

EAST COAST BAYS PARISH

Advent & Christmas 2022

**OUR SEASON OF
HOPE
PEACE
JOY
LOVE.**



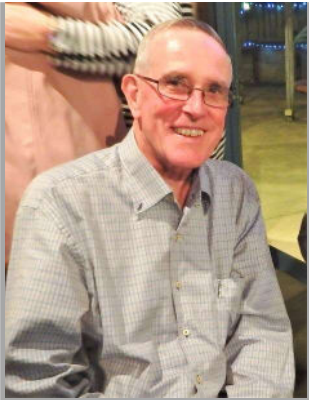
Drawn by Jane Maisey RSJ



Parish Pastoral Council 2022

East Coast Bays Catholic Parish

Our Vision: Inspiring a loving, caring, Christ-like community



Fr. Emile



Fr. Alejandro



Michael



Thomas



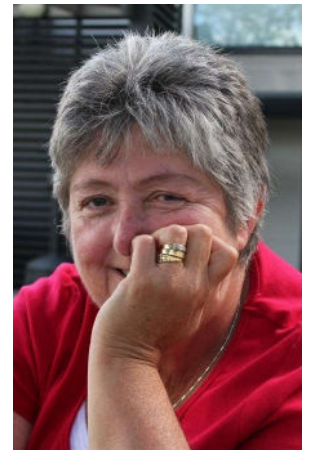
Judith



Lindsay



Marion



Liz



Cathy

PARISH FINANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Fr. Emile and Fr. Alejandro

Barry Rogers - Chair person

Andrew Chrystal, Maurice Lopes; Cathy Flynn.

Beate Matthies.



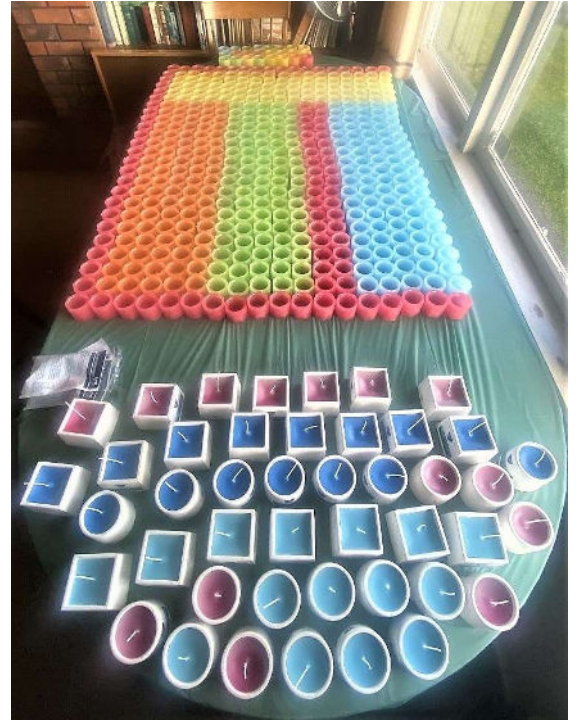
THE EAST COAST BAYS PARISH CANDLE MAKER

What a great blessing and experience for me to see our talented candle maker at work. The time and talent to do all this, really shows the special gifts that God has blessed Fr. Alejandro with. The many hours in melting, recycling candles gifted from various parishes shows that he is an experienced missionary priest – focus on the mission, and you'll get it done. As you see from the photo, these candles will bring light and joy to all who receive them.

The candles Fr. Alex made for the school children moving from St. John's School to the next places of learning, are really special. Each candle has the St. John's School logo, and each candle has the name of the child who is moving on. The other candles you see in the photo – at one stage there were about 450 of them on the table. Wow, the time and love poured out into each candle, along with the wax, of course, will add to the bright light as the candle is lit.

The “candle factory” – the presbytery kitchen – was humming with the sound of bubbling wax in pots on the stove. The pouring of the wax into the moulds was done with great care and creativity.

The whole process showed the care and commitment Fr. Alex put into it all, sharing his love and thankfulness to all the parishioners of the East Coast Bays Parish. Be assured of this, Fr. Alex, when parishioners will light their candles, you will be remembered, always.



Christ said “Be the Light,” Fr. Alejandro got right on to it.

PS. We still have openings for the ‘Tinker’ and the ‘Tailor’.

Be the light that helps others see;
it is what gives life its deepest significance.”

“We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light.”

“There are darkneses in life and there are lights, and you are one of the lights, the light of all lights.”

EAST COAST BAYS BAPTISMS



It is a church requirement that one parent, (ideally both parents), attend a Baptism Course prior to the baptism of their first child. One parent must be a baptised Catholic.

The course involves one session. Courses are held every two months.

2023 COURSE DATES ARE:

**February 7th; April 4th;
June 13th; August 8th;
October 10th; December 5th.**

Baptisms are normally scheduled for the first Sunday of the month at St John's Church, and the third Sunday of the month at St Francis Church at 12.00 mid-day.

To enrol, either for the course, or to make a date for the baptism of a second or subsequent child, contact Liz during office hours, (Tuesday to Friday) ph 320-3127 or email liz@ecbcatholic.org.nz

"God is Indeed with Us"

Message for Christmas 2022

Dr Donna Orsuto

During the Christmas liturgy, we will hear the words, "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means 'God is with us'" (Mt 1:23). The 12th-century Cistercian monk Aelred of Rievaulx reminds us that with the birth of Jesus we can truly affirm that "God is indeed with us."

Aelred continues:

Until now God was above us . . .
but today Emmanuel, today God is with us.
He is with us in our nature,
with us in his grace;
He is with us in our weakness,
with us in his kindness;
He is with us in our wretchedness,
with us in his mercy,
He is with us in charity,
with us in loving care,
with us in affection,
with us in compassion.
O Emmanuel, O God with us!
This is the gift we celebrate this Christmas.
Wherever you are in the world, whatever
you are doing,
whether you are happy or sad,
busy or bored,
delighted or depressed,
stop for a moment, **gaze at the Christ Child**,
and consider the sheer immensity of God's
gift to you.
He brings a love that knows no bounds.
He brings a love that is faithful from the
womb to the tomb.
He brings a love that reaches to every corner
of the world and especially to those who are
suffering: those in hospitals, in war-torn
zones, in situations of dire need.

Know that today,
Emmanuel, God is with you.
Do not doubt his presence.
He came as a baby
more than 2,000 years ago
and He is coming now to you,
this Christmas, if you but welcome him in
your heart.
Stop for a moment, **gaze at the Christ Child**,
and consider the sheer immensity of God's
gift to you and to all humanity.
Welcome him now and he will bring you his
light, his peace, and his joy, wherever you
are, whatever you are doing.

Donna Orsuto

Director, The Lay Centre at Foyer Unitas Ordinary Professor, Institute
of Spirituality, Pontifical Gregorian University



to all our volunteers

It is hard to express in words how grateful we are to all those volunteers who support our parish community.

As life gets more demanding for all of us, we need more volunteers so that we share a lighter load. If fewer and fewer people step up to volunteer, the job becomes too big for one volunteer to handle and they too are forced to resign.

Today we ask you to consider volunteering with one of the many Volunteers groups we have in our Parish.

Another way to participate in our parish life are the various parish ministries.

God calls us to use our gifts and talents to glorify Him and make life better for other people. Please prayerfully consider these opportunities for getting involved in ministry. And if you have an idea for a new parish ministry, please contact the parish office
office@ecbcatholic.org.nz

HAPPY & BLESSED CHRISTMAS.

ECB PARISH SACRAMENTS IN 2023

Our Sacramental year commences with Reconciliation.

We offer this to baptised children 8 years & older.

As our sessions are conversational, we require a parent to attend each session. Our hope is that the sacraments become more integrated into daily life, therefore building our community for generations to come; meeting other families; getting to ask questions and discuss our faith are just a few of the benefits.

RECONCILIATION:

Monday 3rd April	Open date for online registration.
Monday 17th April	Closing date for registration
Sunday 30th April	sessions 1 & 2
Sunday 7th May	Sessions 3 & 4
Wednesday 10th	Ceremony

CONFIRMATION:

Sunday 14th May	Sessions 1 & 2
Sunday 21st May	Sessions 3 & 4
Sunday 28th May	Service / creed
Sunday 11th June	Rehearsal
Wednesday 14th June	Ceremony

All Sessions are typically held on Sundays between 3.00 and 4.30pm .

Timing of Rehearsals and ceremonies will be detailed at the appropriate time.

HOLY COMMUNION:

Sunday 18th June	Sessions 1 & 2
Sunday 25th June	Sessions 3 & 4
Sunday 23rd July	Session 5
Sunday 29th July	Rehearsal
Sunday 30th July	Ceremony

NEW YEAR'S PRAYER

As the dawn breaks on a new year, let us give thanks for all we hold dear: our health, our family and our friends.

Let us release our grudges, our anger and our pains, for these are nothing but binding chains. Let us live each day in the most loving ways, the God-conscious way. Let us serve all who are in need, regardless of race, color or creed.

Let us keep God of our own understanding in our hearts and to chant God's name each day. Let us lead the world from darkness to light, from falsehood to truth and from wrong to right.

Let us remember that we are all one, embracing all, discriminating against none. May your year be filled with peace, prosperity & love. May God's blessings shower upon you and bestow upon each of you a bright, healthy and peaceful new year.

- Rev. Marcy Sheremetta



Nativity - By Joy Cowley

Look now! It is happening again!

Love like a high spring tide is swelling to fullness and overflowing the banks of our small concerns.

And here again is the star, that white flame of truth blazing the way for us through a desert of tired ways.

Once more comes the music, angel song that lifts our hearts and tunes our ears to the harmony of the universe, making us wonder how we ever could have forgotten.

And now the magi within us gathers up gifts of gold and myrrh, while that other part of ourselves, the impulsive, reckless shepherd, runs 'helter skelter' with arms outstretched to embrace the wonder of it all.

We have no words to contain our praise.

We ache with awe, we tremble with miracle, as once again, in the small rough stable of our lives, Christ is born.



Artwork by Jane Maisey rsj

PARISH BAPTISMS CELEBRATED IN 2022

Aayan K; Luke H; Mikayla H; Madison; Helena C; Paulus R; Sanvi B; Dhyanam B; Elaina L; Taylor P; Reagan R; Grayson R; Maddison R; Logan B; Liam S; Nichola E; Samuel E; Jason L; Edward L; Valerlie V; Annabel V; Francis D; Freya B-B; Nathaniel McC; Umisuma L; Rowan W; Cameron McC; Eloisa D; Annaliese M; Janneke M; Maria do E S M; Luna Rodriguez C; Catarina F H; Wilhelm S; Ines H; Ashley O; Delilah C; Mia J; Luka J; Eva D; Charlotte D; Rudy V; Rocco V; Evelyn H; Elvies H; Morgan H; Vicki L; Matilda A; Dalia D; Harry L; Freija F; Harrison C; Olivia B; Rose B; Emily B; Beauden B; Daphne B; Beauden H; Isla H; Aria Honey R; Seth F.



Patrick Flynn; Richard Johnson; Christine Grey; Mary -Therese Lanigan; William Webber; Colin Harvey; Shona Spelman; Denis O'Ryan; Agripina Santamaria; Anthony de Witt; Noelene Fitzgerald; Herbert Blincoe; Slamet Arisandy; Maria Medemblik; John Hill; Margaret Sutherland; Cathy Hill.



Pope Francis

December 22, 2021

To comply with the Emperor Cesar Augustus' decree that ordered them to go to their place of origin to be registered, **Joseph and Mary went from Nazareth down to Bethlehem.** As soon as they arrived, they immediately sought lodging

since the moment for Mary to give birth was imminent. Unfortunately, they did not find anything. So, Mary was forced to give birth in a stable (cf. Lk. 2:1-7).

Let's think: the Creator of the universe...He was not given a place to be born! Perhaps this was an anticipation of what the evangelist John would say: **"He came to his own home, & his own people received him not"** (1:11); and what Jesus Himself would say: "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head" (Lk 9:58).

It was an **angel** who announced the birth of Jesus, and did so to some lowly shepherds. And it was a **star** that showed the Magi the way to Bethlehem (cf. Mt 2:1, 9.10). An angel is a messenger from God. The star reminds us that God created the light (Gn 1:3) and that the Baby would be **"the light of the world,"** as He would define himself (cf. Jn 4:°Nº 02), the "true light that enlightens every man" (Jn 1:9), that "shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (v. 5).

The shepherds personify the poor of Israel, lowly people who interiorly live with the awareness of their own want. Precisely for this reason, they trust more than others in God. They were the first to see the Son of God made man, and this encounter changed them deeply. The Gospel notes that they returned "glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen" (Lk 2:20).

The Magi are also around the newborn Jesus (cf. Mt 2:1-12). The Gospels do not tell us who the kings might have been, nor how many there were, nor what their names were. The only thing we know for certain is that they came from a distant country in the East (perhaps from *Babylonia, or Arabia, or Persia of that time*), they set out on a journey seeking the **King of the Jews**, whom they identified with God in their hearts because they said they wanted to adore him. The Magi represent the pagan peoples, in particular all those who have sought God down through the ages, and who set out on a journey to find Him. They also represent the rich and powerful, but only those who are not slaves to possessions, who are not "possessed" by the things they believe they possess.

The message of the Gospels is clear: the birth of Jesus is a universal event that concerns all of humanity.

Dear brothers & sisters, humility is the only way that leads us to God. At the same time, specifically because it leads us to Him, humility leads us also to the essentials of life, to its truest meaning, to the most trustworthy reason for why life is truly worth living.

Humility alone opens us up to the experience of truth, of authentic joy, of knowing what matters. Without humility we are "cut off," we are cut off from understanding God & from understanding ourselves. Humility is needed to understand ourselves, all the more so to understand God. The Magi may have even been great according to the world's logic, but they made themselves lowly, humble, and precisely because of this they succeeded in finding Jesus and recognising Him. They accepted the humility of seeking, of setting out on a journey, of asking, of taking a risk, of making a mistake.

Every person, in the depths of his or her heart, is called to seek God: we all have that restlessness. Our work is not to snuff out that restlessness, but to allow it to grow because it is that restlessness that seeks God; and, with His own grace, can find Him. We can make this prayer of Saint Anselm (1033-1109) our own: **"Lord, teach me to seek you, and reveal yourself to me as I seek, because I can neither seek you if you do not teach me how, nor find you unless you reveal yourself. Let me seek you in desiring you; let me desire you in seeking you; let me find you in loving you; let me love you in finding you."** (Proslogion, 1).

Dear brothers & sisters, I would like to invite every man & woman to the stable of Bethlehem to adore the Son of God made man. May each one of us draw near to the crèche in our own homes or in the church or in another place, and try to make an act of adoration, inside: **"I believe you are God, that this baby is God. Please, grant me the grace of humility to be able to understand."**

In approaching and praying by the crib, I would like to put the poor in the front row, those whom- as Saint Paul VI used to exhort



Continued



“we must love because in a certain way they are the sacrament of Christ; in them; in the hungry, the thirsty, the exiles, the naked, the ill, prisoners, He wanted to be mystically identified. We must help them, suffer with them, & also follow them because poverty is the securest path to possess the Kingdom of God in its fullness” (Homily, May 1, 1969).

I would like to accompany to Bethlehem all those who have no religious restlessness, who do not pose the question of God, or who may even fight against religion, all those who are improperly identified as atheists.

For this reason, we must ask for the grace of **humility**: “Lord, that I might not be proud, that I might not be self-sufficient, that I might not believe that I am the centre of the universe. **Make me humble. Grant me the grace of humility.** And with this humility, may I find You.” It is the only way; without humility we will never find God: We will find ourselves. The reason is that the person who is not humble has no horizon in front of him or her. They only have a mirror in which to look at themselves. Let us ask the Lord to break this mirror so we can look beyond, to the horizon, where He is. But He needs to do this: grant us the grace and the joy of humility to take this path.

Then, brothers & sisters, just like the star did with the Magi, I would like to accompany to Bethlehem all those who have no religious restlessness, who do not pose the question of God, or who may even fight against religion, all those who are improperly identified as atheists. I would like to repeat to them the message of the Second Vatican Council:

“The Church holds that the recognition of God is in no way hostile to man’s dignity, since this dignity is rooted and perfected in God.... Above all the Church knows that her message is in harmony with the most secret desires of the human heart”

(“Gaudium et Spes,” no. 21).

Let’s return home with the angel’s song: **“Peace on earth to those with whom he is pleased!”**

Let us always remember: “In this is love, not that we loved God that he loved us [...] he first loved us” (1 Jn 4:10, 19), he has sought us. Let’s not forget this.



This is the reason for our joy: we are loved, we are sought for, the Lord seeks us to find us, to love us more. This is the reason for joy: knowing that we are loved without any merit, we are always loved first by God, with a love so concrete that He took on flesh and came to live in our midst, in that Baby that we see

in the crib. This love has a name and a face: **Jesus is the name and the face of love, this is the foundation of our joy.**

Brothers and sisters, I wish you a **Merry Christmas, a happy and holy Christmas.** And I would like that yes, there are well wishes, family reunions, this is always very beautiful, but may there also be the awareness that God comes **“for me.”** Let’s everyone say this: God comes for me. The awareness that to seek God, to find God, to accept God, humility is needed: to seek with humility

the grace of breaking the mirror of vanity, of pride, of looking at ourselves. To look at Jesus, to look toward the horizon, to look at God who comes to us and who touches our hearts with that restlessness that brings us hope.

Happy & holy Christmas!



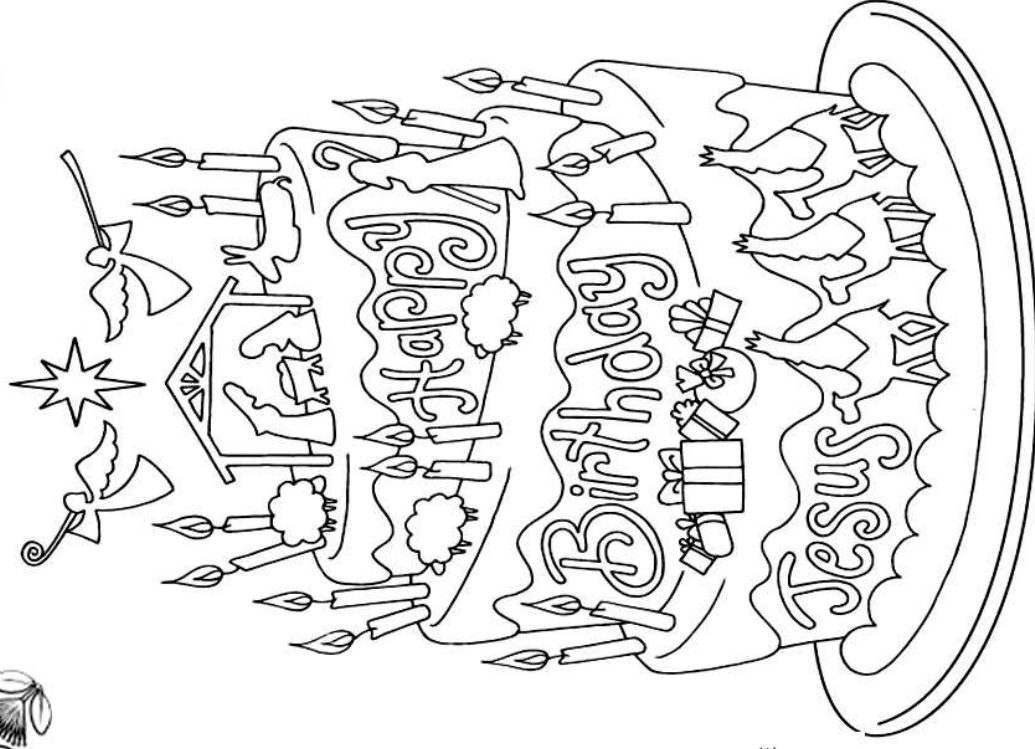
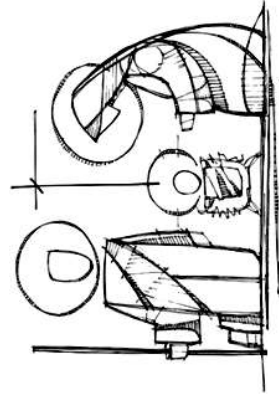
“I am a little pencil in the hand of a writing God who is sending a love letter to the world.” – Mother Teresa



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NATIVITY
MARY
JOSEPH
JESUS
MANGER
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STAR
DAVID
INN
DONKEY
HAY
BETHLEHEM
JOURNEY
ANGEL
WISE
FRANKINCENSE
MYRRH
SHEEP
CAMEL



Meri Kirihimete

*May the
Miracle of
Christmas
fill your heart
with joy.*

PARISH OFFICE

CHRISTMAS / NEW YEAR TIMES.

Regular Office times, Mon.– Fri. 10am - 1pm

The office will be closed between Friday 23 December 2022 -
Monday 16 January 2023.

We will be clearing the answer phone and emails
on a regular basis.

Christmas Mass Timetable 2022

Sunday December 24:

5.30pm;	Christmas Eve	St. Francis Church	Children's Mass
8.15pm;	Christmas Eve	St. John's Church	Youth Choir

Sunday December 25:

7.30am	Christmas Day	St. Francis Church
9.00am	Christmas Day	St. John's Church

Normal Mass times resume

Monday December 26:

9.15am	St. Stephen	St. John's Church
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Please check the current newsletter for Mass times