Dear Parents,

Advent means ‘coming’. In the Church calendar this is the four week period before Christmas, the feast which marks Jesus’ coming into the world as a new born baby. Purple is the liturgical colour for this season reminding us that this period of joyful anticipation, is also a time for us to reflect on our lives and repent of any attitude, behaviour or lifestyle that might be blocking the action of God’s love in our life. There are some wonderful ways for families to celebrate this season, helping all to focus more intently on the coming birth of Jesus. The Advent wreath has a long tradition across many countries and can easily be adapted for home, church or classroom. It is very effective in assisting families to resist the commercial pressures of Christmas and keep their focus on the religious feast.

Today I include some ideas for Ways to Celebrate Advent with your family this year

> Mary, Mary... If any season belongs to Mary, it is surely Advent. Pray to Mary and ask her to give you her sense of conviction and eager anticipation of Jesus’ renewed presence in the world. December 8 marks the feast of her conception and December 11 is Our Lady of Guadalupe.

> Advent Calendars - there are some beautiful religious calendars that can be purchased through Christian book shops - avoid the commercialised chocolate versions that feature toys and reindeers.

> Journey to Bethlehem - using the pieces of your family Nativity scene, set up the stable in your prayer space. Keep Jesus hidden. Place Mary, Joseph and the donkey in a remote location. Each day, the children move them closer to their final destination. Shepherds, sheep, and angels can all journey to Bethlehem, arriving at the stable on Christmas day when Jesus also appears. The Wise Men take longer, arriving on the Feast of the Epiphany.

> Advent Candle - using a tall candle marked with 24 lines to indicate the 24 days of December leading up to Christmas, light the candle each day for your family prayers. As the candle gets shorter, children can count the number of days left to Christmas by the number of lines visible on the candle.

> The Jesse Tree - each day of Advent, place a new ornament symbolising one of the Old Testament ancestors of Jesus (eg Adam and Eve, Abraham, Moses, Isaiah etc). Suggestions for symbols can be found through an internet search.

Yours sincerely,

Leanne Nettleton
Principal
Last week we advertised the dates for the Mathematics showcase their Creative Arts Skills. Every child will be performing returning the cut off note. The information gathered from the MAI Bethany at Glenmore Park. She will be visiting the school shortly on the 24th, 27th and 30th. Last week every child brought home some major but not serious surgery. I will need the full six weeks letter to the class teacher requesting that this arrangement takes approach your child’s teacher or Mrs O’Rourke or Mrs Nettleton. to do so or for your child to bring the report home please send a

Mr Stennett is currently the REC at St Mary’s Rydalmere where he has held this position for 5 years. I know that Jenny and Simon will find the Holy Cross community both welcoming and energizing and that they will enjoy working with the school leadership team – Mrs O’Rourke – Acting Assistant Principal, Ms Porteous – Coordinator and Mrs Richardson – Coordinator, staff and families in this beautiful community.

Leave
I will be taking leave from the 9th December in order to have some major but not serious surgery. I will need the full six weeks following the surgery to recover and this has made it necessary for me to finish the year early. From the 12th December Mrs O’Rourke will be looking after the school and can be contacted through the school office.

END OF YEAR DANCE CONCERT
This Thursday our school will come alive as the children showcase their Creative Arts Skills. Every child will be performing and yes parents once again you have the opportunity to join in the fun and show off your dance moves. The children can start arriving at 7.00pm and will go straight to their classrooms. Parents and siblings can find their way to seating under the Basketball structure in the MPLC. All children will be collected from their teacher under the COLA at the end of the concert.

LEARNING TOGETHER
End of Year Reports
Next Monday 5th December the teachers will be distributing school reports to parents. You may collect these before school from 8.40am or directly after school from 3.15pm. If you are unable to collect your child’s report and would like someone else to do so or for your child to bring the report home please send a letter to the class teacher requesting that this arrangement takes place. Having received your child’s report if you would like to meet with the teachers please contact the teachers to make a mutually convenient appointment. If you have any questions about the End of Year reporting please do not hesitate to approach your child’s teacher or Mrs O’Rourke or Mrs Nettleton.

Mathematics Assessment Interviews
Last week we advertised the dates for the Mathematics Assessment Interviews
One of the dates printed was incorrect. Interviews will take place on the 24th, 27th and 30th. Last week every child brought home an appointment time for one of these dates. Parents are now asked to confirm their child’s attendance at that appointment by returning the cut off note. The information gathered from the MAI is extremely useful in helping teachers understand where students are in their understanding of number.

Please note that school will return for Year One to Six on Tuesday 31st January 2012. Kindergarten will commence school on Wednesday 1st February 2012

Acting Principal Term One 2012 and Permanent Religious Education Coordinator.
Mrs Jenny Bellenger has been appointed as the Acting Principal of Holy Cross commencing Term One 2012. This position may extend into Term 2. Mrs Bellenger has a depth of leadership experience and is currently the Assistant Principal of Bethany at Glenmore Park. She will be visiting the school shortly to be introduced to staff and students. Mr Simon Stennett has been appointed as the Permanent Religious Education Coordinator also commencing in 2012.

RE NEWS
Reconciliation
We congratulate the following children who made their first Reconciliation last week: Sarah Ettehad, Michael Harper, Nathan Inglis, Elizabeth Kitcher, Tami Mahachi, Abbey Mey, Jack O’Keeffe, Callum Scott, Anthony Surace, Ethan Tarry, Ruby Villiers, Hannah Aouchan, Thalia Ferguson, Benjamin Inns, Geremy Muhovich, and Jacob Szymoniczek
We pray that these children will always experience the peace that comes with this sacrament.

End of Year Mass - Mass of Thanksgiving
Our End of Year Mass to give thanks for the blessings of this year will take place at Blessed John XX111 church on Friday 9 December, commencing at 10.00.
Also, this mass will be a special time to thank Mrs Nettleton for her work at Holy Cross and to wish her happiness and success in the future.

Children will return to Holy Cross after the Mass.
We hope many parents and friends will join us at this Mass.

Christmas Hampers
Every year at this time we invite families to donate food items to the St Vincent de Paul Christmas Hampers.
If you are able to help many families will benefit from your generosity and kindness.
Food items can be given to your child’s class teacher.
The Mini Vinnies will be coordinating this activity.
Kindergarten: tinned ham, tinned salmon, Christmas pudding
Year 1: pasta, pasta sauce, Christmas cake
Year 2: soft drinks, coffee, tea
Year 3: tinned fruit, tinned baked beans, tinned spaghetti
Year 4: long life milk, long life custard, fruit juice
Year 5: tinned vegetables, rice, pasta
Year 6: lollies, milo, coffee

Advent
This Sunday we celebrated the First Sunday of Advent. Soon many families will experience the anticipation and joy that comes with putting up their Christmas tree. Below is a simple ritual prayer that you may like to use as a family.
Today we have decided to set up our Christmas tree. Its green branches remind us of the new life that comes into the world when Jesus is born anew in our hearts this Christmas. To show our joy, we decorate our tree with bright and sparkling shapes and colours. Our tree is unique because we place decorations that are special to our family.

Prayer
Loving God, you sent Jesus into our world to fill us all with peace. We welcome Jesus and the new life he brings. Bless our tree, it reminds us of growing things and flourishing life that never ends – just like your love for us.
Now that our tree is ready, we turn on the lights to show that Christ is the true Light of the world, the love that shines in our hearts.

Premiers reading Challenge – PRC
Congratulations to every student at Holy Cross – we have had 100% participation rate for the second year in a row in this event. This is an amazing achievement and commitment by the children, staff and parents. Many of our children are receiving their Gold Award this year – this represents 4 years of participation in the challenge. Keep it up Holy Cross – you are stars! I look forward to hearing about your third year of 100% participation.
PARISH NEWS

ADVENT PARISH REFLECTION MORNING
Saturday 10th December
Time: 9am Mass until shared lunch at 1pm.

On Saturday 10th December Fr Dave Hume will offer a Reflection Time in “Preparation for Christmas” starting with the 9am Parish Mass, followed by reflective times based upon Lectio Divina.

The Reflection morning, after Mass in our parish church, will adjourn to St Mark’s Staffroom.

Program:

- 9.00 am Parish Mass
- 9.30 am Morning Tea in St Mark’s staffroom.
- 10.00 am Prayer
- 10.15 am Lectio Devina: John 1:6-8 & 19-28
- 11.15 am TEA BREAK
- 11.45 am Prayer
- 11.50 am Fr Dave’s talk: A Hidden God.
- 12.10 pm Fr Dave: Guided Meditation
- 12.30 pm LUNCH (Bring a plate to share)

Alone this Christmas? So many people and maybe some in our parish spend Christmas Day on their own. I am inviting parishioners to make an extra place at their Christmas table and phone the parish office so we could put you in touch with people who may be on their own this Christmas. If anyone who is spending Christmas alone please phone our parish office and we will put you in touch with one of our families who would love to have you join them this Christmas.

SPORTING NEWS

School Swimming Carnival

Hopefully all the children competing are taking this opportunity to practice. We still do not have enough parents who have offered assistance at our swimming carnival so that the carnival can run safely and smoothly. We need your assistance so that all the events can be run on the day. Please leave your name at the office if you are able to assist.

Happy Birthday to the following children who celebrate their birthdays:-

Mihir Gaunter, Kyah Reibelt, Aidan Irving, Ysabella Festejo, Benjamin Reetov, Elizabeth Bell, Clara D’Aprile and Ruvimbo Mautsa

Change of Family Details

Please ensure that your family details, especially contact numbers are updated at the office when they change. This is very important in cases of accident or illness when we need to urgently contact parents.

OUTSTANDING SCHOOL FEES

Thank you to all those families who have finalised their 2011 School Fees. If your account is still outstanding and you have not contacted Mrs Nettleton or you are not on an arrangement you are requested to bring it to finalisation before Friday 2nd December, 2011. Please contact Vanessa if you would like to discuss fees with Mrs Nettleton.

Gr8 People

Congratulations to the following students who have been recognised by their fellow peers as a consistently strong leader within their learning community.

2012 Executive Director’s Summer Reading Challenge
Bust the boredom of summer holidays with a book and you could win an iPod Touch

The holidays are a perfect time to discover the fun and pleasure of reading, and as an added incentive, executive director of schools, Greg Whitby, is once again running the Summer Reading Challenge for all students enrolled in a Catholic systemic school in the Parramatta diocese. By independently reading 10 or more age-appropriate books during their summer holidays, students from each category will go in to the draw to win an iPod Touch.

There are three age categories, based on the age the student is on Friday February 10 2012. The categories are:
Ages 5-8
Ages 9-12
Ages 13+

Students must record all the books they read on a log sheet, which is signed off by a parent or guardian. Entries must be received by 5pm, Friday 10 February 2012. The draw will take place on Friday 17 February and the winners will be published on the Catholic Education website.

‘This is an exciting challenge and I encourage students of all ages to take part. The world of reading opens the door to exciting adventures, wonderful new friends and a host of learning opportunities.’ Greg Whitby