

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)
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Weekend Mass Times

Saturday Vigil:

6.00pm St Mary's

Sunday:

8.30am St Margaret's

10.30am St Mary's

6.00pm St Mary's (Spanish)

Live streaming of our 10:30

Sunday Mass is continuing,
accessible on our parish website.

Weekday Mass Times

Mon 10.00am St Mary's

Tue 9.00am St Mary's

Wed 9.00am St Mary's
7.00pm St Mary's

Thu 9.00am St Mary's

Fri 9.15am St Mary's

Sat 9.30am St Mary's

Reconciliation (Confession)

Saturday

10.00–10.30am St Mary's

5.30–5.45pm St Mary's

Eucharistic Adoration

Tue 9.30–10.30am St Mary's

Sat 10.00–11.00am St Mary's

Baptisms at St Mary's

Group baptisms recommence
on 7 March: 12:00 every Sunday
till 27 June. Until March, we are
having baptisms for individual
babies, with up to two
ceremonies every weekend.

Baptism Information Sessions
are held in St Mary's Church at
7:30 pm on the first Thursday of
each month. Those interested in
the baptism of their child should
attend one of these sessions.

Weddings at St Mary's

For information on weddings
please ring the parish office.

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time – 17 January 2021

'You are not your own property; you have been bought and paid for.' (1 Cor 6:19-20)

A common idea is that our body is 'our own property'. On that view, we can legitimately do with our own bodies whatever we like, as long as we don't hurt anyone else; and as long as we don't hurt anyone else, no other person can force us otherwise.

True, it's generally fair enough that within that limit of not infringing the rights of others, or harming society generally, an adult has the *legal* right not to be prevented from controlling his or her own body. But that's a different thing from saying we're *morally* free to treat our own bodies however we wish. Legal right and moral right are different things. There are areas of life where human law rightly refrains from interfering; not everything which is a sin has to be made illegal. But that doesn't mean that every legally permissible course of action is necessarily *spiritually* healthy, truly in accordance with the dignity of the person. And the human body is much more than a piece of property, which we could treat however we like without experiencing spiritual consequences.

St Paul tells us in our second reading, 'Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you since you received him from God. You are *not* your own property; you have been bought and paid for.' Thus Christian faith gives us a much more exalted view of the body. When we were baptised, we became the property of Christ: adopted sons and daughters, and temples of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, even before baptism, every human being is created in the image of God – especially in the soul, but also in the body.

As St Paul points out, the dignity of the body has consequences specifically in the area of sexual morality. And it also affects questions like euthanasia, where one of the common arguments is that we even have the right to dispose of our own bodies if that is our wish. The idea of the dignity of the human body helps us understand that God's laws aren't arbitrary rules he makes us follow – they're about the true dignity of the human person.

This is because the body is an integral *part* of the person, not like just a piece of clothing. A common theme in these difficult moral questions has to do with the *unity* of the human person, the unity of body and soul making up one personal being. Sometimes one hears it said that the body is just a 'shell' that the soul is liberated from at death. But that's not the Christian view. The body isn't a prison we have to escape from, but part of the very identity God gave us. (That's why reincarnation makes no sense from a Christian point of view: the soul doesn't flit from one body to another, as though it made no difference to our identity which one it 'occupied'.)

So, God didn't create human beings simply as spirits. That's what the angels are: spirits without bodies. But human nature, unlike angelic nature, is a *unity* of body and soul. So the soul without the body isn't a complete human person. That's why, for full redemption, we need not just the happiness of the immortal soul but also the resurrection of our body at the end of time.

Now, this false 'spiritualisation' of human nature, that is sometimes called 'angelism', leads to many other errors, and in particular in morality. So if the body *were* only a shell, not an integral part of our very selves, then it *might* be imagined as being a bit like a piece of clothing or property. And (we think) we can use our property any way we like, as long as we don't hurt anyone else. (In truth, even with our property we are stewards, not absolute owners.) So if the body were just 'some property' we owned, then (we think) our supposed 'real self', the conscious soul within, could use it in whatever way

we wanted. On that view, if the real self doesn't include the body, but is just our consciousness, then, for example, we could dispose of the body by euthanasia. Or, we could manipulate its procreative powers according to our wishes. Or, our sexual identity as male or female would be malleable according to our emotional desires, and according to what we thought suited our psychology.

Now in reality, both reason and faith tell us, none of this is true. The person isn't just the soul, or the internal consciousness – it's the body/soul unity. Pope St John Paul II explained that we're *incarnate* spirits and we're *spiritualised* bodies. And, there is a 'language' of life-giving love that God has built into the structure of every human person. In particular, marriage is the mystery of total self-giving love, a power God built into us in our nature as male and female and as holistic unities of body and spirit. All the Church teachings in this area are about respecting the sacred meaning of the body and not trampling on it. So, the spiritualised body – with its life, its sexual identity, its procreative powers – must itself be respected as a sacred personal reality, not manipulated as an 'object' to serve the interests of one part (emotional desire).

And true love for the person – which means at its heart, willing the true good of the person – is always going to include that respect. By contrast, a false or counterfeit love might imagine that love always just means serving the other person's conscious emotional desires – making them 'feel good'. True, making another person feel good is often enough a part of genuine love. But it's not the whole story. We need to respect the dignity of the entire person. But for centuries, our culture has gradually been losing sight of the body-soul unity, and viewing the 'real self' just as something 'within', only known to the person's own consciousness.

Understanding the dignity of the human person in the unity of body and soul, made in the image of God and even raised up to be the Temple of the Holy Spirit, helps us understand how the moral law isn't just a matter of just 'Church regulations' – it's the law of God inscribed in human nature itself, which the Church has no power to change. And it never becomes 'old-fashioned': it's part of the very way the *eternal* God created us. Jesus reminds us through his Church's teachings of the path to true love and happiness written deep in every conscience.

Our Second Reading speaks of sins against purity, wherein we sin against our own bodies which are 'temples of the Holy Spirit'. But human experience is that to resist temptation and keep the virtue of purity, it is necessary not only to reject direct violations of the virtue but also to maintain a wider boundary area. We avoid not just actions that are evil in themselves, but also ostensibly 'neutral' thoughts, words or actions which can nonetheless draw us towards direct evil. These are 'occasions of sin', and to enter unnecessarily into a near occasion of sin is already itself a sin. Like with a cliff edge or a whirlpool, the closer someone goes to the edge, the less likely they will avoid falling victim to the peril. So we avoid the dangerous mindset of looking for 'loopholes', but sincerely seek the will of God and the dignity of the person. This preservation of the 'boundary area' around chastity is the virtue of modesty.

Catechism of the Catholic Church: The Ninth Commandment

'You shall not covet your neighbour's wife.' The Battle for Purity

2520 Baptism confers on its recipient the grace of purification from all sins. But the baptised must continue to struggle against concupiscence of the flesh and disordered desires. With God's grace he will prevail

- by the virtue and gift of chastity, for chastity lets us love with upright and undivided heart;

- by purity of intention which consists in seeking the true end of man: with simplicity of vision, the baptised person seeks to find and to fulfill God's will in everything; (Cf. *Rom 12:2; Col 1:10*)

- by purity of vision, external and internal; by discipline of feelings and imagination; by refusing all complicity in impure thoughts that incline us to turn aside from the path of God's commandments: "Appearance arouses yearning in fools"; (*Wis 15:5*)

- by prayer:

I thought that continence arose from one's own powers, which I did not recognise in myself. I was foolish enough not to know...that no one can be continent unless you grant it. For you would surely have granted it if my inner groaning had reached your ears and I with firm faith had cast my cares on you. (St Augustine *Confessions* 6, 11, 20)

2521 Purity requires modesty, an integral part of temperance. Modesty protects the intimate center of the

person. It means refusing to unveil what should remain hidden. It is ordered to chastity to whose sensitivity it bears witness. It guides how one looks at others and behaves toward them in conformity with the dignity of persons and their solidarity.

2522 Modesty protects the mystery of persons and their love. It encourages patience and moderation in loving relationships; it requires that the conditions for the definitive giving and commitment of man and woman to one another be fulfilled. Modesty is decency. It inspires one's choice of clothing. It keeps silence or reserve where there is evident risk of unhealthy curiosity. It is discreet.

2524 The forms taken by modesty vary from one culture to another. Everywhere, however, modesty exists as an intuition of the spiritual dignity proper to man. It is born with the awakening consciousness of being a subject. Teaching modesty to children and adolescents means awakening in them respect for the human person.

2525 Christian purity requires a purification of the social climate. It requires of the communications media that their presentations show concern for respect and restraint. Purity of heart brings freedom from widespread eroticism and avoids entertainment inclined to voyeurism and illusion.

Concerning purity and modesty, God's Word in Scripture gives us safe counsel in the words of St Paul:

'Whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.' (Phil 4:8)

'But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.' (Eph 5:3-6)

Jesus cautions us of the seriousness of our moral choices, including in matters of purity:

'Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow, and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few.' (Mt 7:13-14)

'I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.' (Mt 5:27-29)

'It is what comes out of a person that defiles. For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.' (Mk 7:20-23)

This same theme of his teaching is found across the New Testament. Just two examples:

'Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day – just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.' (Jude 5-7)

'But as for the cowardly, the unbelieving, the polluted, as for murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their lot shall be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.' (Rev 21:8)

SAINT OF THE WEEK

12 January: St Benedict Biscop – Abbot

Anglo-Saxon abbot St Benedict Biscop [pronounced 'bishop'] took his name as a Benedictine monk after the great founder of the Order, St Benedict (480-547). Benedict Biscop (c.628-690) lived in the time of the conversion of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms to the Catholic faith. In the 5th-century collapse of the Roman Empire the pagan Anglo-Saxons had conquered Roman Britain, driving the Catholic Romano-Britons to the west. But after a century the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, precursors of the kingdom of England, were evangelised in the south (597) by St Augustine of Canterbury, sent on mission by Pope St Gregory the Great; then in the kingdom of Northumbria in north-east England by Celtic missionaries from the Scottish isle of Iona, especially St Aidan (d. 651). In 635 Aidan had converted the Northumbrian king, St Oswald (d. 642), and established the monastery of Lindisfarne on Holy Island.

Benedict Biscop, born about 628 to Northumbrian nobility, was a thane of King Oswiu. Five journeys to Rome from 653 inspired him with fervour for the Church; from 665-67 he became a Benedictine monk at Lerins off the coast of Provence. Archbishop of Canterbury St Theodore of Tarsus (d. 690) made him abbot in Canterbury (669-71). King Ecgrith of Northumbria gave Benedict land to establish a double monastery at Monkwearmouth (674) and nearby Jarrow (685) (in modern Tyne and Wear), pioneering stone and glass in English churches. Benedict gathered many books from his travels to establish the great monastic library there, making it the centre of Anglo-Saxon learning, especially under his pupil St Bede (672-735). He died on 12 January 690. (The monasteries flourished until the Viking Age burst upon Christendom in 793 with the shocking raid of Lindisfarne; Monkwearmouth - Jarrow was raided by Vikings in 794 and destroyed about 860.)

Baptisms

We warmly welcome into the family of God's Church, the following children being baptised this weekend in our Parish:

Gabriella Aurecesca Raffaele

Isabelle Jane Vella

Leon Tuzon

Recently Deceased:

Allan Shallue; Alex Ganino; Robert Herbert

Anniversaries:

Mervyn Gaffney; Joseph Catania; Dominic Ford; Giovanni De Maria; Ronald Balangue; Winifred Ryan

Feast Days:

20 January: St Fabian; St Sebastian **21 January:** St Agnes **22 January:** St Vincent

Readings Next Week:

3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time: Jonah 3:1-5, 10; 1 Cor 7:29-31; Mk 1:14-20

2ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR B – READINGS

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Ps 65:4

All the earth shall bow down before you, O God,
and shall sing to you,
shall sing to your name, O Most High!

FIRST READING

1 Sam 3:3-10, 19

A reading from the first book of Samuel

Samuel was lying in the sanctuary of the Lord where the ark of God was, when the Lord called, 'Samuel! Samuel!' He answered, 'Here I am.' Then he ran to Eli and said, 'Here I am, since you called me'. Eli said, 'I did not call. Go back and lie down.' So he went and lay down. Once again the Lord called, 'Samuel! Samuel!' Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, 'Here I am, since you called me.' He replied, 'I did not call you, my son; go back and lie down.' Samuel had as yet no knowledge of the Lord and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. Once again the Lord called, the third time. He got up and went to Eli and said, 'Here I am, since you called me.' Eli then understood that it was the Lord who was calling the boy, and he said to Samuel, 'Go and lie down, and if someone calls say, "Speak Lord, your servant is listening"'. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

The Lord then came and stood by, calling as he had done before, 'Samuel! Samuel!' Samuel answered, 'Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.'

Samuel grew up and the Lord was with him and let no word of his fall to the ground.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 39

R. Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.

1. I waited, I waited for the Lord
and he stooped down to me;
he heard my cry.
He put a new song into my mouth,
praise of our God. (R.)

2. You do not ask for sacrifice and offerings,
but an open ear.
You do not ask for holocaust and victim.
Instead, here am I. (R.)

3. In the scroll of the book it stands written
that I should do your will.
My God, I delight in your law
in the depth of my heart. (R.)

4. Your justice I have proclaimed
in the great assembly.
My lips I have not sealed;
you know it, O Lord. (R.)

SECOND READING

1 Cor 6:13-15, 17-20

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians

The body is not meant for fornication; it is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. God who raised the Lord from the dead, will by his power raise us up too.

You know, surely, that your bodies are members making up the body of Christ; anyone who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him.

Keep away from fornication. All the other sins are committed outside the body; but to fornicate is to sin against your own body. Your body, you know, is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you since you received him from God. You are not your own property; you have been bought and paid for. That is why you should use your body for the glory of God.

The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Jn 1:41, 17

Alleluia, alleluia! We have found the Messiah: Jesus Christ, who brings us truth and grace. Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Jn 1:35-42

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

As John stood with two of his disciples, Jesus passed, and John stared hard at him and said, 'Look, there is the lamb of God.' Hearing this, the two disciples followed Jesus. Jesus turned round, saw them following and said, 'What do you want?' They answered, 'Rabbi,' – which means Teacher – 'where do you live?' 'Come and see' he replied; so they went and saw where he lived, and stayed with him the rest of that day. It was about the tenth hour.

One of these two who became followers of Jesus after hearing what John had said was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter. Early next morning, Andrew met his brother and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' – which means the Christ – and he took Simon to Jesus. Jesus looked hard at him and said, 'You are Simon son of John; you are to be called Cephas' – meaning Rock.

The Gospel of the Lord.

MEMORIAL ACCLAMATION

We proclaim your Death, O Lord,
and profess your Resurrection, until you come again.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

1 Jn 4:16

We have come to know and to believe
in the love that God has for us.

SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

(for those unable to receive sacramentally)

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.