



PARISH OF ASCOT VALE

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

| | |
|--|--|
| Parish Priest: | Rev Fr Justin Ford |
| Assistant Priest / Lithuanian Chaplain: | Rev Fr Joseph Deveikis |
| Presbytery / Parish Office: | 123 St Leonards Rd, Ascot Vale (Postal: PO Box 468 Ascot Vale 3032) |
| Telephone: | 9370 6688 |
| Website: | www.stmaryschurch.org.au |
| Email: | ascotvale@cam.org.au |
| Office Hours: | Tue – Fri, 10am – 3pm. <i>Secretary:</i> Carmen D’Rosario (Wednesdays) |
| Principal, St Mary’s School: | Mr Paul Hogan T: 9370 1194 |
| Principal, St Margaret’s School: | Mr Gavin Brennan T: 9318 1339 |

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.

21st Sunday in Ordinary Time – 23 August 2020

Today’s Gospel highlights the unique position Jesus gave in his Church to Simon Peter, as the first Pope. We recall that it was Jesus who gave Simon the nickname ‘Peter’ – *Rock*. At their very first meeting, ‘Jesus looked at him and said “So you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called Cephas” (which means Peter).’ (*Jn* 1:42) In Jesus’ own language, Aramaic, the word for ‘rock’ is *kepha*, carried into the Gospels (which were written in Greek) as *Cephas* (a foreign term from the Greek perspective). The Greek word for ‘rock’ is *petra* – given masculine form, *Petros* in order to be a man’s name. (And in English this became *Peter*.) Simply put: all these words just mean ‘Rock’.

Only later, as we hear in today’s reading, does Jesus explain why he changed Simon’s name to ‘Rock’: ‘You are Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.’ (*Mt* 16:18-19) In his native Aramaic, Jesus would have said, ‘You are *kepha*, and on this *kepha* I will build my Church’: the very same word for ‘Peter’ and ‘Rock’. So Simon Peter is himself the Rock.

Jesus thus makes St Peter the rock solid foundation supporting and uniting his People. In himself, Peter is a weak and sinful man, but Jesus shares his own strength with Peter: he is the ‘deeper’ rock on whom Peter himself depends. (cf. *1 Cor* 10:4) (We might also say loosely that Peter’s faith in Christ is the rock – giving us the same conclusion in the end. So Jesus tells Simon Peter at the Last Supper: ‘I have prayed for you, Simon, *that your faith may not fail*, and when you have turned again, *strengthen your brothers*.’ (*Lk* 22:32))

‘The gates of hell’ [Greek: *Hades* – the underworld, the realm of the dead] means the powers of death and evil. Jesus promises that these forces will never defeat his Church which he builds on Peter: it will last continuously until Jesus returns in glory. Christ will be with his Church founded on the Rock of Peter ‘to the end of time’. (*Mt* 28:20)

As for the ‘keys of the kingdom’, from other teachings of Jesus (see e.g. *Mt* 13:24-50) we know the ‘kingdom of heaven’ begins even in the Church here on earth, which is the seed of the Heavenly Kingdom. In the Bible the ‘keys’ are a symbol of having control and authority. Thus in our First Reading, the Lord says of Eliakim: ‘I place the key of the House of David on his shoulder; should he open, no one shall close, should he close, no one shall open.’ (*Is* 22:22; see also *Rev* 3:7) So by entrusting Peter with the ‘keys of the kingdom of heaven’, Jesus gives him authority to guide and govern the Church on earth.

Finally, among the rabbis ‘binding’ and ‘loosing’ meant forbidding and permitting – that is, making laws. So when Jesus says ‘whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven’, he means that the rulings Peter makes for the Church on earth, God will ‘ratify’ in heaven. (We might really say, this implies that God’s guidance is over the rulings in the first place.)

After the Resurrection, Peter receives the mission of Shepherd, to be the ongoing visible presence of Jesus the Good Shepherd: ‘Feed my lambs...tend my sheep...feed my sheep’ (*Jn* 21:15-17) – feeding and tending the flock being the shepherd’s specific role.

From early Christian writings we learn that Peter went to Rome, became its Bishop, and in the end was crucified there by the Roman Empire. And the early Church, guided by the Holy Spirit into all truth as Jesus promised, (*Jn* 16:13) understood that those succeeding Peter as Bishops of Rome – the Popes – also inherit his leadership over the whole Church.

Indeed, it only makes sense that in Jesus' plan, Peter would have successors. One would hardly expect Jesus to set up such an imposing authority, only to let it lapse with Peter's death (just as, neither did the command to teach all nations lapse with the deaths of the other Apostles). And there are no others besides the Popes of Rome who even claim to be heirs of this universal authority of Peter.

God's plan that Peter's authority be perpetuated in the Popes isn't just arbitrary, but has an indispensable role in his design. It's good to recall here some more of why we believe in the authority of the Catholic Church in the first place. Ultimately, we go back to Christ's teaching. Jesus wanted his disciples to know the divine truth he'd come to bring; to share that truth with others, in its fullness; and to be united as one family in believing the true faith.

For Jesus, the truth he brought us from the Father was absolutely precious. He would never say that this or that point that the Father had spoken didn't really matter; that we could believe it or not as we pleased. So he said to Pontius Pilate: 'For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice.' (Jn 18:37)

Jesus wants his disciples to know God's truth, in its completeness: 'All that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.' (Jn 15:15) 'If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will *know* the truth, and the truth will make you free.' (Jn 8:31-32) And those who hear him are to *pass on* his truth to all the world, in its completeness: 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to *observe all* that I have commanded you.' (Mt 28:19-20)

And, Jesus wants his followers to be *united* in the fullness of the one true faith. Jesus, indeed, only ever speaks of one Church: 'You are Peter, and upon this rock, I will build *my Church*.' (Mt 16:18) At the Last Supper he prayed for his followers 'that they may all be one', even as he and the Father are one. (Jn 17:21-22) As St Paul explains, all who are united in him are one Body with one Spirit, with 'one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism'. (Eph 4:4-5)

Yet it seems hard for this 'unity in truth' to happen, because when people read the teachings of Jesus and other teachings of the Bible, often they've disagreed about the right meaning, and have separated into different groups with opposing teachings. So unity is lost; and truth is lost (because at most only one of them can be giving Jesus' teachings complete and without error).

Indeed, without some further authority guaranteed by God Christ's followers could not even tell which books belong in the Bible in the first place. The books weren't originally gathered into one volume, and no one can tell just by reading a book if it is divinely inspired. So in the early Church there was disagreement as to exactly which books should be included – there was no automatic illumination of individual believers; even today Protestants leave out some Old Testament books that Catholics include.

Problems remain even if we rightly add Apostolic Tradition to Scripture as a channel of divine truth. (2 Thess 2:15) Which writings express the true Tradition, and who

interprets it when divisions arise? There must be a *living visible* authority here and now, to declare the true faith.

Jesus didn't leave us without an answer to these problems. One reason he sent the Holy Spirit was to guide the disciples into always giving and interpreting his teachings correctly. So he tells them at the Last Supper: 'The Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you *all things*, and bring to your remembrance *all that I have said to you*.' (Jn 14:26) 'I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor, to be with you *for ever*, even the Spirit of Truth'. (Jn 14:16-17) 'I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into *all the truth*.' (Jn 16:13) And Jesus tells us that he himself will never leave us, until his final coming in glory: 'I am with you always, yes, to the end of time.' (Mt 28:20)

And so, the permanent presence of the Holy Spirit of Truth unites the disciples into 'the Church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth'. (1 Tim 3:15) It is because of all these promises of Jesus that we believe the Church he started with the Twelve Apostles is 'infallible' in her proclamations of God's truth (including of the correct list we now have of books in the Bible). To go against the infallible teachings of the Church is to fail to trust the promises Jesus made that the Holy Spirit would be with his people for ever, and guide them into all truth. So Jesus even told his disciples, 'He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me.' (Lk 10:16)

Now, if Jesus' promises have power, his one infallible Church must still exist in the world today, just as the same Church must have existed in all the centuries since the time of Jesus. So, which Church is it? This is where the four visible marks of the Church point the way: the true Church of Christ is one, holy, catholic and apostolic.

So, unity: we see that the Catholic Church is *one* body, visibly united in faith (at any one time, and across all times). She is *holy* – in her teachings, in the grace of her sacraments. Since we all remain free to resist grace, we her members (her ministers included) do remain sinners (through no fault of the Church's faith and sacraments); and yet, the true Church will certainly bring forth countless saints across the ages. And, the Church is *catholic*, meaning universal – spread, more than any other Christian body, across so many nations. Finally, the Church is *apostolic*: tracing her teachings and her leadership back in history to the Apostles. And that includes in particular her link with St Peter, Prince of the Apostles, whom Jesus appointed Rock and Shepherd.

So in Christ's plan all the sheep of his flock can easily know which is truly his infallible Church, the one they must be part of and believe: not by all becoming great theologians themselves and passing their own 'infallible' judgement on every one of the complex teachings, but because the true Church of Christ will be one, holy, catholic and apostolic. And in particular – a simple visible test, not restricted to the scholars – it will be the one with the clear link to the Apostle Peter, Rock and Shepherd.

THE POPES AS PETER'S SUCCESSORS, LEADING THE CHURCH – 2000 YEARS OF TRADITION

‘We do put to confusion all those who...assemble in unauthorised meetings...by indicating that tradition derived from the apostles, of the very great, the very ancient, and universally known Church founded and organised at Rome by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul... For it is a matter of necessity that every Church should agree with this Church, on account of its pre-eminent authority.’

St Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, late 2nd century; he lists all the Bishops of Rome from St Peter and St Paul on.

‘On him He builds the Church, and to him He gives the command to feed the sheep...If someone does not hold fast to this unity of Peter, can he imagine that he still holds the faith? If he desert the chair of Peter upon whom the Church was built, can he still be confident that he is in the Church?’

St Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, martyr, c. AD 256

‘As I follow no leader save Christ, so I communicate with none but your blessedness, that is with the chair of Peter. For this, I know, is the rock on which the Church is built! ...

This is the ark of Noah, and he who is not found in it shall perish when the flood prevails.’

***St Jerome, Doctor of the Church
Letter to Pope St Damasus I, c. 375***

‘Where Peter is, there is the Church.’

St Ambrose, Bishop, Doctor of the Church, c. 385

‘It has been known in all ages, that the holy and most blessed Peter, prince and head of the Apostles, pillar of the faith, and foundation of the Catholic Church, received the keys of the kingdom from our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Redeemer of the human race, and that to him was given the power of loosing and binding sins: who down even to today and forever both lives and judges in his successors. The holy and most blessed pope Celestine... is his successor and holds his place.’

***Philip, papal legate, opening words
to the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus, 431***

‘Peter has spoken through Leo!’

***Bishops at the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon
hail the teaching of Pope St Leo the Great
defending the true faith in Christ's Incarnation, 451.***

‘We entreat you, honour our decision by your assent, and as we have yielded to the head our agreement on things honourable, so may the head also fulfil for the children what is fitting.’

Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon to Pope St. Leo

‘We cannot pass over the statement of our Lord Jesus Christ who said: ‘Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church’...these [words] which were spoken, are proved by the effects of the deeds, because in the Apostolic See [Rome] the Catholic religion has always been preserved without stain... I hope that I may merit to be in the one communion with you, which the Apostolic See proclaims, in which there is the whole and the true and the perfect solidity of the Christian religion.’

***Rule of faith of Pope Hormisdas, 517,
subscribed to by the bishops of the Eastern Church***

‘The extremities of the earth, and everyone in every part of it who purely and rightly confess the Lord, look directly towards the Most Holy Roman Church and her confession and faith, as to a sun of unfailing light...From the descent of the Incarnate Word amongst us, all the churches in every part of the world have held the greatest Church alone to be their base and foundation, seeing that, according to the promise of Christ Our Saviour, the gates of hell have never prevailed against her, that she has the keys of the orthodox confession and right faith in Him.’

Byzantine theologian, St Maximus the Confessor, c. 650

‘We are obliged by our faith to believe and to hold that there is one holy, catholic and apostolic Church...outside of this Church there is neither salvation nor the remission of sin...Moreover, we declare, state and define that for every human creature it is a matter of necessity for salvation to be subject to the Roman Pontiff.’

Pope Boniface VIII, Unam Sanctam, 1302

(This must be interpreted in its whole context, as allowing for the salvation of non-Catholics who through no fault of their own do not know the true Church.)

‘We define that the holy Apostolic See and the Roman pontiff have the primacy over the whole world and that the same Roman pontiff is the successor of blessed Peter, the prince of the apostles and the true vicar of Christ, the head of the whole Church, the father and teacher of all Christians; and that to him, in the person of blessed Peter, was given by our Lord Jesus Christ the full power of feeding, ruling, and governing the whole Church.’

***Proclamation of the Orthodox and Catholic Bishops at the
Ecumenical Council of Florence, 1439, for a time reuniting
the Eastern Orthodox Church with the Catholic Church***

‘We must hold it as of faith that no one can be saved outside of the apostolic Roman Church...On the other hand, it must be held as certain that those who live in ignorance of the true religion, if such ignorance be invincible, are not subject to any guilt in this matter before the eyes of the Lord.

But then, who would dare to set limits to this ignorance, taking into consideration the natural differences of people, lands, native talents, and so many other factors?’

Pope Blessed Pius IX, Singulari quadam, 1854

‘We believe that this one true religion subsists in the Catholic and Apostolic Church, to which the Lord Jesus committed the duty of spreading it abroad among all men.’

‘They could not be saved who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would refuse either to enter it or to remain in it...’

Jesus Christ...placed Blessed Peter over the other apostles, and instituted in him a permanent and visible source and foundation of unity of faith and communion. And all this teaching about the institution, the perpetuity, the meaning and reason for the sacred primacy of the Roman Pontiff and of his infallible magisterium, this Sacred Council again proposes to be firmly believed by all the faithful.’

***Second Vatican Council: Declaration on Religious Liberty, 1965;
Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium, 1964***

Parish Prayer Partnership with St Patrick's, Bega: please pray a decade each day for St Patrick's parishioners

In an initiative of the Australian Confraternity of Catholic Clergy, Victorian parishes in lockdown can ask to be partnered in prayer with volunteer parishes elsewhere in Australia. And so, our parish is pleased to be twinned with St Patrick's Parish, Bega, N.S.W. We thank Fr Luke Verrell and his parishioners for their generosity! So in this time, Fr Luke will offer his Saturday Vigil Mass each week for our parishioners; St Patrick's Parish will have a Prayer of the Faithful at Sunday Masses for our parish; and after every Mass through the week, Fr Luke and his congregation will say a special prayer of Eucharistic thanksgiving, in solidarity with our parishioners who cannot receive the Eucharist.

Returning their favour, Fr Justin will offer his own Saturday Mass each week for the parishioners of St Patrick's Bega. (Every Parish Priest, by Church law, already offers one Sunday Mass 'pro populo' for all those under his pastoral care; so obviously Fr Luke and Fr Justin will continue to do this for their own parishioners every Sunday.)

And all parishioners of St Mary's and St Margaret's are asked to offer one decade of the Rosary every day for Fr Luke and his parishioners – a fitting sign of our gratitude for their prayers for us in these difficult times.

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| <u>Feast Days:</u> | 24 August: Feast of St Bartholomew, apostle | 25 August: St Louis IX, King of France |
| | 27 August: St Monica | 28 August: St Augustine |
| <u>Anniversaries:</u> | Dominic Nguyen Van Sach; Vincent Nguyen Chu Nguyen; Caterina & Elisabetta Grillo; Caterina, Antonio & Paolo Domenico Barbaro; Rocco & Giuseppe Popolo | |
| <u>Readings Next Week:</u> | 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time: Jer 20:7-9; Rom 12:1-2; Mt 16:21-27 | |

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 next Sunday 30 August. In the meantime, you can access other live streamed Sunday Masses from the Parish Website.

21ST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR A – READINGS

FIRST READING

Is 22:19-23

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

Thus says the Lord of Hosts to Shebna, the master of the palace: I dismiss you from your office, I remove you from your post, and the same day I call on my servant Eliakim son of Hilkiah. I invest him with your robe, gird him with your sash, entrust him with your authority; and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the House of Judah. I place the key of the House of David on his shoulder; should he open, no one shall close, should he close, no one shall open. I drive him like a peg into a firm place; he will become a throne of glory for his father's house.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 137

R. Lord, your love is eternal;
do not forsake the work of your hands.

I thank you, Lord, with all my heart:
you have heard the words of my mouth.
In the presence of the angels I will bless you.
I will adore before your holy temple. (R.)

I thank you for your faithfulness and love,
which excel all we ever knew of you,
On the day I called, you answered;
you increased the strength of my soul. (R.)

The Lord is high yet he looks on the lowly
and the haughty he knows from afar.
Your love, O Lord, is eternal,
discard not the work of your hands. (R.)

SECOND READING

Rom 11:33-36

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans

How rich are the depths of God – how deep his wisdom and knowledge – and how impossible to penetrate his motives or understand his methods! Who could ever know the mind of the Lord? Who could ever be his

counsellor? Who could ever give him anything or lend him anything? All that exists comes from him; all is by him and for him. To him be glory for ever! Amen.

The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Mt 16:18

Alleluia, alleluia!

You are Peter, the rock on which I will build my Church;
the gates of hell will not hold out against it. Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Mt 16:13-20

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi he put this question to his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say he is John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' 'But you,' he said 'who do you say I am?' Then Simon Peter spoke up, 'You are the Christ,' he said, 'the Son of the living God.' Jesus replied, 'Simon son of Jonah, you are a happy man! Because it was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. So I now say to you: You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church. And the gates of the underworld can never hold out against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven.' Then he gave the disciples strict orders not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

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.