



# 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)
<b>Telephone:</b>	9370 6688
<b>Website:</b>	www.stmaryschurch.org.au
<b>Email:</b>	ascotvale@cam.org.au
<b>Office Hours:</b>	Tue – Fri, 10am – 3pm. Parish Secretary: 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

## Mass

Public Masses are currently suspended. 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 on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays of the month are currently on hold. However, Baptism will be administered if there is urgent and grave need.

Baptism Information Sessions are also currently 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

In accordance with the guidelines of the Archdiocese, our churches are not currently open for private prayer.

## Parish Bulletin

The Bulletin will continue to be published, containing the readings for that Sunday for your reflection. This will be uploaded to the parish website on the Saturday morning prior.

## 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter – 3 May 2020

### *LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE FAITHFUL FOR THE MONTH OF MAY 2020*

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

The month of May is approaching, a time when the People of God express with particular intensity their love and devotion for the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is traditional in this month to pray the Rosary at home within the family. The restrictions of the pandemic have made us come to appreciate all the more this “family” aspect, also from a spiritual point of view.

For this reason, I want to encourage everyone to rediscover the beauty of praying the Rosary at home in the month of May. This can be done either as a group or individually; you can decide according to your own situations, making the most of both opportunities. The key to doing this is always simplicity, and it is easy also on the internet to find good models of prayers to follow.

I am also providing two prayers to Our Lady that you can recite at the end of the Rosary, and that I myself will pray in the month of May, in spiritual union with all of you. I include them with this letter so that they are available to everyone.

Dear brothers and sisters, contemplating the face of Christ with the heart of Mary our Mother will make us even more united as a spiritual family and will help us overcome this time of trial. I keep all of you in my prayers, especially those suffering most greatly, and I ask you, please, to pray for me. I thank you, and with great affection I send you my blessing.

*Rome, Saint John Lateran, 25 April 2020  
Feast of Saint Mark the Evangelist*

Pope Francis

## *First Prayer*

O Mary, You shine continuously on our journey as a sign of salvation and hope. We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick, who, at the foot of the cross, were united with Jesus’ suffering, and persevered in your faith.

“Protectress of the Roman people”, you know our needs, and we know that you will provide, so that, as at Cana in Galilee, joy and celebration may return after this time of trial.

Help us, Mother of Divine Love, to conform ourselves to the will of the Father and to do what Jesus tells us. For he took upon himself our suffering, and burdened himself with our sorrows to bring us, through the cross, to the joy of the Resurrection. Amen.

*We fly to your protection, O Holy Mother of God;  
Do not despise our petitions in our necessities,  
but deliver us always from every danger, O Glorious and Blessed Virgin.*

## ***Second Prayer***

“We fly to your protection, O Holy Mother of God”.

In the present tragic situation, when the whole world is prey to suffering and anxiety, we fly to you, Mother of God and our Mother, and seek refuge under your protection.

Virgin Mary, turn your merciful eyes towards us amid this coronavirus pandemic.

Comfort those who are distraught and mourn their loved ones who have died, and at times are buried in a way that grieves them deeply. Be close to those who are concerned for their loved ones who are sick and who, in order to prevent the spread of the disease, cannot be close to them. Fill with hope those who are troubled by the uncertainty of the future and the consequences for the economy and employment.

Mother of God and our Mother, pray for us to God, the Father of mercies, that this great suffering may end and that hope and peace may dawn anew. Plead with your divine Son, as you did at Cana, so that the families of the sick and the victims be comforted, and their hearts be opened to confidence and trust.

Protect those doctors, nurses, health workers and volunteers who are on the frontline of this emergency, and are risking their lives to save others. Support their heroic effort and grant them strength, generosity and continued health.

Be close to those who assist the sick night and day, and to priests who, in their pastoral concern and fidelity to the Gospel, are trying to help and support everyone.

Blessed Virgin, illumine the minds of men and women engaged in scientific research, that they may find effective solutions to overcome this virus.

Support national leaders, that with wisdom, solicitude and generosity they may come to the aid of those lacking the basic necessities of life and may devise social and economic solutions inspired by farsightedness and solidarity.

Mary Most Holy, stir our consciences, so that the enormous funds invested in developing and stockpiling arms will instead be spent on promoting effective research on how to prevent similar tragedies from occurring in the future.

Beloved Mother, help us realize that we are all members of one great family and to recognize the bond that unites us, so that, in a spirit of fraternity and solidarity, we can help to alleviate countless situations of poverty and need. Make us strong in faith, persevering in service, constant in prayer.

Mary, Consolation of the afflicted, embrace all your children in distress and pray that God will stretch out his all-powerful hand and free us from this terrible pandemic, so that life can serenely resume its normal course.

To you, who shine on our journey as a sign of salvation and hope, do we entrust ourselves,  
O Clement, O Loving, O Sweet Virgin Mary. Amen.

---

## ***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.

---

**Recently Deceased:** Theresa Bucchieri

**Anniversaries:** Lucita Bunque; Martina Carreon; Mario Minin; Maria Quattrone

**Readings Next Week:** 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter Acts 6:1-7; 1 Pet 2:4-9; Jn 14:1-12

---

## ***Good Shepherd Sunday***

*Every vocation images Christ, but the ‘imaging’ specific and unique to the Priesthood is to be an icon of Christ in his role as Head, Shepherd and Bridegroom of the Church (cf. St John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation Pastores Dabo Vobis ‘I will give you Shepherds’). In August we have the Week of Prayer for Vocations when we consider all different callings in the Church; today on Good Shepherd Sunday we especially pray for vocations to the Priesthood, that Christ will call and form shepherds of his People after his own heart.*

---

## ***Vocations – a prayer request***

You might know of a young person in the parish, in your family or an acquaintance whom you think would make a good priest or religious. Why not pray for them by name on a regular basis? Sometimes the Lord uses us as his instruments to encourage vocations.

## **FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER, YEAR A – READINGS**

### **FIRST READING**

*Acts 2:14, 36-41*

*A reading from the Acts of the Apostles*

On the day of Pentecost Peter stood up with the Eleven and addressed the crowd in a loud voice: 'The whole House of Israel can be certain that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ.'

Hearing this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the apostles, 'What must we do, brothers?' 'You must repent,' Peter answered 'and every one of you must be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise that was made is for you and your children, and for all those who are far away, for all those whom the Lord our God will call to himself.' He spoke to them for a long time using many arguments, and he urged them, 'Save yourselves from this perverse generation.' They were convinced by his arguments, and they accepted what he said and were baptised. That very day about three thousand were added to their number.

*The word of the Lord.*

### **RESPONSORIAL PSALM**

*Ps 22 (23)*

R. The Lord is my shepherd;  
there is nothing I shall want.

1. The Lord is my shepherd;  
there is nothing I shall want.  
Fresh and green are the pastures  
where he gives me repose.  
Near restful waters he leads me,  
to revive my drooping spirit. (R.)

2. He guides me along the right path;  
he is true to his name.  
If I should walk in the valley of darkness  
no evil would I fear.  
You are there with your crook and your staff;  
with these you give me comfort. (R.)

3. You have prepared a banquet for me  
in the sight of my foes.  
My head you have anointed with oil;  
my cup is overflowing. (R.)

4. Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me  
all the days of my life.  
In the Lord's own house shall I dwell  
for ever and ever. (R.)

### **SECOND READING**

*1 Pet 2:20-25*

*A reading from the first letter of St Peter*

The merit, in the sight of God, is in bearing punishment patiently when you are punished after

doing your duty.

This, in fact, is what you were called to do, because Christ suffered for you and left an example for you to follow the way he took. He had not done anything wrong, and there had been no perjury in his mouth. He was insulted and did not retaliate with insults; when he was tortured he made no threats but he put his trust in the righteous judge. He was bearing our faults in his own body on the cross, so that we might die to our faults and live for holiness; through his wounds you have been healed. You had gone astray like sheep but now you have come back to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

*The word of the Lord.*

### **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Alleluia, alleluia!

I am the good shepherd, says the Lord;  
I know my own sheep and mine know me.  
Alleluia!

### **GOSPEL**

*Jn 10:1-10*

*A reading from the holy Gospel according to John*

Jesus said: 'I tell you most solemnly, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold through the gate, but gets in some other way is a thief and a brigand. The one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the flock; the gatekeeper lets him in, the sheep hear his voice, one by one he calls his own sheep and leads them out. When he has brought out his flock, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow because they know his voice. They never follow a stranger but run away from him: they do not recognise the voice of strangers.'

Jesus told them this parable but they failed to understand what he meant by telling it to them.

So Jesus spoke to them again:  
'I tell you most solemnly,  
I am the gate of the sheepfold.  
All others who have come  
are thieves and brigands;  
but the sheep took no notice of them.  
I am the gate.

Anyone who enters through me will be safe:  
he will go freely in and out  
and be sure of finding pasture.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.  
I have come  
so that they may have life  
and have it to the full.'

*The Gospel of the Lord.*

**‘Anyone who does not enter the sheepfold through the gate, but gets in some other way is a thief and a brigand... I am the gate. Anyone who enters through me will be safe.’** (Jn 10:1, 9)

Jesus in today’s Gospel proclaims himself as the Gate of the sheepfold, the unique way to salvation. Elsewhere he gives the same teaching: ‘There will be only one Flock, and One Shepherd.’ (Jn 10:16) ‘I am the way, the truth and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.’ (Jn 14:6)

Now, in our democratic era we are very wary of any ‘exclusivity’. Thus the idea of an ‘exclusive club’ or of a social class conceived of as ‘better than other people’ goes against our belief in the equality of all human beings. We rightly hold that all human beings are equal by sharing the same nature, by having the same basic rights, by being equally redeemed by Christ and equally called to a divine destiny.

Yet as with any idea, if the ideal of equality is misapplied or taken to unbalanced extremes it leads us astray. The ideal can be falsely extended in various ways that even damage true human equality and well-being. Thus people sometimes have the vague feeling that everyone’s *ideas* should be treated as equal – especially their religious ideas or their ideas about right and wrong. This is a major ingredient in the relativism so common today. ‘All people are equal’ is twisted into ‘All religions are equal’. (Taken to its logical conclusion, equality of ideas would mean we would have to treat as equal even discriminatory and racist ideas that actually negate equality of persons.)

So certainly, we give equal respect to all *people* as they sincerely put forth their beliefs. But this doesn’t mean that the *beliefs* themselves are all of equal value. As we all experience, we are all capable of error, and putting false beliefs on the same level as beliefs that have been proven true is irrational and wrong, in particular when we are talking about truths of good and evil, or about truths that God has spoken and vouched for to the human race.

So Jesus does teach an ‘inequality’ among religions and paths to salvation: there is only one Flock under one Shepherd, only one Name by which we can be saved. And we fully belong to this one Flock through accepting the one Baptism and the one true Faith, the truth with which our Shepherd feeds us. Thus there are the man-made religions on the one hand, but on the other, the religion God himself has given, that purifies and fulfils them all.

But unlike an exclusive club, all people are equally invited to be *included* in this one Flock by accepting Baptism and believing and following the true Faith: all are equally welcome. ‘There are other sheep I have that are not of this fold, and these I have to lead as well.’ (Jn 10:16) Thus the unity of the one Flock and one Shepherd is not ‘exclusionary’ of any human being. It is God’s gift offered to all humanity to

humbly accept (and not our own doing, as though we who *have* accepted it could boast about it).

Neither does it exclude any of the rich diversity God has created: every race, culture, nation and individual is not only to be included, welcomed and preserved in its integrity, but finds its highest fulfilment by being united with God in Christ. Only the ‘diversity’ of sin and error (that actually damages human beings) is purged away, the more deeply we enter into this union of the one Flock under one Shepherd.

Thus we do not negate, but rather welcome and honour, the numerous seeds of goodness and truth – reflections of Christ – God has planted also among those who are not yet visibly part of Christ’s One Flock. Very often, of course, they have not yet had any real way of knowing the One Shepherd. They can still receive his salvation if by grace they follow God’s will as they understand it. Even so, we owe it to them to share the precious gift of knowing, even in this life, their true Shepherd and all he offers.

We are links in a chain, and dare not refuse to pass along to others what has previously been passed to us: as our equals, they have an equal right to the truth. At the same time, in understanding and honouring the gifts already possessed by those with whom we are sharing, we are ourselves led to a deeper awareness of facets of Christ’s fullness we had not yet fully understood.

In sum, there is nothing which is in the slightest exclusionary, unwelcoming, arrogant or elitist about Jesus’ teaching of there being ‘only one Flock and one Shepherd’ – one Saviour, one true Church, one true Faith. Any embarrassment or diffidence about this beautiful teaching of the perfect unity in diversity to which the Good Shepherd invites all people in his Catholic Church, is confused and misplaced – a residue perhaps of the relativism we have absorbed from the surrounding culture.

True, when sharing with others who might themselves be confused about these things, we may need to express ourselves prudently, so as not to be misunderstood as bombastic and blowing *our own* trumpet (which in truth is Christ’s). But for ourselves, we will have full confidence that we should be united as closely as possible with the one Shepherd in his one Flock, and should always aim to invite others into the joy of that unity.

Perfect unity of faith and of charity, expressed and nourished as we share the one Bread of Life: thus we live to the full the way, not only of unity and truth, but of love, inclusivity, welcoming, equality, humility, respect for rightful diversity and freedom. In short, the way modelled for us by the Good Shepherd himself.