



# PARISH OF ASCOT VALE

ST MARY'S CHURCH, 123 ST LEONARDS ROAD, ASCOT VALE  
ST MARGARET'S CHURCH, BARB STREET, MARIBYRNONG

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## Mass

Public Masses are currently suspended in Melbourne, until 13 September. Livestreaming of our 10:30 Sunday Mass will continue from 30 August, accessible from the parish website. Priests continue to offer Masses personally for the praise and worship of God, for the needs of the faithful and the world, especially the alleviation of the current crisis.

## Reconciliation (Confession)

By appointment - no name required. Arrangement will be made for the confession to be anonymous, not face-to-face, with suitable distancing.

## Baptisms at St Mary's

Our normally scheduled Baptisms remain on hold. Baptism will be administered if there is urgent and grave need.

Baptism Information Sessions are also still on hold.

To discuss a future baptism, please ring the parish office during office hours.

## Weddings at St Mary's

6 months' notice required. For information on weddings please ring the parish office during office hours.

## Private prayer in our churches

Our churches are not currently open for private prayer.

## Parish Bulletin

The Bulletin, containing the Sunday readings for your reflection, will be uploaded to the parish website the Saturday afternoon prior.

## 20<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time – 16 August 2020

This weekend on Saturday 15 August, we celebrated the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This year indeed marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the infallible definition of Mary's bodily Assumption into heaven, which was pronounced *ex cathedra* as a dogma of Catholic faith by Venerable Pius XII on 1 November 1950, in the Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus* (DS 3903). The Pope, acting in his God-given role 'as shepherd and teacher of all Christians' (Vatican I), proclaimed:

'To the glory of Almighty God, who has lavished this special affection upon the Virgin Mary, for the honour of her Son, the immortal King of the Ages and the Victor over sin and death, for the increase of the glory of that same august Mother, and for the joy and exultation of the entire Church; by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and by Our own authority,

**'We pronounce, declare and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma: that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory.'**

'Hence if anyone, which God forbid, should dare wilfully to deny or to call into doubt that which We have defined, let him know that he has fallen away completely from the divine and Catholic Faith... It is forbidden to any man to change this, Our declaration, pronouncement, and definition or, by rash attempt, to oppose and counter it. If any man should presume to make such an attempt, let him know that he will incur the wrath of Almighty God and of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul.'

The Second Vatican Council reaffirmed this same faith: 'The Immaculate Virgin, preserved free from all guilt of original sin, on the completion of her earthly sojourn, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen of the universe, that she might be the more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords and the conqueror of sin and death.' (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* (1964))

The Assumption had been the traditional belief in the Church from ancient times – expressed in prayer, liturgy, and the writings of the Fathers. The Church can't add totally new dogmas to divine revelation, but can only make explicit what was somehow contained from the first in what God had revealed by the time of the death of the last Apostle, when 'public revelation' closed. Thus our entire faith is contained in the Scriptures and the original Apostolic Tradition, yet under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (who Jesus promised would lead us 'into all the truth' (Jn 16:13)) Christian reflection understands this revelation more deeply over the centuries. This understanding is 'crystallised' by receiving clearer and more detailed expression in Church teaching. So the faith of the Church is always the same, yet always progressing. (This is called 'development of doctrine', which St John Henry Newman explained in great depth.)

The Resurrection of Christ marked God's defeat of human death, yet the saints must wait until Christ's Second Coming at the end of time to fully receive the benefits of this. At the moment of death the human soul certainly lives on, experiencing reward or punishment as the case may be. Yet God did not create us to be disembodied souls, but a living union of soul and body. Redemption will not be complete until our bodies are finally raised again in the image of the risen Christ, to share the heavenly glory our souls will already possess. The doctrine of the Assumption thus tells us that Mary, as the one who is the most perfectly redeemed and the perfect image of the Church, has already

received this gift from her Son, this fullness of redemption in both body and soul. This is as a unique anticipation and sign of the bodily resurrection and glorification at the end of time for all those whose souls are saved. Christ has made his Mother a shining example of what all the redeemed will one day possess, a star of hope on our pilgrimage through life.

A fascinating testimony of Pope Pius XII was of a personal repeat of part of Fatima's 'Miracle of the Sun', in the Vatican gardens at the time of his proclamation of the dogma. This happened, he attested, at 4:00 pm on 30 October 1950, 31 October, 1 November (All Saints, the day of the dogmatic definition) and 8 November (in those times, the liturgical octave of All Saints).

By his handwritten account (on display at the Vatican in 2008), just as with the crowd of 70,000 at Fatima in Portugal on 13 October 1917 he could stare at the sun without discomfort. In his words: 'The opaque globe began moving outwards, slowly turning over upon itself, and going from left to right and vice-versa. But within the globe very strong movements could be seen in all clarity and without interruption... Several times, on other days at the same hour and in identical or very similar atmospheric conditions, I tried to look at the sun to see if the same phenomenon would appear to me, but in vain; I could not stare at the sun for an instant.' (The climactic 'fall of the sun' witnessed at Fatima seems not to have been part of his experience.)

His legate Cardinal Tedeschini revealed the event to the crowds at Fatima at the close of the extended Holy Year on 13 October 1951. [J. De Marchi *Fatima: The Facts* (1954) p. 228] So we can see in this experience of Pius XII a sign of God's 'endorsement' – both of the truth of the Assumption itself, and of papal claims to infallible divine guidance in such teachings.

Our faith isn't based on proofs or private revelations, but on the Word of God; and the mere fact of the Church having defined the Assumption is sufficient to ground our absolute certainty. But just as with 14-year-old St Bernadette, a few years after the *ex cathedra* papal definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception in 1854, reporting to the parish priest that the Lady at the grotto in Lourdes had said, 'I *am* the Immaculate Conception'; so also with this miracle to which Pius XII testified: they're extra gifts God gratuitously gives his faithful People, to strengthen and help us in our weakness.

By extraordinary 'coincidence' beyond human planning, on the very day the Queen assumed into heaven first came down to Fatima, 13 May 1917, Eugenio Pacelli (the future Pius XII) was being ordained Bishop by Pope Benedict XV. This is not just 'any' coincidence, as though like his sister's birthday, or his graduation from primary school! Ordination as a Bishop is one of the two essential pre-conditions of becoming pope (along with election by the Cardinals), since whoever is Bishop of Rome is, by that fact, the Successor of Peter. (So if the College of Cardinals elects as pope a man who is not yet a Bishop, he does not actually become pope until his episcopal ordination is carried out.)

And so, Mary's first appearance at Fatima was also the precise day when the future Pius XII was endowed with the essential *sacramental* component of that papal authority by which he would infallibly declare the dogma of Mary's Assumption 33 years later.

Obviously the three illiterate children of Fatima had no way of knowing the future pope was being made bishop that day;

and of course no one at all, at this point, knew that he would be pope. Conversely, the episcopal ordination was carried out without knowledge of what the three shepherds in Fatima were experiencing – let alone of the Miracle of the Sun that would validate their visions the following October.

(Neither is it even plausible that the eventual election of Pius XII in 1939 was influenced by this coincidence of dates (by then possibly known). Rather, the Cardinals were doubtless motivated in those months before World War II by the fact that Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli was already Vatican Secretary of State (Prime Minister), with extensive experience from having earlier been Pius XI's representative in Germany – not by any thought of enabling a future footnote about the 13 May 1917 coincidence, scarcely known even to Fatima devotees today!)

So we are looking at what (from a human perspective) is pure coincidence. With 265 popes in 2000 years, episcopal ordination of a future pope occurs on average only about once every 2700 days (or less often in modern times, with longer papal reigns). If we add to this the fact that only 2 of the 265 popes have made infallible definitions about Mary, the improbability of this 'Fatima coincidence' rises even higher.

The 'coincidences' keep piling up. In a radio broadcast on 31 October 1942 for the close of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of Fatima, Pius XII consecrated the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary (in response, it would appear, to the request of Mary made to Lucia, the surviving seer of Fatima, in 1929). At this time, the 1917 prophecies of Fatima about World War II had recently been made public. The very next day, November 1, 1942, the tide of the war turned, as Germany began to lose the key Battle of El Alamein (which till then had hung in the balance), as Allied troops marched out for Operation Supercharge. (British Prime Minister Winston Churchill wrote in 1950, 'It may almost be said, "Before Alamein we never had a victory. After Alamein, we never had a defeat."')

On 8-10 November, French North Africa fell to the Allies; 12-15 November 1942 was the decisive battle for Guadalcanal; and 19 November 1942 the turning point in the battle for Stalingrad. On 28 February 1943, Sr Lucia, who in her convent would have known little of military matters, wrote to a Bishop that God had shown her the war would be shortened because of the Consecration. (If after the War, someone was inventing a fictitious papal consecration of the world to make it look as though it had influenced the turnaround in the war, the date that would be chosen for the backdated hoax would very arguably be 31 October 1942.) Final Allied victory came with Japan's surrender, 15 August 1945 (Feast of the Assumption).

Taking these dates in isolation, an unbeliever might just manage to cling to the theory that these are a few of the 'undesigned coincidences' that sometimes happen in history. But in view of the fact that we *already* have vast rational evidence for the divine institution of the papacy and for the supernatural nature of the Fatima apparitions, this further huge coincidence of dates is explained far more credibly and rationally by saying that there is an intelligent plan coordinating all this – and since it is beyond human planning, reasonably it can only be divine.

## **20<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR A – READINGS**

### **FIRST READING**

*Is 56:1, 6-7*

*A reading from the prophet Isaiah*

Thus says the Lord: Have a care for justice, act with integrity, for soon my salvation will come and my integrity be manifest.

Foreigners who have attached themselves to the Lord to serve him and to love his name and be his servants – all who observe the sabbath, not profaning it, and cling to my covenant – these I will bring to my holy mountain. I will make them joyful in my house of prayer. Their holocausts and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar, for my house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.

*The word of the Lord.*

### **RESPONSORIAL PSALM**

*Ps 66*

R. O God, let all the nations praise you!

O God, be gracious and bless us  
and let your face shed its light upon us.  
So will your ways be known upon earth  
and all nations learn your saving help. (R.)

Let the nations be glad and exult  
for you rule the world with justice.  
With fairness you rule the peoples,  
you guide the nations on earth. (R.)

Let the peoples praise you, O God;  
let all the peoples praise you.  
May God still give us his blessing  
till the ends of the earth revere him. (R.)

### **SECOND READING**

*Rom 11:13-15, 29-32*

*A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans*

Let me tell you pagans this: I have been sent to the pagans as their apostle, and I am proud of being sent, but the purpose of it is to make my own people envious of you, and in this way save some of them.

Since their rejection meant the reconciliation of the world, do you know what their admission will mean? Nothing less than a resurrection from the dead! God never takes back his gifts or revokes his choice.

Just as you changed from being disobedient to God, and now enjoy mercy because of their disobedience, so those who are disobedient now – and only because of the mercy shown to you – will also enjoy mercy eventually. God has imprisoned all men in their own disobedience only to show mercy to all mankind.

*The word of the Lord.*

### **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

*Mt 4:23*

Alleluia, alleluia!

Jesus preached the Good News of the kingdom  
and healed all who were sick. Alleluia!

### **GOSPEL**

*Mt 15:21-28*

*A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew*

Jesus left Gennesaret and withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. Then out came a Canaanite woman from that district and started shouting, 'Sir, Son of David, take pity on me. My daughter is tormented by a devil.' But he answered her not a word. And his disciples went and pleaded with him. 'Give her what she wants,' they said 'because she is shouting after us.' He said in reply, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the House of Israel.' But the woman had come up and was kneeling at his feet. 'Lord,' she said 'help me.' He replied, 'It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the house-dogs.' She retorted, 'Ah yes, sir; but even house-dogs can eat the scraps that fall from their master's table.' Then Jesus answered her, 'Woman, you have great faith. Let your wish be granted.' And from that moment her daughter was well again.

*The Gospel of the Lord.*

### **Spiritual Communion**

My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love you above all things, and I desire to receive you into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace you as if you were already there and unite myself wholly to you. Never permit me to be separated from you. Amen.

#### **Feast Days:**

**19 August:** St John Eudes

**20 August:** St Bernard

**21 August:** St Pius X

**22 August:** The Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary

#### **Recently deceased:**

Jean Matthews; Fr Michael Wheeler; Salvatore Di Stefano; Eugene Ritossa; Warren Saunders

#### **Anniversaries:**

Patrick Ryan; Cornelius Paul; John Hendry; Mary Laird; Daniella Sessarego

#### **Readings Next Week:**

**21<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time:** Is 22:19-23; Rom 11:33-36; Mt 16:13-20

### **Parish Live Streamed Masses on hold until 30 August**

There will be no live streamed Parish Masses on 16 August or 23 August. Live streamed 10:30 Sunday Mass will resume on 30 August. You can access other live streamed Sunday Masses from the Parish Website.

*It is the will of God that we should have nothing which has not passed through the hands of Mary.*

*St Bernard (quoted by Pope Pius XII, Encyclical Letter on St Bernard "Doctor Mellifluus" 24 May 1953)*



**PRAYER FOR THE PEOPLE OF LEBANON**  
following the Beirut blast

**God of Compassion,**

You are strength to those who suffer and comfort to those who grieve.  
We pray for the people of Lebanon in this time of disaster.  
Embrace those who died so suddenly and console those  
who grieve for loved ones.

United in solidarity with our Lebanese sisters and brothers we pray:  
For healing and strength for those injured and suffering  
That the international community will respond with generosity  
and compassion  
And that stability and peace will be restored in Lebanon.

**We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.**

**Lebanon  
Appeal**

You can assist those affected by the Beirut blast through Caritas Australia, by clicking the button on the parish website; or by going to:

[www.caritas.org.au](http://www.caritas.org.au); or by calling 1800 024 413. This will enable you to donate to the Middle East Regional Appeal supporting relief efforts in Lebanon, as well as in Syria and Jordan.

**CatholicCare Appeal, August 2020**

The annual CatholicCare Appeal is running in August. As the social service agency of the Archdiocese, CatholicCare delivers family and relationship counselling, refugee and settlement support, education and school programs, and pastoral services. You can donate online at [www.ccam.org.au/SundayAppeal](http://www.ccam.org.au/SundayAppeal) (or by clicking the Donate to CatholicCare button on the home page of our parish website, which will take you to the CatholicCare website); or call 9287 5513. CatholicCare has encouraged parishioners, when making a donation, to record that they're from this parish – so that CatholicCare can make a tally of our parish contributions and send us an acknowledgement. All gifts of \$2 and above are tax deductible.

**SAINT OF THE WEEK**

**20 August: St Bernard (1090-1153), Abbot, Doctor of the Church.** There are a number of saints named Bernard, but the best-known is St Bernard of Clairvaux, called the 'Last of the Fathers' of the Church.

Bernard was born in 1090 to a noble family in Fontaine-lès-Dijon in Burgundy, eastern France. In 1112, he entered the new Cistercian order, which had formed as a branch of the Benedictine order of monks. Like the great Cluniac reform movement that spread through the Church from Cluny Abbey from 910 (but was now itself becoming lax), the Cistercians aimed to return to a stricter following of the original Rule written by St Benedict (480-547). In 1098, St Robert of Molesmes established their first abbey at Cîteaux (from which the order would take its name); the order was consolidated under St Robert and his successors St Alberic and St Stephen Harding.

St Bernard would greatly advance the growth and fame of the Cistercians across Europe. The charm of his personality was such that he persuaded his five brothers, his father and 25 friends to enter the order with him. After three years he was chosen as abbot of a new monastery at Clairvaux, which became a model of fidelity to the Cistercian rule; over the years, he established dozens of other monasteries.

The 12<sup>th</sup> century has been called the 'Age of St Bernard'. From 1115 he became until his death the dominant figure of the religious and political life of Western Europe – rebuking kings, advising popes, castigating the Roman Curia, obtaining the condemnation of Abelard, rallying Christendom behind Innocent II after a disputed papal election, denouncing the luxuries of the Cluniac monks. His hundreds of letters include dozens addressed to popes, kings, queens, cardinals; one is to 'the people of England', another to 'all the Faithful'. When his disciple was elected pope as Eugene III, Bernard wrote to him the classic work *De Consideratione* – on how to be a good pope. In his final years, he was disheartened by the failure of the Second Crusade, which he had strongly supported. He died on 20 August 1153, and was canonised by Pope Alexander III in 1174. The most influential part of his many writings was his contribution to Mariology (theology about Mary).

In 1664 a new branch of the Cistercians formed at La Trappe Abbey in Normandy, aiming to return to the order's original strictness. This branch became known as the Trappists, or the Cistercians of the Strict Observance. In 1954 a Trappist Abbey was established in Victoria, at Tarrawarra between Yarra Glen and Healesville; and Tarrawarra Abbey has become a place of prayer and retreat for Melbourne Catholics. Up to six can be housed at the guesthouse; anyone can book to stay there up to a week, with the option of joining the monks at Mass and as they chant the Liturgy of the Hours across the day. As well as farming cattle, the monks are distributors of Communion breads to many parishes across Australia, including our own.

***Words of St Bernard:***

*What you write has no savour for me unless I have read Jesus in it.*

*Love is self-sufficient; it is pleasing to itself and on its own account. Love is its own payment, its own reward.*

*Love needs no extrinsic cause or result. Love is the result of love; it is intrinsically valuable.*

*I love because I love; I love in order to love... When God loves, he wishes only to be loved in return; assuredly he loves for no other purpose than to be loved. He knows that those who love him are happy in their love.*

*Whoever you are that perceive yourself during this mortal existence to be rather drifting in treacherous waters,  
at the mercy of the winds and the waves, than walking on firm ground,  
turn not away your eyes from the splendour of this guiding star, unless you wish to be submerged by the storm...*

*In dangers, in doubts, in difficulties, think of Mary, call upon Mary...*

*With her for guide, you shall not go astray, while invoking her, you shall never lose heart...  
if she walks before you, you shall not grow weary; if she shows you favour, you shall reach the goal.*