

*John went into all the region around the Jordan,  
preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins . . .*

Luke 3: 3

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We, the people of Boonah Catholic parish,  
acknowledge the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which our parish is located  
and where we conduct our mission and ministry.

We pay our respects to ancestors and elders, past and present.

As a local community of faith within the Church of Brisbane,  
we are committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples'  
unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas  
and their rich contribution to society.

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*Warm greetings to the members of the Boonah Catholic community and beyond on the 2nd Sunday of Advent.*

## 1. REFLECTIONS ON THE SUNDAY WORD.

The **reflection** for this Sunday is offered by Julian McDonald, a Christian Brother who lives in Sydney.

My limited knowledge of the Old or First Testament leads me to think that the central figure of today's gospel-reading might well have been the first hippie listed in recorded history. I sometimes wonder what his parents Elizabeth and Zechariah might have thought of their only son and his somewhat unusual life-style. Perhaps God saved them the embarrassment of trying to explain to their neighbours just what had gotten into their son, by taking them to heaven before John went wild. In light of Zechariah's high profile in the Temple, John, too, would probably have been in line for an important position. However, he chose to go in a different direction.

Luke expands on that different direction in today's gospel-reading. He starts by listing all the notables in positions of power, and then proceeds to point out that God's word eluded them all and, instead, came to an eccentric, who was living an alternate life-style. I wonder if there is something about position and power that makes those, who aspire to those things or who have them, impervious to hearing or understanding the word of God. By

way of contrast, God's word took hold of John and fired him up to embark on a mission of waking up his world. John found a freedom that escapes many of us. Ignoring both fear and favour, he found within himself the ability to share the insights that God's Spirit had led him to discover. Luke, having reflected on John and his frenzied activity of calling people to a change of heart and outlook, described him as the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy that there would come on the scene an obscure figure who would call people to ready themselves for the coming of the Messiah by changing their hearts:



“A herald’s voice in the desert, crying: ‘Make ready the way of the Lord, clear him a straight path. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be levelled. The windings shall be made straight and the rough ways smooth, and all humankind shall see the salvation of God” (Isaiah 40, 3-5).

It takes courage and integrity for anyone to claim her/his freedom. In that regard John the Baptist is a model and inspiration for us all. Dawna Markova is a woman of our own times who seems to have found her freedom, and is not afraid to claim it in the public forum. Perhaps we, too can learn from her as we do from the Baptist: *I will not die an unlived life. I will not live in fear of falling or catching fire. I choose to inhabit my days, to allow my living to open me, to make me less afraid, more accessible, to loosen my heart until it becomes a wing, a torch, a promise. I choose to risk my significance; to live so that which came to me as a seed goes to the next as a blossom and that which came to me as a blossom, goes on as fruit.*

John, of course, by using the metaphor of road maintenance and redirection, was calling his people to set about changing their own hearts and challenging the predominant culture to direct its resources to things like justice, compassion and security for everyone. He was echoing the message of Isaiah that God’s saving love is for everyone without exception, and that the first step, for all who came to listen to him and be baptised, was to straighten out their lives, to get rid of whatever was blocking the way for the word of God to touch their hearts.

Advent, as we know, is a time for us to stop and ponder the significance of the coming of God among us in the person of Jesus. While Jesus, like John, spent some time in the wilderness before embarking on his mission, he immersed himself in all the nonsense, strife and madness of what is involved in living life in close proximity to other struggling human beings. He was born in a stable on the edge of a small town that was so overcrowded that there wasn’t even basic accommodation available. And he grew up in a culture that was so plagued with religious rivalry and infighting that he ended his life on a cross provided by agents of a culture that was anathema to those who practiced Judaism.

The crowded urban cultures in which most of us live are quite simply symptoms of the brokenness of our world, a brokenness that cries to be mended, but a brokenness we feel unable to address because of fear, a sense of helplessness or a reluctance to claim our true freedom.

The arrival of John the Baptist with his call to all to open themselves to a change of heart and spirit came as a surprise. Yet his call evidently woke his part of the world from its slumber. His appearance was a surprise, but a reminder to those around him that the God he proclaimed is a God of surprises. Moreover, he is a reminder to us that we can never predict exactly when and how God will appear in our lives. However, we can be sure that God is present to us somehow in the events that fill our days, if only we have ears to hear and eyes to see.

This Sunday’s gospel-reading is an invitation to us to stop and ponder what is calling for change in our own hearts. There will be no possibility of change if we think there is no reason to change. If we are happy that the geography of our hearts needs no maintenance or alteration, then we will stay in our ruts. But perhaps we may need to do something to open a pathway by which God can find a way into our hearts as we prepare for Christmas.





If we are tempted to think that all this is in the too-hard basket, we might do well to look at today's second reading from Paul to the Philippians. Many of us write letters at this time of the year to bring extended family members up to date. Today's extract from Philippians is a little like that. To a community with whom he has worked, Paul gives credit for their efforts to spread the good news of Jesus. But he takes no credit for his own efforts. He attributes their good work to the



through us. The invitation of Advent is to open up, even just a little, to allow Jesus to come in.

fact that they have opened their hearts to Jesus and God's Spirit, but that's the kind of thing God does if we take the risk of providing an opening for God to work in and



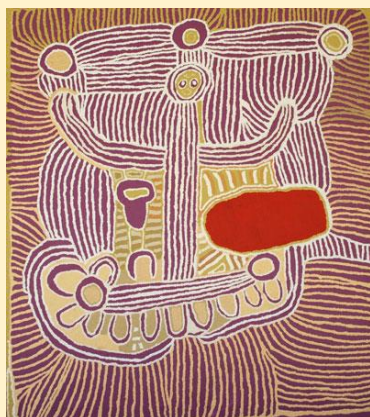
## 2. *Boonah Parish happenings . . .*

from commands to invitations,  
 from laws to ideals,  
 from threats to persuasion,  
 from coercion to conscience,  
 from monologue to conversation,  
 from ruling to serving,  
 from withdrawn to integrated,  
 from vertical and top-down to horizontal,  
 from exclusion to inclusion,  
 from hostility to friendship,  
 from static to changing,  
 from passive acceptance to active engagement,  
 from prescriptive to principled,  
 from defined to open-ended,  
 from behaviour-modification to conversion of heart,  
 from the dictates of law to the dictates of conscience,  
 from external conformity to the joyful pursuit of holiness.

When these elements are taken in the aggregate, they indicate a model of spirituality. This, they say, is what good Catholics should look like and this is how they should behave. That means the elements indicate what the Church should look like and how it should behave. This is a significant model-shift. This is a teaching of the Second Vatican Council.

- Fr. John O'Malley SJ, 2006

Our **SUNDAY EUCHARIST** schedule is:



*Desert Eucharist*  
Linda Syddick Napaltjarri (b. 1937)

**Saturday**

5.00pm

**Boonah church**

**Sunday**

7.30am

**1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday: Harrisville church**

**2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday: Peak Crossing church**

9.30am

**Boonah church**

Our **WEEKDAY EUCHARIST** schedule for this week, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Week of Advent:

**Monday** 6<sup>th</sup> December 5.30pm, **Boonah church**

**Tuesday** 7<sup>th</sup> December 8.00am **Boonah church**

**Wednesday** 8<sup>th</sup> December 6.00pm, **Peak Crossing church** *followed by dinner at The Peak Pub*

**Thursday** 9<sup>th</sup> December 8.00am **Boonah church**



▪ *We pray with and for those who are sick in our parish and beyond:* all across the globe infected with COVID-19; former pastor of Boonah parish Fr. Ellis Clifford, Chris Healy, Paul White, Arthur Devin, Liliana Toohill, Libby Shields, Marko Babic, Max Gardiner, Bernice Lippiatt, Trish Merlehan, Bernadette Pinchin, Simon Greatrex, Neil O'Connor, Cate Mitten, Bernice Brault, Paula Ebrington, Fletcher Casey, Jill

Archer, Matthew Bowden, Louisa, David Mitchell, Vince Bellett, Bill (USA) and sick members of parish families and those beyond our parish boundaries.

▪ **EVERY SUNDAY** when we gather for the Sunday eucharist, there are baskets (of some kind or another) at the entrances of our churches.

We are invited to bring a gift of **non-perishable food or goods** for people seeking help from our local St. Vincent de Paul.

*The local conference very much appreciates our weekly support.*

▪ **THANK YOU** to all who support the weekly Sunday collection. Your gifts enable the parish to meet its expenses and to function like an everyday household. If you would like to give weekly or monthly in a planned way, please see me.

- **CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION.** The 1<sup>st</sup> Rite for Reconciliation (formerly known as Confession) may be celebrated anytime. Please phone 5463 1057 to make a suitable time. Alternatively see me before Mass (if there is plenty of time) or after Mass (once the majority of people have left the church).

- Last week was the final week for the students at **OUR PARISH SCHOOL**. It was a very full week for all who make the school work day by day.

On Tuesday evening we celebrated the End of Year 6 and completion of primary education with prayer, awards and festivities. We also acknowledged that many families of the Year 6 students finish their involvement with our school as they have no more children with us next year. It is great that the school *farewells* these families.

Then on Wednesday morning the whole school community celebrated a Liturgy of the Word to mark the conclusion of the 2021 academic year. There was also a lot of fun activities for the children during the whole day.

Last day of the school year was Friday which saw a general tidy-up of all rooms and spaces. The staff gathered for lunch later in the day at *The Vue*. Great food!

At the lunch we bade farewell to several staff including Cassie (who was with us this year), Connor (sports), Wayne Bird (grounds), Caitlin Baker (teacher - nine years) and Peta Schoenwald (teacher - 15 years). *We wish them all the best in their new endeavours and happy retirement to Wayne.*





▪ The **SOUTH COUNTRY DEANERY - PRIESTS** will meet this coming Wednesday 8th December at the Ipswich Catholic Community parish centre. We are looking forward to our final gathering for this year.



30<sup>th</sup> November 2021

3. Pope Francis is currently on his **APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO CYPRUS AND GREECE (2-6 DECEMBER 2021)**. The following text is from **ECUMENICAL PRAYER WITH MIGRANTS** celebrated at the Parish Church of the Holy Cross in Nicosia, Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2021.

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

It is a great joy to be here with you and to conclude my visit to Cyprus with this prayer meeting. I thank Patriarchs Pizzaballa and Béchara Raï, and Ms. Elisabeth of Caritas. I greet with affection and gratitude the representatives of the different Christian confessions present in Cyprus.

I want to say, from my heart, a big “thanks” to you, the young migrants who offered your testimonies. I received copies of them in advance, about a month ago. They made a great impression on me then, and again hearing them today. More than just moved, I had the powerful sensation that comes from encountering the beauty of truth. Jesus was moved in that way when he cried out: “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants” (Mt 11:25). I too give praise to the heavenly Father because this is happening today, here and throughout the world. God is revealing his Kingdom, his Kingdom of love, justice and peace, to the little ones.

After listening to you, we better understand all the prophetic power of the word of God, who, through the apostle Paul, tells us: “You are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God” (Eph 2:19). Those words were addressed to the Christians of Ephesus, not far from here, centuries ago, yet those words remain as timely as ever, as if they were written for us today: “You are no longer strangers, but fellow citizens”. This is the prophecy of the Church: a community that, for all its human limitations, incarnates God’s dream. For God too dreams, like you, Mariamie, from the Democratic Republic of

the Congo, who described yourself as “full of dreams”. Like yourself, God dreams of a world of peace, in which all his children live as brothers and sisters. God wants this, God dreams of this. We are the ones who don’t want it.

Your presence, migrant brothers and sisters, is very significant for this celebration. Your testimonies are like a “mirror” held up to us, to our Christian communities. When you, Thamara, who come from Sri Lanka, told us that people often ask, “Who are you?”: the brutal experience of migration calls our very identity into question. “Is this what I am? I don’t know...Where are my roots? Who am I?” When you ask these questions, you remind us that we too are sometimes asked the same question: “Who are you?” And sadly, all too often, what is really being asked is: “Whose side are you on?”, “What group do you belong to?” Yet as you said, we are not numbers, names on a list; we are “brothers and sisters”, “friends”, “believers”, “neighbours” to one another. Yet when group or political interests, including those of nations, start to push, many of us end up being set aside and without wanting it, become slaves. For interest always enslaves, it always creates slaves. Love, which is expansive and the opposite of hatred, makes us free.

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When you, Maccolins, who come from Cameroon, tell us that in the course of your life you have been “wounded by hate”, you spoke about this, about these wounds inflicted by interests: and you reminded us that hate has also poisoned relationships between us Christians. And this as you said, changes us; it leaves a deep and long-lasting mark. It is a poison. Yes, you made us feel this by the passion with which you spoke. Hate is a poison hard to remove, a twisted mind-set that, instead of letting us see ourselves as brothers and sisters, makes us see one another as enemies, as rivals, or even as objects to be sold or exploited.

When you, Rozh, who come from Iraq, say that you are someone “on a journey”, you remind us that we ourselves are a community on a journey; we are journeying from conflict to communion. On this road, which is long and has its ups and downs, we should not be afraid of our differences, but afraid of the close-mindedness and prejudice that can prevent us from truly encountering one another and journeying together. Close-mindedness and prejudice re-erect the wall of division, the hostility between us, that Christ tore down (cf. Eph 2:14). Our journey towards full unity can only advance to the extent that, together, we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, on him who is “our peace” (ibid.), the “cornerstone” (v. 20). It is he, the Lord Jesus, whom we encounter in the faces of our marginalized and discarded brothers and sisters. In the face of the migrant who is despised, rejected, put in a cage, exploited... But at the same time – as you said – the face of the migrant journeying to a goal, to a hope, to greater human companionship...





Vatican Media.

In all these ways, God speaks to us through your dreams. The danger is that many times we do not let our dreams in, we would rather sleep and not dream. It is easy to look the other way. And in this world we have grown accustomed to a culture of indifference, a culture of looking the other way and thus sleeping peacefully. Yet that way it is impossible to dream. God speaks through your dreams. God does not speak through people who are dreamless, because they have everything or because their hearts are hardened. God calls us not to be content with a divided world, content with divided Christian communities, but to journey through history drawn by his own dream: the dream of a humanity freed of walls of division, freed of hostility, where there are no longer strangers, but only fellow citizens, as we heard Paul say in the passage I just mentioned. Fellow citizens who are diverse, yet proud of that diversity and individuality, which are God's gifts. Diverse, proud to be diverse, but always reconciled, always brothers and sisters.

May this island, marked by a painful division – from here I can see that wall – become by God's grace a workshop of fraternity. I thank all those who are working to make that happen. We must realize that this island is generous, but it cannot do everything, since the number of people arriving is greater than their possibilities of insertion, integrating, accompanying and promoting. Its geographical closeness may make it easier... but it is not easy. We must understand the limits to which the island's leaders are bound. But on this island, and I have seen this in the leaders I have met, a commitment to become, by God's grace, a workshop of freedom. And it will, if two things can happen. First, an effective recognition of the dignity of every human person (cf. *Fratelli Tutti* 8). Our dignity is not up for sale; it cannot be rented out; it must not be squandered. Hold your head high and say: I am a child of God; I have my dignity. The effective recognition of this dignity is the ethical foundation, a universal foundation, which is also at the core of Christian social doctrine. Second, a trusting openness to God the Father of all; this is the "leaven" that we, as believers, are called to offer (cf. *ibid.*, 272).

If these two things can happen, the dream can translate into a daily journey, made up of concrete steps from conflict to communion, from hate to love, from escape to encounter. A patient journey, which day by day leads us to the land God has prepared for us. The land where, when people ask "Who are you?", you can readily respond, "Look, I am your brother, your sister. Don't you recognize me?" And then, go your way in peace.

As I listen to you and see your faces, I am reminded of another thing: your suffering. You arrived here, but how many of your brothers and sisters are still making the journey? How many desperate people have set out in difficult and precarious conditions, but did not arrive? We can think about this sea, which has become a great cemetery. Looking at you, I see the suffering caused by your journey; I see all those people who were kidnapped, sold, exploited... and who are still on the journey, we know not where. We are speaking of slavery, of universal enslavement. We see what is happening, and the worst thing is that we are becoming used to it. "Oh yes, today another boat capsized... so many lives were lost..." This "becoming used" to things is a grave illness, a very grave illness, and there is no antibiotic for it! We have to resist this vice of getting used to reading about these tragedies in the newspapers or hearing about them on other media.

Looking at you, I think too of all those people who had to return because they were turned away and ended up in concentration camps, real concentration camps, where the women have been sold, and men tortured and enslaved... We are appalled when we read stories of the concentration camps of the last century, those of the Nazis or those of Stalin, and we say: "How could this possibly have happened?" Brothers and sisters, it is happening today, on nearby coasts! Places of enslavement. I have seen some filmed testimonies about this: places of torture and human trafficking. I say all this because it is my responsibility to help open people's eyes to this reality. Forced migration is not a kind of "tourism"! And our sinfulness leads us to think: "Those poor people, those poor people!", and with those words, "poor people", we blot everything out. This is today's war: the suffering of our brothers and sisters, which we cannot pass over in silence. Brothers and sisters who left everything behind to get on a boat, in the dark of night, and then... without knowing if they would ever arrive. And all those who were turned away and ended up in the concentration camps, true places of torture and enslavement.

Such is the story of this developed civilization that we call the West. And then – forgive me, but here I would like to say what is in my heart, at least so that we can pray for one another and do something – and then, there is the barbed wire. We see it here: it is part of a war of hatred dividing a country. Yet in other places, barbed wire is set up to prevent the entrance of refugees, those who come in search of freedom, food, assistance, fraternity, joy, those fleeing from hatred but then find themselves facing a form of hatred called barbed wire. May the Lord awaken the conscience of us all before these realities.

Excuse me if I have spoken of things as they really are, but we cannot remain silent and look the other way amid this culture of indifference.

*May the Lord bless all of you! Thank you.*



4. One of my liturgy colleagues shared this and I thought some might be interested in this comment. It was published in *La Croix International* on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2021: "The problem with transubstantiation" by Hendro Munsterman, a Roman Catholic theologian who teaches in France. Hendro writes on faith and religion for the Dutch Christian daily *Nederlands Dagblad* where this article was originally published.

"Only one-third of American Catholics believe that the Eucharist is the body and blood of Christ," the US-based Pew Research Centre noted last August.

"You see, even Catholics agree with us!" said the Protestants in a sigh of relief.

But conservative Catholics were greatly alarmed.

"Sixty-nine percent of Americans who consider themselves Catholics do not believe Church teaching that the bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Christ during consecration at Mass," they said.

Both groups have missed the point.

#### A false dichotomy?

The Pew surveyed actually asked Catholics if they believed in "the Church's teaching on transubstantiation" or that "bread and wine are symbols of the body and blood of Christ".

In other words, it was a question of believing in transubstantiation or symbolism. But both terms are highly problematic when it comes to describing the Catholic faith in the Eucharist.

The Catholic Church, in fact, does not believe in "transubstantiation". It is term officially adopted in the thirteenth century to sensibly



and intelligibly express the mystery of faith that Christ is truly present in the Eucharist under the species of bread and wine. Catholics believe actually in the real presence. The concept of transubstantiation is merely a theological tool; the best we have.

Or, perhaps, the best we once had.

The term has become problematic. Indeed, the word "substance" sounds very different in our ears than it sounded in the ears of our ancestor. For us, the word includes such things as molecules, atoms and matter.

### It's all Greek to me

When the term "transubstantiation" entered Catholic teaching in the eleventh century, theologians such as Thomas Aquinas and others based their arguments on the philosophical thinking of the Greek philosopher Aristotle.

The latter used the term in a sense that means exactly the opposite of what we now understand it to mean.

The "substance" of an object, of something that exists, is for Aristotle everything except its matter and what is visible or tangible about it.

The Greek term he used (*ousia*), which was later translated into Latin as *substantia*, is probably best translated in our contemporary language as "being".

Aristotle, in his attempt to understand reality, distinguished between the so-called "accidents" of an object and its "substance" (being).

The accidents concern everything that has to do with materiality and visibility: colour, form, material. For example, the "accidents" of a cupboard may be that it is made of wood, is brown and is 180 centimetres high. But the

"substance" or the being of the cupboard does not depend on these accidents.

If, for example, we give the brown cupboard a beautiful blue colour with a brush or replace the wooden planks with glass plates, nothing changes in its "substance", according to Aristotle. It remains "essentially" a cupboard. We could say that only a "trans-accidentation" has taken place.

When Christians come together around bread and wine and the priest presides over this eucharist on behalf of Christ, all the "accidents" (the material and visible part of bread and wine) remain the same. But the very essence of the bread changes: trans-substantiation.

It is no longer bread to satisfy hunger and be able to eat together, but bread to satisfy spiritual hunger and gathered to truly participate with sisters and brothers in Christ's offer of salvation.

There is no hocus pocus involved (even though this magician's term comes from the Latin words *hoc est corpus meum* - "This is my Body").

Transubstantiation can be felt only by people who know and believe inwardly that reality is not limited to materiality. Indeed: that requires faith.

### The problem with symbolism

The term "symbol" is equally problematic.

In general language, it is understood as a synonym for "not real". But in the philosophical and Christian traditions, the term is used in a different way.

Namely, if we use "symbol" as referring to "things, places, events or persons that mediate a presence and an awareness of another reality," it is a word that can also express

something of the mystery of Christ's real presence.

So do Catholics believe in transubstantiation, or do they see it as a symbol? It all depends on how you interpret, understand and use the terms "substance" and "symbol".

Ultimately, of course, the mystery of faith cannot be adequately expressed in words.

The Eucharistic mystery of Christ's real presence cannot be explained. It has to be celebrated and experienced as a grace-filled mystery that, while ultimately transcending all understanding, truly makes one live.

That's because in faith we know Christ presence, not beside or above reality, but in it and through it.



2<sup>nd</sup> December 2021

5. The Australian Human Rights Commission has launched *Set the Standard: Report on the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces*. It is sobering reading indeed!



On 5 March 2021, the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces (Review) was established by the Australian Government, with support from the Federal Opposition and crossbench.

Conducted by the Australian Human Rights Commission and led by the Sex Discrimination Commissioner, the Review was asked to make recommendations to ensure that Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces are safe and respectful and that the nation's Parliament reflects best practice in prevention and response to bullying, sexual harassment and sexual assault.

The report has been tabled on 30 November 2021.

Access the report, executive summary and summary [here](#).

## *Advent Prayer*

Lord Jesus,  
Master of both the light and the darkness,  
send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas.

We who have so much to do and seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day,  
We who are anxious over many things look forward to your coming among us.  
We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of your kingdom.

We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your presence.  
We are your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light.

To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!  
Amen.

*Henri J.M. Nouwen (1932-1996)*



The poster features a white central area with a blue border, set against a background of green and yellow brushstrokes. At the top, there are three logos: Brisbane Catholic Education (teaching, challenging, transforming), the Archdiocese of Brisbane (a shield with a cross and a crown), and Centacare. Below the logos, the word "STOPline" is written in large, bold, red letters. Underneath, the text reads: "STOPline receives information about abuse, harm and other serious misconduct by Archdiocesan workers (including priests, religious, employees and volunteers)." This is followed by the statement "Information can be provided anonymously." in red. A yellow horizontal line separates this from the contact information: "Phone: 1300 304 550", "Email: AOB@stopline.com.au", and "Online Report: www.bnecatholic.stoplinereport.com". At the bottom, there is a circular logo with the word "STOPLINE" and the text "If you think it's wrong ..... report it." in red.

**STOPline**

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Phone: 1300 304 550  
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**If you think it's wrong ..... report it.**



Finally . . . getting vaccinated is about the common good and accepting personal responsibility to care for the neighbour!



Enjoy these Advent days!

*John*

pastor  
Boonah Catholic community