



St Mary's Parish Concord

6th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Year C

13 February 2022

LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING: Jeremiah 17:5-8

**Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals;
Blessed are those who trust in the Lord.**

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 1

Happy are they that hope in the Lord.

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20

If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile.

GOSPEL: Luke 6:17, 20-26

Blessed are the poor, but woe to you who are rich!

PRAYER INTENTIONS

We pray for Fr Paulino Tui Kolio, Josephine Tesoriero, Alice McKenna (Ireland) and all those who have died recently.

We pray for Giuseppina Ferrara, William Obeid, Francesco Franze, and all those whose anniversaries occur about this time, Cosimo & Viola Franze, Salvatore Valenzisi and for all our deceased family members, friends, and parishioners.

We pray for all health care worker and all those who continue to work to protect the community.

We pray for all those affected by floods and other natural disasters.

CHURCH ATTENDANCE UPDATE

All are welcome to join us at our Sunday and weekday Masses. No bookings are required.

Face masks are mandatory. Please continue to check-in using the QR code.

If you are unwell, please do not come to the church. See the parish website for more details

CONFIRMATION 2022: There will be two celebrations of Confirmation at St Mary's Concord: **Saturday 14 May at 3.00 pm and Sunday 15 May at 11.00 am. Registrations will only be accepted from Monday 28 March until Friday 8 April 2022.** More details will be available in March. Numbers at each session may be limited depending on COVID Health Restrictions in May 2022.

Acknowledgement of Country



We acknowledge the Wangal people of the Eora nation as the traditional custodians of this land

LIVE STREAMING FROM ST MARY'S

We began live streaming the parish 9.30 am Mass in December 2020. When we were locked-down from June to October 2021, the live streamed Mass provided a valuable link for our parish community. **The dynamic coverage is made possible because someone is directing the cameras.** A small team of volunteers has enabled that to happen each Sunday. In 2022 we need directors. **Are you interested in becoming part of the live-streaming team?**

The 9.30 am Sunday Mass is live streamed to on the parish Facebook page (St Marys Parish Church Concord) and to the parish YouTube channel.

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCL0awxfUmJ6XjHJZcqsR2_A

While we encourage all who can to join us on Sundays, we know that some older and frail parishioners are not able to come to the church.

Are you struggling in this time of crisis?

Depression. Anxiety. Loneliness. Conflict. Stress. CCareline 13 18 19 is a free and confidential helpline for counselling, relationships, parenting, ageing, disabilities, addictions and mental health. For help finding help, call CCareline on 13 18 19

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THE SERMON ON THE PLAIN

When we think of the Beatitudes, we mostly recall Matthew's version at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:1-12). In Luke's Gospel, we hear another version of the Beatitude. The context for Luke's version is Jesus instructing his disciples in what is called the *Sermon on the Plain* (Lk 6:17-49).

This year we hear the *Sermon on the Plain* as our Gospel reading over three Sundays, beginning on the Sixth Sunday (13 February). It is worth noting that we only hear this challenging part of Luke's Gospel once every three years (in Year C of the Lectionary) and in some years when Lent begins in February, we often miss part of it.

Luke sets the scene just after Jesus has chosen the Twelve. As well as a large crowd of his disciples, a great multitude of the ordinary people had followed Jesus to this place.

They had come to hear Jesus and be healed by him. But it is to his disciples that Jesus directs his message. That is an important point to recall because the Beatitudes only make sense if they are heard with the ears of faith.

Matthew's Gospel has nine Beatitudes. Luke has four, followed by four corresponding Woes. The Beatitudes/Woes are presented not just as opposites but as the two sides of the one coin. It is a very stark way of saying that Jesus is turning the values of the world upside down.

Australian biblical scholar, Brendan Byrne SJ, sums it up when he writes "The Beatitudes and Woes make sense in the light of the coming reversal of fortune so prominent in Luke's view of salvation." (*The Hospitality of God* p 65). In other words, they only make sense if we are open to the gift of salvation that Jesus is offering us.

The poor and those in need are powerless. They are vulnerable. They are also blessed or fortunate because their vulnerability allows them to be more open to the gift of salvation.

Luke first introduced that gift of salvation when the angel appeared to the shepherds and declared "today a Saviour has been born for you" (Lk 2:8-11). Salvation is also the gift that Jesus offers to the criminal dying on the cross who asks "Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Lk 23:42).

Salvation is the gift of life that Jesus offers to all people. But it is a gift that needs to be received. As we will see as we follow Luke's Gospel, power and wealth are seen as obstacles that hold people back because the powerful believe that they do not need God.

In the next part of the Sermon, Jesus draws out the practical implications of this reversal of values by declaring that those who want to follow him must love their enemies and do good to those who hate and persecute them.

Paul Crowley
Parish Priest

THE CHALLENGE OF AGING IN 2022

The Australian Catholic Bishops' Social Justice Statement released in September 1998 was called *The Challenge of Aging*. The United Nations had designated 1999 as the International Year for Older Persons. The Social Justice Statement wanted to challenge some of the myths about older people that had emerged in Australian society in the second half of the twentieth century. Over twenty years later many of those myths still flourish.

Back in 1998 a pervasive myth said that older people were a drain on our society and some commentators warned that the government needed to control the ever-increasing costs of Aged Care. As *The Challenge of Aging* noted the reality was that a majority of older Australians were "healthy, productive, financially independent and more likely to be giving care than receiving it".

That remains true in 2022 but there have also been some significant social changes. One shift has been the perception of who is an "old person".

Even in the 1990s many of those who had retired in their early 60s were active in the community. They were the volunteers who supported the work of the parish and many other community groups. That generation has disappeared or they are themselves in need of care.

The generation now in their 60s are still healthy and productive. Because of economic pressures many are still working. Others find themselves supporting their children and grandchildren while often also caring for elderly parents. One practical consequence has been a sharp decline in the pool of volunteers. That is reflected not only in the parish but also in many community organisations.

Advances in health care mean that many of us are living longer and will at some point need support. The current debate about Aged Care needs to reflect those social changes.

While the trend to home care has many positive benefits, it is also leaving many older members of our community isolated. The pandemic has obviously added to that isolation. Other social changes have compounded that trend. It is now almost impossible to access any Government service without a computer or smart phone.

There are many significant social issues facing us including the impact of a global pandemic. In the coming months there will be many debates about the funding not only of Aged Care but of Health and Education more generally. How we respond to the challenges facing us will tell us much about our values and the future direction of our society and country.

Paul Crowley
Parish Priest

OUR PARISH COMMUNITY IN 2022

In early 2021 it seemed that the COVID pandemic was under control and life could slowly return to normal. Then on Saturday 26 June 2021 Sydney went into another lockdown as the Delta strain began to spread. All churches were closed. What was to be a two-week lockdown lasted almost four months.

Even when Masses resumed on 24 October 2021 many people were hesitant to come back to Mass. By late November as the vaccination targets were reached, we began to hope that families could once again celebrate Christmas.

Although some restrictions were lifted, many were still hesitant. The numbers at our Christmas Masses in 2021 were well below the pre-COVID attendance.

As we come to the end of January, our Mass attendance continues to be well below our pre-COVID numbers. The arrival of the Omicron variant of the virus has had a significant impact on public confidence as we experience a "shadow" lockdown.

On the positive side, the decision to install video cameras in the church in November 2020 has enabled us to live-stream the 9.30 am Mass each Sunday. It continues to be an important point of contact for those who are unable to come to Mass.

It remains true, however, that many of the things we took for granted in the past are still not possible. The residents of St Mary's Villa, like all those in Aged Care facilities, have been seriously affected. Children have not been able to attend school and spend time with their friends.

Important family celebrations have been cancelled or postponed. In 2020 the parish sesquicentenary celebrations were cancelled

We will slowly emerge from the COVID pandemic and when we do, one of the challenges we face is the rebuilding of our parish community.

We need to rebuild our teams of volunteers such as our catechists and those who in the past took Holy Communion to the sick. Our other parish ministry teams also need new members: readers, ministers of Communion, acolytes, altar servers, the altar society.

The Parish Pastoral Council has an important role to play as we reflect on our Vision and Mission. New members are needed in 2022.

Please think about how you can contribute to rebuilding the parish community. Now is the time to start planning for a post-COVID world. Perhaps a good place to start is our Sunday celebration of the Eucharist. If you are well and fully vaccinated, join us each Sunday as we give thanks to God for our many blessings.

Paul Crowley
Parish Priest

HERITAGE SIGNS: In 2020 St Mary's Parish commissioned five heritage signs to mark the sesquicentenary of the parish. They recall historical parish buildings that once existed on the parish site: the first church (1845), the second church (1874), the presbytery (1882), the first school building (1894) and the convent (1898). The signs have been placed close to the original locations of the buildings.

THE PRESBYTERY: When Father Callaghan McCarthy was appointed parish priest in 1870, he lived in a cottage on the Burwood side of Parramatta Road until the presbytery (the priest's residence) was built in 1882. It stood on the northern side of the 1874 church and faced Burton Street.



The Presbytery was on the eastern side of the church and faced Burton Street.

The original building was extended several times as the needs of the parish changed. As well as providing a residence for the priests, it also served as the office for the parish until 1994 when the parish office was relocated to 4 Ada Street.

The presbytery continued to be as the residence for the priests of the parish until 2002. It was demolished in 2008 to make way for the new St Mary's Villa.

COLLECTIONS: The normal practice of passing the collection plates remains suspended. There are two containers at the back of the church and at the side door marked 1st and 2nd Collection. Your regular donations can be placed in the appropriate containers. For your convenience Tap and Go stations are now available at the doors of the church. Tap to donate the set amount. Please note that receipts cannot be issued for donations and the transactions cannot be reversed.

PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN

The Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney Safeguarding Office provides support and training for parish communities to ensure that our communities offer a safe and caring environment. The Safeguarding Office also provides support for those who have suffered abuse.

If you or a person close to you has been abused by someone working or ministering within the Archdiocese of Sydney, the Safeguarding Office will listen to you respectfully, offer support and discuss the options you have available to you. Please contact the Safeguarding and Ministerial Integrity Office on phone: 9390 5812.

St Mary's Church Concord

The painting of the Blessed Virgin Mary that is the dominant image of Mary in the church is a copy of *The Immaculate Virgin of Los Venerables* painted by the Spanish artist Bartolome Esteban Murillo (1618-1682) in about 1678.

It is believed that the original painting was commissioned from Bartolomé Esteban Murillo by Justino de Neve, who was ecclesiastical president of the *Hospital de los Venerables* in Seville. He later donated it to the chapel at the hospital. The original painting is now in the Prado Museum in Madrid

The title of Immaculate Virgin reflects the belief that Mary was without sin from the first moment of her being. Although it was only officially declared a dogma of the Church in 1854, belief in the Immaculate Conception of Mary had been a popular devotion in Spain since the 16th century.

In this painting Murillo combined two different iconographic traditions: the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption. Although the Assumption of Mary was only declared to be a dogma in 1950, it too had been a popular devotion for many centuries.

The parish's copy was cleaned and restored in February 2020 to mark the Sesquicentenary of the founding of St Mary's Parish (1870-2020).



VOTIVE CANDLES: A long Christian tradition has linked lighting a candle to prayers of petition. When we pray for a particular intention or for someone who has died, lighting a candle often provides a visible expression of our prayer. That is also why we give a donation so that it becomes “my candle” that I am offering as a sign of my prayer.

Many churches have moved to electric votive candles.



We have two electric votive candle stands to give parishioners an opportunity to “light” a candle. You simply need to touch the button in

front of the candle.

We also have a votive candle stand in the shrine of *Santa Maria Vergine Annunziata* at the back of the church. It offers an opportunity to light a specially designed candle that fits into a glass holder. A donation can be placed in the box at the front of the stand.

HOUSE OF WELCOME FOODBANK APPEAL



Foodbank provides household necessities for people seeking asylum who have limited or no income. People can access groceries on a weekly basis to alleviate the cost of living. The Foodbank program is largely stocked through the generosity of people in the community. No contribution is too small.

Contact: office@houseofwelcome.com.au

197 The Trongate, Granville

Ph: 02 9727 9290

stfrancis.org.au/house-of-welcome

ST LUKE'S GOSPEL

This year on the Ordinary Sundays we read from Luke's Gospel. For the next five Sundays, until Lent begins, we will be exploring Luke's account of the beginnings of the ministry of Jesus in Galilee.

For more, please see January 30 Bulletin

*Paul Crowley,
Parish Priest*

SUNDAY & ORDINARY TIME

Changes in society have already led many to see Sunday as just another day in the week. But for us it remains the day when we gather as a community to celebrate our relationship with God in Christ.

Unfortunately, over the past two years the COVID pandemic lockdowns have further eroded our sense of the community gathering on Sundays. We continue to face that challenge.

To read more, please see January 30 Bulletin

*Paul Crowley,
Parish Priest*