



# PARISH OF ASCOT VALE

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

<b>Parish Priest:</b>	Rev Fr Justin Ford
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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.

## 22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time – 30 August 2020

### Parish Prayer Partnership with St Patrick’s, Bega

As was announced in last week’s bulletin, 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.**

*Fr Luke and his Parish have chosen the following prayer of Eucharistic Thanksgiving at the end of Mass in solidarity with us:*

Heavenly Father, you offer me the living and life-giving food that is Christ your Son.  
Humbly, I accept; and I pray that this divine food  
may deepen, strengthen and make flourish the supernatural life in me  
and in all who receive it at this Mass and those who desire to receive it today.

Jesus, Son of the Father,  
you became the Lamb of God, the victim for our sins.  
May I receive you with gratitude and love.  
May I absorb something of your love for the Father  
and of your love for all;  
and may all of us who receive Holy Communion  
be filled with your Spirit and become more like you.

Holy Spirit of God, abiding in me,  
help me to receive with great reverence and love this gift of the Father.  
Help me to surrender myself to Jesus and through him to the Father,  
and make stronger and more conscious  
the bond that unites us to one another in Christ Jesus.

Come, Lord Jesus, come.  
I adore you because you are my God.  
I believe you because you are Truth.  
I hope in you because you are my Saviour.  
I love you because you are all perfect, and because you have so loved me.

(Fr Luke) Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof  
(All) but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

Although praying this prayer with full meaning might seem to presuppose that we ourselves have just received Communion, there is no reason (even in these times when Communion is still impossible for us) that we can't pray the prayer (perhaps after watching Mass online), uniting ourselves with its sentiments insofar as possible. We thus reciprocate the act of solidarity made by the parishioners of St Patrick's Bega as at the end of their Masses they pray this prayer with us in mind. And we pray thereby that their Communions will bear good fruit for themselves; we ask God for fruitfulness of the graces *we've* received through our personal spiritual Communion, and through the Bega parishioners' prayers for us; and we increase our longing for the day when we can again receive Communion sacramentally.

In the coming time when we're able to return to church without restrictions, perhaps the 'Prayer of Thanksgiving' that the parishioners of Bega are generously offering for all of us after every Mass can make us rethink our own practice after Mass is over.

Many Catholics rightly keep the time *before* Mass as a period of silent prayer in preparation for the sacred action that is about to take place; but the time *after* Mass typically sees immediate departure of most of the congregation once the hymn concludes. Although this is legitimate, the Church sets before us a higher ideal if we want maximum spiritual benefit.

Pope Pius XII, in his Encyclical on the Sacred Liturgy, *Mediator Dei* (1947) (nn. 123-126), affirmed the long custom of personal thanksgiving after Mass:

'When the Mass...is over, the person who has received holy communion is not thereby freed from his duty of thanksgiving; rather, it is most becoming that, when the Mass is finished, the person who has received the Eucharist should recollect himself, and in intimate union with the divine Master hold loving and fruitful converse with Him...

'Each individual, since he is united with Christ, should not interrupt the hymn of praise in his own soul, "always returning thanks for all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father." (Eph 5:20)

'...The Church...advises her priests and faithful to converse with the divine Redeemer for at least a short while after holy communion, and inserts in her liturgical books, fitting prayers...by which the sacred ministers may

make suitable preparation before Mass and holy communion or may return thanks afterwards...

'Such personal colloquies are very necessary that we may all enjoy more fully the supernatural treasures that are contained in the Eucharist and according to our means, share them with others, so that Christ our Lord may exert the greatest possible influence on the souls of all.

'Why then...should we not approve of those who, when they receive holy communion, remain on in closest familiarity with their divine Redeemer even after the congregation has been officially dismissed, and that not only for the consolation of conversing with Him, but also to render Him due thanks and praise and especially to ask help to defend their souls against anything that may lessen the efficacy of the sacrament and to do everything in their power to cooperate with the action of Christ who is so intimately present.'

The revised *Roman Missal* after the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) continued to include suggested prayers of 'Thanksgiving after Mass'. The published hand missals that Catholics often own and use, generally include these prayers at the back. You can say some or all of them, or other prayers altogether, or simply use your own words.

In communities where members of the congregation have become aware of the value of this thanksgiving, one sees them returning to their knees once the final hymn concludes, virtually as one body. Once our churches re-open after the lockdown, individuals might consider taking up this short time of thanksgiving – not an obligation, clearly; yet a great benefit for those who do make this generous effort rather than hastening to leave God's house as quickly as possible.

## **SAINT OF THE WEEK**

**3 September: St Gregory the Great, Pope, Doctor of the Church (c. 540-604).** Pope St Gregory I is one of three popes (along with Leo I and Nicholas I) traditionally known as 'the Great'. He reigned in the early Middle Ages, when the barbarian tribes had overthrown the Roman Empire in the west (476), while the Empire continued in the east, ruled from Constantinople (Istanbul). St Benedict (480-547) had recently founded his monastic order which would spread through western Europe. St Gregory came from a Roman Senatorial family, and at 33 became the governing Prefect of the city. He used his inheritance to found seven monasteries, becoming a monk himself. Ordained deacon, from 579 to 585 he served as the Pope's ambassador in Constantinople, before returning to his monastery.

In 590, the plague was ravaging Rome and had killed Pope Pelagius II. Reluctantly accepting his own election to the papacy, Gregory, while awaiting confirmation of his election from the Emperor in the East, led a penitential procession (25 April) to pray for the end of the plague. During this, he had a vision of St Michael the Archangel sheathing his sword over the mausoleum of the Roman Emperor Hadrian on the banks of the Tiber; he took this for a sign that the plague would now end. [*Our earliest written account of this is 10<sup>th</sup> cent., but this is likely based on earlier oral traditions.*] (Hadrian's Mausoleum became known as Castel Sant'Angelo, and is now surmounted by a statue of St Michael.)

Pope from 3 September 590, Gregory was the first to commonly use the title, 'Servant of the Servants of God', and he set the path for the medieval papacy in his numerous pastoral writings, homilies and letters. At the boundary of the ancient and medieval worlds, he looked to the future rather than the imperial past. In the chaotic times of Lombard attacks, he was a gifted administrator, both in Church affairs and in civil responsibilities that now fell to the papacy in the Empire's effective absence – especially organising relief for the needy. He had a deep influence on the Church's liturgy (for example moving the 'Our Father' to its current position in the Mass) and made important contributions to gathering and organising the musical development that is still called 'Gregorian Chant'. He reaffirmed papal authority in the west, favoured Benedictine monasticism, and promoted the missions, most prominently initiating the mission of St Augustine of Canterbury to the pagan Angles and Saxons who now ruled England. Gregory died on 12 March 604.

## **A Reflection from the Prophet Jeremiah: Faithfulness and Popularity**

‘Each time I speak the word, I have to howl and proclaim: “Violence and ruin!” The word of the Lord has meant for me insult, derision, all day long.’ (Jer 20:8) The prophet Jeremiah’s words from our First Reading remind us that if we’re to be true prophets, God’s faithful messengers, this will always mean opposition and unpopularity to some degree.

This is because God’s message to humanity, while a message of unparalleled joy for those who fully accept it and try to live by it, is also a message of challenge and even warning. The path of life, of obedience to God’s word, always passes by way of the Cross, as Jesus tells us so powerfully in our Gospel: to reject sin means to renounce ourselves. And as well as those who heed the warning, there will always be those who resist and resent it.

And so Jesus tells us, ‘Alas for you when the world speaks well of you! This was the way their ancestors treated the false prophets.’ (Lk 6:26) ‘If the world hates you, remember that it hated me before you.’ (Jn 15:18) A temptation for all of us is to deliver only the ‘positive’ aspects of the message and to remain silent about the ‘negative’ – so as to avoid unpopularity. We think, ‘If people are going to listen to us as we deliver Christ’s message, it’s important that we be liked, that the Church have a good public image.’

There’s a certain degree of truth in this – if the messenger repels, the message is unlikely to get very far. And the primary accent in our teaching has to be on the positive. But if we take this so far as to hide or change parts of Christ’s teachings as handed on by his Church, so as to stay popular, then it’s no longer Christ’s actual message that we’re delivering anyway. We’re promoting a false Christ of our own fashioning. It’s not hard to slip from, ‘I must be liked, so that people accept Christ’s message from me’ [which is already a double-edged sword], to the simple imperative, ‘I must be liked!’ Popularity becomes the idol.

This idolisation of popularity can then lead to the claim that the Church ‘drives people away’ by her ‘harsh’ teachings. Now, doubtless it can happen that people are driven away at times by our un-Christian behaviour, or by our faulty communication of the Gospel message. But it also happens that people simply choose to reject even the *faithful* communication of the Gospel message. Pope Francis tells us in *Evangelii Gaudium*, ‘We will never be able to make the Church’s teachings easily understood or readily appreciated by everyone. Faith always remains something of a cross...’ (42)

So we have to reject the false idea, that ‘Since the message hasn’t been accepted by the wider world, we therefore need to change the message’. In that approach, ‘being accepted’ has become the ultimate goal, not sharing the life-giving truth God has entrusted to us.

In the end, it’s a matter of love. We teach the whole gospel message without compromise, not because we want to be ‘hardline’ or ‘rigid’ or because we’re more interested in ‘rules’ than compassion (some standard slurs one hears) – but because we firmly believe that the teaching of Christ is always in the end the path of true compassion, love, life, freedom and happiness, even if it passes by way of the Cross. And so we reject the counterfeit love and compassion that denies the Spirit-guided teachings of the Church, justifies sin, and leads only to spiritual destruction.

The more we truly love God and neighbour, and the more we’re truly concerned for the deep well-being of others, then the more the words of Jeremiah in our reading today (when he was tempted to remain silent) become our own words: ‘There seemed to be a fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones. The effort to restrain it wearied me, I could not bear it.’ (Jer 20:9) The true prophet is driven by love to always proclaim, with love, the full Gospel truth of what love means

### **From Church teaching – On speaking the full Gospel truth, in love**

‘The Church, one hears, is lacking in understanding and compassion. But **the Church’s motherhood can never in fact be separated from her teaching mission, which she must always carry out as the faithful Bride of Christ, who is the Truth in person.**

‘As Teacher, she never tires of proclaiming the moral norm. The Church is in no way the author or the arbiter of this norm. In obedience to the truth which is Christ, whose image is reflected in the nature and dignity of the human person, the Church interprets the moral norm and proposes it to all people of good will, without concealing its demands of radicalness and perfection.

**‘In fact, genuine understanding and compassion must mean love for the person, for his true good, for his authentic freedom.**

‘And this does not result, certainly, from concealing or weakening moral truth, but rather from proposing it in its most profound meaning as an outpouring of God’s eternal Wisdom, which we have received in Christ, and as a service to man, to the growth of his freedom and to the attainment of his happiness.

**‘Still, a clear and forceful presentation of moral truth can never be separated from a profound and heartfelt respect,** born of that patient and trusting love which man always needs along his moral journey, a journey frequently wearisome on account of difficulties, weakness and painful situations.

‘The Church can never renounce the “the principle of truth and consistency, whereby she does not agree to call good evil and evil good”; she must always be careful not to break the bruised reed or to quench the dimly burning wick (cf. Is 42:3).

‘As Paul VI wrote: **“While it is an outstanding manifestation of charity towards souls to omit nothing from the saving doctrine of Christ, this must always be joined with tolerance and charity,** as Christ himself showed by his conversations and dealings with men. **Having come not to judge the world but to save it, he was uncompromisingly stern towards sin, but patient and rich in mercy towards sinners”** (*Humanae Vitae* 29).’

*Pope St John Paul II, Encyclical Letter ‘Veritatis Splendor’  
('The Splendour of Truth'), 6<sup>th</sup> August 1993*

## **Social Justice Sunday – ‘To Live Life to the Full’**

Today is Social Justice Sunday, and this year the Bishops of Australia are addressing the theme of mental health. You can download their full statement, ‘To Live Life to the Full’, from the home page of the parish website.

### **22<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR A – READINGS**

#### **FIRST READING**

*Jer 20:7-9*

*A reading from the prophet Jeremiah*

You have seduced me, Lord, and I have let myself be seduced; you have overpowered me: you were the stronger. I am a daily laughing-stock, everybody's butt. Each time I speak the word, I have to howl and proclaim: ‘Violence and ruin!’ The word of the Lord has meant for me insult, derision, all day long. I used to say, ‘I will not think about him, I will not speak in his name any more.’ Then there seemed to be a fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones. The effort to restrain it wearied me, I could not bear it.

*The word of the Lord.*

#### **RESPONSORIAL PSALM**

*Ps 62*

R. My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.

O God, you are my God, for you I long;  
for you my soul is thirsting.

My body pines for you  
like a dry, weary land without water. (R.)

So I gaze on you in the sanctuary  
to see your strength and your glory.  
For your love is better than life,  
my lips will speak your praise. (R.)

So I will bless you all my life,  
in your name I will lift up my hands.  
My soul shall be filled as with a banquet,  
my mouth shall praise you with joy. (R.)

For you have been my help;  
in the shadow of your wings I rejoice.  
My soul clings to you;  
your right hand holds me fast. (R.)

#### **SECOND READING**

*Rom 12:1-2*

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

Think of God's mercy, my brothers, and worship him, I beg you, in a way that is worthy of thinking beings, by

offering your living bodies as a holy sacrifice, truly pleasing to God. Do not model yourselves on the behaviour of the world around you, but let your behaviour change, modelled by your new mind. This is the only way to discover the will of God and know what is good, what it is that God wants, what is the perfect thing to do.

*The word of the Lord.*

#### **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

*cf. Eph 1:17, 18*

Alleluia, alleluia! May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ enlighten the eyes of our heart,  
that we might see how great is the hope  
to which we are called. Alleluia!

#### **GOSPEL**

*Mt 16:21-27*

*A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew*

Jesus began to make it clear to his disciples that he was destined to go to Jerusalem and suffer grievously at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, to be put to death and to be raised up on the third day. Then, taking him aside, Peter started to remonstrate with him. ‘Heaven preserve you, Lord,’ he said ‘this must not happen to you.’ But he turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle in my path, because the way you think is not God's way but man's.’

Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it. What, then, will a man gain if he wins the whole world and ruins his life? Or what has a man to offer in exchange for his life?’

‘For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and, when he does, he will reward each one according to his behaviour.’

*The Gospel of the Lord.*

**Memorial Acclamation:** Save us, Saviour of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free.

### **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.

#### **Hymns:**

<b>Entrance</b>	–	CWB 625	This day God gives me
<b>Offertory</b>	–	CWB 513	I love you, O my Lord most high
<b>Communion</b>	–	CWB 454	Be still, for the presence of the Lord
<b>Recessional</b>	–	CWB 408	Hail Queen of heav'n

#### **Feast Days:**

**3 September:** St Gregory the Great, pope, doctor

#### **Recently Deceased:**

Marie Mallia; Lidia Oppedisano; John Fogarty; Emilio Sessarego

#### **Anniversaries:**

Domenico Trimboli; Dawn McIntosh; Eduarda Dancel; Eulogio Mallari; Geoffrey Ford;  
Jennifer Ford; William Murray

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

**23<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time:** Ezek 33:7-9; Rom 13:8-10; Mt 18:15-20