Advent and Christmas...

Advent is the season of four weeks that begins the Church’s year of worship and prepares for Christmas. In a spirit of hope and expectation it first focuses on the second coming of Christ at the end of time, then concentrates on the preparation for Christmas. The liturgical colour for the season is violet.

Christmas is the liturgical season following Advent. It begins with the celebration of the Nativity of the Lord and includes some other special feast days: the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph; Mary, the Holy Mother of God; the Epiphany of the Lord; and concludes with the Baptism of the Lord. The liturgical colour for Christmas is white. See the back page for more information...

The Catholic Church in the Land Down Under … (Year 6)

During Term 4, the Year 6 students have investigated the contributions made by Catholics to the growth of Australian Society. They used historical sources, such as the video by Brisbane Catholic Education, “Little Did We Dream”, to encourage an understanding of the history of the Church in Australia as well as Catholic education, particularly in the Brisbane Archdiocese.

The focus then shifted to how certain people contributed to that history and what made their efforts so significant. They were asked to nominate a significant Catholic and explain why that person is significant, and how they have lived out their values and their spirituality in their everyday life.

‘Works of Mercy’ were reviewed from previous terms, and organisations such as Caritas and St Vincent de Paul were investigated to explain how such charities have also had a significant impact on the growth of the Church and its believers, past and present.

This unit dovetailed well with the History unit in which the students nominated an Australian, who has contributed positively to the growth of our nation, as a candidate for the St Joseph’s ‘Hall of Fame’.

Our school year, and the students’ final year at primary school, will conclude with a focus on the joy and hope of the Advent Season.
Praying in the Church … (Prep)

This term in Prep the children learnt about our beautiful church building and discussed many of the things we found inside the church. During this year we have been observing and discussing how believers pray together at important times and during this term we joined the school community in some special celebrations; we joined our Year 6 buddies to celebrate Mass and we also participated in the end of year Thanksgiving Mass with the whole school.

The Prep children have been identifying celebrations and rituals that mark special times in the life of the Church community (and in the Church year e.g. Baptism, Lent, Holy week, Easter, Advent, Christmas). They have investigated ways in which members of the Church pray together during these special celebrations with words, actions, music, symbols, silence and special colours. We have also made connections between the Church rituals and the special times in the children’s lives.

In the final few weeks of term the Prep children have been exploring the Christmas stories in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. We have expanded upon the special gifts that the wise men brought baby Jesus by linking this to our gift giving to the poor through the St Vinnie’s Christmas Appeal. The greatest present to all of us is the gift of Jesus. We wish all of you peace, love and joy for the festive season.

Baptism, Eucharist and the Birth of Jesus … (Year 1)

In Term Four, Year 1 students have been learning about the words, actions and symbols used in the Sacraments of Baptism to communicate God’s presence and action; for example the use of water, the sign of the cross and the anointing with oil. The students also explored the Sacrament of Eucharist and the significance it has within the Catholic Church. Students observed this when they attended Mass. They also learnt about some different roles of people in the local parish community and how to become members of the Catholic Church at Bracken Ridge.

Later in the term students listened to, viewed and read stories from different Gospels that related to the birth of Jesus. They compared and contrasted the stories in both Matthew and Luke’s Gospels.

Students have been exposed to a variety of books, pictures and online resources to learn about the stories of the Nativity and the world as it was at the time of Jesus’ birth. The children also participated in whole school prayer celebrations that communicate these stories.

What’s so super about heroes? … (Year 3)

In Year 3 this term the students have explored the question ‘What’s so super about heroes?’. They have explored the idea of ‘heroes’ and were able to identify the qualities that make a hero. With this understanding of what makes a hero, they identified some local heroes within our community who have helped others.

The students then explored some stories about heroes in the Bible. Through the study of Old Testament scriptures the children explored the special relationship that the Jewish people had with God, which is revealed through the stories, people and events recorded in the Torah and Tanach, the Hebrew scriptures. They became familiar with stories about heroes from the Hebrew scriptures, in particular the Exodus and the story of Moses and Esther. After finding stories about heroes in the Bible, the children found some rules for how to be a hero—also in the Bible.

The children explored the Ten Commandments and discussed how they guide believers to be happy, to be heroes and to be good people. They also explored the Beatitudes looking at the connection between the scriptures and living a moral life.
Promises, promises ... (Year 2)

In our Religion lessons this term the Year 2 children explored the meaning of the word “Covenant”. They understood that a covenant is a special promise between God and his people. They read Old Testament stories such as Noah, Abraham and Sarah and Moses. The children looked at the covenant that God made with the Jewish people in each of these bible stories. The children then explored special covenants they have in their own personal lives and why these promises are important. The boys and girls were able to identify classroom responsibilities, the 5 Non-Negotiables at school and family rules in their own home. The Year 2s realised that we have covenants to help keep us safe and happy. Covenants help to fulfill God’s dream for a world of peace, hope and love. The children also learnt about Judaism this term. They learnt that Jesus was a Jew and they learnt about some of the traditions and symbols of this religion.

To finish the term the Year 2s explored the religious season of Advent. They know that Advent is a time of waiting for the birth of Jesus at Christmas. The children discussed ways they can help the less fortunate during this season. They decided to donate a grocery item to St. Vincent de Paul, to distribute to those in need in our community. Many thanks to our school community for supporting this worthy cause.

Challenge and change: the Catholic Church in Australia … (Year 4)

Year 4 Religion this term has linked with our study of the history of Australia’s colonisation; we have been investigating the early history of the Catholic Church in Australia.

During Term 3 the students took the role of a convict travelling on the First Fleet and they learnt that the majority of convicts who travelled to Australia in the late 1700s were either from England or Ireland. Because of this we had some knowledge that there was a mixture of both Catholics and Anglicans settling in Australia.

We learnt that Catholics in Australia were initially discriminated against. As there was no official recognition of the Catholics in the colony, Catholic convicts were forced for a period to attend Anglican Church services. Five years after landing, lay Catholics petitioned Governor Arthur Phillip to appoint the first Catholic priest Fr Dixon. Fr Dixon was actually a convict sentenced to transportation for his involvement in the Irish Rebellion!

Within discussion the Year 4s understood that it was crucial for Catholics to have a priest in a country in which they were discriminated against. It was a necessity to have a priest to perform the sacraments of baptism, marriage, and funeral rites with the Catholic faith; but the priest was also an educated person who could give direction and guidance during a time of great turmoil and change. The role of the priest was necessary in order to establish the Catholic Church in the early colony.

The Year 4 students also investigated some of the turmoil and change that existed in the Jewish community in First Century Palestine; for example the destruction of the Second Temple and the expulsion of the Jews by the Romans. The world behind the parable of the Good Samaritan gave the students an insight into some of the Jewish groups that existed at this time.

The Year 4s have come to the realisation of how lucky and fortunate they are to live in 2015 Australia where they are free to practice their faith without persecution. We have indeed journeyed a long way!

Communities of believers … (Year 5)

This term we identified some of the ways in which faith is shared and strengthened within communities of believers, past and present. We looked at this especially within the celebration of the Eucharist.

Students examined how the wisdom of the Saints helps us understand about caring for the wellbeing of others and the faith of the communities of believers. We also explored the way that titles, images, prayers and texts about Mary, Mother of Jesus, reveal her role in the community of believers as well as identifying the two purposes of the Rosary - to assist in a meditation of scripture and as a repetitive mantra. As we draw closer to Christmas, we will look at the infancy narrative and Mary’s role in this important story.
Thank you to the classroom teachers of St Joseph’s School who have written an article explaining their classroom Religious Education Program for this term. This Term’s articles were written by: Eve Rawlinson, Louise Quinn, Jenny Biondi, Sonya Wagensveld, Linda Orrell, Tennille Coates, Nicki Goodman and edited by Peggy Roe.

Celebrating Advent and Christmas
Retrieved from Evangelisation Brisbane

**FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT**
Be alert at all times, praying. (Luke 21:36)
Jesus, help us to be aware of our actions and the people around us. Amen

**SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT**
Prepare the way of the Lord. (Luke 3:4)
Jesus, may we be like John the Baptist preparing our hearts for Jesus’ return. Amen

**THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT**
John said to them, “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.” (Luke 3:11)
Jesus, as we prepare for Christmas may we be generous in sharing what we have with those who have less than we do. Amen

**FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT**
Blessed are you among women. (Luke 1:42)
Jesus, thank you for the people in our lives who are with us in our times of need and joy. Amen

**THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD (CHRISTMAS)**
Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours. (Luke 2:14)
Jesus, let us be like the angels and shepherds and spread the good news of your birth. Amen

**HOLY FAMILY**
Then Jesus went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. (Luke 2:51)
Jesus, thank you for our family. Help us to honour and respect each other even when it is hard. Amen

**MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD**
Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. (Luke 2:19)
Jesus, bless our mothers who gave us life. Amen

**THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD**
On entering the house the wise men saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. (Matthew 2:11)
Jesus, help us to shine your light for all people. Amen

**BAPTISM OF THE LORD**
You are my Son, the Beloved, with you I am well pleased. (Luke 3:22)
Jesus, fill us with your Holy Spirit. Amen