

The Monica December 2018



St. Monica's Parish Moonee Ponds

Presbytery: 22 Robinson Street, Moonee Ponds, 3039

Telephone: 03 9370 5035

The Monica Email: themonicanewsletter@gmail.com



From the Editorial Team

Having attended the First Eucharist, Bereavement Mass and Golden Oldies celebrations of late, we are most certainly feeling spirit-filled!

It's easy to feel a little jaded due to the increasing commercialisation of Christmas and the soullessness that accompanies the hoards to shopping centres where 'festive rage' overshadows any sense of joy that the season should bring. It is therefore heartening to see that joy does indeed exist right here in the St Monica's Parish and practically leaps from the pages of our magazine in this edition.

We know you'll enjoy, as we did, reading about the Austrian Christmas traditions of our new contributor, Melanie Watt. We have some delightful photos and reflections from the Year 3 students who celebrated their first Holy Communion, Lisa Mammola captures the festive cheer of the annual Christmas Anointing & Golden Oldies Christmas lunch at the Symons Centre and we hear from Eleanor Colonico about the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

There is a heart warming story about a family in our Parish Community, along with Christmas wisdom from Fr. Tony and Fr. Daryl. This, and much more in our final 'Monica' for 2018.

A special thank you to all the wonderful people who regularly contribute articles and photographs to The Monica. Since our first edition, we've had a number of articles and photos from Cathy McNeil and Margaret & Russell Mogg. We warmly welcome new contributors, Melanie Watt, and Yvonne and Eakcawin Manopsakulpon. Thanks also, to the lovely, Sonya Bading and Abygaile Cukavac, in the Parish Office, who provide ongoing support to us. It's a fabulous team of volunteers and the magazine only exists because of all their combined efforts.

Have a wonderful, spirit-filled Christmas and see you again in 2019!

Jo Barrett and Paula Theocharides,
The Monica Co-editors

A Pastoral Letter

Greetings my fellow Parishioners!

After three weeks' holiday and a week's retreat, I am racing to meet a deadline for this issue of the Monica.

What shall I write about? Given this is our Christmas edition, perhaps a few words of wisdom from Pope Francis about the way we should aspire to live our life might be inspiring? They were for me!



Remember the past with Gratitude – something we do every year; especially at this time of Christmas, as we remember and give thanks for the great gift of God's love given to us in the birth of Jesus, his only begotten Son.

Live the present with Enthusiasm – we all ought to do this because we do not live it alone. He who loves us and died for us is calling us to love one another as he loves us; He is there for us and, he reminds us, we are here for one another!

Face the future with Confidence – because the One who loves us has gone before us, to prepare a place for us. He is ahead of us, waiting for us; waiting to welcome us home where in His life and love we will live forever.

This Christmas, may the blessing of God be upon you and all whom you love. May we all have the grace to remember the past with gratitude, to live the present with enthusiasm and face the future with confidence!

A Happy and a Blessed Christmas to all!

Fr. Tony Feeney



Parish Holy Land Pilgrimage in 2019

The Parish Holy Land Pilgrimage will be leaving Melbourne on Monday 6th of May 2019 and will return on Thursday 23rd of May 2019. Watch this space for more details!

The Season of Advent: The Season of Waiting Written by: Fr. Daryl Montecillo

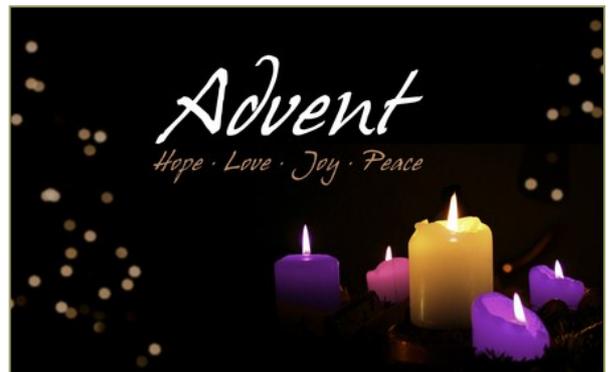


It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas. The hustle and bustle of daily life seems to pick up pace; carols blare from shop speakers, advertising and sales go into overdrive, we begin to navigate various functions and break up parties... you know the drill. It can be, and usually is, a hectic time. Perhaps that's why the Church begins her new year, not with the joys (and happy exhaustion) of Christmas, but with the holy season of Advent.

Advent is the Church season of waiting. It's a pregnant pause (pun intended!), to remind us of what the festive season is ultimately about. The word originates from Latin and means 'coming': The Lord is coming. To help us to enter into this joyful mystery of our Faith, the liturgy itself changes pace. Instead of vibrant green, the vestments change to violet or purple, and each Sunday we stop singing the *Gloria*, our hymn of praise, holding off until we join with the angels and sing it again at Christmas.

Perhaps the most striking and obvious of our Advent practices is the Advent wreath. The four candles (three purple and one rose to match the vestments), are sat amidst a ring of greenery symbolising the unending life-giving love of God. They are gradually lit, one each week as a sign of our growing excitement and hope at the coming of the Christ child, the true light of the world.

While we can see it each week at Mass, it isn't too difficult to DIY and might be something that you could take up in your own homes. Perhaps you could light the candles each night for dinner? For the first two weeks the candles are purple, symbolizing hope and love. In the third week a rose candle is lit representing joy and the final purple candle represents peace. There are many prayers that you could pray together as you light them or even take turns in finding and leading family prayer might be helpful too.



Whatever it is we do over this coming hectic month, just as we prepare our homes for the various celebrations and visitors, it's important that we also prepare our hearts for the most important guest: The Lord Jesus. With all the gifts that we give and receive, let's remember that - whether we realise it or not - the gift He offers is the one that our hearts most deeply desire: Peace and Love. Come Lord Jesus!



St. Monica's Parish Primary School: **First Holy Communion Reflections**

My First Holy Communion

Date: 21st of October, 9:15am – 10:15am

Location: St. Monica's Parish Church

Priest: Fr. Tony Feeny

I took my first step into the Church, nerves all throughout my body. My white and silver dress shimmered on the walls. I felt special in a way I'd never felt before. The time felt everlasting. The Church looked magical in an odd way, a promising way, that gave me comfort and bravery. It helped me get over my annoying nerves.

The floor of the Church was a dark red carpet and I'm guessing it felt rough, it would tickle your fingers if you touched it. I often think that the red on the carpet represented Jesus's blood {also known as the wine} and the roughness of the carpet represented how rough the thorn crown would have felt when Jesus died.

The seats were cold and the wood of the seat felt smooth. I could see the stain glass windows. The windows were shining into the Church, they were creating light. I could see the tabernacle and the Priest, I could see all of the sacred objects that belonged to the Church.

Finally, after the long wait, the host was placed in my mouth. Everything changed, I felt Holy and I felt new opportunities; I felt closer to God. It made me happy to feel these things. Even though the host wasn't my favourite food it was worth eating it to receive all these feelings.

By Madeleine, 3B



St. Monica's Parish Primary School: **First Holy Communion**



My First Holy Communion

On the 21st of October was my first Holy Communion. It was from 10:30am to 11:30am. It was at St. Monica's Parish Church and the Priest was Father Tony Feeney.

How did I feel?

I felt nervous at the start of my First Holy Communion. My family was there with me and they said there's no reason to be nervous and it made me stop being nervous.

How did the Church look and feel?

The symbols in the Church were Holy and looked special. In my mind it was like I was one of those symbols and I was special like that.

How did I feel when I ate the bread?

I felt more Holy when I ate the bread for the first time, but my tastebuds didn't. At first it tasted like cardboard, but after a short while it tasted like an ice cream cone.

After the mass, I felt happy because I took a bigger step in the kingdom of God, but I was also happy because that day it was my Pop's birthday too.

By Tadhg, 3B



Thank you Lord for the wonderful day we shared on my First Holy Communion. I loved being with my family and friends during this special occasion. I was also excited to wear a traditional Filipino shirt called, 'barong' on the day. Now that I've had my first Holy Communion, I can be an altar server at St. Monica's Parish Church.

By Nathan Cukavac



St. Monica's Parish Primary School: **First Holy Communion**

Year 3 Student Reflections

My First Holy Communion

My First Holy Communion was on the 28th of October. The Mass started at 10:30am, ended at 11:30am and was held at St. Monica's Parish Church. Our Priest was Father Tony Feeney.

How did I feel?

I felt nervous, but mostly excited on my Holy Communion day. The reason why I felt nervous and excited is because I was having the Eucharist for the first time and that's a big deal for me; it's like a new step forward in my life and is a big change, even though it may seem like a little thing.

How did the Church look and feel?

St. Monica's Parish Church had red velvet carpet and to me it symbolises Jesus' blood. The Church had stained glass windows with pictures of Jesus. There were rows and rows of wooden benches. It felt like there was good energy around us and there was always something happy to think of. The Church felt warm and welcoming because a lot of Parishioners were present.

How did I feel when I ate the bread?

I felt like a new person when I received the bread. I also felt like I was sharing this moment with God. I was thinking about Jesus and knew he would always be with me.

By Mia L.



St. Monica's Parish Primary School: First Eucharist Thanksgiving Mass



On Wednesday 31st of October, the children who had received their First Eucharist attended a Mass of Thanksgiving.

At the end of mass, Father Daryl presented the children with their certificates, which was witnessed by some of their parents. They were then treated to a delicious morning tea in the Symons Centre.

Thank you to the many parents who organised this special celebration. The Symons Centre was beautifully decorated and the muffins, fruit and Big M's received very favourable reviews!

Mary McPherson



Our Parish Community: **the Maurici Family** Written by: Rebecca Gauci Maurici



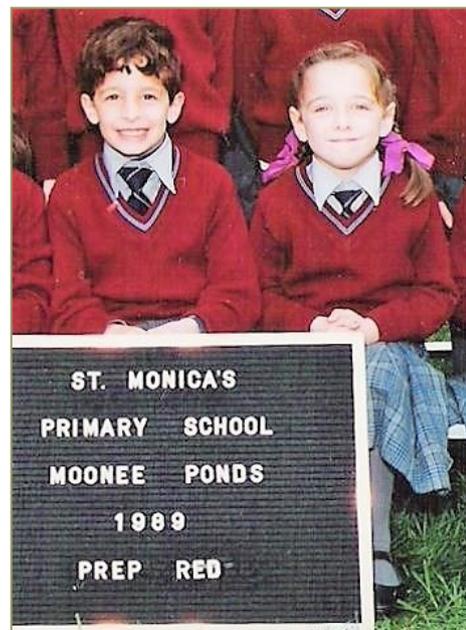
Lucinda Maurici was baptised on the 23rd of September 2018. It was particularly nice for us, as Lucinda's big sister, Aurora, mum, Rebecca Gauci Maurici, and dad, Lance Maurici, were all baptised at St. Monica's Parish Church.

Lucinda wore the same baptism gown as her mum and big sister, which her grandmother, Marian Blake, had made 36 years earlier!

The St. Monica's Parish Church and Primary School has been a great influence and importance in our lives. Lance and I actually met at St. Monica's Parish Primary School; he proposed to me outside of our Prep classroom and we were married at the St. Monica's Parish Church in 2012!

Lucinda's Baptism

Fr. Tony, Rebecca Gauci Maurici, Lucinda, Aurora and Lance Maurici



Lance Maurici and Rebecca Gauci Maurici on their Wedding Day in 2012

Lance Maurici and Rebecca Gauci Maurici in their Prep class photo in 1989

St. Monica's Parish: Bereavement Mass

Written by: Yvonne Yuen

This year's Bereavement Mass was celebrated on Wednesday 21st of November at 7pm. It was coordinated by the St. Monica's Bereavement Support Group, with Michelle Wing, Skye Palmer and Kathi Quick taking on the organisation of this year's Mass. In the lead-up, invitations were issued and the group made phone calls to bereaved parishioners, offering support and a compassionate ear.



The Mass was especially significant for the bereaved; it occurred during the month of remembrance and was well-supported by around 250 people. It was an opportunity to remember and cherish our deceased loved ones, especially those who passed away within the previous twelve months. Fr. Daryl, in delivering the homily, reminded us that in the deepest depth of grieving, where darkness rules, a single candle lit will shine the brightest. Families were invited to come forward to light a candle. The collective array of light symbolised the hope given by Christ and the compassion offered by the Parish Congregation to assist with the healing process, as each person contemplated their life-death journey.

Fr. Daryl was supported in celebrating the Mass with Fr. Des Maginess. Once again, the beautiful music was generously supplied by Music for Funerals, adding to the feeling of reverence as the Congregation joined Sue and Jean-Paul in singing the hymns. Fr. Daryl also blessed with Holy water the photos of loved ones that were placed at the front of the Church altar.

Overall, it was a very moving experience. Tears ran down the cheeks of all who attended. Suddenly, an arm reached out to rub a shoulder and leaned over. A gentle whisper murmured into an ear, "it's ok".



The Gospel of the night was Matthew 11, 28-30, ***"Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke on you and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your soul. For my yoke is easy to bear, and my load is not hard to carry."*** Jesus teaches us, perhaps with the help of families and friends, that this hurt and pain can be shared and the healing may begin and this journey can be more pleasant.

After Holy Communion, everyone was invited to the Symons Centre where food and refreshments were offered by the Bereavement Support Group.

Sincere thanks to the Bereavement team for organizing such a beautiful event. Thanks also to the Parish Office who provide the Group with valuable administrative support for their activities. The next Bereavement Mass is scheduled for Wednesday 1st of May 2019 and will be followed by a second Mass in November 2019.

Vinnies Christmas Appeal: **Christmas Filled with Joy** Written by: Mary McPherson

This year, St Monica's Parish Primary School is again supporting the Vinnies Christmas Appeal.

Recently, members of the St Monica's Conference, David McLean and Sue Rivette, met with students and staff from the school to discuss the school's involvement. As in past years, school families will generously donate food and gifts that will be distributed to people in need this Christmas.



The student leaders took responsibility for informing the school community about the Appeal, what was being asked of families and why. They were keen to ensure that the message of the Vinnie's Christmas Appeal, 'Make it a Real Christmas Filled with Joy', was heard and understood by school children and their families. They wrote messages to the families, spoke at a whole school assembly and visited classrooms to deliver the message.

At the time of writing this article, the Appeal was well underway and, as always, St Monica's Parish Primary School students and families were showing their support and willingness to help make Christmas a joyful time for all in our community. We sincerely thank the school community for their generous contribution to the Vinnies Christmas Appeal.



Generous in-kind donations of food and Christmas supplies



Older children home alone

There is no specific law in Victoria that says what age children can be left alone. Victorian law is clear however, that it is a parent's responsibility to ensure that their children are appropriately and safely cared for.

When deciding if your child is old or mature enough to stay home alone, it's useful to consider the following questions:

Tip 1

Do they feel comfortable and confident about being left alone?

Tip 2

Can they use the telephone?

Tip 3

Do they know how to keep themselves safe? For example, do they know not to answer the door or not to swim in the pool?

Tip 4

Are they mature enough to handle any problems that might arise like a fire or injury?

Tip 5

Do they have any illnesses, such as asthma, that may make it unsafe for them to be alone?

Tip 6

Do they know appropriate adults in your local area who they can contact for help?

Tip 7

Do they know how to access emergency services by ringing 000?

Tip 8

How long will you be away? There is a big difference between you going to the shop for a few minutes and being gone for several hours.

Tip 9

Who else is in the house?



Christmas Anointing: 5th December 2018

Written by: Lisa Mammola

The 'Golden Oldies', are an enthusiastic group of Senior Parishioners who meet on the first Wednesday of the month. The group, of approximately 50, meet in the Symons Centre at 11:00am for an intimate Mass and informal lunch, where Parishioners enjoy plates of goodies they have prepared themselves.

On Wednesday 5th of December, the Golden Oldies shared a special advent service during which Fr. Tony and Fr. Daryl lay their hands on the head of each individual present. Each Parishioner was anointed with Holy oil (on the forehead and palms of their hands), in a traditional manner, intended to bring spiritual and physical strength.

The Christmas Anointing is a special celebration, which boasts the hospitality of the mother's of St Monica's Parish Primary School; they host a Christmas lunch as a gesture of support for our fellow Parishioners. This year's lunch included a generous supply of homemade pastries, sandwiches, and of course, no meal would be complete without, cake.

The lunch was buoyed by the beautiful voices of the St Monica's Parish Primary School Choir, who sang a few songs. An army of Year 5s also came across from the school to greet and assist our beloved Golden Oldies.

Not surprisingly, the service had a special significance for all the Parishioners with whom I spoke; it seemed to fill all of them with a great sense of courage and strength, an inner peace. I think Fr. Tony summed it up nicely when he said, "that today, in our togetherness, in our sharing and in our nourishing each other, God is clearly present."

It was a great lunch. I think Fr. Tony and Fr. Daryl enjoyed the experience (almost) as much as the Parishioners present.

All Parishioners are welcome to join this beautiful group. Their next service will be on Wednesday 6th of February 2019.



Christmas Anointing: 5th December 2018

Photos: Lisa Mammola



The Feast of the Immaculate Conception: **Festa Della Madonna Immacolata**

Written by: Eleanor Colonico

Celebrated in various ways around the world, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception focuses on the Virgin Mary and how she conceived without sin. It is celebrated around the world on the 8th of December, nine months before the Feast of the Nativity of Mary, which is celebrated on the 8th of September.

The Feast can be traced back to the mid-19th Century, when Pope Pius IX issued an apostolic constitution to the Vatican in 1854. However the actual concept of Immaculate Conception reaches much farther into history, back to the earliest days of Christianity. The Eastern Christian Church first celebrated a “Feast of the Conception of the Most Holy and All Pure Mother of God” on the 9th of December, perhaps as early as the fifth century in Syria.

Different cultures around the world celebrate the day in different ways. In Italy, it is a public holiday. Since 1953, the Pope, in his capacity as Bishop of Rome, visits the Column of the Immaculate Conception in Piazza di Spagna to offer expiatory prayers. Many Italians spend the day attending a Church Mass.

In Australia, the day is widely celebrated by the Catholic community, with many Australians attending special Masses held in the honour of the Virgin Mary. As the day is close to the Christmas break, Church-run schools often use the day to teach students about the Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ, the Immaculate Conception and the importance of Christmas.

‘Festa Della Madonna Immacolata’ was held at St Monica’s Parish Church on Sunday 9th of December. The concelebrated Mass included Fr. Frank Buhagiar, Fr. Tony Feeney and Fr. Daryl Montecillo and featured the St Monica’s Italian Choir. The procession with the Statue of Our Lady was accompanied by ‘Banda Bellini’. It was a wonderful day, enjoyed by the many Parishioners who attended.



Celebrating the Birth of Christ: Our Austrian Family Traditions

Written by: Melanie Watt



As the granddaughter of European immigrants, Christmas has always been the most important event on the family celebration calendar. Little has changed to the rituals brought over from Austria by my grandparents 60 years ago. Whilst there are variations across Europe, the richness of traditions developed over hundreds of years highlights the significance given by Europeans to the Christmas period.

Many Europeans celebrate Christmas on Christmas Eve. In German speaking countries such as predominantly Catholic Austria, "The Holy Night" is translated as *Weihnacht*. Heiligen Abend revolves around pray and attending midnight Mass.

Christmas traditions embedded in Australia have been influenced from all over Europe. The evergreen Christmas tree, like ivy and holly, is the symbol of eternal life. The Christmas crib, which reminds us of the Nativity, first appeared in Italy and other Catholic countries like Hungary, Switzerland, Spain and Portugal. The Advent Calendar; from Germany, aimed to encourage children to be patient until Christmas.

Since ancient times, the Romans would give each other gifts during the *Saturnales* celebrated in Ancient Rome at the winter solstice. Whether on Saint Nicholas' Day, Saint Basil's Day, Christmas, New Year's Eve, or even Epiphany, we have continued the tradition of offering gifts.

For our family, these Austrian Christmas traditions are as strong as ever. Focusing on the celebration of the birth of Jesus, everyone quietly gathers in the lounge room. The children sit excitedly near the Christmas tree and the nativity story is read. Standing in a circle, everyone then says the *Our Father*. Dad speaks of the small and significant family members' milestones of the year; allowing us to share, reflect and be thankful for the family's blessings. We all join in singing Christmas Carols, including Silent Night in German, after which everyone moves around offering Christmas wishes, kisses and hugs.



Traditional Christmas market in Vienna, Austria

Following a loud rendition of Jingle Bells, and with much ado, the children excitedly give out the gifts under the tree. It gets very noisy as twenty-two family members loudly unwrap gifts and share the joy of togetherness. The evening continues with a sumptuous Australian Christmas dinner.

This coming together on Christmas Eve for reflection, prayer, singing, well-wishing, gift giving and of course, eating, is the most joyous expression of our faith, bringing our family even closer together as we celebrate Christ's birth.

St. Monica's Tennis Club: New Courts for the Club **Written by: Cathy McNeill**

After 15 years of marvelous competition, St. Monica's Tennis Club's classic clay courts have come to the end of their practical life. These much-loved courts will soon be replaced with synthetic grass, which we hope will serve the club for many years to come and require much less maintenance.



**St. Monica's classic clay courts by day...
Stay tuned for the 'after' photos!**

The new courts will look similar to our current courts, as the Committee has chosen terracotta grass and sand. Coloured sand is different to the usual white sand you may have seen on other synthetic grass courts and should significantly reduce glare on sunny days.

Work to replace the courts is scheduled to commence on Monday 7th of January 2019. We hope that the replacement process will only take two weeks; however, should be finalised by 31st of January 2019 at the latest.



**St. Monica's classic clay courts by night...
Stay tuned for the 'after' photos!**

The Committee is very grateful to Fr. Tony and the Parish for their continuing support. This project would not be possible without it.



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Children's Activity Page

Minty Candy Cane Scented Play Dough Recipe is beautiful, freshly scented play dough for the kids to play and create with this Christmas. It has a blend of peppermint essence to mimic that of a candy cane, which we all love at this time of the year. To keep with the Christmas theme, the Minty Candy Cane Play Dough Recipe is also coloured green and speckled with red glitter.

What you will need:

- 1 Cup Plain Flour
- 1 Tablespoon Oil
- 200ml Water
- 50ml Peppermint Essence
- ½ Cup Salt
- 2 Teaspoons Cream of Tartar
- Green Food Colouring
- Tablespoon Red Glitter



How to make it:

- Pour all dry ingredients; flour, salt, cream of tartar and glitter together in a saucepan.
- Add oil, water, peppermint essence and green food colouring to the dry ingredients.
- Use a whisk before heating, as it will help to remove lumps and will blend the ingredients well.
- Cook over medium heat constantly stirring until it becomes a thick blob.
- Turn out onto a clean surface and knead into a smooth blob.
- Allow the play dough to cool before playing with it.
- Store in a plastic zip lock bag or air tight container.

Helpful tip: if the play dough turns out a little sticky, sprinkle a small amount of plain flour onto the bench and knead until smooth and combined.

Taken from: <https://www.learning4kids.net/2012/12/13/minty-candy-cane-scented-play-dough>

Why not make some Christmas ornaments using your new play dough?



Taken from: <https://www.learning4kids.net/2012/12/16/minty-candy-cane-scented-play-dough-ornaments>

Christmas Prayers for Children



Advent Prayer

4, 3, 2, 1... Count the weeks 'til Jesus comes.
 Each week we add another light.
 Our hope for Jesus growing bright.
 We pray, we share, we do our part...
 To welcome Jesus to our heart!



A Prayer to help those in need this Christmas

May my family and friends who need a Christmas miracle be blessed.
 May whoever is feeling weak during the festive season be given strength.
 May all of those who are carrying heavy burdens this Christmas have their load lightened. Amen.



A Christmas Prayer

Lord, we welcome You into our hearts and homes.
 Bless us with Your peace, fill us with Your joy, surround us with Your love.
 We celebrate You and thank You for coming. Amen.



A Christmas Prayer

Lord, You came upon a midnight clear, to bring joy to the world and draw us near.
 It was a Holy night, when You came from above, to fill our hearts with hope and love.
 Thank you, sweet Jesus, for clothing us with comfort and joy. Amen.



