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2020 reflections...

Second Sunday of Advent, Cycle B

Sunday, December 6, 2020

Gospel Reading

Mark 1:1-8

John the Baptist preached repentance and baptized the people, in preparation for the one who would baptize with the Holy Spirit.

Background on the Gospel Reading

Today's Gospel is taken from the beginning of Mark. Unlike Luke and Matthew, Mark does not include any details of Jesus' birth. Instead Mark begins with the appearance of John the Baptist in the desert. On this the Second Sunday of Advent, we are invited to reflect upon the role of John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Jesus and the salvation that he would bring to us.

Mark's description of the appearance of John the Baptist highlights John's continuity with the Jewish prophetic tradition. Mark combines quotations from the Old Testament books of Malachi, Isaiah, and Exodus. Mark's description of John as an ascetic, living in the desert, clothed in camel hair, and eating locusts and wild honey, is reminiscent of the description of the prophet Elijah found in Second Kings. The people of Judea and Jerusalem flock to him, listening to his message of repentance and forgiveness; they also come to him to be baptized. Mark's Gospel is clear, however, that John the Baptist's role is only to prepare the way for another who will come, one who is greater than John.

Many scholars believe that the Gospels reflect the tension that likely existed between followers of John the Baptist and disciples of Jesus. Each of the four Evangelists report on John's preaching and baptizing, and they each emphasize the importance of Jesus' baptism by John. The four Gospels also explain that John was sent to preach in preparation for another. In the Gospel of Luke, the question is raised as to whether John the Baptist was himself the Messiah. Just as in today's Gospel, however, John speaks quite explicitly that the Messiah was to come after him.

In today's Gospel we hear John the Baptist contrast his baptism of repentance with the baptism that Jesus will inaugurate. John says that he has baptized with water, but that the one who is to come will baptize with the Holy Spirit. John's baptism was not yet a Christian baptism, but a preparation for the Sacrament of Baptism through which sins are forgiven and the gift of the Holy Spirit is received.

John the Baptist is presented to us as a model during Advent. We, too, are called upon to prepare a way for the Lord. Like John the Baptist, we are messengers in service to one who is greater than we are. Our Baptism commissions us to call others to life as disciples of Jesus.



The Vinnies van picked up our food today.
We pray this will help some families in need this Christmas.

Thank you St Mary's Community.

From Our Board Chair

Kia ora tatou

This year has been like no other – we have had so much to contend with, and people's patience and forbearance have been tested to the maximum.

The extent of our school community spirit, engendered by the creativity of James and Anna and their amazing colleagues, whilst not unexpected was heart-warming to see, with widespread use of technology and then unhesitating cooperation as we reintegrated after the Level 4 restrictions were gradually lifted.

Thank you all for your support of our staff who worked many hours to represent lessons for on-screen rather than in-person presentation. I know that each of you will have your own COVID experiences that in some cases confronted you with hardship, and in others raised your spirits higher than you would have thought possible.

The school remains ready to confidently assist with any ongoing issues that it can, and James and his team have open hearts to offer support.

We must acknowledge James' leadership despite getting a real 'hospital pass' in his first year. Not only was there COVID, but also the Catholic Character Review (ably supported by Teresa Rush), and senior staff moving on. In this respect we should pause to

thank Anna for staying in support and forming what was from my point of view the A Team of professional educational management.

Anna (as we knew she would one day) is now leaving to take her deserved place as head of a nearby school. God Bless and thank you Anna.

We also acknowledge Fr Philip Billing being with us as our parish priest and my appreciation of his pastoral heart – we have agreed to work in 2021 to take steps to bring the parish and school closer together.

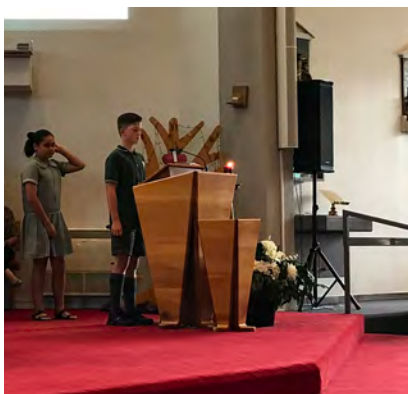
On the Board we have had to say a reluctant farewell to Katy Weallens after so many years of association with the school, and welcome Lorraine Schofield to the Board table in her stead.

What a blessing to have a Cluny community on our doorstep – more than once I know we have been held in prayer not only by these good women but by the whole world-wide community. How could we fail with that power behind us?

Finally, to our special cohort of Year 6 graduates off to various schools to form an essential part of new communities – God Bless you all, Arohanui, you will always have a place in our hearts.

Tony Lenton

Board Chair





Message from the Principal

Tēnā koutou kōtoa e te whānau,

Tihei mauri ora, nau mai, haere mai, tena koutou katoa, E nga whanau, e nga kaiako, e nga tamariki, e nga manuhiri, tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa would like to take this opportunity to thank each and everyone in our St Mary's community for their contribution and commitment to our St Mary's community.

To the St Mary's children of 2020, we are grateful to God for each one of you. Each one of you is unique and each one of you has a very special life journey to travel. Make the most of everything that life throws at you the good and the bad.

Do your best. Be kind to everybody no matter what. Be honest. Look after your community and the environment. Use and develop your gifts and serve without being asked or expecting a reward. In short Be SAINTS. Remain inspired by the teachings of Jesus and make a difference in your community.

Go well, go safe, Godspeed. Stay Safe and have an absolutely brilliant Christmas and New Year.

*Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou katoa
No reira, tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa*

As this year draws to an end I would like to remind you that your child's report went "Live" yesterday. You can view their progress towards their goals, the graph and their general comment. The teachers have also added a learning story in regards to the Arts as well. Please take the time to read over and understand them. A lot of time and energy has gone into making sure we can show you the progress and achievement your children are making.

The children visited their new classroom for 2021 yesterday. You will have received a letter confirming this. By now you may have noticed you can also view your child's class for 2021 on HERO.

The structure of some of our classrooms has changed slightly. We have tried to make sure children are placed in the best learning environment we can provide and we have taken into account, gender, year group and certain mixes of children. It is imperative that we remember a lot of effort is required and we need to give the children and classrooms time to settle.

The children had the visit to their new rooms to help with anxiety and we ask that the parent community support this by re-assuring their children that change can be embraced and accepted. We must give children and teachers time to settle in the beginning of 2021 so please do not ask for your child to be moved as we must give relationships time to nurture. Thank-you for your support with this.

I hope to announce our new Deputy Principal early next week. Mrs Vincent has won the position of Learning Support Coordinator and will be supporting our at-risk learners through some individualized programmes, this is great news for us as a school. Mrs Rush will be doing CRT throughout the school and working on our integration of RE throughout the school.

May God Bless you and keep you safe during the holiday season.

We look forward to seeing you all in 2021!

James Murray
Principal

2020 Special Character Reflection

"I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength"

(Philippians 4:13)

We began this year with great anticipation, who would have guessed what lay ahead for us all. Our Catholic faith guided us as the pandemic changed the landscapes of our lives. It was a year where we saw the Catholic Social Teachings being fully lived and enhanced by all.

Holy Week and Easter became an intimate family time, travelling together remotely and sharing our faith in different ways. Our homes became homes of greater faith as they grew and learnt together. Family prayer altars led by our children, share online was very moving and the faith the young ones showed was inspiring. The photos and videos shared by our families were very much appreciated and showed a deep connection to our Lord.

As we came back to school we continued to prioritise our faith journey together online with Liturgies and Masses shared in our homes and classrooms.

We would like to thank Fr Philip and Fr Arnold who served us with compassion, love and strength. As their 'usual world' too changed they were pillars of strength for us all. Ensuring we were cared for spiritually and helping us bring the church into our daily lives in a new way.

To our Cluny Sisters, we thank you for your ongoing support of the school. The prayers you say for us and your active role in supporting us and engaging in the educational aspirations of the school is appreciated.

Thank you, Mr Murray, for leading our school during this eventful year and ensuring the School's Catholic Character is maintained and strengthened in all aspects. Ensuring that all our students receive a quality holistic education whilst at St Mary's.

The staff of St Mary's; office administrators, cleaner, caretaker, all support staff, teachers aides and teachers what an amazing feat you have all achieved. Unity and collegiality that the school

staff has, enabled us this year to always be positive, support each other and excel in our roles within the school. Always keeping the Vision and Mission as a focus and going over and above for all our students.

We would like to make special recognition of Mrs Suzanne Tanner, whom we acknowledge for her 50 years of dedicated service to Catholic Education. Mrs Tanner, you are a true testament to being a servant of the Lord. The lives you have enhanced and the impact you have made on many students' faith journey is immeasurable. Thank you.

This year we were privileged to be able to have the Catholic Character Review. This gave us an opportunity to celebrate all the wonderful things we do to enhance the school's Catholic Character and to provide excellent education for all students. Our review was a great success and we can be genuinely proud of all we do here at St Mary's.

Thank you to our community, your support for the school and your commitment is what makes our school so great. This year our community has been involved both in-person and online being connected in faith. We have drawn strength from our community who have supported each other, been patient, understanding and shown great wisdom.

Finally thank you to our students who endured the many changes this year and became our leaders in our faith. The way that they handled the challenges of online learning was inspiring. They accepted the Lord wholeheartedly into their daily lives in new and exciting ways.

I wish you all a very Blessed Christmas season.
May you all find peace and joy.

Meri Kirihimete

God Bless

Teresa Rush



50 YEARS IN CATHOLIC EDUCATION

I would like to thank my colleagues and the community for the privilege of teaching in Catholic Schools for 50 years.

Thank you for recognising me in the profession I love.

I will keep coming to school because I love watching the children I teach grow.

Suzanne Tanner



From our Parish Priest

'No room in the inn' will be a familiar echo for many families this Christmas. Border restrictions and heightened vigilance over the coronavirus coming into the country, along with quarantine and isolation facilities at capacity, have made it difficult for returning Kiwis to come home and be with family for Christmas. Many will spend Christmas apart. Some may even feel like lepers and unwanted if they return infected with the virus.

On top of the many New Zealanders returning home from overseas after months, and, in some cases many years, due to the global pandemic, there are many others who are struggling to find a home to own or even rent. Being a first homebuyer is becoming increasingly out of reach for the average Kiwi. House prices keep going up but people's wages and salaries aren't. This, coupled with a national housing shortage, means that 'no room in the inn' is an everyday reality for many in our own country. Many in our country are homeless, others face the very real prospect of homelessness in the future.

Homelessness is a complex issue with many pathways that can contribute to a person or family experiencing homelessness. Homelessness never happens overnight and is the culmination of a number of stressful factors, such as illness, loss of employment, low income, financial debt, limited affordable rentals, mental health, drug and/or alcohol addictions, family harm, sexual harm and childhood neglect to name a few.

As Christians celebrating Christmas, homelessness and making a home for Emmanuel 'God-with-us' should be a flesh-and-blood everyday reality. Mary and Joseph, unwedded but with child, had door upon door closed on them, not welcomed by their kin, having to rough it and give birth in a makeshift shelter. Later, they would flee to Egypt as refugees, and then return to Nazareth seeking a home and income.

How can we forget the humble beginnings of Jesus? Born into the harsh realities of human existence, no room in the inn, born in a manger and deprived of comforts that normally surround a birth. Born away from the home of his parents, from the warmth and love of extended family. Born homeless.

In Luke's Gospel, God is portrayed as a God who comes to us in the overlooked and forgotten. He comes to us in our poverty. God is to be found in the midst of life, right before our eyes in people and ordinary situations: Like Mary and Joseph, every Christian is called to welcome into the home of their heart the gift of God in Jesus. Just as Mary allowed God's spirit of love to dwell within her and give birth to Jesus in the world, so too must we. In simple terms, we are to put skin on God and reach out to those in need so they can find a home in the God who loves them.

Be Good, Be Kind, Make a Difference - St Mother Theresa.

Blessings and peace.

Fr. Philip



CHRISTMAS MASS TIMES



Christmas Eve

5pm - St Mary Immaculate

7pm - St Mary Immaculate

10pm - St Mary Immaculate

Midnight Mass - St Joseph's, Te Puna (Te Reo)

Christmas Day

9am - St Mary Immaculate

9am - St Therese, Bethlehem

(The Christmas Mass for Matakana Island will be celebrated on Sunday 27th December, 11.30am)



Christmas Prayer for families



Loving God,

During this holy season of Christmas, we ask for blessings on all families.

Let Mary's openness to your wondrous way 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

Farewell from Anna MacKinnon

It has been a huge privilege and honour to have been a part of the St Mary's school and community for the last six years - I have loved working here. My departure is for my own personal growth and I am excited about the new opportunities and challenges that first time principalship will offer me.

I have many thank yous:

I would like to thank Sr Allison, Sr Gabrielle, Sr Emeli, Fr Philip and Fr Arnold. Thank you for supporting me in my Catholic faith and bringing your presence to our school.

Thank you to the leadership teams, both past and present, for your passion, energy and future-focused vision which has helped me to grow my own leadership capacity.

I would like to thank the staff. I have been very privileged to have had the opportunity to work with such an amazing team of leaders, teachers and support staff at St Mary's, and I have learnt a great deal through the combined expertise and support of you all. You are all incredibly dedicated and hardworking, which has seen teaching and learning continually raised to new levels at St Mary's.

I would like to thank the community. I still marvel at the amazing warmth and spirit that is evident from our parents, whānau and wider community. Your involvement in and support of St Mary's School is a very real strength. In so many ways throughout the year it is evident. Thank you to the Board of Trustees and our PTA for your dedication.

Finally, and most importantly, I would like to thank our akonga, our St Mary's learners. Each year I look back at what our learners have achieved and how far they have all come. All our learners can be proud of their own growth - spiritually, socially, emotionally and academically. You all have skills and talents and are a great success in your own individual ways. I am so proud of you.

I know that St Mary's is in an excellent position with James and the leadership team at the helm.

To everyone : you are all the reason that I come to school everyday and you all make that decision so easy for me. I will miss you all greatly.

Kia hora te marino,

kia whakapapa pounamu te moana,

Kia tere karohirohi i mua i tou huarahi.

May calm be spread around you,

May the sea glisten like greenstone

And the shimmer of summer

dance across your path.

Ngā manaakitanga

God bless you all.

Anna MacKinnon
Deputy Principal



We will miss you Anna!



Special Character Cup: Alana Kenny
Special Character Cup: Freddie Gleaves
Liturgical Service Cup: Maria Tustin
Liturgical Service Cup: Peter Chang
Kapa Haka Certificate: Freddie Gleaves
Kapa Haka Award: Loimata Paaka
Kapa Haka Award: Tiare Workman
Maori Achievement Award: Luka Brazendale
Maori Achievement Award: Areta Kahura
Pasifika Award: Kahlia Gardiner Hano

Sportsperson of the Year: Sidney Orchard
Music Cup: Peter Chang
Visual Arts Cup: Jahren Ralia
Performing Arts Cup: Sophie Van den Borst
Literature Cup: Ivy Barrett-Hodgson
Mathematics Cup: Leo Gray
Leadership Cup: Christian Poli Tipi
Principal's Cup: Hugo Palairet
Board of Trustee Cup: Cormac Gardiner



PTA Report 2020



I would like to personally thank our PTA members and friends of the PTA, without you we would not be able to do what we do. I would also like to extend a warm welcome our newest PTA members who joined us this year and have already made such a positive contribution, I look forward to working with you all in 2021.

Our continued success would not be possible without the support from the Board of Trustees, James Murray, and our teacher representative Jo Meehan, who is vital for communication with staff. I would also like to thank Theresa Dunston and Karen Mulhern, who are at the heart of our school and are always incredibly supportive and happy to help.

A huge thank you to our treasurer Rebecca Morrell and our secretary Kelly Jury who work so hard to help make our events successful but also to ensure that the PTA funds are best spent to benefit the school community.

Whilst 2020 has been a crazy year the PTA still managed to have achieved many successful events and projects. The year started with the fabulous PTA run Outdoor Adventure Day, which is always a wonderful, fun way to start the school year. Thank you to the fabulous Mel Gash who has organised this event for many years and 2020 saw her oversee her last Outdoor Adventure Day as she leaves St Mary's. We will truly miss Mel, and the incredible contribution she has made to the school community over the past 12 years.

We brought back the Hotdog Day this year after taking 2019 off to reset. A big thank you to Jo-Anne Ryder for making this possible. We had another successful math-a-thon, raising nearly \$9,000 for our school community.

Over the year we spent the funds from last year's math-a-thon on much needed classroom resources as well a significant contribution towards the new sandpit that is currently being built. Thank you to Joanne Meehan for the fabulous job you do in organising the Math-a-thon each year.

Over the course of the year the PTA funds have contributed towards much needed new life jackets, bought three brand new kayaks, two custom made St Mary's marquees complete with sides, the new Aroha house shield, the new PA sound system, extending the cricket turf, and contributing towards EPro8 equipment. We have also approved a number of shade sails for the school that should be installed over the summer break.

We introduced some changes to how we fundraise with the introduction of online payments via Kindo. Like any new initiative we had some teething problems but on the whole this has proven to be a very successful. We hope to build on this in the New Year and explore the new opportunities this medium opens up.

Still to come in 2020 is the Christmas Disco and a big thank you to Megan Yardley for taking over managing this event from Mel Gash, I know the children are looking forward to another great night. On the 19th December we are hosting the community Family Christmas Fireworks sponsored by Taylor Bros Transport, Kennards Hire, Aegis Security and Triac AV Light & Sound. It is going to be a great night so bring a picnic or dine from one of the many food trucks, browse the community stalls and enjoy some fun entertainment.

On behalf of the PTA I would like to wish you all a safe and happy holiday season. See you in 2021 for another fun and successful fundraising year.

E te Atua e manaaki ki a koutou katoa

Tracey Phizacklea

Chairperson



Dates to Remember

Monday 14 December

Term 4 ends 12 noon

Saturday 19 December

St Mary's Taylor Bros Fireworks 6pm

Thursday 4 February

Rá Whánau Mai

Friday 5 February

Term 1 starts

Monday 8 February

Waitangi Day (school is closed)

Wednesday 17 February

Ash Wednesday

Thursday 18 February

- **Aroha Swimming Sports**
- **Commissioning Mass**

Thursday 11 & Friday 12 March

Year 4 Camp

2021 Term Dates

Term 1

Thursday 4 February - Friday 16 April

Term 2

Monday 3 May - Friday 9 July

Term 3

Monday 26 July - Friday 1 October

Term 4

Monday 18 October - Friday 17 December

School Magazine

Magazines will be available from December 19th and can be purchased directly from a stall at the fireworks.

Congratulations to Jahren Ralia for her magazine design. It will feature on the cover of the 2020 school magazine.

**St.marys
Magazine**



Rá Whánau Mai 2021

On Thursday 4th February, St Mary's will open for Rá Whánau Mai (Family Welcome Day). This is a family open day and is a great opportunity for you, as parents and whánau, to share your expectations, your child's interests, strengths, and learning needs and the knowledge you value, directly with your child's teacher. There will be a coffee cart and lunchtime sausage sizzle.

Each time slot (one per child) will be 10 minutes long and can be booked by going to: www.schoolinterviews.co.nz and using the following code: **7zgep**.

Please complete the following questionnaire in google forms with your child before the meeting on Thursday 4th February - <https://cutt.ly/ghWyREw>

School is closed for instruction on the day but you are welcome to stay and enjoy a coffee or sausage sizzle with your child before taking your child home again.

After School Care

After school care will look a little differently moving into 2021 as we endeavour to meet the needs of our community. When school finishes we will be operating a holiday programme from 12pm to 5.30pm on Monday 14th December through to Wednesday 23rd December. If you have any queries please contact Shelley: afterschoolcare@stmarystga.school.nz

Holiday Programme 2021

The holiday programme for January will run from Monday 18th January through to Friday 29th January. If you have any queries please contact Shelley: afterschoolcare@stmarystga.school.nz

After School Care 2021

After school care will commence on Tuesday 9th February 2021. There will be no after school care on Friday 5th February 2021.

Before School Care 2021

We will also be running a before school care programme which will start on Tuesday the 9th February. The times will be 7.15am- 8.30am. All enquiries to Shelley: afterschoolcare@stmarystga.school.nz

2021 Teaching Staff

Tika: New Entrant and Year 1

Erin Oates
Louisa Strange
Adele Mayall
Janine Goldsmith

Maramatanga: Year 2

Lisa Broadmore
Angela Cochrane
Randy Piceno & Amber Armstrong

Whakapono: Year 3 and Year 4

Trina Fraser Year 3
Joanne Meehan Year 3
Catherine Wood Year 3
Suzanne Tanner Year 4
Lisa Walters Year 4
Tania Yorke Year 4

Aroha: Year 5/Year 6

Megan Akkerman
Gerardine Robbie
Josh McCabe
Annette Laban
Megan Kelliher & Kylie McIntosh

Stationery lists will be posted on HERO, our FB page and put on our school website next week.



St Mary's
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Tauranga

CELEBRATION OF HOPE & COMMUNITY **CHRISTMAS FIREWORKS** AT ST MARY'S SCHOOL

Sat 19 Dec 2020

Gates open at 6.00pm

FOOD STALLS | ENTERTAINMENT

Spectacular fireworks extravaganza

kicking off between 8.45pm and 9.00pm
(weather dependant)

St Mary's Catholic School



Tickets - www.eventbrite.co.nz

Adult = \$10 | Child = FREE (aged 14 and under)

Event limited to 4000 tickets

Cash-out facility available

No unaccompanied children 18 years & under. We have right of refusal.

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