

St Mary's Parish Concord

1st Sunday of Lent

Year A

26 February 2023

LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING: Genesis 2:7-9, 16-18; 3:1-7
You shall not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 50
 Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

SECOND READING: Romans 5:12, 17-19
Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.

GOSPEL: Matthew 4:1-11
Jesus fasted forty days and was put to the test.

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 Turkey, Syria and New Zealand recovering from the recent natural disasters.

We pray for those who are sick, especially those who have no one to care for them.

We pray for Mary Samany, Cecil Savarimutto, Osmond Anthony Pillai and all those who have died recently; we pray for Francesco Alvaro, Fernando Escano, Tanina Rizzo, Maria Rosa Pappalardo, Hanna Dib Chidiac and for all those whose anniversaries occur about this time; for all our deceased family members and friends.

WELCOME TO THE FAMILIES FROM ST MARY'S SCHOOL

We welcome at the 9.30 am Mass the children and their families from the Lawrence (Gold) House in St Mary's School. We hope to welcome the children from the other three "Houses" over the coming weeks.

OPEN DAYS: St Mary's School is holding an Open Day next Sunday, 5 March from 10.30 am to 12 noon. A second Open Day will be held on Tuesday 7 March from 9.15 to 10.15 am.

ST MARY'S PLAYGROUP operates each Friday of the school term from 9.30-10.45am in the Parish Hall. All families are welcome to join us with their pre-school aged children. It is a wonderful opportunity to engage with other families and have fun with your child. Please email St Mary's Primary School at info@stmconcord.catholic.edu.au or the parish office at parish@stmarysconcord.org.au.

Access is from Burton Street via the Bell Tower Courtyard between the church and St Mary's Villa and the Parish Forecourt.

Acknowledgement of Country

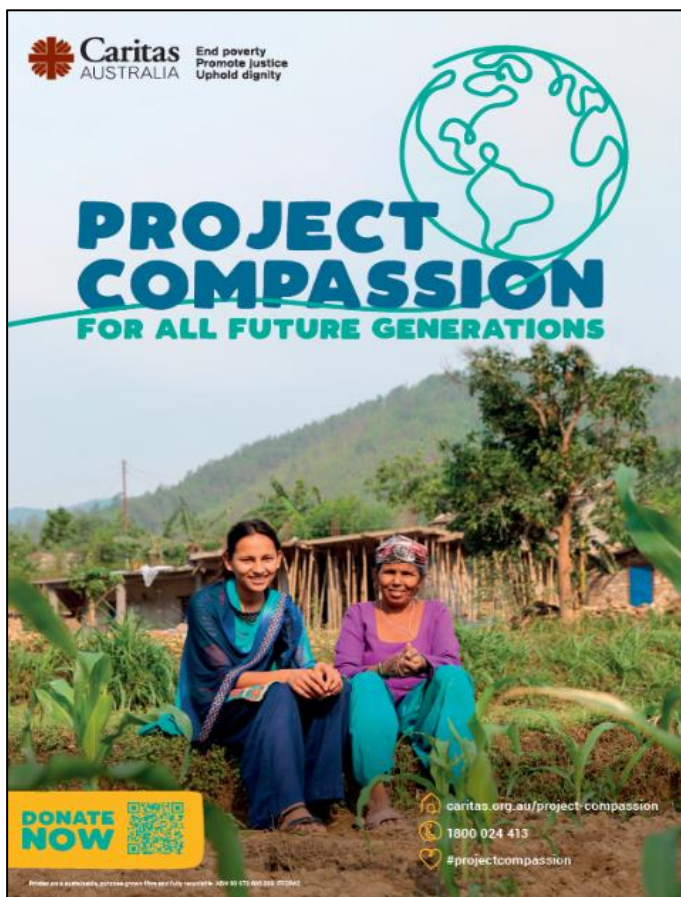


We acknowledge the Wangal people of the Eora nation as the traditional custodians of this land.

ASHES TO EASTER: A Concert-Reflection with Peter Kearney will be held at 3.30 pm on Sat 4 March in St Joan of Arc Church, Dalhousie Street, Haberfield. All are welcome. No charge but a donation on entry would be appreciated.

COME TO THE LIGHT: Our "Biblical Book Club" will begin meeting this week in the Parish Hall: **SUNDAYS at 3.00 pm beginning on 26 February.** **TUESDAYS at 7.30 pm beginning on 28 February.** To register for either the Sunday or Tuesday sessions please phone the parish office (tel 9747 4210) or email parish@stmarysconcord.org.au.

A few copies of the book are still available from the Parish Office.



This year's poster features 16-year-old Laxmi who lives in one of the most remote communities in Nepal which experiences high levels of poverty. Laxmi's chance at a better life was through education. She was supported by her parents. Sadly, when she was 10 years old, her father passed away and Laxmi stopped going to school.

Before her father's passing, Laxmi joined a child's club at her school that was run with the support of Caritas Nepal, through the Nepal Livelihoods and Resilience Program. Child's clubs support students to develop their speaking, writing and leadership skills through extracurricular activities. Thanks to the support of her child's club, Laxmi was encouraged to resume her education. She became an active member of her child's club, where she developed the skills and confidence to become a leader, advocating for clean water taps at her school.



Please donate to Project Compassion 2023.

Together, we can help vulnerable communities face their challenges today and build a better tomorrow **For All Future Generations.**

You can donate through Project Compassion donation boxes/envelopes available from your parish, by visiting caritas.org.au/project-compassion, or by calling 1800 024 413.

FASTING AND LENTEN PENANCE

On this First Sunday of Lent each year we read about Jesus going into the wilderness after his Baptism. This Sunday we will read Matthew's account (Mt 4:1-11).

The practice of fasting in the early Christian communities reflected the Jewish tradition and was linked to prayer.

Although the Law of Moses only demanded fasting for the Day of Atonement, the practice was common and devout Jews would fast every week.

Fasting was also seen as an appropriate way to prepare for an important celebration. By the second century Christians were 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. As the season of Lent began to evolve, the Lenten fast was linked to the forty days Jesus fasted after his baptism.

The Lenten fast in the fourth century allowed people to have 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.

Christians also saw fasting as a preparation for the reception of the Spirit and so it was also associated with preparing for Baptism and the Eucharist. That is the origin of the fast before receiving Holy Communion.

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

There were also many references in early Church documents to the prophet Isaiah (Is 58:1-9) and to the teaching of Jesus (Mt 6:16-18). Both warned against fasting becoming only an external practice that did not touch the heart, the core of a person's being.

In the Australian Catholic Church only Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are now set down as days for fasting and abstaining from eating meat. However, 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 almsgiving are still recommended.

The focus, however, is not on the external practice but on opening our heart to God. For some people perhaps a "fast" from social media or from the constant use of their smart phone would be a significant act of self-denial that would also create space for prayer.

Paul Crowley

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

CHILDREN'S LITURGY OF THE WORD

The Children's Liturgy is not a catechetical class nor Sunday school; it is a celebration of the Word of God at a level appropriate for young children. They listen to the Gospel reading of the Sunday and share prayers and reflections. The children leave the church after the Opening Prayer and return at the Preparation of the Gifts. The Children's Liturgy is held in the chapel of St Mary's Villa. The Children's Liturgy would not be possible without the adult leaders. We thank the leaders and helpers. All children of primary school age are invited to attend. We ask that pre-school children remain in the church with their parents.

FIRST HOLY COMMUNION 2023: There will be a special Mass for 1st Holy Communion on Sundays 20 & 27 August. **More details and registration forms will be available in early July.** Families who believe that their child is ready to celebrate 1st Holy Communion can also choose to celebrate 1st Holy Communion at any parish Sunday Mass. Please contact the parish for more details. The best preparation for a child for 1st Holy Communion is to participate in a Mass each Sunday. with their family

HOW CAN I MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

After almost three years of disruptions due to COVID, we face many challenges as we return to a more normal life.

As a parish, 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 in the wider community.

We thank those who continue to support the parish community each Sunday as readers and ministers of Holy Communion. However, we need more people to become active members of our community. **We particularly need volunteers to serve as Communion Ministers to the Sick, as Catechists and as members of the Parish Pastoral Council.**

For more information, contact Fr Paul or the Parish Office: parish@stmarysconcord.org.au

JOHN'S GOSPEL IN LENT

The four Gospels, that have been handed down to us, emerged from the early Christian communities in the latter decades of the first century.

We know that each evangelist, as we call the authors of the Gospels, was presenting an account of the life and teachings of Jesus for his own community. That context gave each Gospel its particular focus.

While Mark, Matthew and Luke shared a common approach, John's Gospel is very different. That difference has led many scholars to seek to understand what was happening in the *Johannine Community* as it is called.

To understand the issues facing that community at the end of the first century we need "to read between the lines" of John's Gospel. To do that we need the help of those who study the Gospel.

As a Christian community living in the early twenty-first century, an understanding of those issues can help us to understand the message of John's Gospel for us today.

That task is made more difficult, however, because we do not hear John's Gospel read in full on Sundays throughout the year. Instead, we hear it in sections. We listen to John's account of the Passion on Good Friday. We read other sections during the Easter Season.

This year in Lent we will hear three of the great dramatic narratives of John's Gospel on the third, fourth and fifth Sundays: the woman at the well, the man born blind and the raising of Lazarus.

These stories are about coming to believe in Jesus and have been read in Lent from the earliest centuries as an "instruction" for those who were preparing to be baptized at the Easter Vigil.

This Lent I am inviting you to join me in reading *Come to the Light - Reflections on John's Gospel* by Brendan Byrne, an Australian Jesuit priest and renowned biblical scholar. Drawing on his knowledge of John's Gospel, he offers spiritual reflections on some of the key chapters.

Those who are interested are invited to join a group that will meet over five sessions in the Parish Hall either on five Tuesday evenings or on five Sunday afternoons.

The groups will be based on a "Book Club" model. Each week a section of *Come to the Light* (about 15 pages) will be the subject of our shared reflections. More information is available on a separate registration form.

Paul Crowley

CONFIRMATION 2023: The Sacrament of Confirmation will be celebrated at 11.00 am on Sunday 4 June. **Registrations will not open until Monday 24 April.** Please see the parish website for more details.

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.

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

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.

COLLECTIONS: The practice of passing around the collection plates during Mass remains suspended. Your regular donations can be placed in the appropriate containers in the church. For your convenience "Tap and Go" stations are available at the doors of the church. Tap to donate the set amount. Please note that receipts cannot be issued for donations and the "Tap & Go" transactions cannot be reversed.

MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

Most commentators agree that Matthew's Gospel was written in Antioch in Syria between the years 80-90. Matthew, like Luke, follows Mark's Gospel but adds his own material. In particular, Matthew was writing for a predominantly Jewish Christian community, but it was a community needing to discover their identity as disciples of Jesus.

Reading between the lines it is possible to identify some of the issues that were confronting Matthew's community as they reflected on the life and teaching of Jesus.

Matthew's Gospel presents Jesus as the fulfilment of the covenant between God and the People of Israel. But, like Jesus himself, the community was facing persecution at the hands of the Jewish authorities.

The Christian community in Jerusalem had already suffered persecution, as Luke records in the *Acts of the Apostles*. By the 80s the Mission to the Jews had collapsed as tension developed between the Christian and Jewish communities in Antioch.

The single most important external event was the first Jewish war. The Roman legions had attacked and destroyed Jerusalem in 70AD. The loss was significant for both the Jewish community and the early Christian community in Jerusalem. In particular, the Temple had been destroyed and so the Jewish leaders took an even stronger stand against dissent groups such as the Christians.

It was a period of great change for the Church and Matthew's Gospel is seen as a response to the key issues facing the community in Antioch. In some ways it was a crisis of identity as the community tried to understand its mission apart from its Jewish heritage and its pagan neighbours.

Matthew set himself the task of "restating the tradition" by presenting a new synthesis of traditional Jewish material. But Matthew also understood that new wine requires new wine skins (Mt 9:17) and so his Gospel also reflected the new structures that were emerging in the community.

We can learn much from Matthew's synthesis of old and new as we continue the Mission of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus in an ever-changing world.

Paul Crowley

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 and **YouTube Originals**.

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 or Tel (02) 62019845.

Facebook | 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.

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

197 The Trongate, Granville

Ph: 02 9727 9290

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 or call 1800 024 413 toll free.

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 for meeting times and resources. Perhaps this could be a crucial step toward recovery and saving a life.

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

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 Presbytery c 2003

When Father 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 facing 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 a cottage at 4 Ada Street.

The Presbytery continued to be the residence for the priests of the parish until 2002. As part of the strategic plan for the development of the parish site, in 2002 the residence for the parish priest was relocated to a cottage at 6 Ada Street that the parish had purchased in 1995.



In 2008 the Presbytery, the Convent and the 1950s school building were all demolished to make way for the new St Mary's Villa.