



## St Mary's Parish Concord

Mary, Mother of God

1 January 2023

### LITURGY OF THE WORD

**FIRST READING:** Numbers 6:22-27

*The Lord make his face to shine upon you.*

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM:** Psalm 66

May God bless us in his mercy.

**SECOND READING:** Galatians 4:4-7

*When the time had come, God sent his Son.*

**GOSPEL:** Luke 2:16-21

*After eight days he was named Jesus.*

### PRAYER INTENTIONS

We pray for those who continue to suffer because of war and violent conflicts, especially for the people of Ukraine and of Myanmar (Burma).

We pray for communities in many places who are still affected by floods and other natural disasters. We pray for those who are sick, especially those who have no one to care for them.

We pray for Antonietta Messina, Filomena Arcillia and all those who have died recently; we pray for Rosario Costa, Maria Daidone, Domenico Celluci, George Kheir, Gino Cortiana, Noel Cruz, Diogo Cardozo and all those whose anniversaries occur about this time; and for all our deceased family members and friends.

**CHRISTMAS TREE and NATIVITY SCENE:**

Special thanks to Vince & Rita Lamotta and Lauren, Amelia, Christina and Danielle who each year set up our Christmas Tree and Nativity scene.

**COVID HEALTH GUIDELINES:** The COVID virus is still spreading in the community. **Wearing a mask in indoor public spaces helps protect everyone** in our community and especially those who are at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 and flu.

## CHRISTMAS 2022

In 2020 and 2021 our parish Christmas celebrations were impacted by the spread of the COVID virus in the community.

While COVID is still a concern in the community, we were able to celebrate Christmas 2022 without many of the previous restrictions.

Our Christmas Vigil Mass and the 9.30 am Mass on Christmas Day were both well attended, with many also participating in the 9.00 pm Mass. Thank you to all those who joined us across our five Christmas Masses to celebrate the Nativity of Jesus.

Unfortunately, COVID did force some members of our parish community to isolate at Christmas. The live streaming of the 9.30 am Mass each Sunday does assist those who cannot join us in person.

It is also possible to view the Mass later by going to the parish YouTube channel or on the parish Facebook page. The livestreaming is greatly enhanced by the expert assistance provided by Angela and James who take turns to direct the cameras.

Special thanks to our parish choir, led by Jessica and by Catherine at the organ, who lifted our spirits as we celebrated the birth of Jesus. Our musicians and singers assisted at three of our Christmas Masses.

On a more personal note, I thank you for your Christmas greetings, and for the cards and gifts I received. I also thank you for the sympathy cards and messages that I received at the recent death of my mother, Rose.

*Paul Crowley,*  
Parish Priest

## Acknowledgement of Country



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

**CHRISTMAS OFFERINGS:** Each donations made using the *Christmas Offering* envelopes supplement your contributions to the Sunday the first collection. As noted on the back of the envelope, your donation goes to the fund that provides support to sick priests and priests working in special ministries. An example is Fr John Andersen, a Sydney priest who has been working in Peru for the past 40 years. The Sydney Priests' Fund pays John a salary that enables him to continue his ministry in Iquitos, Peru.

## ST MARY'S CONCORD 2023 LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

As we begin a new year, it is always important to pause and to give thanks for the blessings we have shared. In the past, I have often included a review of the year on the Sunday after Christmas. However, with Christmas falling on a Sunday in 2022, that message was included in the Parish Bulletin on Sunday 18 December. For those who may not have seen it, the bulletin can still be viewed on the parish website under the "Publications" tab.

While not repeating the whole message here, I want to reaffirm once again our thanks to all healthcare workers for their extraordinary dedication to caring for those with COVID in hospital or in Aged Care.

Special thanks to all the staff of St Mary's Villa who have cared for the residents in the face of constant COVID lockdowns throughout 2022. An important challenge facing the parish community in 2023 will be planning for the future of St Mary's Villa.

As I noted last November (27 Nov 2022 bulletin), it has become clear that smaller stand-alone residential aged care facilities, like St Mary's Villa, will need significant additional support if they are to meet the administrative demands created by changes to Commonwealth Government regulations.

A review of the needs of St Mary's Villa has concluded that the best way to secure its long-term future is for the Villa to become part of a larger Catholic Aged Care group. No decision has yet been made but that change will have significant implications for the parish.

An important part of the parish's long-term strategic plan has been the building of a new Parish Centre to replace the existing parish office. In November 2020 the parish was able to purchase the property at 6 Broughton Street (the corner of Burton and Broughton Streets).

With the support of the Parish Finance Committee and the Parish Pastoral Council, plans are now being prepared for a new Parish Centre that will also serve as the Parish Office. It is hoped that the project will begin by the middle of 2023.

As we begin a new year, we face many challenges. We need to rebuild the various parish ministry teams: those who support the community at Sunday Masses and those who extend the Mission of the parish into the wider community.

We particularly need volunteers to serve as Communion Ministers to the Sick, as Catechists and as members of the Parish Pastoral Council.

This month will also mark the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my appointments as Parish Priest of St Mary's Concord. My thanks to all in the parish community; without you there would be no St Mary's Parish. I thank you sincerely for your support and wish you every blessing for the New Year.

*Paul Crowley,  
Parish Priest*

## THE CHRISTMAS SEASON

In the Church's calendar the Christmas season begins on Christmas Eve with the Vigil Mass and continues until the feast of the Baptism of the Lord which this year is celebrated on Monday 9 January.

Traditionally the feast of the Epiphany is celebrated on 6 January, the twelfth day of Christmas. In many countries, including Australia, the feast is transferred to the Sunday closest to 6 January. This year we celebrate the Epiphany of the Lord on Sunday 8 January.

The word *Epiphany* comes from the Greek word for "manifestation". In the western Church, the feast became associated with the manifestation of Jesus to the non-Jewish peoples through the visit of the Magi. Each year we read the account of the coming of the Magi that is found only in Matthew's Gospel (Mt 2:2-12). In Matthew's Gospel the Magi or wise men came from the East; that presumes that they were probably from Persia, modern Iran.

In the Eastern Churches the Epiphany was the original feast of Christ's birth. When the feast was adopted by the Western Church, it became a celebration of the revelation of God's eternal plan of salvation in Christ, manifested as "the light to enlighten all nations".

As Jesus came to reveal God's love for all peoples so we too are called to bring a message of peace and good-will to all the nations. That is an invitation to work with men and women of every race, religion and culture to bring peace to the world.

*Paul Crowley*

**BAPTISM OF CHILDREN 2023** Parents wishing to present a child for Baptism please note that Baptism is not celebrated at St Mary's during the season of Lent which begins on Ash Wednesday. This year Ash Wednesday falls on 22 February. There are some places still available in January and February. Contact the Parish Office for details. Baptism will be celebrated again after Easter Sunday (9 April 2023). Baptism is celebrated at 11.00 am on Sunday.

**CONFIRMATION 2023:** There will be two celebrations of Confirmation: Sat 3 June and Sun 4 June. Registrations will not open until Monday 24 April. Please see the parish website for more details.

**MARRIAGE ANNULMENT:** The Tribunal of the Catholic Church offers advice to all of those who have experienced a marriage breakdown and question the validity of their first marriage as understood by the Church. Inquiries: 9307 8300 or email: [admin@sydneytribunal.org.au](mailto:admin@sydneytribunal.org.au)

**MEALS ON WHEELS** is seeking volunteers to assist the elderly in our community. All it takes is a spare 2 hours a week to make a difference in someone's life! Packers, drivers and helpers are all needed. Phone 9747 1135 or email [mow@bcws.org.au](mailto:mow@bcws.org.au)



**CLIMATE CHANGE:** World leaders gathered in Canada in December 2022 for COP 15, the United Nations Conference of the Parties on biodiversity. In his Message for the **2022 World Day of Prayer for Care of Creation**, Pope Francis urged world leaders to commit to ambitious plans at the COP 27 to achieve the goal of keeping global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius. He also urged leaders gathering at the COP 15 to make new multilateral agreements to halt the alarming increases in destruction of ecosystems and extinction of species.

Pope Francis reminds us that the Gospel calls us to repentance, to a new relationship with God and a different relationship with others and with all of creation. This conversion of heart will lead us to take action personally, but also communally to care for our common home.



These two meetings present another opportunity for world leaders to agree on actions which will address the twin crises of climate change and loss of biodiversity.

They also present us with an opportunity as people of faith to join with others in calling for effective action to deal with these immense ecological crises.

The Australian Catholic Bishops Office for Justice, Ecology and Peace has produced a new **Information Sheet on COP 27 & COP 15**.

For more information:

<https://socialjustice.catholic.org.au/2022/11/10/cops-docs/>

**THE LETTER:** The Feast of St Francis of Assisi (4 October) saw the world premiere at the Vatican of the documentary film **The Letter: A Message For Our Earth**. Based on Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical letter, "Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home" the film was made in partnership with the Laudato Si' Movement, the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and the Dicastery for Communication.

It explores the consequences of climate change through the voices of the poor, young people, indigenous peoples and others who met with Pope Francis last year. The film is streaming for free at [theletterfilm.org](http://theletterfilm.org) and **YouTube Originals**.

**HOW DO I BECOME A CATHOLIC?** Adults who have not been baptized and wish to become part of the community of the Catholic Church receive the Sacraments of Christian Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist) in the **Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults** (RCIA).

The RCIA presumes that there is an extended period of formation and preparation, usually leading to the celebration of Baptism at Easter.

Baptised members of other Christian Churches who wish to become members of the Catholic Church do so through **Reception into Full Communion**.

If you are interested, or if you know of someone who may be interested in becoming a Catholic, please contact Fr Paul or the Parish Office tel 9747 4210 or email [parish@stmarysconcord.org.au](mailto:parish@stmarysconcord.org.au).

### 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.

**PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL** The Parish Pastoral Council is a consultative body entrusted with the task of reflecting on the parish's vision and mission. In a spirit of service to the community the Pastoral Council works with the parish priest to foster and support appropriate pastoral action. Members serve a four-year term with half the Council changing every two years.

As we begin to plan for 2023, new members are needed. Any active parishioner 18 years of age or older may be nominated or may nominate his/herself. If you are interested, please talk to Fr Paul or to any of the current members. For more information go to the "Our Parish" tab on the Home Page of the parish website [www.stmarysconcord.org.au](http://www.stmarysconcord.org.au)

**MARIAN COURT INDEPENDENT LIVING** Marian Court Units is an independent living village for over 55s, acquired by the Trustees of Catholic Aged Care Sydney in April 2022. Conveniently located near Strathfield station, there are currently vacant units featuring one bedroom one bathroom (46sqm) and two bedrooms two bathrooms (65sqm). There is a sliding scale of entrance and exit fees to suit your circumstances. Please call the Manager on 0400 077 781 for an inspection.

**SOCIAL JUSTICE:** The 2022 Social Justice Statement, *Respect: Confronting Violence and Abuse*, invites us to engage with a complex and confronting social reality. It explores the roots of violence and abuse, honours the voices of victims, offers a social and theological exploration of the reality of violence, especially against women and children, and invites us to develop relationships in all parts of our lives 'marked by equality and reciprocity rather than domination and violence, respect and freedom rather than coercion and control.'



If the content of the Statement raises issues or concerns for you, please refer to the Getting Help page in the Statement for a list of support channels, or speak to a trusted friend, your GP, your parish priest or parish pastoral worker.

Access the Statement: <https://bit.ly/SJS22-23>.

More information: ACBC Office for Justice, Ecology and Peace, [www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au](http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au) or Tel (02) 62019845.

Facebook | [www.facebook.com/socialjusticeACBC](http://www.facebook.com/socialjusticeACBC)

Twitter | @JusticeCatholic

Instagram | @JusticeCatholic

## JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE FOODBANK

The JRS continues to support those seeking asylum and temporary migrants in Australia, as they remain excluded from all forms of Federal government support. This has meant that people who were once working and self-sufficient have had to rely on charities, like JRS, for rent, medication, bills and food. To help keep everyone fed, we are asking those who can to donate one item a week (1 or 2 Kg bags of Basmati Rice, Tuna in oil, Cooking Oil (750ml/1L/2L bottles), tinned tomatoes, tinned lentils, chickpeas, red kidney beans, pasta (spaghetti, penne, spiral) but please not tinned spaghetti. Donations can be placed in the blue bin on the table at the back of the church.

**MARRIAGE** Are you planning to celebrate your Marriage in 2023? Many couples begin their planning by booking a venue for the reception. If you are hoping to celebrate your marriage in a Catholic church, it is important to confirm your date with the church and with a priest before committing yourself to a reception or any other booking.

## Help with Alcoholism and Addiction

Do you, a family member, or friend need help with an addiction concern? You can reach out to the **Calix Society**. Calix is an association of Catholic alcoholics, drug addicts, and family members and friends affected by addiction, who are maintaining their sobriety through participation in their Catholic faith and a 12 Step program. We welcome anyone concerned with the illness of alcoholism or addiction who wish to join with us in prayer for *the virtue of total abstinence, promoting our spiritual development, and striving for the sanctification of the whole personality of each member*. Contact [calixsydney@outlook.com](mailto:calixsydney@outlook.com) for meeting times and resources. Perhaps this could be a crucial step toward recovery and saving a life.

## HOUSE OF WELCOME FOODBANK



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](mailto:office@houseofwelcome.com.au)

197 The Trongate, Granville

Ph: 02 9727 9290

[stfrancis.org.au/house-of-welcome](http://stfrancis.org.au/house-of-welcome)

## Caritas Australia Ukraine Appeal

The continuing violence in Ukraine is a humanitarian crisis. Over three million people have



been displaced and thousands of civilians have lost their lives. Our long-standing partner, Caritas

Ukraine, is on the ground to provide support for those forced from their homes. Donate today at [www.caritas.org.au/ukraine](http://www.caritas.org.au/ukraine) or call 1800 024 413 toll free.



**HERITAGE SIGNS:** St Mary's Parish commissioned five heritage signs to mark the sesquicentenary of the parish in 2020.



***The First Church 1845***

The signs are located in the Church Forecourt and recall the 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). Each sign has been placed close to the original location of that building.

The sign near the Parramatta Road gates also reminds us that prior to European settlement, the Burwood-Concord district was occupied by the Wangal clan. They called themselves the Eora, meaning 'the people' and they had been living in the Sydney area for at least 10,000 years.

The British colony of New South Wales was established in January 1788 with the arrival of the First Fleet. In late 1788 a small settlement was established at Parramatta and by 1791 a bush track had been built between Sydney and Parramatta that became what is now Parramatta Road.

In 1793 some free settlers received grants in the area then named Liberty Plains. In that same year, land grants were made to six non-commissioned officers in the district that came to be known as Concord.

## 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.