



St Mary's Parish Concord
2nd Sunday of Lent
 Year C
13 March 2022

LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING: Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18
The Lord made a covenant with Abraham, his righteous servant.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 27
The Lord is my light and my salvation.

SECOND READING: Philippians 3:17 – 4:1
Christ will transform our humble bodies, conforming them in his glorious body.

GOSPEL: Luke 9:28-36
While Jesus prayed, the appearance of his face changed.

PRAYER INTENTIONS

We pray for Luigi Moschetti, Winnie Hermann and all those who have died recently.

We pray for Antonio Patrizi, Betty Lucas, John McCue and all those whose anniversaries occur about this time 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 peace in the world and especially for Ukraine.

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. The changes that took effect from Friday 25 February mean that face masks are no longer mandatory for the church. However, masks are recommended for those indoor settings where it is not possible to maintain social distancing. Please respect other people's space.



Caritas Australia Ukraine Appeal

The escalating violence in Ukraine is rapidly becoming a dire humanitarian crisis. In a matter of days, over half a million people have been forced from their homes and at least 400 civilians have lost their lives. Our long-standing partner, Caritas Ukraine, is on the ground, supporting people in need during this unfolding humanitarian crisis.

ST MARY'S SCHOOL OPEN DAY: There are two sessions for those who wish to take the opportunity to inspect the school facilities and meet the students and staff. **Sunday 13 March 10.30 to 11.30 am and Tuesday 15 March 3.45 to 5.00 pm.**

FIRST RECONCILIATION: Registrations have now closed. Parents are reminded that an **information meeting about the Sacrament of Penance will be held in the church at 7.30 pm on Tuesday 15 March.** The children do not need to attend. The presentation by Fr Paul is aimed at parents and others who want to learn more about the Sacrament of Penance. All are welcome to attend.

Enrolment Mass: The children preparing for 1st Reconciliation and their families are asked to join the parish community at **9.30 am Mass on Sunday 20 March.** An enrolment will take place within the Mass.

EUTHANASIA LAWS IN NSW
Sign an ePetition



A parliamentary committee has recommended that the Legislative Council proceed with consideration of the bill. To demonstrate your opposition to the proposed laws, sign the e-petition

PROJECT COMPASSION: *For All Future*

Generations: Biru 30, lives in a rural village in Jharkand State in eastern India. After contracting polio as a child, he lost mobility in one of his legs making it difficult for him to walk. With your generous support, Biru was able to access a development program, run by Caritas Australia's partner, Caritas India. He gained the skills, support and encouragement he needed to establish his own bicycle repair business. Now, Biru can provide a good life for his family and an essential service to his community. He has discovered a sense of pride,



confidence and hope which has inspired others living with a disability and paved the way. The assistance communities receive today will flow into the future for generations to come. Your generosity will assist some of the world's most vulnerable communities to lift themselves out of poverty. Please donate to *Project Compassion 2022*

and help people living with disabilities in India gain access to education and clean water, empowering them with skills to build a better future for all.

Acknowledgement of Country



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

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 later in March.

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

ASHES TO EASTER A Lenten concert-reflection with Peter Kearney will be hosted by St. Ambrose Parish on Friday 25 March, 7.00pm (after Stations of the Cross at 6.00pm) in St. Ambrose Church 2 Burke Street CONCORD WEST. Donations welcome at conclusion. Peter's concert weaves songs, hymns, stories and reflections on Lenten & Easter themes. Mainly for adults though older students could enjoy. Peter Kearney's hymns and songs, published in fifteen albums, include 'Fill My House' and 'The Beatitudes'. Some of his compositions are included in the 'As One Voice' hymnal. Peter's CDs and music will also be available.

FASTING AND LENTEN PENANCE

From the earliest centuries Lent has been a time to do penance. In the second century Christians were already preparing for Easter by a forty hour fast that began on Good Friday. By the early fourth century the preparation for Easter had been extended to forty days. It was seen to imitate the 40 days fast of Jesus after his baptism.

The Lenten fast at that time was demanding. People had only one meal each day and it was eaten after sunset. Abstinence from meat and wine and the further restriction on all dairy products during Lent were only added in later centuries.

Fasting for medical reasons was not uncommon in ancient Greece and Rome. However, the essential feature of Christian fasting was its link to prayer. In modern times we call fasting without prayer dieting.

Christians also saw fasting as a preparation for the reception of the Spirit and so it was associated with preparing for Baptism and the Eucharist.

Fasting for Christians was always an expression of a commitment to ongoing conversion. There were many references in the early Church to the prophet Isaiah (Is 58:1-9) and to the teaching of Jesus (Mt 6:16-18) who both warned against fasting becoming only an external practice that did not touch the heart, the core of a person's being.

While Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are set down as days for fasting and abstaining from eating meat, all Christians are called to do some form of penance on Fridays throughout the year and during the season of Lent.

The form of that penance is left to each person. However, the traditional penitential practices of prayer, fasting and alms-giving are still recommended. Our fasting is an expression of self-denial. For some people perhaps a "fast" from social media would be a significant act of self-denial.

Fr Paul Crowley

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.

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



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

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 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.

NEW WINE SKINS

In the Gospels when Jesus is confronted by the Jewish leaders about his disciples not observing the Law of Moses, he used the metaphor of a wine skin (Luke 5:37-38). All his listeners immediately understood his message.

Over the centuries, even to the present day, animal skins have been used to carry wine. Over time the skin would be stretched to its limit. If new wine was placed in an old skin, as the new wine fermented the skin would burst. Both the skin and the wine would be lost. Therefore, new wine needs new wine skins.

The image may be old, but the message is still relevant. Throughout the centuries, the Church has constantly adapted to changing times. Jesus had spoken Aramaic, the language of his local community in Palestine. As the apostles, like Paul, took the Gospel to non-Jewish communities, they used Greek.

All the books of the New Testament, including the Gospels, were written in Greek. In the first century, the teaching of Jesus needed to be proclaimed not only in a new language but also in new concepts.

By the 4th century, the Christian community in Rome had not only adopted the Latin language but also many of the customs of the Romans.

The tension between being faithful to the past while exploring new ways to proclaim the Gospel has been a challenge facing the Church through the centuries.

In the 1960s the Second Vatican Council took up that challenge and the changes that followed have enabled the Church to proclaim the Gospel more effectively in the 21st Century.

Here in Australia the national Plenary Council has been exploring the challenges we face. In Rome Pope Francis continues his call for Catholics throughout the world to look for "new wine skins" by promoting the model of the Synod as a new way of being Church.

A new word "Synodality" is being used to capture this new way of being Church. Fundamentally, it is not about structures or governance. It is about seeking new ways to proclaim the Gospel.

If we take seriously the call to ongoing conversion, we must also be open to change. Not all change is positive and so discernment is an essential part of process. That demands not only listening to each other but to the Holy Spirit.

If we believe that Holy Spirit is guiding us, we will be open to change because we are a Pilgrim People who are still on the journey. As Jesus taught his disciples, the new wine of the Kingdom of God needs new wine skins if the wine is not to be lost.

*Paul Crowley
Parish Priest*

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*

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).



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 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.

To read 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*

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.

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

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.