



# 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
<b>Assistant Priest / Lithuanian Chaplain:</b>	Rev Fr Joseph Deveikis
<b>Presbytery / Parish Office:</b>	123 St Leonards Rd, Ascot Vale (Postal: PO Box 468 Ascot Vale 3032)
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<b>Office Hours:</b>	Tue & Fri, 10am – 3pm. <i>Secretary:</i> Carmen D'Rosario
<b>Principal, St Mary's School:</b>	Mr Paul Hogan T: 9370 1194
<b>Principal, St Margaret's School:</b>	Mr Gavin Brennan T: 9318 1339

## 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  
[No 7pm Mass this week]

**Thu** 9.00am St Mary's

**Fri** 9.15am St Mary's

**Sat** 9.30am St Mary's

## 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 normal schedule of Baptisms  
and Baptism Information  
Sessions remains on hold.  
However, announcements  
will soon be made about the  
resumption of Baptism  
ceremonies for individual  
babies, with up to two  
ceremonies every weekend.

## Weddings at St Mary's

For information on weddings  
please ring the parish office.

## Private prayer in our churches

St Mary's, although its doors  
remain closed, is now available  
for private prayer by  
contacting the parish office.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent – 6 December 2020

'The beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.' These words which commence our gospel reading today are the very opening words of St Mark's Gospel, the gospel on which our Sunday readings will concentrate over this second year (Year B) we have just begun of the three-year liturgical cycle.

Our word 'gospel' is from Old English 'god-spell', which simply means 'Good News'. This translates the Greek word *evangelion* (*eu* = 'good', *angelion* = 'message'). Originally, this word referred, not to the four accounts by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, but to the whole message and salvation Jesus brought. Thus Jesus himself is reported by Mark as 'proclaiming the good news (*evangelion*) of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news (*evangelio*)"'. St Paul has a similar usage in his letters. In the 2nd century we find the term being applied also to the actual writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, whom today we term 'evangelists'.

It's good to recall our basic knowledge of the four written gospels, our primary sources for the life and ministry of Jesus. Whereas Jesus himself spoke in Aramaic, the four gospels (like all books of the New Testament) are in Greek, the *lingua franca* of the eastern parts of the Roman Empire. Each of the four brings its own perspective on Jesus. The first three are known as the 'Synoptic Gospels' because of their broad similarity of content and structure. John's Gospel, held to have been the last written, takes quite a different approach in its account of Jesus' public ministry – picking out just a few miracle stories but giving extended teaching of Jesus in connection with each one.

For decades after Jesus's Death, Resurrection and Ascension (in either AD 30 or AD 33) his life and teaching were especially communicated by the oral preaching and teaching of the disciples; only gradually was this also given written form.

Certainly our faith, relying on the Spirit-guided teaching of the Church, tells us the books of the Bible were all inspired by the Holy Spirit and are thus the Word of God. However, this doesn't mean that God simply told the human authors what to write. 'In composing the sacred books, God chose men and while employed by Him they made use of their powers and abilities, so that with Him acting in them and through them, they, as true authors, consigned to writing everything and only those things which He wanted.' (Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*) The authors themselves, one presumes, would not have been aware they were being divinely guided, and would simply have gone about their writing as would any author, including making use of existing sources.

Scholars continue to debate the exact dating and interrelationship of the gospels, and the extent to which the authors of the later written gospels made direct use of the earlier ones, and the extent to which they relied on other oral or written sources. Over the last century it has commonly been held that Mark's Gospel was actually written before Matthew's (despite the way we order them in our Bibles) and that Matthew made use of Mark. However, the question is not resolved, and there are a number of theories.

Historical testimony from the early Church indicates that St Mark was not an eyewitness of Jesus' ministry himself, but as a disciple of St Peter during his time in Rome put into writing what he learnt from Peter's eyewitness accounts of Jesus. The gospels themselves do not actually state their authors' names – Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis, gives our earliest information (early 2nd century) about Mark's authorship. Mark's Gospel, the shortest of the four, was written, it seems, around the 60s of the 1st century – most likely in Rome, for an audience of Christians of gentile rather than Jewish background.

*With the end of lockdown, the three Sacraments conferring an indelible character are now proceeding again after postponement – Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders in its three degrees of Diaconate, Presbyterate and Episcopate:*

### **Sacrament of Baptism – Baptisms at St Mary's**

We warmly welcome into the family of God's Church, **Tilly James Jarvis** and **Alessio Joseph Cicione**, baptised at St Mary's this weekend.

### **Sacrament of Confirmation**

Last Thursday Fr Justin, by delegation from Archbishop Comensoli, conferred the Sacrament of Confirmation on Year Six children from St Margaret's School; and this Wednesday, he will confer the Sacrament on Year Six children from St Mary's School. We keep all these children in our prayers.

### **Sacrament of Holy Orders – Ordinations to the Priesthood and Diaconate**

On Saturday morning at St Patrick's Cathedral, Archbishop Peter ordained four new priests for service in Melbourne: **Rev. Fr Simeon Anthony**, **Rev. Fr James Baptist**, **Rev. Fr Jude Ezeme** and **Rev. Fr Jude Johnson**. There will also be ordinations to the Diaconate this month. We congratulate and pray for all those being ordained Priests and Deacons.

### **Sacrament of Holy Orders – Episcopal Ordination of Bishop-elect Greg Bennet as Bishop of Sale**

This Tuesday 8 December, the Mass of Installation and Ordination of Bishop-elect Greg Bennet as Bishop of Sale will be celebrated at St Mary's Cathedral in Sale. The Bishop-elect has been Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Melbourne from 2012 to 2019; prior to that, as well as serving in different parishes, he was Director of Ministry to Priests and inaugural Director of the Archbishop's Office for Evangelisation. We keep the Bishop-elect in our prayers, with gratitude for his years of faithful service in Melbourne.

#### **Recently Deceased:**

Michael Mallia; Caterina Perre; Fortunata Gullace

#### **Anniversaries:**

Frank McSweeney; Kevin Dowling; Wenceslao Mallari

#### **Feast Days:**

**7 December:** St Ambrose, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

**8 December:** The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary – Parish Feast Day

**9 December:** St Juan Diego Cuauhtlatotzin [Visionary of Our Lady of Guadalupe]

**10 December:** Our Lady of Loreto [This optional memorial is newly added to the Liturgical Calendar by Pope Francis]

**11 December:** Pope St Damasus I

**12 December:** Our Lady of Guadalupe

**Readings Next Week:** 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent, Year B: Is 61:1-2, 10-11; 1 Thess 5:16-24; Jn 1:6-8, 19-28

### **Anticipated further lifting of restrictions hoped to enable Christmas and Baptism planning**

Further government announcements about lifting of restrictions are expected today. This will enable us to make plans for scheduling our Christmas Masses, and to organise how bookings for baptisms after New Year will be arranged. Currently we are conducting individual baptisms for families from our waiting list, but we hope to soon resume group baptisms, enabling all the families who are waiting to celebrate the Sacrament sooner rather than later.

We are now fully back at our normal Mass schedule. 150 people are allowed to attend services at St Mary's, and 80 at St Margaret's. We should still maintain 1.5 metres distance (standing, in the pews, or in the Communion queue), and wear masks inside the church; we still need to sanitise, and to register contact details of those who attend. To avoid delays in starting Mass, **you are asked to arrive at Mass well in advance of the starting time.** Obviously if 150 people arrive simultaneously five minutes before Mass is meant to begin, it will not be possible for all these people to be registered in the space of those five minutes. **Registration at the church door will also be sped up if you book your place in advance on the parish website.** This will also guarantee you a spot; whereas it is possible

that some of those who turn up without booking will miss out on a place, if number limits are reached. (Bookings are no longer necessary, and are no longer being taken, for weekday Masses, as numbers at these will never go close to the congregational limit.)

### **Parish Feast Day – The Immaculate Conception**

**Tuesday 8 December** is our Parish Feast Day, the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mass will be at 9:00 am. A plenary indulgence (under the usual conditions) is available for visiting our parish church, St Mary of the Immaculate Conception, on its feast day, and devoutly reciting there an Our Father & Creed.

### **No public Mass this Wednesday evening**

Because of the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation for children from St Mary's School this **Wednesday evening 9 December**, for this week only there will be no 7:00 pm Wednesday Parish Mass.

### **St Vincent de Paul Christmas Appeal**

This is the time of the St Vincent De Paul Christmas Appeal. You are encouraged to donate, either by using the envelopes at the church doors, by calling 13 18 12, or online at [vinnies.org.au](http://vinnies.org.au) (A button on the home page of our parish website will take you to the donation page.)

### **The G.I.F.T. Paper – Growing. In. Faith. Together**

This weekend the 24<sup>th</sup> edition of the 'G.I.F.T. Paper' (Growing. In. Faith. Together) will be given away at all Masses.

This free quarterly brochure for parishioners and school families, an initiative of parishioners, brings together interesting articles from various sources to help us 'grow in faith together'. Copies have already been issued, as always, to school families. The G.I.F.T. Paper will also be accessible from the home page of the parish website.

## SAINT OF THE WEEK

**4 December:** St John Damascene, Priest and Doctor of the Church

St John Damascene (St John of Damascus), last of the Greek Fathers of the Church, was born in Damascus, Syria, about 675, and brought up a Christian.

Damascus, long in Roman/Byzantine control, had fallen to Arab forces in 634, in the great Muslim conquest that began under Muhammad (c. 570-632), founder of Islam; and in 661 the Umayyad dynasty gained the caliphate, ruling the whole Muslim world and establishing the capital of the Islamic Empire in Damascus. The Umayyad Caliphate (661-750) was the largest-ever united Muslim empire, ruling in the end from Spain to central Asia and the borders of India. The conquests spread the religion of Islam, but at first the majority of former Roman / Byzantine citizens in the Caliphate remained Christian – now second-class citizens paying a special tax, but with freedom of worship.

St John Damascene's grandfather was an administrator under the Byzantines, and then served the new Arab rulers; and John's father served in the court of the Caliph in Damascus. John received an extensive education from Cosmas, a Sicilian monk taken captive by the Arabs but freed through the influence of John's father. The saint himself is reported to have served for a time in the court of the Caliph.

But (maybe about 706) John became a monk, then priest, at the Mar Saba Monastery in the Judean desert between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea – established in 483 by St Sabbas (439-532), and still operating as a Greek Orthodox monastery today. (The times of St John Damascene preceded the division of Orthodox from Catholic that grew from 1054; indeed, after the Muslim conquest, monks from Mar Saba had fled to Rome in 645, where they established San Saba's on the Aventine hill, a site today under the Jesuits.)

Theologically, St John is prominent for compiling and systematising the work of his predecessors into a coherent whole (especially in the third book, the *De fide orthodoxa*, from his *Fountain of Wisdom*). He is an early

theological critic of Islam, and a prominent expositor of the bodily Assumption of Mary into heaven.

But St John was above all the great opponent of the iconoclast ('image-breaking') heresy. Byzantine Emperor Leo III (reigned 717-41), perhaps influenced by Muslim rejection of religious images, from 726 denounced religious imagery as idolatrous and prohibited by the Old Testament. Christian religious art, despite some early divergent views, had developed from the first Christian centuries; but under emperors Leo III and Constantine V (741-75), images were banned and destroyed (as in the Protestant Reformation much later).

Iconoclast Patriarchs of Constantinople were installed; supporters of icons were persecuted, monks in particular, and some martyred. Some monasteries were secularised, and Constantine tried to abolish religious vows, at one point forcing monks and nuns to parade hand-in-hand in the Hippodrome in Constantinople. The Popes opposed iconoclasm, holding councils in Rome denouncing it (and from this time looking for support from the Franks rather than the Byzantines). St John, safely outside the Byzantine Empire, wrote three works against the heresy.

St John Damascene died at Mar Saba on 4 December, about 749. An iconoclast council held at Hieria in 754 under Constantine V singled out John for attack. But the Seventh Ecumenical Council, Nicaea II in 787, under the patronage of Empress-Regent Irene and with papal support and representation, reversed this, and re-affirmed the legitimacy of using religious images (for honour and veneration, not worship as divine): 'He who venerates an image venerates in it the person whom the image represents.' (There was a return of the heresy under three more iconoclast emperors from 814, until its final rejection by the Empire from 843. After the division of Orthodox from Catholic, both have continued to uphold Nicaea II and the veneration of images.) In 1890, Pope Leo XIII named St John Damascene a Doctor of the Church.

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*The 1992 'Catechism of the Catholic Church' draws on St John Damascene's doctrine in its own teaching on images:*

**1159** The sacred image, the liturgical icon, principally represents Christ. It cannot represent the invisible and incomprehensible God, but the incarnation of the Son of God has ushered in a new "economy" of images:

Previously God, who has neither a body nor a face, absolutely could not be represented by an image. But now that he has made himself visible in the flesh and has lived with men, I can make an image of what I have seen of God...and contemplate the glory of the Lord, his face unveiled. (St. John Damascene)

**1161** All the signs in the liturgical celebrations are related to Christ: as are sacred images of the holy Mother of God and of the saints as well.

Following the divinely inspired teaching of our holy Fathers and the tradition of the Catholic Church (for we know that this tradition comes from the Holy Spirit who dwells in her) we rightly define with full certainty and correctness that, like the figure of the precious and life-giving cross, venerable and holy images of our Lord and God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, our inviolate Lady, the holy Mother of God, and the venerated angels, all the saints and the just, whether painted or made of mosaic or another suitable material, are to be exhibited in the holy churches of God, on sacred vessels and vestments, walls and panels, in houses and on streets. (Second Ecumenical Council of Nicaea, AD 787 (DS 600))

**1162** "The beauty of the images moves me to contemplation, as a meadow delights the eyes and subtly infuses the soul with the glory of God." (St. John Damascene)

## **2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT, YEAR B – READINGS**

### **ENTRANCE ANTIPHON** *(if no hymn is sung)*

O people of Sion, behold,  
the Lord will come to save the nations,  
and the Lord will make the glory of his voice heard  
in the joy of your heart.

### **FIRST READING**

*Is 40:1-5, 9-11*

*A reading from the prophet Isaiah*

‘Console my people, console them’ says your God.  
‘Speak to the heart of Jerusalem and call to her that her  
time of service is ended, that her sin is atoned for, that  
she has received from the hand of the Lord double  
punishment for all her crimes.’

A voice cries, ‘Prepare in the wilderness a way for the  
Lord. Make a straight highway for our God across the  
desert. Let every valley be filled in, every mountain and  
hill be laid low, let every cliff become a plain, and the  
ridges a valley; then the glory of the Lord shall be  
revealed and all mankind shall see it; for the mouth of  
the Lord has spoken.’

Go up on a high mountain, joyful messenger to Zion.  
Shout with a loud voice, joyful messenger to Jerusalem.  
Shout without fear, say to the towns of Judah, ‘Here is  
your God.’ Here is the Lord coming with power, his arm  
subduing all things to him. The prize of his victory is  
with him, his trophies all go before him. He is like a  
shepherd feeding his flock, gathering lambs in his arms,  
holding them against his breast and leading to their rest  
the mother ewes.

*The word of the Lord.*

### **RESPONSORIAL PSALM**

*Ps 84*

R. Lord, let us see your kindness,  
and grant us your salvation.

1. I will hear what the Lord God has to say,  
a voice that speaks of peace, peace for his people.  
His help is near for those who fear him  
and his glory will dwell in our land. (R.)

2. Mercy and faithfulness have met;  
justice and peace have embraced.  
Faithfulness shall spring from the earth  
and justice look down from heaven. (R.)

3. The Lord will make us prosper  
and our earth shall yield its fruit.  
Justice shall march before him  
and peace shall follow his steps. (R.)

### **SECOND READING**

*2 Pet 3:8-14*

*A reading from the second letter of St Peter*

There is one thing, my friends, that you must never  
forget: that with the Lord, ‘a day’ can mean a thousand  
years, and a thousand years is like a day. The Lord is not  
being slow to carry out his promises, as anybody else  
might be called slow; but he is being patient with you  
all, wanting nobody to be lost and everybody to be

brought to change his ways. The Day of the Lord will  
come like a thief, and then with a roar the sky will  
vanish, the elements will catch fire and fall apart, the  
earth and all that it contains will be burnt up.

Since everything is coming to an end like this, you  
should be living holy and saintly lives while you wait  
and long for the Day of God to come, when the sky will  
dissolve in flames and the elements melt in the heat.  
What we are waiting for is what he promised: the new  
heavens and new earth, the place where righteousness  
will be at home. So then, my friends, while you are  
waiting, do your best to live lives without spot or stain  
so that he will find you at peace.

*The word of the Lord.*

### **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

*Lk 3:4, 6*

Alleluia, alleluia!

Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths:  
all people shall see the salvation of God. Alleluia!

### **GOSPEL**

*Mk 1:1-8*

*A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark*

The beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ, the  
Son of God. It is written in the book of the prophet Isaiah:

Look, I am going to send my messenger before you; he  
will prepare your way. A voice cries in the wilderness:

Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight,  
and so it was that John the Baptist appeared in the  
wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the  
forgiveness of sins. All Judaea and all the people of  
Jerusalem made their way to him, and as they were  
baptised by him in the river Jordan they confessed their  
sins. John wore a garment of camel-skin, and he lived on  
locusts and wild honey. In the course of his preaching he  
said, ‘Someone is following me, someone who is more  
powerful than I am, and I am not fit to kneel down and  
undo the strap of his sandals. I have baptised you with  
water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.’

*The Gospel of the Lord.*

### **MEMORIAL ACCLAMATION**

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

### **COMMUNION ANTIPHON** *(if no hymn is sung)*

Jerusalem, arise and stand upon the heights,  
and behold the joy which comes to you from God.

### **SPIRITUAL COMMUNION** *(for those unable to receive)*

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:**

#### **Entrance**

– CWB 242 (verses 1, 4, 5)

O come, O come Emmanuel

#### **Offertory**

– CWB 239

Hark! a herald voice is calling

#### **Communion**

– CWB 82

There is a longing in our hearts, O Lord

#### **Reflection**

– CWB 244

On Jordan’s bank

#### **Recessional**

– CWB 416 (verses 1, 8, 9)

Immaculate Mary