



St Mary's Parish Concord

4th Sunday of Advent

Year B

24 December 2023

LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING: 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8-12, 14, 16
The Lord will protect the dynasty of David forever.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Ps 88
For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.

SECOND READING: Romans 16:25-27
May your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of Lord Jesus Christ.

GOSPEL: Luke 1:26-38
You will conceive and bear a son.

PRAYER INTENTIONS

We pray for peace in the world and especially for people suffering because of war and violence.

We pray for reconciliation between all people who share this land, especially with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We pray for communities facing bush fires, floods and storms and for those who are working to protect them.

We pray for Tina Cassaniti, John (Gianni) Malfitana, Pasqua Quinto, Anne Pryde, Tony Grace and all those who have died recently; we pray for Gino Cortiana, Jean McKibbin, Diogo Cardozo and all those whose anniversaries occur about this time; we pray for all our deceased family members and friends.

CHRISTMAS MASSES

CHRISTMAS EVE

Sunday 24 December

6.00 pm Vigil Mass for Christmas

9.00 pm Mass during the Night

There is no Mass at 12.00 Midnight

CHRISTMAS DAY

Monday 25 December

Masses at 7.30 am and 9.30 am

The 9.30 am Mass will also be livestreamed.

See the parish website for more details.

The 9.30 am Mass is the last Mass.

There is no Mass at 11.00 am and no evening Mass on Christmas Day.

CHRISTMAS OFFERINGS: Each Christmas donations placed in 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 an income to sick priests and priests working in special ministries.

Acknowledgement of Country



We acknowledge the Wangal people of the Eora nation, the Traditional Custodians who have walked upon and cared for this land for thousands of years. We acknowledge the continued deep spiritual attachment and relationship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to this country and commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of Reconciliation.

ST MARY'S CONCORD 2023

As we come to the end of another year, it is always important to pause and to give thanks for the blessings we have shared.

It is also an opportunity to review the year and the challenges we have faced. We, like other parishes in this part of Sydney, are facing demographic change and rising house prices. It is obvious that there are fewer young families in the parish. Those same factors have also had an impact on St Mary's School.

Many older parishioners are no longer able to join us each Sunday. The livestreaming of the 9.30 am Sunday Mass is helping them to stay connected. We thank Angela and James who are the directors of the video cameras that livestream the Mass.

While most of the COVID restrictions have been lifted in the wider community, the elderly and especially residents in Aged Care facilities are still at risk. As a result, our parish ministry to the sick is still limited.

St Mary's Villa continues to be an important work of St Mary's Parish. In November we welcomed Kerrin Hunter as the new CEO of St Mary's Villa. Changing government regulations and the impact of the COVID pandemic on the Aged Care workforce continue to create challenges.

Special thanks to Rita Attard who has continued to go into St Mary's Villa as a volunteer to support the residents and to lead Communion Services.

A general decline in volunteers has had an impact on all community organizations and the parish is no exception. We still need to rebuild the various ministry teams who assist at Sunday Masses.

Our Sunday Masses depend on many people: the altar society who clean the church, the musicians and singers in our choir, the readers, special ministers of Communion and the wardens. We thank all those who have continued to be available on the various rosters.

St Mary's School is an important part of our parish. We thank all the school staff for their commitment and for the support they give to the parish families who entrust their children to their care. Leeanne Favotto in her role as the school's Family Educator has continued to encourage families to become more involved in the parish.

The catechists and those who lead the Children's Liturgy of the Word on Sundays also support the children and their families. Their ministry is very much appreciated.

The members of the St Vincent de Paul Society are the face of the compassionate Christ to our sisters and brothers who are struggling to find the necessities of life. We thank them for their willingness to give of their time to help others.

As a parish community, we continue to help the Catholic community of Sacred Heart Parish, Serabu in Sierra Leone, West Africa.

The parish also depends on volunteers for other important pastoral roles: the Parish Pastoral Council, the Parish Finance Committee, the Social Committee. We thank all those who have continued to be involved during the year.

It was with great sadness that we farewelled Robert Rafferty after his sudden death in October. Robert was the chair of the parish Finance Committee and a member of the Parish Advisory Committee for St Mary's Villa.

The parish continues to depend on your financial support. Without your support the parish would not be able to function. As an example, we now pay a contract cleaner to vacuum the church each week when previously volunteers had done that task.

We are fortunate to have a committed parish staff who provide administrative support: Jenni McEntee, the parish secretary and Monica Vaughan, the parish business manager.

It is important that we remember that St Mary's parish is first and foremost about people. We come together every Sunday to support each other on our journey of faith and to reach out to others.

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 during 2023. I wish you every blessing for Christmas and the New Year.

Paul Crowley
Parish Priest

PARISH COLLECTIONS: 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 also 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.

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL: **New members are needed for 2024.** 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 Parish Pastoral Council works with the parish priest to foster and support appropriate pastoral actions. Members serve a four-year term with half the Council changing every two years. The Pastoral Council meets on the first Tuesday of every second month from February to December. Any parishioner 18 years of age or older may be nominated or may nominate his/herself. If you are interested, please contact Fr Paul.

NATIVITY SCENE ST MARY'S CHURCH



Special thanks to Vince & Rita, and Lauren, Amelia, Christina and Danielle Lamotta who have once again erected our Christmas Tree and Nativity scene. Their "special ministry" has for many years greatly contributed to our celebration of Christmas.

VOTIVE CANDLES: A long Christian tradition has linked the lighting of a candle to prayers of petition. When we pray for a particular intention or for someone who has died, lighting a candle is visible expression of our prayer.

That is also why we give a donation so that it becomes "my candle" that I am offering to God as a sign of my prayer.

For safety reasons 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.

In 2018 we also added a new votive candle stand in the shrine of *S Maria Vergine Annunziata* at the back of the church. It offers parishioners an opportunity to light a specially designed candle that fits into a glass holder.

If there are no candles in the glass cups, simply place the candle into the cup and use the lighter that is provided. Please do not lift the glass holders out of the stand. A donation can be placed in the box at the front of the stand.

The parish buys the special candles for that stand and your donations also help to cover the cost of the candles.

PARKING: Thank you to all who take the time to find parking in the streets near the church. On-site parking is only available in the Church Forecourt via the Parramatta Road gates. **Please park rear to the buildings to avoid reversing after Mass.**

The Burton Street entrance to St Mary's Villa must be kept clear at all times for emergency vehicles. Please also note that on Christmas Day many Villa residents go out to spend the day with their family. Access is essential.

ADVENT – WAITING IN HOPE

The Season of Advent opens the Church's liturgical year. The English word "advent" comes from the Latin "adventus" which literally means "coming". In pagan Rome "adventus" was the celebration of the anniversary of the coming of the Emperor.

The early Christians took over the term and used it for the time of preparation for Christmas when they celebrated the first coming of Christ. That remains the focus of the last week of Advent.

However, the season begins by looking to the future, not to Christmas but to the second coming of Christ in glory. In that sense the first weeks of Advent continue the focus of the last Sunday of the Church's year, the feast of Christ the King.

By the end of the fourth century, as the Christmas season became established in Spain and Gaul, Advent emerged as a time of preparation for those who were to be baptized on the feast of the Epiphany and so it came to be seen as a "second Lent".

At one time it extended for 40 days from the feast of St Martin (11 November) to the Epiphany (6 January) leading to the popular name of "St Martin's Lent".

The traditional use of purple or violet vestments recalls that connection with Lent. But Advent is not a penitential season. At St Mary's, we distinguish the different seasons by using blue-purple vestments for Advent and red-purple vestments for Lent.

In Rome the season of Advent did not become established until the middle of the sixth century. By then the link with a time of preparation for Baptism had diminished as had the earlier penitential practices. Pope Gregory the Great (591-604) reduced Advent to four Sundays to make a clear distinction between Advent and Lent.

In Advent we continue to use Alleluia as our Gospel acclamation, but the *Gloria* is not said or sung. It is omitted so that it may resound with greater freshness at Christmas. Popular devotions such as the Advent wreath give a focus to our waiting in hope for the coming of Christ.

Paul Crowley

PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN

Child sexual abuse is a crime. The appropriate people to deal with crimes are the police. If you, or anyone you know, have been abused, please contact the police. Alternatively, you can contact the Safeguarding and Ministerial Integrity Office Phone (02) 9390 5810 or safeguardingenquiries@sydneycatholic.org.

You may also want to speak to your Parish Priest who will be able to provide support and guidance. The Archdiocese has a legal obligation to report crimes to the police.

ALTAR SOCIETY and CHURCH CLEANING

In the past we were fortunate to have several groups of volunteers who ensured that our church was kept clean. Currently, there is only one group who are rostered once a month on a Saturday morning.

We thank Yvonne, Theresia and Frances who are continuing the long tradition of the Altar Society.

Our aim is to have at least two groups so that the church is cleaned once a fortnight. Generally, the cleaning tasks are completed in less than one hour.

We also used to have teams of volunteers who vacuumed the church carpet each week. The parish now pays a contract cleaner to clean the carpet each week.

Can you give one hour on a Saturday morning once a month? The time can be flexible. If you can help, please contact the Parish Office tel 9749 4210 or email parish@stmarysconcord.or.au

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.

SUPPORTING OUR PARISH There are many ways parishioners continue to support the Mission and work of the parish: the Planned Giving program, Tap n' Go donations and cash donations placed in the collection buckets each Sunday.



For your convenience this QR Code allows secure credit donations to be made to the parish through the Commonwealth Bank of Australia.

The QR Code will take you directly to the Donation Page on our parish website. If you

select the default option (Sunday collections) your donation will automatically be split between the normal parish 1st and 2nd collections. Alternatively, you can scroll down for other options.

PARISH COLLECTIONS: 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 also 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.

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

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. In this painting Murillo combined two different iconographic traditions: the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption.

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. 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)

PARISH HERITAGE SIGNS

In 2020 St Mary's Parish commissioned five heritage signs to mark the sesquicentenary of the founding of the parish in 1870. They can be seen in the Church Forecourt and 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 FIRST CHURCH

The first church built on the St Mary's Parish site was blessed and opened by Archbishop Polding on 7 December 1845.

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 had been established in January 1788 with the arrival of the First Fleet under the command of Captain Arthur Phillip.

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.

The Concord-Burwood district continued to grow and in 1844 land was purchased by the Catholic Church on Parramatta Road at Concord for the site of a church and school.



The First Church 1845

The painting is based on a photograph taken in 1917 when the hall was under construction behind the first church. That painting now hangs in the parish hall

THE PRESBYTERY

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 Presbytery c 2003

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.

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, as part of the strategic plan for the development of the parish site, the Presbytery, the Convent and the 1950s school building were all demolished to make way for the new St Mary's Villa.



St Mary's Villa Residential Aged Care 2010

ST MARY'S SCHOOL

The 1845 church also served as a hall and from 1846 as a classroom for a one-teacher school with John Clancy as the first schoolmaster.

When John Clancy retired due to ill health in 1858, he was followed by a series of lay teachers. Records are unclear about the school's operation in the 1860s but when St Mary's Parish was established in 1870, the existing one-teacher school became part of St Mary's Parish.

When the New South Wales Colonial Government withdrew funding for denominational schools in 1879, it became more difficult for the parish to pay the salary of the teacher and to maintain the school.

Fr Callaghan McCarthy, the first parish priest, asked the Sisters of Charity to take charge of the school and in 1883 the Sisters began travelling each day from Ashfield to teach in the school-hall



The photo of the 1894 school was taken 1917 as the hall was under construction (on the left).

The first school building was erected on the parish site in 1894. It stood on the western side of the present Church Forecourt on what is now the "grass" area within the school precinct. The foundation stone laid by Cardinal Moran can now be seen on the western side of the church steps

St Mary's School continued to expand. In 1940 a new infants' school was built facing Burton Street and in 1956 a Commercial College for girls was built on the site of the second church. When more classrooms were needed in the 1970s, the first school building was demolished to make way for a new block of classrooms that were blessed and opened by Archbishop James Freeman on 3 September 1972. They became the Kindergarten block until almost forty years later in 2011 when another classroom block was built for Kindergarten along the Parramatta Road boundary of the school precinct on the western side of the hall.



The 1972 classroom block was then demolished to create the present "grass" area.