

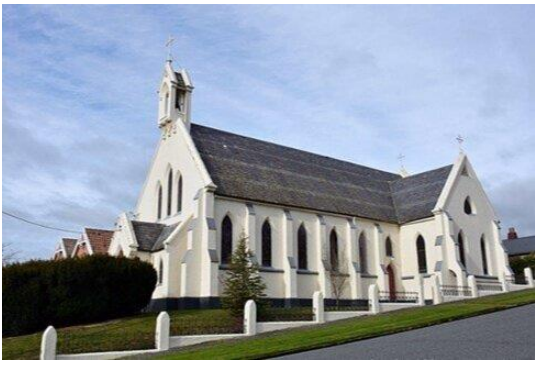
Christmas Graces – a reflection from His Holiness Pope Francis
elected to the See of Saint Peter in 2013

A great light shines forth (Is 9:1); the light of Jesus' birth shines all about us... Our heart was already joyful in awaiting this moment, now that joy abounds and overflows, for the promise has been at last fulfilled. Joy and gladness are a sure sign that the message contained in the mystery of this night is truly from God. There is no room for doubt; let us leave that to the sceptics who, by looking to reason alone, never find the truth. There is no room for the indifference which reigns in the hearts of those unable to love for fear of losing something. All sadness has been banished, for the Child Jesus brings true comfort to every heart.

Today, the Son of God is born, and everything changes. The Saviour of the world comes to partake of our human nature; no longer are we alone and forsaken. The Virgin offers us her Son as the beginning of a new life. The true light has come to illumine our lives so often beset by the darkness of sin. Today we once more discover who we are! Tonight, we have been shown the way to reach the journey's end. Now must we put away all fear and dread, for the light shows us the path to Bethlehem. We must not be laggards; we are not permitted to stand idle. We must set out to see our Saviour lying in a manger. This is the reason for our joy and gladness: this Child has been *born to us*; he was *given to us*, as Isaiah proclaims (9:5).

If we take him in our arms and let ourselves be embraced by him, he will bring us unending peace of heart... From now on, the way of authentic liberation and perennial redemption is open to every man and woman who is simple of heart... In a society so often intoxicated by consumerism and hedonism, wealth and extravagance, appearances and narcissism, this Child calls us to act soberly, in other words, in a way that is simple, balanced, consistent, capable of seeing and doing what is essential. In a world which all too often is merciless to the sinner and lenient to the sin, we need to cultivate a strong sense of justice, to discern and to do God's will. Amid a culture of indifference which not infrequently turns ruthless, our style of life should instead be devout, filled with empathy, compassion, and mercy, drawn daily from the wellspring of prayer. Like the shepherds of Bethlehem, may we too, with eyes full of amazement and wonder, gaze upon the Child Jesus, the Son of God. And in his presence may our hearts burst forth in prayer. *Let us see, O Lord, your mercy and give us your saving help (Ps 84:8)*





Message from Lawrence Parish

Like most places, this has been a difficult and challenging time for us here in Lawrence.

Restrictions meant we were unable to take communion to our people in the Rest Home, nor lead Services there each month, for the first part of the year.

We said farewell to Father Chris, and wished him well in his retirement, and welcomed Father Jacob.

Another change for us was selling the Church and Presbytery, and permanently moving to the Parish Centre.

This is proving to be a very warm, welcoming place for our

small community to worship together.

It is great however, that for the last few months, we have been able to return to visiting and ministering to the people at the Rest Home.

We finished the year with a lovely service last Thursday where we prayed together and sang Christmas Carols, which was greatly appreciated and enjoyed by all the residents.

Wishing you all the peace and joy of this Christmas season

Stephanie Swann

Pastoral Assistant

Lawrence

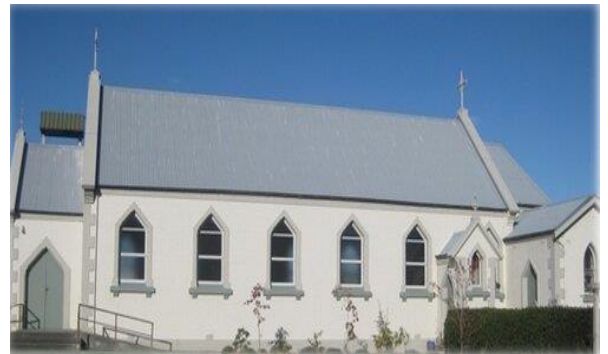
Message from Milton Parish

"As a child growing up in a large family (2nd youngest of 9), my memory of Christmas Eve in the 60's has stayed with me over all the years. It was a time of excitement to be going out to Mass at midnight! I was never allowed to stay up until then but was put to bed at a reasonable hour and then woken to be taken to Mass. We walked the couple of blocks from our home to the church, it was very dark!! The church was full of bright lights and candles with altar boys, and parishioners taking up every pew, with some people standing as well. I remember the atmosphere being festive and the singing of Carols just beautiful. A very reverent time and a lovely start to our family Christmas day."

Hope you all have a Peaceful Merry Christmas

Joan McLeod

You may be wondering what has happened to Tommy Lynch, his brother Philip has advised us that after discharge from hospital he has been admitted into hospital care level at Summerset at Bishops court facility at 36 Shetland Street, Wakari, Dunedin. It is likely, unless a miracle happens, that this will be his permanent home. He has been having general mobility problems and his short-term memory is fading and he's suffering from partial memory loss."



Message from Balclutha Parish

Thank you to all parishioners who have helped and supported in so many ways during the year.

May Peace – the Spirit of Christmas,

Joy – the hope of Christmas,

And Love – the heart of Christmas

Be with you all, through the wonder and presence of the Christ Child our Saviour and Lord.

Pauline Dodds

Chairperson Parish Pastoral Council



The Christmas story is one of simplicity. Our Lord and Saviour was born in a manger with only his mother and father. His guests were shepherds, a few animals and the three Magi. It is a heartwarming reminder of the true reason for the season. The last few years have been difficult for all of us, and the next few years are going to be challenging times, but we cling to Hope. That midst all of the confusion and fears of recession, God is with us, has always been and will always be with us. Jesus is the light of the world. May the baby Jesus continue to have room in our hearts, our lives, reflect God's presence and our homes radiate God's peace. With an abundance of hope, faith, hope and love, we will get through the crisis together. Be encouraged. God is still on the throne and he will work this out for the good of the church, if the church is willing to do their part in building the kingdom.

Helen Keller once wrote: "Christmas is the harvest time of love. Souls are drawn to other souls. All that we have read and thought and hoped comes to fruition at this happy time. Our spirits are astir. We feel within us a strong desire to serve. A strange, subtle force, a new kindness animates man and child. A new spirit is growing in us. We dare to give friendship, service, the equal loaf of bread and love." — **May His peace, His power and His purpose dwell in our hearts and homes.**

"Your children need your presence more than your presents."

I take this opportunity to thank you all for your support and generosity

Gospel Infancy Narratives: In Scripture, the birth of Jesus is secondary in importance to his death and Resurrection. The meaning of his birth is understood properly only in the light of his coming life, death, and resurrection. Luke begins with two Annunciation stories. First, the angel Gabriel appeared to Zechariah, an old man whose wife was beyond the age of childbearing, to tell him that Elizabeth would conceive a son. The Old Testament often used the literary technique of saying that someone was conceived of a mother beyond childbearing years to highlight that this person was called by God to a special mission. But if being born of a woman beyond child-bearing years was remarkable, how much more extraordinary, and how much greater the person must be destined to be, who is born of a mother without the intervention of a human father! The story of the two annunciations is a way of highlighting the dignity and importance of Jesus. St. Luke tells us (2:7) that Mary "gave birth to her firstborn and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger because there was no place for them in the inn." The thrice-repeated word manger is the most important word in this account. The child will be found in the manger because it is in the person lying there that people will find the sustenance of God. The finding of the child in the manger is a sign that God wants to be found by his people again and to be recognized once more as the people's sustenance. The Child was wrapped in swaddling clothes that suggest a royal child, a son of King David. Very often the shepherds are presented as devout people who spent their time praying for the coming of the Messiah while tending their flocks. Actually, in the literature of the time, they were looked down on by society and often mentioned with tax-collectors and whores! So, God's choice of these lowly, despised shepherds for the first the visitors to the manger tells us that the Saviour of sinners and outcasts has been born. He is a Saviour who makes the last become first and for Whom there are no outcasts. The angels' song, "Glory to God in the highest and peace to all people with whom He is well pleased," ["of good will"] is a way of saying that God was present at the birth of Christ who would bring salvation to all people.

Season's Greetings from all of us at Te Whatu Ora Southern Public Health.

As you may have heard, Covid-19 cases are currently on the rise in our region. We want to help everyone stay safe & healthy and have a "Covid-free Christmas"! A few reminders:

- Check your vaccinations, including boosters, before going on holiday. Boosters are available for everyone aged over 50, and Maori & Pacific Peoples over 40 years.
- Get RATs - have enough RATs to test yourself and your whānau. If you are unwell, stay home.
- Have a Covid plan in place including a supply of face masks, hand sanitiser & RATs.
- Consider hosting gatherings outside in the sunshine & the fresh air.
- For indoor spaces with crowds, keep the windows and doors open, and a mask is still a great idea.

For more advice and information on having a "Safe-as Summer" check out the United Against Covid-19 Website here: <https://covid19.govt.nz/prepare-and-stay-safe/have-a-safe-as->

Charismatic Renewal is now known as **Charis** and the **Current of Grace** is the name now given to Diocesan Service groups.

Dunedin Diocesan Service Group are having a day of Praise and Worship with opportunity for Personal Prayer Ministry: Mercy Parish, St Patrick's Basilica, Macandrew Road, South Dunedin on the **11th of February 2023 10.00am – 3.30pm**

Speakers – Helen Smithson (National President of Charis NZ), & Fr Vaughan Hook will give a Testimony. Please bring lunch to share. A wonderful opportunity to be refreshed and restored in the Holy Spirit. For more information contact Mary Snelling 0274 256 804 masnelling@etra.co.nz or Kathy Mayo 021 1325 400

CHARISMATIC CONFERENCE – MARCH 2023

'RECEIVE HOLY SPIRIT POWER'

Friday, 24 March, 7 p.m. to Sunday, 26 March, 2 p.m.

This Conference will take place at El Rancho, 58 Weggery Drive, Waikanae Beach, Kapiti Coast.

SPEAKERS: Opening Message: Cardinal John Dew

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS: Dr Mary Healy (USA); Robert Falzon (MenALIVE); Fr John Rea SM

Final Mass Celebrant: Archbishop Paul Martin, SM

REGISTRATION FEE: \$135.00 which includes meals.

REGISTRATIONS ARE OPEN but close 8 March.

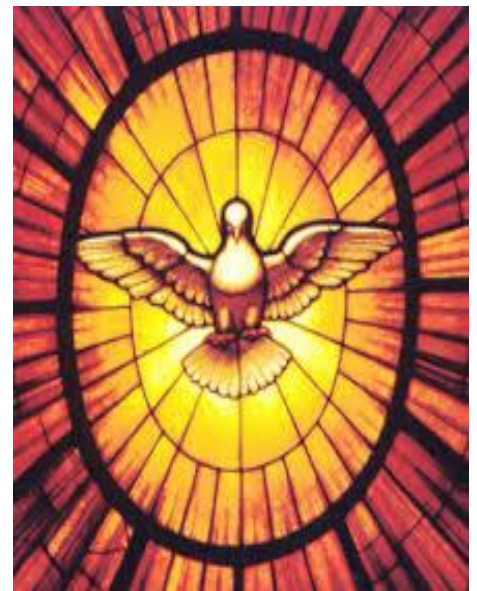
Onsite Accommodation is available at different rates.

REGISTRATION: www.currentofgraceconference.info

Website for further information: charisnz.com or

Facebook: m.facebook.com/charis/nz/

Enquiries to Kathy.mayo@xtra.co.nz



St Mary MacKillop Parish, Prayer Ministry – The Parish would like to begin a Ministry for those who have special prayer requests. The vision is for people to bring their request after Mass for one-on-one prayer with someone who wishes to pray with them. This could be after Mass on a Sunday or during the week. If you think you would like to take part as a prayer leader, have maybe been involved in this area before and would be happy to be part of a team, please speak to Fr Jacob or send your details to cluthacatholic@gmail.com, we can see if a Team can be organised and how the Holy Spirit guides us in this initiative to pray for one another in a deeply personal way.

SUNDAY READINGS FOR THE COMING MONTH OF JANUARY – Year A

1st January – Solemnity of Mary – Numbers 6:22-27, Galatians 4:4-7, Luke 2:16-21

8th January – The Epiphany of the Lord – Isaiah 60:1-6, Ephesians 3:2-3.5-6, Matthew 2:1-12

15th January – 2nd Sunday Ordinary Time – Isaiah 49:3.5-6, 1 Corinthians 1:1-3, John 1:29-34

22nd January – 3rd Sunday Ordinary Time – Isaiah 8:23-9:3, 1 Corinthians 1:10-13.17, Matthew 4:12-23

29th January – 4th Sunday Ordinary Time – Zephaniah 2:3;3:12-13, 1 Corinthians 1:26-31, Matthew 5:1-12

5th February – 5th Sunday Ordinary Time - Isaiah 58:7-10, 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, Matthew 5:13-16

We pray for: those recently deceased, and those whose anniversaries are at this time:

Caren Phillips, Thomas Bunbury, Marion O’Connell, Gertrude Carson, Peter Willcocks, Barbara Hugtenburg, Jean Hughes, Maureen Bowden, Andrea Donovan, Judith Michie, Ann Walker, Bill Sinclair, Lorna McLachlan.

Sinulog – Santo Nino Festival

The Feast Day of the Holy Child of Jesus is on the 15th of January and is recognized as a pageant of faith and celebration in honour of the beginnings of Christianity in the Philippines. On **Friday 13th January 2023** this special Feast will be celebrated with Mass at 7.00pm in St Mary MacKillop Church. After Mass we will join together for a shared supper. All are welcome to this Mass, Supper and Thanksgiving on this special occasion.

Enrich your Marriage with The Marriage Kit by SmartLoving - An enrichment course for married couples wanting a lasting, passionate relationship as God intended. Accessed from the privacy of your home on your own timetable, this online course will energise your relationship, revitalise your passion and equip you with practical tools for every day. To find out more visit: smartloving.org/marriage-kit

Advent Sale ends 31 December for 50% off use coupon code: Advent

SmartLoving also offers kits for couples preparing for marriage. If you are unfamiliar with this Australian, world-wide renowned, Catholic marriage ministry review on line at www.smartloving.org/review

Christmas Story

The golden rice grains: There is a beautiful poem by the mystic poet of India, Rabindra Nath Tagore, extolling the reward of generous giving. It tells the story of a king who regularly visited his people, passing through the streets in a chariot. One morning as the king was passing by, a beggar woman who planned to ask him for alms, stood on the roadside with her begging bowl. As the king approached her, however, he descended from his chariot and stretched out his hand as though he was expecting a gift from the woman. Excited and surprised, the woman put her hand in the cotton bag on her shoulder, took out a pinch of rice, and with trembling hands gave it to the king. The king was well pleased; he smiled at her put her offering in his pocket and gave her back a pinch of grains from his other pocket. When the woman returned to her small hut that evening and examined the grains, she had gotten that day, she was surprised to find a few grains of gold in the rice. You can imagine both her surprise and despair when she realized she should have given all her rice grains to the king. — We are here to offer our gifts to Child Jesus in the manger as His birthday gift. Let us remember that Jesus does not want our material gifts as much as He wants ourselves, with all our weakness and temptations, our merits and demerits. Let our Christmas gift to him be a heart full of love and a strong and sincere resolution to share it generously with others.