

Date:	16th/17th Dec 2023	Third Sunday of Advent	
Mass Time:	VIGIL 5:00PM	8.00AM	9.30AM
Acolyte:	Ed Junis	Marek Grus	John Belfanti
First Reading:	Anne Maureen Scarff	Tom Horsfall	Anne Edwards
Second Reading:	Lynette Boyd	Tanya Graham	Brian Edwards
Prayer of the Faithful:	Colleen Baker	Kim Crawford	Peta Sparkes
Music:	No One		Chris Wilson
Date:	23rd/24th Dec 2023	Fourth Sunday of Advent	
Mass Time:	VIGIL 5:00PM	8.00AM	9.30AM
Acolyte:	Ian Miles	Randall Noney	Richard Merchant
First Reading:	Felix Kobus	Cecilia Hunt	Steve Bishop
Second Reading:	Wilhelmina de Raadt	Jim Gresser	Ingrid Merchant
Prayer of the Faithful:	Margaret Smith	Vicky Walker	Matt Aldous
Music:	Chris Wilson		Streeters
Date:	24th Dec 2023	Sunday Christmas Eve	
Mass Time:	CHILDREN'S MASS 5:00PM	12:00AM	
Acolyte:	Ian Miles	Randall Noney	
First Reading:		Katherine Mahns	
Second Reading:		Debbie Breytenbach	
Prayer of the Faithful:		Katherine Mahns	
Music:	Andrew Wilson	Chris Wilson	
Date:	25th Dec 2023	Christmas Day	
Mass Time:		8.00AM	9.30AM
Acolyte:		Marek Grus	Bernard Ellis
First Reading:		Tanya Graham	Katherine Mahns
Second Reading:		Kim Crawford	Anne Ellis
Prayer of the Faithful:		Cecilia Hunt	Katherine Mahns
Music:		Margaret Gresser	Streeters



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

St Thomas Aquinas Parish

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Phone: 02 4754 1052; Emergency ONLY: 0474 631 168

Parish Email:	email: springwood@parracatholic.org
Parish Website:	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)
Parish Pastoral Council:	Email suggestions to 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
Children's Liturgy:	3rd Sunday of every month, 9:30 am
Baptisms:	2nd and 4th Sundays of every month - 11 am and by appointment
Weddings:	By appointment
Funerals:	Please Contact the Parish Office

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.



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Brothers and Sisters: Rejoice Always

Have you ever wondered why the Priest wears different colours during Mass? As a child I liked to guess which of the four colours my parish priest would sport for Mass... little did I know it was all prescribed by the Catholic Church; I just needed to look at Ordo to find the answer. Your everyday Catholic would know the four main liturgical colours: white, red, violet, and green. According to the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, the purpose of the variety of colour of the sacred vestments is to express outwardly the specific character of the mysteries of faith being celebrated and to give a sense of the passage of the Christian life throughout the course of the liturgical year. In this season of Advent the Church uses violet... but why? Violet is associated with sorrow and repentance of sins; walk through Penrith Westfield or experience end of year celebrations, there's nothing penitent about them. Additionally Advent is generally celebrated with joy as we wait expectantly for the Birth of Christ. Why then does the Church use violet in Advent? Traditionally Advent was treated similarly to Lent - the faithful were asked to increase their prayers and penance in preparation for Our Lord. This is also shown in the readings for the last two Sundays - we look forward to the Second Coming of Christ and use St. John the Baptist's example of humility as means of preparation. Whilst this season does evoke a sense of joy as we look forward to the birth of Christ it still maintains its penitential character.

This Sunday is traditionally called Gaudete Sunday. It's one of the two days in the Church's calendar where the colour rose is used (it's also one of the two days where the Priest looks like a giant easter egg in his rose vestments). Rose is a mixture of Violet and White: it represents the light in the midst of penitence - in short: the penitential season does not last forever. We are called to rejoice today as the Birth of our King is approaching. Our First Reading highlights this as Isaiah foretold that the coming Messiah would usher in a new era of peace: 'The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for the Lord has anointed me. He has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to bind up hearts that are broken; to proclaim liberty to captives, freedom to those in prison; to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord.' This prophecy ties the Jubilee Year with the Messiah; the chosen one would free all people from their debt of sin - we are no longer bound to sin and death. This reality gives rise to our sense of joy on this Gaudete Sunday.

Dear Friends, with the Birth of Christ only a few days away may we renew our gratitude to Almighty God this Advent. May we zealously continue our preparation with joy as we await the Nativity of Our Lord.

Fr. Chris





Entrance Antiphon

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice.
Indeed, the Lord is near.

First Reading [Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11](#)

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

I exult for joy in the Lord.

The spirit of the Lord has been given to me,
for the Lord has anointed me.
He has sent me to bring good news to the poor,
to bind up hearts that are broken;

to proclaim liberty to captives,
freedom to those in prison;
to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord.

‘I exult for joy in the Lord,
my soul rejoices in my God,
for he has clothed me in the garments of salvation,
he has wrapped me in the cloak of integrity,
like a bridegroom wearing his wreath,
like a bride adorned in her jewels.

‘For as the earth makes fresh things grow,
as a garden makes seeds spring up,
so will the Lord make both integrity and praise
spring up in the sight of nations.’

Responsorial Psalm [Lk 1:46-50, 53-54, R. Is 61:10](#)

(R.) My soul rejoices in my God.

1. My soul glorifies the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.
He looks on his servant in her nothingness;
henceforth all ages will call me blessed. *(R.)*
2. The Almighty works marvels for me.
Holy his name!
His mercy is from age to age,
on those who fear him. *(R.)*
3. He fills the starving with good things,
sends the rich away empty.
He protects Israel, his servant,
remembering his mercy. *(R.)*

Second Reading [1 Thessalonians 5:16-24](#)

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians

May you all be kept blameless, spirit, soul and body, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Be happy at all times; pray constantly; and for all things give thanks to God, because this is what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus.

Never try to suppress the Spirit or treat the gift of prophecy with contempt; think before you do anything – hold on to what is good and avoid every form of evil.

May the God of peace make you perfect and holy; and may you all be kept safe and blameless, spirit, soul and body, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. God has called you and he will not fail you.

Gospel Acclamation [Isaiah 61:1 \(Lk 4:18\)](#)

Alleluia, alleluia!
The Spirit of the Lord is upon me;
he sent me to bring Good News to the poor.
Alleluia!

Gospel [John 1:6-8, 19-28](#)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

There stands among you, unknown to you, the one who is coming after me.

A man came, sent by God.
His name was John.
He came as a witness,
as a witness to speak for the light,
so that everyone might believe through him.
He was not the light,
only a witness to speak for the light.

This is how John appeared as a witness. When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, ‘Who are you?’ he not only declared, but he declared quite openly, ‘I am not the Christ.’ ‘Well then,’ they asked, ‘are you Elijah?’ ‘I am not,’ he said. ‘Are you the Prophet?’ He answered, ‘No.’ So they said to him, ‘Who are you? We must take back an answer to those who sent us. What have you to say about yourself?’ So John said, ‘I am, as Isaiah prophesied:

a voice that cries in the wilderness:
Make a straight way for the Lord.’

Now these men had been sent by the Pharisees, and they put this further question to him, ‘Why are you baptising if you are not the Christ, and not Elijah, and not the prophet?’ John replied, ‘I baptise with water; but there stands among you – unknown to you – the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo his sandal-strap.’ This happened at Bethany, on the far side of the Jordan, where John was baptising.

Communion Antiphon [Cf Isaiah 35:4](#)

Say to the faint of heart: Be strong and do not fear.
Behold, our God will come, and he will save us.



Recently Deceased: Lillian Pockran

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

FINANCIALLY SUPPORTING OUR PARISH AND ITS WORKS: There are a variety of ways you can support our Parish and its Mission:

- **QR Code:** located on the Bulletin Front Page.
- **EFTPOS Machines:** located at the back of the Church.
- **Direct Debit:** Please contact the Parish Office for more details.
- **Direct Deposit:** Details are as follows:

Bank Account Name: Springwood

BSB: 067-950

Bank Account Number: 00000560

Reference: Your name in full.

All donations go to maintaining our Church and supporting the various ministries associated with our Parish.

PARISH CHRISTMAS CAROLS: 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, or to assist with hospitality when the group visits our parish, please contact the parish office. Commit the first fruits of your new year to Christ with the 2024 Epiphany Pilgrimage (2-9 January 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.



SYDNEY SUMMER SCHOOL OF EVANGELISATION: 7TH – 14TH JANUARY 2024:

Summer School is a week-long, live-in, life-changing retreat at the Mt Carmel Retreat Centre in Varroville NSW, featuring praise and worship, inspiring talks, engaging liturgy, and more. Open to young people aged 16-35. More info: contact@summerschool.org.au. Bookings: summerschool.org.au

PARISH OFFICE HOLIDAY CLOSURE: The Parish Office will be closed for holidays from the Tuesday 26 December 2023 - Monday 15 January 2024. It will reopen on the Tuesday 16 January 2024. Masses and Confessions will continue as normal during this period.

ADORATION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT:

Adoration will resume on Monday 5th February 2024. Our new schedule follows:

Monday - Saturday:
From 8:15 am - 9:15 am

First Friday Adoration starts from the 1st of March 2024 at 7:00 pm



CHILDREN'S LITURGY: This 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.



Just a gentle reminder that members of our St. Vincent de Paul conference will be available at all Masses on the weekend of 16th - 17th 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!



“To love is to will the good of the other.”

- St Thomas Aquinas