which will also be used to pay off the remaining balance of the cost of the restoration of the candle holders now in full display in our church. If you feel you are called to help please do via cash or eftpos machine at the back of the church near the sacristy. Thank you.

**ONLINE BULLETIN:** There's no doubt that our bulletin is important and we are not going to stop printing it, but strongly recommend you reduce the effect these traditionally printed bulletins have on the environment by substituting with an electronic books version. You can access our parish bulletin directly from our Website or Facebook each Friday.

**WORKING BEE:** Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> December, 10.00am to 4.00pm! We would love as many parishioners as possible to help us clean up our church property. Bring along your gardening tools, hats, sunscreen, WATER and wheelbarrows! Many hands make light work! Come for an hour, two or whatever you can spare. We will spark up the BBQ at lunchtime to fuel our wonderful volunteers!



Just a gentle reminder that members of our St. Vincent de Paul conference will be available at all Masses on the weekend of 16<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> December to accept your donations of Christmas Hampers and cash towards fresh food and fruit and vegetable vouchers. Through the generosity of our parishioners to this appeal, at least 120 people will be able to make this Christmas a real celebration, because they will experience the true Christmas spirit through your care, concern and gifts. If anyone has a problem organising delivery on this weekend please contact Margaret 0247 531 031. May the Peace of the Christ Child fill your hearts at Christmas and throughout 2024!



**EPIPHANY PILGRIMAGE 2024 MEAL:** The parishes of the Blue Mountains Deanery will host the Epiphany Pilgrimage from 2-9 Jan 2024. You can be a part of the celebrations and help welcome the pilgrims to our beautiful mountains by assisting with the festive meal when they visit us at STA parish on 3rd -4th January. Please contact Colleen Kime on 02 4754 4335/M: 0407 125 427 or leave your details at the parish office.

