

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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Website:	www.stmaryschurch.org.au
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Office Hours:	Tue – Fri, 10am – 3pm. Parish Secretary: Carmen D'Rosario
Principal, St Mary's School:	Mr Paul Hogan T: 9370 1194
Principal, St Margaret's School:	Mr Gavin Brennan T: 9318 1339

Mass

Masses are now able to be celebrated with 10 people attending, plus essential ministers. You are invited to book your attendance at a Mass using the parish website.

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 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month are still on hold. However, 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 will continue to be published, containing the readings for that Sunday for your reflection. This will be uploaded to the parish website the Saturday afternoon prior.

6th Sunday of Easter – 17 May 2020



PASTORAL LETTER FROM THE BISHOPS OF VICTORIA

Wednesday 13 May 2020

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Throughout this situation of the Coronavirus pandemic our prayers and solidarity have been with you all, and will continue to guide the challenging decisions we have been called to make.

Despite the many weeks of worry and social restrictions, we are delighted that as of 11.59pm yesterday, Tuesday 12 May 2020, churches in Victoria may now be open in certain circumstances.

This opportunity for small gatherings and for some quiet moments of prayer in the sacramental presence of Our Lord is a gentle first step in the right direction, and rightly a moment of rejoicing for God's people. We are pleased to work constructively with our communities to make appropriate adjustments. Strict restrictions still govern our actions due to the risks of COVID-19 and we are all being asked to show patience and fortitude.

Each Diocese is communicating with their parishes about how various ministries, including sacramental care, will be conducted in this first stage of the easing of social restrictions. We wish to be fully compliant with the directives that apply across Victoria, so that we ensure the protection of elderly and vulnerable people, and work together for the common good of our communities.

The conditions under which a church can be open include a collection of contact details (for the purposes of contact-tracing if it becomes necessary), strict monitoring of numbers, ongoing hygiene requirements, publicising the scheduled times for private worship, and public worship limited to ten people at a time.

Arrangements for liturgies and access to churches while ensuring these conditions are met will vary, depending on the facilities and resources that are available in each particular community. We recognise that deciding on these arrangements and putting them in place is not straightforward, and we ask for patience and understanding during this time.

This new stage of restrictions is subject to changing guidance that we receive from the State Government authorities, and we are advised this will be reviewed at the end of May.

After a difficult time for all of us, including many new pressures on families and great challenges for healthcare and emergency workers, we share in the disappointment that social restrictions are likely to continue for some time.

Nevertheless, we act with one accord in doing what is most prudent and loving for the sake of those most susceptible to the virus. We rejoice that Christ is with us and will walk with us as we begin the long journey out of the current stage of restrictions.

Yours sincerely in Christ Jesus,

Most Rev Peter A Comensoli	ARCHBISHOP OF MELBOURNE
Most Rev Shane Mackinlay	BISHOP OF SANDHURST
Most Rev Paul Bernard Bird CSsR	BISHOP OF BALLARAT
Rev Peter Slater	DELEGATE OF DIOCESAN ADMINISTRATOR, SALE

The following email about our own parish response to our new situation was sent on Friday to parishioners whose email addresses are on our database. It is reprinted here (with some edits) for parishioners not on our email database. If you did not receive the email, and wish to receive future emails, please email the parish office (ascotvale@cam.org.au), and we will add your email address to our database.

Dear Parishioners,

Hope this finds you well! We continue to pray for the alleviation of the current crisis of COVID-19, and we look forward to the day when we can resume all our normal activities.

I know that many of you have been participating in our livestreamed Masses at 10:30 am every Sunday, and this livestreaming will continue. Thanks to those parishioners who have helped make this possible! (You can access this from the parish website stmaryschurch.org.au)

After this difficult period of lockdown, it's great that we can also now cautiously re-open various events for attendance. The Government now permits 10 persons (or 20 for funerals) to attend religious services, plus essential ministers. This attendance is now also one of the legal reasons for which you may legitimately leave your premises.

So, we have started scheduling Masses you can attend, with two Masses scheduled on most days, three on Sundays.

Because of the 10-person limit, it will be necessary for you book your attendance in advance, which you can do on the home page of the parish website, stmaryschurch.org.au. Bookings are open for Masses up until next Thursday, 21 May. Further Masses will be opened to booking in the future – check on the website from next Thursday.

Naturally, by government and archdiocesan guidelines, many cautions must be in place. 1.5 metre distancing must be maintained, whether you are sitting or standing. Contact details of all those attending will be registered when you enter the church. Hand sanitiser will be made available by an attendant. Church doors are closed during the service (for which reason our parish requirement is that those attending must be in the church at least 5 minutes before the starting time (or 10 minutes before the livestreamed 10:30 Sunday Mass) at which point the doors will be closed).

After each Mass, the government requires us to properly sanitise the church. (Our limited capabilities for this process limit the number of Masses we are able to schedule. For the same reason, unfortunately we are not opening the church to private prayer at this time, since although it is technically permitted, the guidelines require sanitising to take place after each session. This is also the reason large areas of the church are roped off – so that the cleaner knows that those areas do not need sanitising. Otherwise, it would be impossible for us to open at all.)

At least for this weekend, all Masses are at St Mary's, not at St Margaret's.

If you know parishioners without internet access, you might ask them if they want you to make a booking on their behalf. If you do this, please inform them of the need for them to be inside the church 5 (or 10) minutes before Mass.

It is unclear how much demand there will be at this point, and our schedule will be adjusted in the coming weeks to match our situation – check the website for times. We ask for the time being that only one Mass be booked per person, to enable as many parishioners as possible to attend at least one Mass in these early weeks of the new system.

If you find yourself consistently unable to make a booking in the coming weeks, please contact the parish office (preferably by email), and we will see what we can do. However, please don't ring the parish office just to make normal bookings, as we don't have the capacity to handle a large volume of calls and manual bookings. Those who simply need assistance in using the online booking system might first ask a family member or friend for help, and only call on the parish office if necessary.

I look forward to seeing you at our Masses in the coming days and weeks!

Fr Justin

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER, YEAR A – READINGS

FIRST READING

Acts 8:5-8, 14-17

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

Philip went to a Samaritan town and proclaimed the Christ to them. The people united in welcoming the message Philip preached, either because they had heard of the miracles he worked or because they saw them for themselves. There were, for example, unclean spirits that came shrieking out of many who were possessed, and several paralytics and cripples were cured. As a result there was great rejoicing in that town.

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, and they went down there, and prayed for the Samaritans to receive the Holy Spirit, for as yet he had not come down on any of them: they had only been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 65

R. Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

1. Cry out with joy to God all the earth,
O sing to the glory of his name.
O render him glorious praise.
Say to God: 'How tremendous your deeds! (R.)

2. 'Before you all the earth shall bow;
shall sing to you, sing to your name!'
Come and see the works of God,
tremendous his deeds among men. (R.)

3. He turned the sea into dry land,
they passed through the river dry-shod.
Let our joy then be in him;
he rules for ever by his might. (R.)

4. Come and hear, all who fear God.
I will tell what he did for my soul:
Blessed be God who did not reject my prayer
nor withhold his love from me. (R.)

SECOND READING

1 Pet 3:15-18

A reading from the first letter of St Peter

Reverence the Lord Christ in your hearts, and always have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you all have. But give it with courtesy and respect and with a clear conscience, so that those who slander you when you are living a good life in Christ may be proved wrong in the accusations that they bring. And if it is the will of God that you should suffer, it is better to suffer for doing right than for doing wrong.

Why, Christ himself, innocent though he was, had died once for sins, died for the guilty, to lead us to God. In the body he was put to death, in the spirit he was raised to life.

The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

All who love me will keep my words,
and my Father will love them and we will come to them.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Jn 14:15-21

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

Jesus said to his disciples:

'If you love me you will keep my commandments.
I shall ask the Father,
and he will give you another Advocate
to be with you for ever,
that Spirit of truth
whom the world can never receive
since it neither sees nor knows him;
but you know him,
because he is with you, he is in you.
I will not leave you orphans;
I will come back to you.
In a short time the world will no longer see me;
but you will see me,
because I live and you will live.
On that day
you will understand that I am in my Father
and you in me and I in you.
Anybody who receives my commandments
and keeps them
will be one who loves me;
and anybody who loves me will be loved by my Father,
and I shall love him and show myself to him.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

We continue to lift up our prayers to God in the current crisis – praying for all those who have died from COVID-19; for those gravely ill, and all those infected; for health-care workers, leaders, and all those whose work is especially crucial in the present hour; for researchers working towards a vaccine; for all those whose jobs or businesses have been lost or are in jeopardy, and all in financial difficulty; for protection and help for ourselves, our families, our parish, our Church, our nation and all the world.

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.

<u>Hymns:</u>	Entrance	–	CWB 346	Alleluia! Alleluia! Hearts to heav’n (<i>verses 1, 3</i>)
	Offertory	–	CWB 449	Alleluia, sing to Jesus
	Communion	–	CWB 469	Christians, let us love one another
	Recessional	–	CWB 408	Hail Queen of heav’n

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

Recently Deceased: Joseph Bui; Francesco Patti

Anniversaries: Elsie Sesto; Medina Dancel; Mercedes Pelayo

Readings Next Week: **The Ascension of the Lord:** Acts 1:1-11; Eph 1:17-23; Mt 28:16-20

From today’s readings:

- In the First Reading from the *Acts of the Apostles*, the ‘Philip’ mentioned as proclaiming Christ in the Samaritan town (*Acts* 8:4-8) (and who later baptises the Ethiopian eunuch, *Acts* 8:26-40) is not St Philip the Apostle. (The Apostles had actually remained in Jerusalem at this point (*Acts* 8:1).) Rather, he is another Philip known as St Philip the Deacon (or ‘the Evangelist’). He was one of the seven men appointed (including St Stephen, the first martyr) for the distribution of food to the needy in the community, so that the Apostles could keep concentrating on prayer and the service of the Word. The Apostles had laid hands on these seven men, who are generally accounted the first Deacons. (*Acts* 6:1-6)
- The account of Peter and John laying hands on the Samaritans, who then received the Holy Spirit, is a primary scriptural witness to the existence of the sacrament of Confirmation as distinct from Baptism. ‘Peter and John... prayed for the Samaritans to receive the Holy Spirit, for as yet he had not come down on any of them: they had only been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.’ (*Acts* 8:14-17) The same occurs in *Acts* 19:5-6, where St Paul baptises, and then lays hands for the gift of the Holy Spirit. *Hebrews* 6:2 names ‘the laying-on of hands’ as one of the first elements of Christian instruction. (See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* n. 1288, quoting Pope St Paul VI: ‘The imposition of hands is rightly recognised by the Catholic tradition as the origin of the sacrament of Confirmation, which in a certain way perpetuates the grace of Pentecost in the Church.’)
- ‘Always have your answer [Greek: *apologian* – defence] ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you all have. But give it with courtesy and respect and with a clear conscience...’ (*1 Pet* 3:15) These words of St Peter in our Second Reading are often cited as a basis for the importance of being able to give ‘reasons for our hope’ – a reasoned defence of the truth of Christian faith (for example, by proofs of God’s existence; proofs from miracles, etc.). The word in the New Testament text is a form of the Greek word *apologia*, meaning ‘a speech in defence’. So even today we speak of the field of study and writing called ‘apologetics’, meaning this reasoned defence of faith. (So ‘apologetics’ does not mean ‘apologising’ in the sense of saying sorry for our faith!)
- ‘If you love me you will keep my commandments’, Jesus in our Gospel tells the disciples at the Last Supper. (*Jn* 14:15) At the heart of our love for God is our desire to please him and do his will; and our *actions* in obedience to his commands are much more reliable signs than mere words, or passing emotions, that we do genuinely love God above all things (as we must if we are to be saved, and enter into heavenly union with him). This is why a serious and deliberate violation of a divine command negates supernatural charity, driving grace from our souls.
- Also in our Gospel, Jesus promises the sending of the Holy Spirit: ‘I shall ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you for ever, that Spirit of truth whom the world can never receive...’ (*Jn* 14:16-17) He later adds, ‘The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said to you.’ (*Jn* 14:26) ‘When the Spirit of truth comes he will lead you to the complete truth.’ (*Jn* 16:13) This promise of the permanent presence of the Holy Spirit of Truth is a fundamental basis for our certainty that the community of disciples that Jesus was establishing (upon Peter the ‘Rock’ (*Mt* 16:18) and the other Apostles) would always infallibly proclaim the complete truth of Jesus’ teachings. The Church was thus made ‘the pillar and foundation of truth’ (*1 Tim* 3:15), in which Jesus is with us always, ‘to the end of time’. (*Mt* 28:20)