

# GOD IS WITH US

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Reflection and Prayer for Advent 2022 with Sunday readings and the Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council Preparation and Consultation Plan 2022-2023.

# SIGN OF THE CROSS.

Come, Lord Jesus! Rev. 22:20

## FROM THE READINGS

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**First Reading:** The Lord spoke to Ahaz and said, 'Ask the Lord your God for a sign for yourself coming either from the depths of Sheol or from the heights above. 'No,' Ahaz answered 'I will not put the Lord to the test. Then Isaiah said: 'Listen now, House of David: Are you not satisfied with trying the patience of people without trying the patience of my God, too? The Lord himself, therefore, will give you a sign. It is this: the maiden is with child and will soon give birth to a son whom she will call Emmanuel, a name which means "God-is-with-us."'

*Isaiah 7:10-14*

### **Gospel:**

This is how Jesus Christ came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a man of honour and wanting to spare her publicity, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins.' Now all this took place to fulfil the words spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel, a name which means 'God-is-with-us.'

When Joseph woke up he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do: he took his wife to his home."

*Matthew 1:18-24*

## **Prayer and Reflection I**

- **Read** the scripture passages aloud or silently.
- **Reflect and pray**, stopping to ponder any 'stand out' words or phrases. 10 mins
- **Respond** 10-15 mins

Individuals: Write or sit quietly with your reflections.

Groups: Share your responses and listen to others (2-3 mins each).

- o What stands out for you?
- o What do you want to take with you?

## FROM THE SANDHURST MISSION AND PASTORAL COUNCIL PREPARATION AND CONSULTATION PLAN 2022 - 2023

- **Why A Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council?** Establishing a Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council (SMPC) is a significant commitment by our Diocese to create a structure that supports synodal governance, leadership and decision making. The SMPC will operate as an instrument of relationship and collaboration, bringing together lay people and clergy with the Bishop for delivery of the Church's mission in a strategic way. As all the baptised share responsibility for this mission, the SMPC will support and encourage co-responsibility at a diocesan level. Starting from a commitment to discernment and listening to the signs of the times, it will provide advice to the Bishop, review our current situation, develop strategic pastoral plans and cast a vision for the future. SMPC page 14.
- **What is a Mission and Pastoral Council:** Usually referred to as a Diocesan Pastoral Council (DPC), it is one of the participatory processes for clergy, religious and laity that a Bishop can employ in his Diocese (see Vatican II Council's Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, 26). A DPC is advisory to the Bishop. Pope Francis says that the aim of a DPC "should not be ecclesiastical organisation but rather the missionary aspiration of reaching everyone" (The Joy of the Gospel, 31). The SMPC will be a leadership body whose purpose is to discern and propose practical solutions to the Bishop in order to support the mission and pastoral life of the Diocese.

The Go Forth report states that the SMPC responsibilities may include:

- discernment of the vision and mission of the Diocese;
- discernment on matters concerning the mission and pastoral life of the Diocese particularly with concern to parishes;
- discerning, developing and making recommendations to the Bishop on a mission and pastoral plan for the Diocese in relationship and collaboration with the other consultative bodies and parishes of the Diocese;
- collaboration with other bodies in the implementation of the pastoral plan; and
- collaboration with other bodies in an annual review of the mission and pastoral plan and recommend any necessary revisions to the Bishop.

## Prayer and Reflection II

- **Read** the paragraphs from the SMPC Preparation and Consultation Plan, aloud or silently.
- **Reflect and pray**, considering
  - o What stands out for you?
  - o Any Advent scripture insights that shine additional light on these words.
  - o Ways in which your insights may relate to
    - a) your parish
    - b) our Diocese?
- **Express a hope for the future.**

# PRAYER

FOR THE SANDHURST MISSION AND PASTORAL COUNCIL

**In this time of Advent, we turn to Mary,**  
our Mother of Good Counsel  
and patroness of our Diocese,  
as we seek to become a more missionary and pastoral Church:  
people of faith, hope and love for our world.

**May we be led**  
by the same wisdom and courage sent by the Holy Spirit  
to guide her along unfamiliar paths  
and through challenging decisions.  
We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Our Lady of Good Counsel, pray for us. Amen.**

*Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council (SMPC) Preparation and Consultation Plan, page 6.*



Prepared for Advent Year A 2022. Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst, PO Box 201 Bendigo, Vic, 3552 Email: [adultfaith@sandhurst.catholic.org.au](mailto:adultfaith@sandhurst.catholic.org.au) **Acknowledgements:** Go to: [www.sandhurst.catholic.org.au/](http://www.sandhurst.catholic.org.au/) Click on banner 'A Year of Preparation and Consultation for a Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council', scroll down for prayer card and 'Preparation and Consultation Plan'. For SMPC updates and more diocesan news register to receive the Sandhurst eNews: [www.sandhurst.catholic.org.au](http://www.sandhurst.catholic.org.au) OR access digital code.

