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CatholicOutlook

MAGAZINE

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE DIOCESE OF PARRAMATTA

Lent & Easter | Autumn 2026



Bishop Vincent's Easter Message | Our Special Year of St Francis
New Hope in Windsor | The Diocese Turns 40 | Pope Honours Lalor Park Parishioner
Holy Week Mass Times

Catholic Outlook

Imprimatur and Publisher:
Bishop Vincent Long OFM Conv
Bishop of Parramatta
(02) 8838 3400
PO Box 3066,
North Parramatta, NSW, 1750
bishop@parracatholic.org
www.catholicoutlook.org

Editor & Vicar for Communications:
Br Mark O'Connor FMS
(02) 8838 3400
PO Box 3066
North Parramatta, NSW, 1750
comms@parracatholic.org

Deputy Editor:
Antony Lawes

Head of Communications and Engagement:
Anita Sulentic

Catholic Outlook is produced by the
Communications and Engagement Team.
Contributors: Belinda Gadd, Mary Brazell,
Gelina Montierro, Mary-Jane Chemuel, and
Isabell Petrinic.

Design:
Nicolette Axiak

Nihil Obstat:
Fr Wim Hoekstra

Accounts:
accounts@parracatholic.org

Images:
Unless specified, all images taken by
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The Diocese of Parramatta reaffirms the wise axiom attributed to Saint Augustine of Hippo, "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, freedom; in all things, charity." In this spirit, *Catholic Outlook* publishes a variety of Catholic viewpoints. They are not necessarily the official views of the Diocese of Parramatta.

Latest appointments

Most Rev Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFM Conv, Bishop of Parramatta, has confirmed these appointments in the Diocese of Parramatta:

Rev Jeff Miller SDB

Parish Priest at Our Lady of the Rosary Parish, St Marys, from 16 January 2026.

Rev Deacon Thong Nguyen

Deacon Assisting at the Parish of Baulkham Hills from 1 February 2026.

Rev Dr Deacon Michael Tan

Deacon Assisting at St John the Evangelist Parish, Riverstone, from 1 February 2026.

Rev Deacon Roque Dias

Deacon Assisting at Sacred Heart Parish, Westmead, from 1 February 2026.

Rev Andrew Bass

On long service leave from 2 February 2026.

Rev Joseph Truong Nguyen OFM Conv

Assistant Priest at Our Lady of the Rosary Parish, Kellyville, from 14 February 2026.

Rev Matthew Dimian

Administrator at St Aidan's Parish, Rooty Hill, from 27 February 2026.

Rev Jobi Payyappilly MS

Administrator at St Paul the Apostle Parish, Winston Hills, from 27 February 2026.

Rev Pio Yong Ho Jang

Administrator at St John Vianney Parish, Doonside, from 1 March 2026.

Rev Ambrose Owusu-Ansah

Assistant Priest at St Paul the Apostle Parish, Winston Hills, from 1 March 2026.



Cover image: Parishioner Jackson Ryan, portraying Jesus, during the youth-led Stations of the Cross on Good Friday at St Bernadette's Parish, Castle Hill, in April 2025.
Image: Alphonsus Fok/Diocese of Parramatta

Acknowledgement of Country

Here in the Diocese of Parramatta, we gather on Country on which members and Elders of the Darug and Gundungurra communities and their forebears have been custodians for many centuries and on which Aboriginal people have performed age-old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal. We acknowledge their living culture and their unique role in the life of the region.

An artwork by Bundjalung Elder Aunty Rhonda, an Aboriginal Services volunteer at Catholic Care Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains, in Emerton.

A message from the Editor

Dear friends,

Lent and Easter remind us powerfully that we live in a sinful yet graced culture. It's been said that sin is the "refusal to be touched by the pain of others". And the antidote, says Cynthia Bourgeault, is *kenosis*: the self-emptying whose name is the grace of love:

"When surrounded by fear, contradiction, betrayal; when the 'fight or flight' alarm bells are going off in your head and everything inside you wants to brace and defend itself, the infallible way to extricate yourself and reclaim your home in that sheltering kingdom is simply to release whatever you are holding onto – including, if it comes to this, life itself."

No wonder then that Pope Leo's Petrine ministry is increasingly devoted to the peacemaking of the Risen Christ in our fractured and violent world. The Risen Christ who refused to retaliate with hate and 'hold on' but rather died so that we might live.

The horrors taking place in wars in Ukraine, the Middle East, Myanmar and Sudan and the selfishness and greed which are destroying many hearts, even in a country as blessed as Australia, illustrate the challenge we face.

Indeed, from his first public words as Pontiff, our new Pope has prioritised our duty as disciples of Jesus to promote nonviolent peacemaking and resistance to war.

Notably, before he blessed the crowd in his recent visit to Lebanon, Pope Leo asked: "Young people of Lebanon, are you ready to be artisans of peace?"

Are we, the people of God in Parramatta in the 40th anniversary of our Diocese (see page 18) also deeply committed to be 'artisans of peace?' Are we really willing to extricate ourselves from violence and "simply to release whatever (we) are holding onto – including, if it comes to this, life itself'.

That is the challenge our Pope Leo constantly puts before us, which is echoed in Bishop Vincent's Easter message (page 10) delivered in this special Year of St Francis (see page 12).

Our own Vicar for Consecrated Life, Sr Patty Andrew OSU, further develops a spiritual way forward for us as we practice the Gospel virtue of not judging others – in her book review on the wisdom of the desert fathers (page 24).

And in our Looking Deeper spiritual section, Dr Debra Snoddy and Sr Susan Connelly provide us with fresh biblical reflections to deepen our Easter peacemaking faith (pages 28-31).

And in our local church, we praise God for the witness of Fr Paul Marshall, Rector of the Seminary (page 32) and the parish of Windsor (page 34) to see how Easter discipleship is lived out practically.

This Easter 2026, let us then take to heart and meditate on the profound message of our Holy Father Pope Leo: "Peace is not authentic if it is the product of partisan interests. It is only genuinely sincere when I do to others what I would like them to do to me" (Mt 7:12).

Let's then become peacemakers and like Christ and with his grace, simply release whatever we are holding onto. ✚

Br Mark O'Connor FMS
Editor of *Catholic Outlook* and Vicar for Communications.

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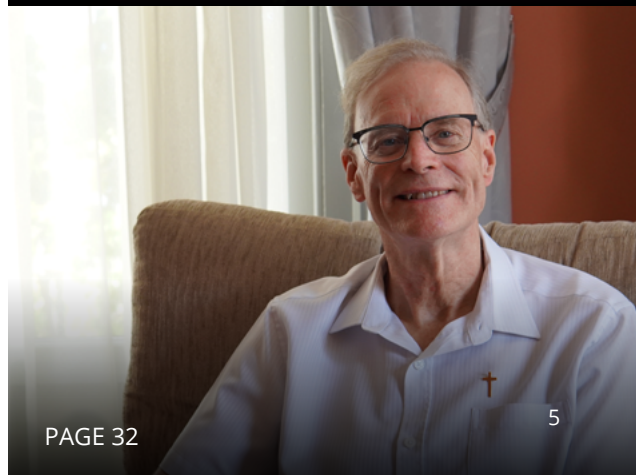
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Filipino, Tongan, African and Cantonese-speaking chaplaincies across the Diocese of Parramatta gathered in early January to honour their journeys of faith, displacement and hope as they welcomed the pilgrimage of the Migrant Jubilee Cross, an initiative of the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office. The cross's visit to the Diocese resonated with many as a symbol of resilience, faith, and belonging in one of the country's most culturally diverse regions.

Q Read more about the pilgrimage of the Cross on *Catholic Outlook* online.



Holy Week, the week leading up to Easter, is the most sacred time in the Church's calendar, commemorating the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Join your local parish during Holy Week to explore the meaning and events of Jesus' last days for our salvation.

Turn to pages 38-41 for a full list of parish Mass and Liturgy times across the Diocese.



Members of the judiciary and legal community, public service officials, law students and their families gathered at St Patrick's Cathedral, Parramatta, on 3 February for the annual Red Mass. Originating in Paris in 1245 in honour of St Ives, patron saint of lawyers, this tradition continues to invoke the gifts of the Holy Spirit – wisdom, justice and compassion – on those in attendance for the start of the legal year.

Q Read more about the Mass on *Catholic Outlook* online.

Image credit: Filipino Chaplaincy Diocese of Parramatta.



On 8 February, Mary Queen of the Family Parish, Blacktown hosted the annual Mass for St Josephine Bakhita. As the Patron Saint of South Sudan, Sudan, and victims of modern slavery and human trafficking, her legacy continues to inspire. The vibrant Sudanese and South Sudanese communities gathered to celebrate her life, along with their faith and cultural heritage.

Q Read more about the Mass on *Catholic Outlook* online.



This year, the Diocese of Parramatta celebrates four decades of growth, vitality and God's work carried out through the faithful service of thousands of clergy, consecrated religious and lay people. Though young in years, the Diocese has a rich and inspiring history. Across Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains, our communities continue to flourish and share the Good News with faith and joy.

Turn to pages 18-19 to read more about the history of our Diocese.



For more than six decades, Fr John O'Neill has stood at the altar, brought people into communion with God through the Sacraments, taught the Catholic faith, inspired vocations, and shepherded generations of people with conviction, clarity and deep personal love for Christ. The tight-knit community of St John Vianney Parish, Doonside, farewelled their long-serving shepherd in December last year.

Q Read about the farewell on *Catholic Outlook* online.

Image: Alfie Ramirez.

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WHAT'S ON

in the Diocese?

30 MARCH

Office of Tenebrae, St Patrick's Cathedral, Parramatta

1 APRIL

Chrism Mass, St Patrick's Cathedral, Parramatta

3 APRIL

CYP Good Friday Night Walk

4 APRIL

Easter Vigil, over 150 new Catholics will be baptised

8 APRIL

40-year Anniversary of the Diocese of Parramatta

25 APRIL

ANZAC DAY

1 MAY

Beginning of the Month of Mary

2 MAY

Liturgical Ministers Commissioning Mass, St Patrick's Cathedral, Parramatta

24 MAY

Pentecost

Q For more events in the Diocese of Parramatta in 2026, please visit parracatholic.org/events



Pope Leo XIV visiting the tomb of St Francis in Assisi.
Image: Vatican Media



POPE'S PRAYER INTENTIONS

Each month Pope Leo XIV asks us to pray as a global community for his great concerns for humanity and for the mission of the church.

MARCH 2026

For disarmament and peace

Let us pray that nations move towards effective disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, and that world leaders choose the path of dialogue and diplomacy instead of violence.

APRIL 2026

For priests in crisis

Let us pray for priests going through moments of crisis in their vocation, that they may find the accompaniment they need and that communities may support them with understanding and prayer.

MAY 2026

That everyone might have food

Let us pray that everyone, from large producers to small consumers, be committed to avoid wasting food, and to ensure that everyone has access to quality food.



BISHOP VINCENT'S

Easter Message

2 0 2 6



Dear Sisters and Brothers,

The peace of the Risen Christ be with you!
In this Lent/Easter season of 2026, we are all living in very troubled, wounded times. Amidst so much conflict, violence and entrenched hatred, we might even be tempted to occasionally lament: Where is our God?

In such chaotic times, it is good to be reminded of a wonderful story about St Teresa of Ávila. One day, the devil appeared to her, disguised as Jesus. St Teresa wasn't fooled for even a second, dismissing the devil. Before leaving, the devil asked her, "How could you be so sure I wasn't Jesus?" Teresa replied: "You didn't have any wounds – Christ has wounds!"

One of the most striking elements of our Gospel's Resurrection stories is that Jesus is still wounded in all of them. The crucifixion wounds do not disappear. The resurrected body of Christ remains marked by His earthly suffering, forever. It is not until the disciples see the wounds of Christ that they recognise Jesus for who He is.

Our Catholic faith, however, refuses to gloss over our own personal wounds, the wounds of our brothers and sisters, and those of our suffering planet with hollow positive thinking.

Instead, our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, urges us to move beyond passivity. Leo challenges us to become peacemakers!

And we can all become peacemakers in very simple ways. If only we had the eyes of faith, we would notice that peacemaking is all around us.

To name only a few examples:

- In the quiet tender care of our nurses and care givers in our hospitals, especially to the elderly and the dying.
- In the patient and professional care of our Catholic teachers who generously serve our young people.
- In the quiet heroism of parents as they sacrifice themselves for the good of their children.
- In the outreach of our social services like Catholic Care to the needy.
- In the lives of ordinary people who refuse to become resentful and instead choose to forgive and love their enemies.

Yes, the wounds of such peacemakers do not embitter them but become fountains of peace and hope for others.

This Easter 2026, let us allow the Risen Lord to roll away the rocks of pride, ego and selfishness from our hearts. May we banish all violence from our lives. May the light of the risen Christ that streams from His glorified wounds bring joy, healing and peace to us all.

For "By His wounds, we are healed". ✚



Bishop Vincent Long OFM Conv
Bishop of Parramatta



Young people during Catholic Youth Parramatta's Good Friday Night Walk.

A SPECIAL YEAR OF *St Francis*

BY **BELINDA GADD**

An invitation to renew our commitment to peace, reconciliation and care for creation.

To mark 800 years since the death of St Francis of Assisi, Pope Leo XIV has proclaimed a Special Year of St Francis, running until 10 January 2027.

He reminded the faithful that St Francis' call to peace unites peace with God, peace among humanity, and peace with Creation – "inseparable dimensions of a single call to universal reconciliation".

A time to revitalise the Gospel life

For the Diocese of Parramatta, the Special Year holds particular resonance, shaped by the Franciscan charism of Bishop Vincent Long OFM Conv, Bishop of Parramatta – a charism that invites the faithful to imitate St Francis' evangelical virtues of poverty, humility, compassion and service to the poor.

*“May the Lord give you peace”
– St Francis*

“The Pope encourages us to be bridge-builders in the time that is marked by so many seemingly interminable wars, by internal and social divisions that create mistrust and fear,” Bishop Vincent wrote.

“I encourage you all to take advantage of the Franciscan Jubilee Year with a view to revitalising the Gospel life and witness we are called to live – personally and collectively.”



Q Scan to read more about the Special Year in our Diocese.



Sr Mary Louise Hume OSC (right) during the Diocesan gathering for Consecrated Life.

Franciscan communities share Jubilee joy

Conventual Franciscans

"This is great news for the entire Franciscan family and the Church at large."

Fr Christopher Shorrocks OFM Conv, Parish Priest at Our Lady of the Rosary Parish, Kellyville.

Friars of St Francis

"St Francis was a man of peace... Peace will be achieved when there is good will and the love of God."

Fr Ruben Martello FSF, St Bernadette's Parish, Dundas Valley.

Franciscan Missionaries of Mary

"I thought, how can I and my sisters be more Franciscan to the point that we radiate the face of Francis of Assisi in our communities in the Western Suburbs and the Blue Mountains."

Sr Rosalie Ilboudo FMM, Provincial.

Poor Clare Sisters

"St Francis' life became one of giving mercy to all he met... transformed entirely into living prayer."

Sr Joanne Fitzsimons OSC and Sr Pia Galea OSC.

Capuchin Franciscans

"All gifts received are meant to be shared. We live a fraternal Gospel way of life together and share our lives with those we encounter."

Fr John Nguyen OFM Cap, Assistant Priest, The Good Shepherd Parish, Plumpton.

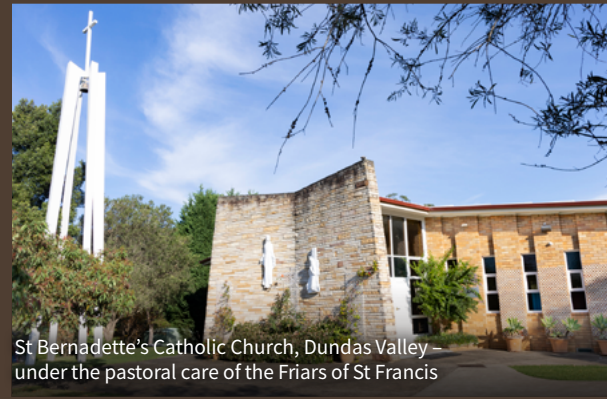
Secular Franciscans

"It is an opportunity to gain a renewed sense of the Church's mission and to experience the love and mercy of God through the example of St Francis of Assisi."

Anthony Saliba OFS, Mary Immaculate Parish, Quakers Hill-Schofields.



The Good Shepherd Catholic Church, Plumpton – under the pastoral care of Capuchin Franciscans



St Bernadette's Catholic Church, Dundas Valley – under the pastoral care of the Friars of St Francis



Poor Clares Monastery, North Richmond



Our Lady of Consolation Chapel, Rooty Hill – under the pastoral care of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary



Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Church, Kellyville and Franciscan Shrine of the Holy Innocents, Kellyville – under the pastoral care of the Conventual Franciscans



PLENARY INDULGENCES AVAILABLE

During this Year of Grace, Catholics may receive a plenary indulgence by devoutly taking part in Jubilee celebrations or making a pilgrimage to a Franciscan church or a place dedicated to St Francis, under the usual conditions of confession, Communion and prayer for the Holy Father's intentions.

Embarking on a pilgrimage offers a beautiful opportunity to prepare our hearts for the season of Lent and the joy of Easter. ✚

Embark on a Franciscan pilgrimage at these holy sites, pictured right.



HSC Excellence

REFLECTS STRENGTH OF WESTERN SYDNEY CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

BY **SABRINA DE LA MOTTE**

Twenty two secondary schools across Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese (CSPD) have celebrated another year of exceptional HSC results, after the Class of 2025 received their ATAR results in November.

Among the 2025 cohort, 20 students were recognised as NSW All-Rounders – achieving the highest possible band (Band 6) in 10 or more course units. Schools with All-Rounders were: Catherine McAuley Westmead, Cerdon College Merrylands, Nagle College Blacktown, Parramatta Marist High School, Delany College Granville, St Patrick’s Marist College Dundas, St Pauls Catholic College Greystanes, Caroline Chisholm College Glenmore Park, Gilroy Catholic College Castle Hill and St Andrew’s College Marayong.

Fifteen schools recorded an increase in Band 6 (a mark between 90 and 100) results compared with 2024, with many demonstrating notable improvements across multiple performance indicators.

Four students topped the state in their subjects, earning HSC First-in-Course Honours:

- English Standard: Mankirat Kaur, Santa Sophia Catholic College Gables
- Mathematics Standard I: Nicholas McKewen, Gilroy Catholic College Castle Hill
- Studies of Religion I: Emily Gonzalez, Catherine McAuley Westmead
- PDHPE: Nishika Talusani, Caroline Chisholm College Glenmore Park

“It’s very surreal, I was not expecting this at all, but I’m very proud of myself,” said Nishika, who placed first in PDHPE, the sixth most popular course in the state.

Caroline Chisholm College Principal Tania Cairns congratulated Nishika on her dedication and highlighted the positive learning relationship she shared with her teacher.

“I am extremely proud of Nishika’s result which is testament to her positive learning relationship with her teacher, Mrs Caroline McElroy, and her exceptional work ethic, proving that young women



From left, Emily Gonzalez, Mankirat Kaur, CSPD CEO Jack de Groot, Nicholas McKewen and Nishika Talusani. Image: CSPD/Stuart Matters

of Sydney's west are empowered to excel," Tania said.

Nicholas, first in Mathematics Standard, said he and his family were elated with the result which he attributes to the support provided by the school.

"I really wanted to pay back my teacher Mrs Jennifer Wakeling for all the hard work she has put in with me through the years, she was an absolute mammoth part of this result," he said.

Emily, who topped the State in Studies of Religion I, marks the second year in a row that a CSPD student has achieved First-in-Course in this subject.

"I was lucky enough to have two amazing teachers, Mr Nguyen and Ms Pasion, whose passion for learning kept me motivated throughout the HSC," Emily said.

Mankirat achieved first in English Standard, which is also the largest HSC subject, undertaken by more than 33,400 students statewide.

"I was so overwhelmed with emotions, I was extremely excited to share the news with my family and to see their reactions," she said.

"My teachers became my support system throughout my two years at Santa Sophia, and I dedicate this success to them."

Among the many post-school pathways being considered by these high-achieving students, Mankirat is in the selection process to become a commercial pilot with Qantas, while Emily hopes to study occupational therapy at the University of Sydney or ACU.

CSPD Chief Executive Officer Jack de Groot congratulated the Class of 2025 on their outstanding results.

"I am extremely proud of the achievements of our students across Western Sydney Catholic Schools," he said.



Year 12 students at St Patrick's Marist College Dundas. Image: supplied

"It is wonderful to see so many First-in-Course honours and consistent excellence across our schools. These results reflect the dedication of our hardworking students and the expert teachers who support them through best-practice, evidence-based teaching."

The Class of 2025 continues the tradition of academic excellence across Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese, highlighting both remarkable individual achievements and the strong support of their school communities. ✚

Sabrina De La Motte is the Social Media Officer for Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese.



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Year 12 students at Santa Sophia College, Gables. Image: supplied

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DIOCESE TO BUILD STATE-OF-THE-ART CATHOLIC PRECINCT AND CHURCH

On Sunday 7 December, the Diocese of Parramatta announced that it has purchased land in the centre of Blacktown City, directly adjacent to the soon-to-be-developed Blacktown Quarter – a \$2 billion redevelopment vision from Walker Corporation and Blacktown City Council that will create a vibrant new heart for one of the largest and fastest-growing cities in Australia.

The Diocese will build a new Church and state-of-the-art Catholic precinct in the heart of the new city.

“From this new spiritual home, the Parish will be able to welcome new families and reach out more effectively to those on the margins; strengthen liturgical, catechetical, and community life; deepen partnerships for service with organisations in the civic centre; and be a daily visible sign of God’s presence in the heart of the city,” said Bishop Vincent Long OFM Conv, Bishop of Parramatta.

“It will ensure our Catholic community will remain visible, accessible, and engaged in the life of the city for generations to come,” he said.

Upon completion, the Parish of Blacktown – Mary, Queen of the Family – with its strong and diverse history and faith community, will be relocating its two sites (St Patrick’s and St Michael’s) to return to the civic centre where St Patrick’s Parish was originally located. The Parish will be a vibrant space where faith, community and city life come together for over 10,600 Catholics and all who call Blacktown home.

In his address, Parish Priest Fr Wim Hoekstra EV expressed the desire for the parish to journey together to help shape the new Church.

“For some, this might seem like too much change, for others it’s an exciting opportunity to be part of the new city of Blacktown. And for others, this might seem like the fruition of the conversations in 2016 about a new Blacktown Church.

“We want to journey with you as we go through this project, gathering as much feedback and helpful advice to help shape our new Church,” he said.

Blacktown Mayor Brad Bunting affirmed Council’s commitment to the project and the Parish.



Images: Parishioners and clergy during the Blacktown Quarter project announcement and consultation session.

“Blacktown Quarter will be a place that people will work, have a great



education, great health, a place for you to gather with family and friends... and because of today's announcement, it will be a place of faith, of spiritual leadership, here in Blacktown," he said.

Evangelisation, mission and service

Bishop Vincent further reflected on this new chapter for the parish community in a pastoral letter.

"Being in the centre of civic life is a providential opportunity for evangelisation, mission and service. Jesus tells us, 'You are the light of the world. A city built on a hilltop cannot be hidden.' (Mt 5:14). By situating the parish in a visible and accessible location, we seek to shine Christ's light where people naturally gather.

"By consolidating two historic churches into one new parish community, we are not closing churches. We are building a stronger, more vibrant spiritual home capable of meeting modern pastoral needs. This decision allows us to focus our resources on a mission-driven presence in the heart of civic life.

"I ask all the faithful to enter this new chapter with patience, trust and courage. Let us remember:

We are not abandoning our past – we are carrying it forward.

We are not losing our identity – we are renewing our mission.

We are not closing communities – we are uniting as one body in Christ.

We are responding to the signs of the times and the promptings of the Holy Spirit. The return to the heart of this important city is a unique opportunity for us to be the Church in mission, for the parish and for the whole Diocese.

"With this development, may Mary, Queen of the Family Parish continue to be a haven of welcome, a centre of mission and outreach, and a beacon of Christ's love in the heart of our civic community. I entrust this endeavour to the intercession of Our Lady under her title of Mary, Queen of the Family, the saints who have guided our diocese, and the faithful generations whose prayers have brought us to this moment." †



Q For more information or to sign up for project updates, visit mqofblacktown.org.au/BlacktownProject



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Where the Spirit Leads

40 YEARS OF THE DIOCESE OF PARRAMATTA

BY ANITA SULENTIC

For a 2,000+ year old institution, 40 years seems but the blink of an eye. For the people of Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains, the 40-year anniversary of the Diocese of Parramatta marks four decades of growth, of fruition and of God's work taking place through the thousands of clergy, consecrated and lay people who have served this great Diocese.

Ever old, ever new

We mark the "official" beginning of the Diocese as 1986, but there is a reason that Parramatta is called the "cradle of Catholicism" in Australia – the roots of Catholicism in this region can be traced back to the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788, when the seeds of faith were first sown.

The history and importance of Parramatta cannot be overstated. From the deep connection of the Darug and Gundungurra people to the land and waterways, to its vital part in Australia's colonial history, Parramatta is an ongoing source of religious, cultural and environmental significance.

We are the home of the first Catholic school, one of the first places that Mass was celebrated, where the first religious women (Sisters of Charity) in Australia were based and where the first public religious profession took place by Sr M. Xavier Williams RSC of the Sisters of Charity. It is home to the first Catholic orphanage and the many other 'firsts' from different religious communities, including the first Convent of Mercy by the North Sydney Sisters of Mercy and the founding of the Sisters of Mercy in 1888.

From the 1900s to 1950s, the Catholic population significantly grew, particularly after WWII with an

influx of Catholic migrants from diverse countries in Europe, Asia and Africa. Many migrant communities founded their own churches here. For example, the Maronite Church was founded in Harris Park in 1970 and continues to grow to this day.

A place of our own

In response to the post-war immigration and baby boom, it was proposed to the Holy Father, Pope St John Paul II, that Sydney be divided into three: the Archdiocese of Sydney, and the Dioceses of Parramatta and Broken Bay. In 1986, the Holy Father approved this request, and in November that year, completed his historic six-day tour of Australia – the most comprehensive visit by a reigning Pope.

In less than a week, he visited every state and territory, travelled more than 11,000kms and attended 38 functions, including his notable addresses at the Sydney Cricket Ground, the MCG in Melbourne, the Opera House and in particular his seminal address to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Alice Springs.

Of significance to Parramatta was his arrival by helicopter to the western suburbs, touring Blacktown Showground and Seven Hills in his popemobile and addressing workers at the Transfield Factory. He is remembered through a special monument in St Patrick's Cathedral forecourt that was unveiled in 2015.

A growing spirit

Four decades, four bishops and a doubling of the population. In 1986, the approximate population of Western Sydney was between 1.3 and 1.5 million people. That number is now over 3 million, and growing at one of the fastest rates in the country.

New suburbs are still being created, migrant families from new countries are continuing to put down roots, and faith is being lived out in kitchens, classrooms, hospital wards, and parish halls.

Growing to 45 parishes, 130+ clergy, 230+ religious, 80 schools, 55 daycare centres and before and after school services, the Diocese has grown by learning to listen. It learned the languages of newly arrived families and the unspoken prayers of those doing it tough. It listened to the sadness of those who witnessed the Cathedral's historic burning. It learned that Mass might sound different from parish to parish - but that reverence, joy, and the longing for God remain unmistakably the same. It continues to listen to the vulnerability and fragility of many, through the everyday moments in parishes or services helping the marginalised such as Catholic Care, right through to our first Synod held in 2023, where accompaniment and walking with others became the focus for our future.

Over four decades, the Diocese has been shaped by teachers and catechists, religious and clergy, volunteers and grandparents, the young and old - many of whom never expected to be "builders of a diocese", yet became exactly that. They taught the faith in schools and living rooms, defended dignity in times of uncertainty, and quietly kept showing up, even when it was hard.

And we should not forget the ongoing inspiring leadership of all our popes after St John Paul II in the last four decades.

From the gentle deep wisdom of Pope Benedict XVI, to the prophetic vision of Pope Francis and his outreach to those on the margins, to the courageous peace-making mission of our current Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV.

Forty years on, our Diocese is still energetic. We are still the 'youngest' in terms of foundation, but also

our median age: we are the most diverse and multicultural and have the highest percentage of Catholics in Australia.

Our Diocese is now wiser, more diverse, and deeply aware that the mission is far from finished. The same Spirit who moved us at the beginning continues to nudge, challenge, and surprise, inviting the people of God to step forward together.

We will always look back with nostalgia but simultaneously shine a little brighter for what comes next. Because if the past 40 years have taught us anything, it's this: in Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains, faith doesn't just survive. By God's grace, it grows. †

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WEDNESDAY, MAY 21, 1986

For Trinity Sunday

Newspaper clippings from The Catholic Weekly from 1986. Image: Supplied

Bede Heather installed as Parramatta's first bishop
CLIFF BAXTER reports from St Patrick's Cathedral

Joyous occasion for the Church

THE NOTE passed along the rows of a jam-packed St Patrick's Cathedral as Bishop Bede Heather was liturgically installed as the first Catholic Bishop of the new Diocese of Parramatta. Was this some special message, another piece of history in a city filled with almost two centuries of history?

"Are you the driver of light blue Datsun SRN 127?" the note asked. "because your lights are still on." Even on such an auspicious occasion, Parramatta never forgets to show a human face.

It was to this "human face" that the 58-year-old bishop, after being welcomed into his Cathedral

marriage, or their unsuitability for employment, or their parlous condition of health.

"Sometimes their material needs are well met by welfare services, at other times not so well.

helping hand and a human heart," he said.

It came as no surprise that Bishop Heather had chosen this as the theme for his address, nor that he is convinced that

we must seek greater unity of faith as we continue the work of the Second Vatican Council.

He pointed to some debate, contention and division among us, as some have not hesitated to hurt others from the depth of their conscientious convictions.

We had not, he

pointed out, sufficiently heeded Paul's admonition, "God is not a God of confusion, but of peace."

As a sign of his commitment to the spirit of Vatican II, Bishop Heather has taken as his episcopal motto the words, Sacrosanctum Concilium (The Holy Council).

On Thursday May 29 Bishop Heather leaves for New York to attend the International Dialogue of the Roman Catholic-Baptist World Alliance.

The night before (May 28) he will attend the installation of Bishop Patrick Murphy as Bishop of Broken Bay, in Corpus Christi Cathedral, St Ives, at 7.30 pm.

As Bishop Heather

CONTINUED PAGE 2



Applause for Bishop Bede Heather, first Bishop of the new Diocese of Parramatta, from Cardinal James Freeman and Bishop Geoffrey Robinson at St Patrick's Cathedral, Parramatta on Monday night. Dean of the Cathedral, Father Larky, is in the background. — Mike Thorpe photo.

"Above all, their sense of dignity is at risk. What they need is the touch of human kindness.

"For various reasons they fail to catch the wave of plenty. Perhaps it is their disability that leaves them behind, or the breakdown of their



Two new dioceses approved

A proposal, carefully designed and thoroughly considered to provide more effective pastoral care for the people, has been approved by Pope John Paul II, creating two new dioceses within the Archdiocese of Sydney.

This is one of the most significant developments in the Archdiocese of Sydney since the appointment of its first Archbishop in 1842.

It means that Sydney's one million Catholics are now located throughout the three dioceses.

The two new dioceses are:


- **BROKEN BAY**, which, in general terms, largely encompasses what was formerly the Northern Region, and which will now also include the Carlingford Parish.
- **PARRAMATTA**, which, again in general terms, embraces the area previously identified as the Outer Western Region and which will now also include the parishes of Dundas Valley, East Granville, Granville, Harris Park, North Parramatta and Parramatta.

The new Bishop of Broken Bay is the Most Reverend Patrick Laurence Murphy, D.D., L.S.S., B.A., formerly Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney and Bishop for the Northern Region.

by **Ron F. Robinson**
Editor-in-Chief

The new Bishop of Parramatta is the Most Reverend Bede Vincent Heather, D.D., L.S.S., B.A., formerly Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney and Bishop for the Outer Western Region.

Bishops David Cremin, John Heaps and Geoffrey Robinson will continue as auxiliary bishops



to the Archbishop of Sydney, the Most Reverend Edward Bede Clancy, D.D., L.S.S.

Announcement of the Pope's adoption of the proposal was made in Rome by way of publication in L'Osservatore Romano, at 9 pm Monday night.

Details of the new dioceses were released by Archbishop Clancy.

Archbishop Clancy has expressed his delight with the decision of Pope John Paul to adopt the proposal for the creation of new dioceses within the Sydney Archdiocese.

Commenting on the announcement, Archbishop Clancy said: "I am delighted with the decision from Rome. It represents the fruits of a great deal

Fruits of hard work



AMBROSE ‘MOVING HEARTS’ IN GREYSTANES

BY ZOE CARTWRIGHT

Exciting developments have been underway at Our Lady Queen of Peace in Greystanes, with Ambrose continuing to grow and innovate to meet the needs of local families.

The former parish convent has been transformed into a 50-place extension of the Ambrose preschool, offering longer operating hours and vacation care. Opening in January 2026 and located alongside the existing long-established preschool, this expansion increases the preschool to 73 places, creating more opportunities for families to access high-quality early learning in a nurturing, uniquely Catholic environment.

Parish Priest Fr Paul Roberts played a pivotal role in bringing this vision to life and shared his enthusiasm for the project, describing it as a positive outcome for the community and a powerful example of collaboration and vision.

“For me this project represents a broadening of the participation in God’s call that occurs here on the hill at Greystanes,” Fr Paul said. “Through Ambrose Early Learning and Out of School Hours Care, OLQP Primary, St Paul’s Catholic College and the worshipping community and pastoral care of the Parish, we envision an inclusive and cross generational learning community.” He reflected on the shared foundation that unites

the community. “This whole learning community, in its many different parts, is called to have a common and uniting foundation. That foundation is the life-long learning of our belonging, purpose and action in God’s mission! If each of us – and all of us – can grow in this foundation, then we will live to the full in our own lives and bless the world around us with the dignity, mercy and hope that God intends for all.”

Fr Paul also shared his hope for the impact of the new service. “I hope and pray that the gift of the families and precious young children of this new early learning venture will move the hearts of our whole Greystanes Catholic community; move us to further realise the sacredness of nurturing and growing in God’s call, from infancy and throughout the life journey.”

This initiative, made possible under Government policy to encourage creation of preschool places, has breathed new life into the one-time convent building. Community Ventures CEO Anthony Goonan said the transformation was both significant and fast paced.

“After the building was handed over to builders at the end of July, the project team worked to a very tight timeline while navigating the complexities of a structure originally built for another purpose,” he said.

Thanks to the outstanding efforts of Figtree Project Management and Girvan Constructions, the refurbishment was completed in just three months. More than 160 professionals contributed over 8,000 work hours to deliver these impressive new learning spaces.

Over the decades the parish building was used as a convent, school administration and music rooms and, most recently, Ambrose Out of School Hours Care. In August 2025, the Ambrose OSHC team moved into a new, purpose-built school hall. This facility is an example of synodality being lived in the Diocese as it was designed collaboratively with school partners and the Ambrose team to meet everyone's needs. It features a dedicated air-conditioned space for Ambrose, along with a shared futsal court, offering ample room for indoor games and activities for both school and Ambrose children.

Newly appointed preschool Director Temika Yendun, who brings extensive experience across a range of leadership roles in the early years sector, shared her excitement for the journey ahead.

"Being part of a connected, faith-based community provides a unique opportunity to support children and families in meaningful ways." Temika said. "I'm excited to contribute to an environment where relationships, learning, and community truly come together."

"Building strong, meaningful relationships is important to me, and I look forward to actively engaging with the school, parish, and wider local community alongside the children and families. Strengthening these connections enriches children's learning environments and supports their daily experiences, creating a strong sense of belonging and continuity."

These upgrades mark an exciting new chapter for Ambrose at Our Lady Queen of Peace, one defined by growth, collaboration, and a continued commitment to enriching the lives of children and families. Ambrose looks forward to the journey ahead and the many opportunities this expanded service will bring to the Greystanes community. ✝

Q Limited places are still available. Visit www.ambrose.org.au to secure your child's place.

Zoe Cartwright is the Marketing and Communications Coordinator for Community Ventures.



Parish Priest Fr Paul Roberts at the blessing of the icon of "St Ambrose in Parramatta" celebrated by Bishop Vincent Long late last year at Ambrose Early Learning OLQP Greystanes. Image: Supplied



The beautiful new playground surrounding the renovated building, now home to Ambrose Early Learning OLQP Greystanes. Image: Supplied

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ANSWERING *the call to serve*

BY **SABRINA DE LA MOTTE**

Year 6 school captains across Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese (CSPD) are embracing their leadership roles with purpose, eager to make a positive and lasting impact on their school communities in their final year of primary school.

Grounded in service, responsibility and faith, these leadership roles are awarded to students who demonstrate strong values and a commitment to leading by example, as recognised by both their peers and teachers.

At Our Lady of the Nativity Primary Lawson, Year 6 school leaders Rosie, Lewin and Johnathan see their leadership roles as an opportunity to lead by example and to be a voice for their peers.

“Being a school leader means that you get to lead the school with pride and joy, set a good example and make sure everyone feels included at all times,” said Rosie.

Looking ahead to the end of their captaincy, these young leaders are already considering the impact they hope to make, with their goals reflecting a deep sense of care for their school communities.

“I hope that I can make everyone feel welcomed and respected, especially our new kindy buddies, and to create ways for our students to reach their full potential in learning,” said Lewin.

“I want to be able to show my fellow students that the future is in our hands,” said Johnathan. “We can change the future by working together, and I want to show them that.”

For Eloise and Jimmy, school captains at Christ the King Primary North Rocks, the announcement of their leadership roles marked a memorable milestone.

“I felt excited and proud of myself because all of my hard work and dedication had been recognised,” said Eloise.

“When I was chosen to be a leader with Eloise I was shocked and overwhelmed, but I know it’s going to be really fun,” said Jimmy.

Alongside their hopes for their schools, each student has also set a personal goal for themselves as a leader, recognising that leadership is a journey of growth and reflection.

“My goal is to become more confident in both small and big crowds,” said Jimmy.

“I want to acknowledge my weaknesses as a school leader, as I know I am not perfect,” said Johnathan.

The Year 6 students begin their leadership year with the support of their teachers, families and wider school community. Their willingness to serve is a powerful reminder that young people rise to the opportunity to lead with faith, compassion and courage.

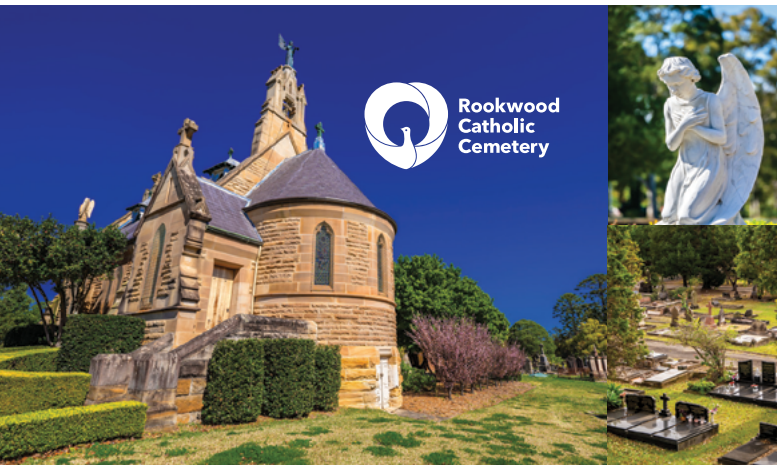
As they strive to achieve these goals for their final year of primary school, they carry with them these skills and responsibilities as they enter into their senior years in 2027.

With 80 schools across Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains, Catholic Schools Parramatta



Diocese is dedicated to nurturing faith-filled, service-minded students. ✝

Q To learn more about CSPD's dedication to enriching students' lives through education grounded in excellence and inclusivity, visit: parra.catholic.edu.au.



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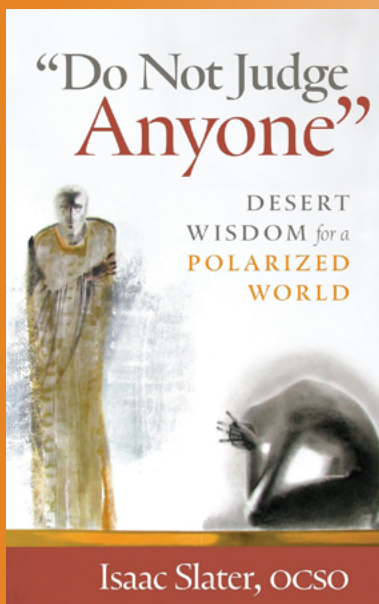


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Wisdom for a Polarised World

ALLOWING WHEAT AND WEEDS TO GROW TOGETHER

BY **SR PATTY ANDREW OSU**

In this time of rapid change, when there is a rupture in the world order, we long to find a continuous thread which will illuminate hope in the many situations of chaos and darkness emerging both locally and globally.

Our first response to this disorder is to seek a meaningful perspective. As people of hope, we desire to create a faith-based way of seeing, that brings a coherence to assist us simplify the growing complexity of life, in this first quarter of the 21st century.

Isaac Slater OCSO, in his recently published book, *Do Not Judge Anyone*, offers us a way to live this time with love, compassion and purpose. He explores the ancient wisdom articulated by the contemplatives of our Christian tradition known as the “desert fathers and mothers”. These men and women lived their Gospel-centred lives in a radical way that illuminated the teachings of Jesus, especially in terms of their relationships with others.

Slater suggests that our tendency towards simplification and judgement is our constructed way to hold complexity at bay. He notes that in doing this, our first response to situations of conflict is frequently to moralise. This places a moral ideal on others without explicitly indicating how grace is the means for effecting a change of heart. Slater claims that moralism may be the besetting sin of the Western Church.

He proposes opening our hearts to the “the gratuity of grace” as a healing pathway to offset moralism and self-righteousness. Through grace, we are empowered to embrace both justice and mercy. This enables attentive presence to the other which liberates us from being trapped in an introspective mindscape that is judgemental.

Healing such negativity disposes us to cultivate what Slater describes as a non-dual heart space. This enables us to embrace our own complexity with simplicity and relate empathetically with others. While this non-judgemental process brings healing, Slater assures us it is not about the absence of conflict. Instead, it offers us a way to foster a stable presence within it.

We begin with prayer because it provides the trusted and intimate space for all our emotions to rise before God including anger, which needs to be “rocked, cradled and cared for” (p.75). Sourcing his core insights from the teachings of the Desert Fathers, Slater describes prayer as “the seed of gentleness” (p.33), reflecting things as they are – like a mirror – without judging.

Such prayer is grounded in the expansive nature of God’s infinite love. We are reminded that our sins and those of the entire world are no more than a handful of sand within the vast ocean of divine mercy and that, “we can never underestimate our need to soak in and savour, to marinate in divine mercy” (p.17).

Held securely in God’s love we defer judgement to our Creator who allows the “wheat and weeds” to grow together. ✚

***Do Not Judge Anyone: Desert Wisdom for a Polarized World*, by Isaac Slater, Liturgical Press, 2025 – available on [amazon.com.au](https://www.amazon.com.au)**

Sr Patty Andrew OSU is the Vicar for Consecrated Life.

ARCHBISHOP RYAN JIMENEZ TO VISIT PARRAMATTA

BY **ANTONY LAWES**

The head of the world's largest conference of bishops (by geographic area) will be speaking in Parramatta in April, as part of a series of public lectures in Sydney and Melbourne.

Archbishop Ryan Jimenez, of Agaña, on the island of Guam, is the head of the Episcopal Conference of the Pacific, which is the largest such conference by area in the world, stretching from Guam in the western Pacific to Tahiti in the southeast. He is also the vice president of the umbrella organisation, the Federation of Catholic Bishops Conferences of Oceania.

He will give a talk at the Cloister Hall of St Patrick's Cathedral, Parramatta, on Tuesday, 21 April, at 6pm, as part of the annual *Bishop Vincent Presents* series.

The theme of his lecture will be "an immigrant bishop for an immigrant church", in which he will address his own story of growing up in the Philippines and moving to the US territory of Guam as a young man. He will also reflect on some of the big issues facing the people of the Pacific, such as climate change, migration and inequality. After the talk, he will hold a question-and-answer session.

In a private audience with Pope Leo in Rome 2025, Archbishop Jimenez spoke to the Holy Father about the catastrophic consequences of climate change and the resulting rise in sea levels on many Pacific islands. This had forced many people from these low-lying countries to emigrate to Australia, he said.

He told *Vatican News* that one of his colleagues from Tuvalu sent him a message before his meeting with the Pope. "Please tell the Holy Father that we are sinking," his colleague said.

While in Parramatta, Archbishop Jimenez will also be meeting with Filipino priests in the Diocese, the



Archbishop Jimenez. Image: Rommell R. Buenafior

Filipino community and members from the Payce Foundation. He will then travel to Melbourne for the Helder Câmara Lecture on 28 April, as well as attending other community events with the Filipino community. ✚

Q For more information on Archbishop Jimenez's visit to the Diocese, go to our website parracatholic.org/events



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70 YEARS OF SERVICE

BY ISABELL PETRINIC

A much-loved family man, admired parishioner, and, as many would say, the backbone of St Bernadette's Parish, Lalor Park, has been honoured with a Papal award.

Typically received in Rome, the Benemerenti Medal was conferred on Kevin Sloane, 95, by Bishop Vincent Long OFM Conv, Bishop of Parramatta, on behalf of Pope Leo XIV, during Mass on Sunday 9 November.

"He contributed to the building of this community, of this church, through seven decades. We owe you a great debt of gratitude, Kevin," Bishop Vincent said.

The citation detailed Kevin's decades of service to St Bernadette's Parish, noting how he quickly became immersed in parish life, assisting in financial matters and helping to establish the Lalor Park Conference of the St Vincent de Paul Society, which he served until recently.

The occasion brought together most of Kevin's family, which include eight children, 24 grandchildren and 25 great-grandchildren.

"We're just so proud of him," said Kathy Newman, Kevin's daughter. "He's an inspiration, just in that he's still living at home independently with mum."

Granddaughter Rachel Newman described him as "a good leader of the family." Granddaughter Madeline O'Rourke added, "There are no words... He's funny and very loved."

Kevin said his children are his proudest achievement, and of his seven decades of service to the church, he said simply: "I'm just another volunteer – I happen to be here. I think if you come to church, that's what you're supposed to do. You volunteer."

"Never in my wildest dreams would I have thought this would happen. But then, who does!" ✚

About the Medal

The Benemerenti Medal is a Papal honour recognising exceptional service and dedication to the Catholic Church.

Established by Pope Gregory XVI in 1832, it became a civil award for clergy and laity who have made outstanding contributions to the Church's mission or served their communities with distinction.

Each year, around 20 nominations for recognition are considered and put forward to the Vatican by the Diocese of Parramatta's Honours Committee.



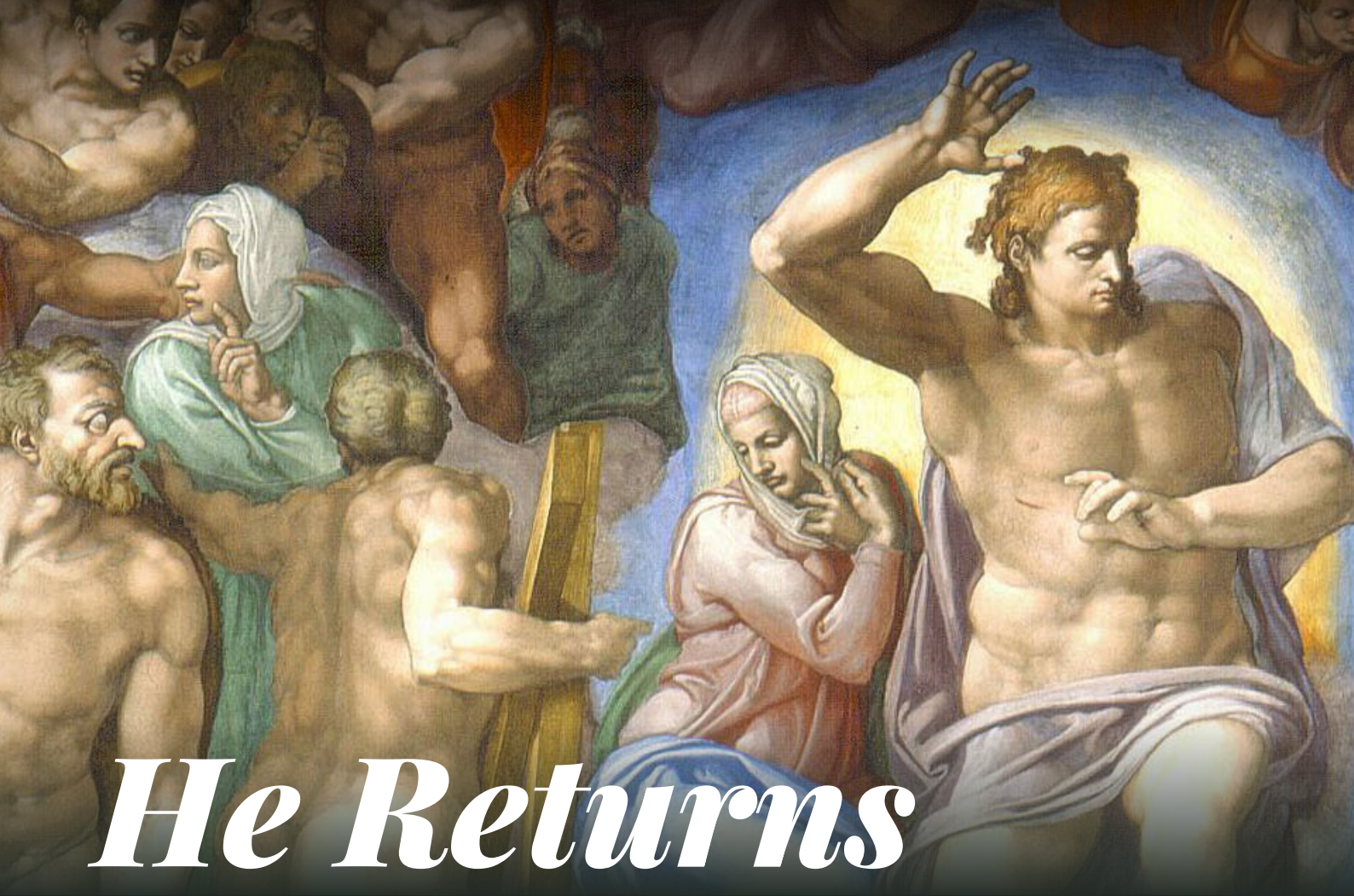
"Mr Sloane's quiet dedication and service to others speak volumes about his character," Diocesan Honours Committee Chair Jim Hanna read from the official acknowledgement of Kevin's service to the Church.

"He is dependable, kind-hearted, and community-minded, always willing to lend a helping hand without seeking recognition."

Looking Deeper

*" ... we are laid in the
tomb, with him we are
raised up to accompany
lost travellers on their
journey."*

Henri Nouwen



He Returns

BY SR SUSAN CONNELLY RSJ

From childhood, most of us have been used to images of Jesus ascending to heaven amid clouds, based on the scene depicted in the Acts of the Apostles:

“...he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ‘Men of Galilee,’ they said, ‘why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven’ (Acts 1:9-11).

This description of Jesus’ departure in Acts is understandable, given that clouds and sky belong to the realm of symbols that engage humans from many religions about cosmic realities and the presence of God beyond us. Such images occur frequently in both Christian and Jewish scriptures and are also used in relation to Jesus’ second coming, which describe him coming in glory, surrounded by clouds, sitting on a throne and with angels in service.

So when we read of the two men in white saying that Jesus will come back in the same way as he was seen to go to heaven, it is understandable to assume that it would be in the context of sky and clouds. And of course, religious art

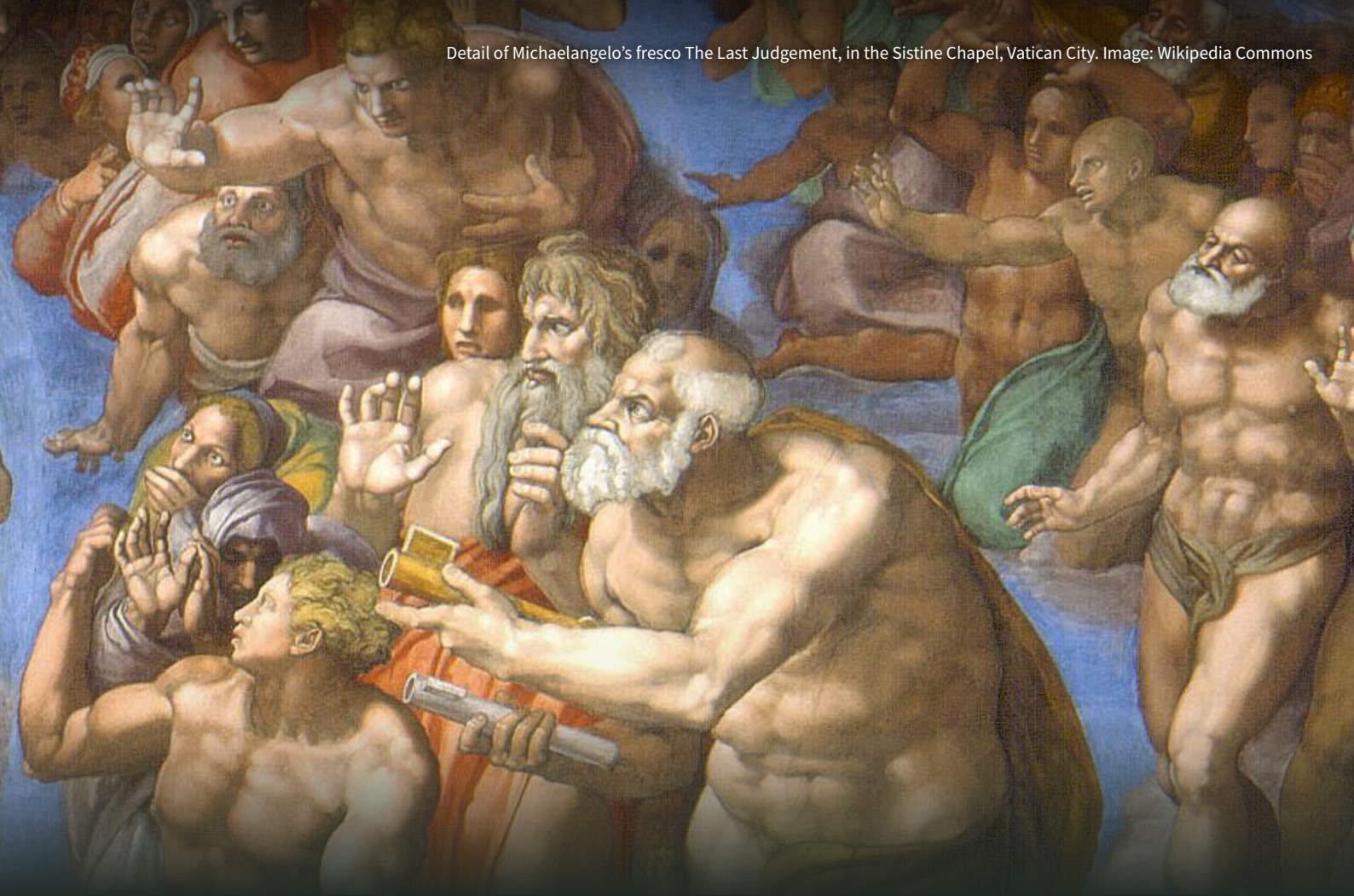
has for centuries used this symbolism to illustrate these scenes in beautiful and captivating panoramas.

But what if other understandings of this scriptural passage can challenge us and enrich us? We may stay with cloud images if we must, but will we miss something essential if we do?

As the disciples gaze into the sky, Luke says that their gazing is questioned: “...why do you stand here looking up to the sky?” The reason given is that “...he will come back in the same way you have seen him go”. But if that means that he will come back on the clouds, then why should they not spend their time gazing upwards? Why is their behaviour questioned?

The depiction of Jesus’ departure in Acts is an effort to describe the indescribable. Perhaps the account of his prior, and very different, departure from this life given to us in the Gospels can explain why the disciples are challenged about gazing into the sky. Perhaps the statement that his return would be the same as his going away refers not to the event described with clouds, but with his departure 40 days beforehand.

Jesus’ leaving this earth was by means of his death. And how did he die? He was tortured to death. He went from this world through a widespread and appallingly vicious



mode of political control employed by the major power of the time: crucifixion. But how is it that he could return in that way?

Jesus describes himself as the one who identifies with human beings who are hungry, thirsty, estranged, naked, sick or in prison (Matthew 25:31-46). Astoundingly, human need and distress is embraced by Jesus to the extent of his identifying himself with every oppressed person, saying that whatever is done to them is done to him.

Luke's ascension scene builds on this identification of Jesus with people made poor or outcast, by telling us that he will come in the same way that he was seen to go. His going through death, and therefore his coming into our midst today as a result of the resurrection, is as deeply confronting for us as for the disciples. Where should we be looking for him when it is rivetingly obvious that the way he was taken, and therefore the way he returns, is through the cross?

The crucified Christ embraces all suffering people in our very violent world, which is so controlled by greed for money, land and power. Abused children, people undergoing domestic violence, those killed recently at Bondi, the untold number of Palestinian victims of genocide, the world's indigenous peoples oppressed

in so many ways, the starving people of Sudan and elsewhere, the Ukrainians being bombed daily, the West Papuans in their hidden, murderous oppression, victims of any repressive system and all those suffering in any way through sickness, ageing, loneliness and neglect are those with whom Jesus identifies. His words apply to us in every time and place: "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40).

Looking into the sky can be comforting, but are we able to accept that the timeless and resurrected Jesus Christ identifies with all suffering people, and that therefore our response to them must be judged to be our response to him? †

Susan Connelly is a Sister of St Joseph who has had extensive experience with the people of Timor-Leste. She is greatly concerned about the people of West Papua.

PEACE, TRUTH AND SOCIAL COHESION

BY DR DEBRA SNODDY

In the Christian tradition, peace is never merely the absence of conflict or the achievement of social consensus. In the Gospel of John, peace is a gift that flows from relationship with Christ and participation in God's truth. Jesus' promise "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives" (John 14:27) locates peace not as a form of external stability but as a transformed way of being with God and with one another. This vision of peace speaks powerfully into the contemporary Australian context, where social cohesion is increasingly tested by cultural fragmentation, historical wounds, and deepening public polarisation.

John's Gospel consistently binds peace to truth. Jesus declares before Pilate: "For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth" (John 18:37). Peace, therefore, cannot be sustained by denial or avoidance. It requires honesty, about who we are, about the structures that shape our society, and about the fears that divide us. In Australia, this includes grappling with the ongoing legacy of colonisation, the experience of First Nations peoples, and the challenges of living together in a multicultural and multi-faith society. From a pastoral perspective, peacemaking begins not with easy answers but with attentive listening and moral courage.

The risen Christ's greeting, "Peace be with you" (John 20:19, 21, 26), is spoken into a space of fear as the disciples isolate themselves from the outside world. They are locked away, anxious and uncertain, yet it is precisely there that Christ breathes the Spirit and commissions them for mission. This detail, so often missed, is pastorally significant. Peace is not postponed until fear has vanished; it is given in the midst of fear. Many Australians today inhabit similar locked rooms, shaped by mistrust of institutions, anxiety about economic security, and suspicion of difference. The Johannine Christ enters these spaces not with condemnation but with reconciliation, grounding peace in forgiveness and renewed relationship.

This understanding of peace resonates with the social teaching of Pope Leo XIII, who argued that authentic peace depends upon justice, moral order, and respect for human dignity. In *Rerum Novarum* and related teachings, Leo XIII insisted that social harmony cannot endure where people are reduced to economic units or excluded from participation in the common good. His vision challenges pastoral ministry to see peace not as sentimentality but as a social and ethical task. Written in the 19th century, this document is still relevant today.

Indeed, more recently, Pope Leo XIV has taken up this tradition while addressing the contemporary fragility of social cohesion. In his early teaching on peace, Leo XIV has emphasised that peace is sustained not by uniformity but by shared commitment to the dignity of every person. He has warned against cultures of contempt and misinformation, arguing that peace collapses where truth is manipulated and fear is exploited. Echoing John's Gospel, Leo XIV has stressed that peace must be rooted in justice and truth that liberates rather than truth wielded as a weapon.

This emphasis is especially pertinent in Australia, where public discourse is often shaped by rapid media cycles and adversarial debate. A pastoral response informed by Leo XIV's teaching resists the temptation to retreat into ideological camps. Instead, it calls the Church to model a different way of being present: fostering dialogue, encouraging ethical reflection, and holding together conviction and compassion. Such a stance does not erase difference but seeks to humanise it.

In pastoral practice, this means creating communities where people can speak honestly without fear, where disagreement does not lead to exclusion, and where the vulnerable are protected. It also means recognising that peace requires formation, the formation of conscience, formation in listening, and formation in hope. As Pope Leo XIV has observed, peace grows where people are taught how to live responsibly with one another.



John's Gospel offers a final word of reassurance: "Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid" (John 14:27b). This is not a call to naïve optimism, but an invitation to trust that God's reconciling work continues even amid uncertainty. In Australia, the Church's vocation is to witness to a peace that tells the truth, seeks justice, and builds belonging. Drawing on

the Johannine vision and the complementary insights of Popes Leo XIII and Leo XIV, pastoral ministry can help shape communities where peace is lived patiently, relationally, and hope-filled signs of God's abiding presence in a fractured world. †

Dr Debra Snoddy is a biblical scholar based in Sydney.



A CUPPA WITH A *priest*

FR PAUL MARSHALL

Rector of the Holy Spirit Seminary,
Harris Park

BY **ANTONY LAWES**



As rector of the Holy Spirit Seminary, in Harris Park, Fr Paul Marshall is helping to prepare the next generation of priests for the Diocese of Parramatta. But the seminarians are not the only ones learning, he is finding out a lot about himself too.

Fr Paul was ordained to the priesthood nearly 40 years ago by the first Bishop of Parramatta, Bede Heather, and has spent most of that time in the Diocese. For almost 30 of those years, he has worked in parishes either as a priest, assistant priest or administrator.

He remembers life as a seminarian in the 1980s was firmly focused on academic studies: these days the seminarians at Holy Spirit are spending more time on human formation, on their emotional and spiritual development. This is necessary, he says, if priests are to be able to better help their flock.

“We all have got a backpack on our backs; we carry our own family baggage and a lot of of the seminary formation is about trying to process our own stuff that we get stuck on,” he says.

“There’s a lot of inner work and that’s the journey... it frees you to be there for others. It gives you the ultimate freedom – for God, for relationships. But it’s a tough journey.”

He says this new way of learning has “challenged my own human development and formation”, and he is working with his own spiritual director to “process stuff” too.

‘Bringing me close to God’

Fr Paul grew up in the mountains just outside Hobart, Tasmania, which instilled in him a love of nature’s wild places that has never left him. This love has taken him to New Zealand to mountain climb and ski, as well as to the Himalayas. As Youth Chaplain in the Diocese in the 1990s, he would often take groups hiking in the Blue Mountains.

“Mountains open me to a place of freedom, bringing me close to God,” he says.

The growth in his faith began at home with parents who were regular Mass-goers, but was further kindled by parish priests, teachers, peers and “other adventurous people” who taught him to better appreciate the wider world.

The Christian Brothers had a particular impact on his spiritual growth, especially during his school years.



Fr Paul (third left) with Bishop Vincent, Mark Buhagiar and our seminarians.

Their enthusiasm in teaching, on the sports field or on bushwalking excursions, "cultivated my interest in nature, engaging my sense of wonder and sowed the seeds of faith", Fr Paul says.

He remembers one brother, Br Chris Shearer, his Year Six teacher, was a key person on his road to the priesthood. One day in 1969, he brought a television into class so everyone could watch the moon landing. "A seed of vocation, unknown to me at the time, was fermenting in being humbled before the infinity of the universe around us."

Years later after he had left school, Fr Paul received a letter from Br Chris asking if he had considered joining the priesthood. "It was timely because I was thinking about it," he says.

The Christian Brothers were there for him again when he took up his first appointment as a parish priest at Sacred Heart Parish, Luddenham-Warragamba, giving him accommodation for several years at their nearby retreat centre in Mulgoa until the parish had raised enough money to build a presbytery. "The Brothers taught me their love of God in prayer and the value of community and the power of storytelling," Fr Paul says.

Another important moment came when his family relocated from Hobart to Sydney when he was 17. He remembers the feeling of despair at leaving his friends behind and, while walking along the coast at Coogee one day, asking himself what was the constant thing in his life? His answer: God.

'Priesthood is a unique seed'

Over the years, Fr Paul has served in five parishes in the Diocese and is currently the Administrator of St Oliver Plunkett's Parish, Harris Park, along with being Rector at the seminary.

He says in his many years as a priest, he has been struck by the faith and love shown to him by parishioners.

He says when he first became a parish priest, the belief was that priests were taught theology and canon law and expected to navigate the rest on their own. Nowadays, he encourages his seminarians to recognise that they don't have all the answers and to work with and consult the parish community. This consultation and listening is akin to the synodality championed by Popes Francis and Leo, and Bishop Vincent. "It's not some magic thing, it already exists in parishes," he says.

Fr Paul believes priests are still as important as ever, just for different reasons than in the past. His job, he says, is to prepare those looking to enter the



Fr Paul blesses a father and child at Mass at St Patrick's Cathedral.

priesthood to be adaptable and open to what society is doing.

"Priesthood is a unique seed planted in the rich soil of God's love and it gives me deep joy as rector of our seminary to see our men formed to serve our Diocese into the future.

"I have seen God's hand in my life as I look back over the years. God has looked beyond my limitations and has shown me my potential." †



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PARISH PROFILE

ST MATTHEW'S PARISH, WINDSOR

New hope in mainland Australia's oldest church

BY MARY BRAZELL

Among the pockets of growth in surrounding suburbs, St Matthew's Parish, Windsor, enjoys feeling like a country town parish.

But this new growth is bringing a vibrancy and energy into the oldest Catholic church still used for worship on mainland Australia.

"I like that you feel part of a community," explained parish secretary Judy Rigg, who has been in the parish for 32 years.

"You see them down the street and they say, 'how are you?'"

"And knowing that you can help people too, when you get phone calls or people who come to the door who just want a chat – sometimes, that's all they want."

Sacramental Coordinator Cita Adams added, "there's a source of communion among the parishioners, because they are people you see every single week."

Eucharistic Minister and parishioner for 36 years, Monnette Claravall, said, "Our parish is warm, supportive and Christ-centred. It is a small parish and it feels like we grow together spiritually."

Parish priest has 'beautiful soul'

Some of the groundswell of energy in the parish has been credited to Parish Priest Fr Ranillo Creta, who joined the parish in 2023.

Judy explained that when Fr Ranillo first moved into the parish, he was very observant as to how it ran and now, he feels comfortable initiating new projects.

"We've got a parish council, our children's liturgy has started up again, and he's hoping to start a youth group," she said.

Cita said, "He's very approachable, caring, understanding and humble – he really doesn't like the accolades."

Parish council member Declan Edgar credits Fr Ranillo for helping him become a better Catholic.

"He's a very stoic man and has a beautiful soul. His homilies are passion-driven and he conveys Jesus' message thoroughly with conviction."

Monnette said, "with his support, no job feels too difficult. He listens to us attentively and makes us feel heard."

Reflecting on his 40th priestly anniversary in 2023, Fr Ranillo described his ministry as "a great blessing."

"I look at the priesthood as not only doing something for the people, but God wanting to continue to bless the people that I minister to through me, which is a joyful experience."

Easter 'hope for new life'

As parishes across the Diocese prepare for Holy Week, parishioners describe it as being a very uplifting time.

"I ponder on the voluntary suffering and death that Jesus endured for us and am unable to comprehend how much love that He shows in doing so," Finance Committee member Vince Rayfield said.

Judy said, "to have that love to die for us is mind-blowing and goes to show that He knows you and He's always there."

Cita said, "Easter is a time for me to reconnect and reassess my life and faith journey. Sometimes I fall and get back up again, but Easter gives you hope to keep going."

Monnette said, "It's hope for new life."

Hopes for 2026

With the weekly Mass attendance almost doubling over the past few years, the parish remains hopeful that the new and returning faces can contribute to the life of the church.

Declan said, "There is a growing hunger among parishioners to reach out to the community, to talk about Jesus, faith and life.

"As we have started a parish council, I see the parish flourishing with new potential to serve the community."

Judy said, "We hope that with the children's liturgy and youth groups starting up, they'll engage and welcome families and school students."

Sharing in Christ's peace

As the country still reels from the devastating Bondi massacre and the ever-present global turmoil



in countries like Ukraine and Sudan, I asked the parishioners how we can share the hope, joy and peace of Christ we experience at Easter within their communities.

"We can share joy and peace within our community by living as Christ calls us to and treating everyone equally with love and respect," Monnette said.

Cita said, "You should have love and joy in yourself first before you can share that joy and love with other people, and to do that, you have to forgive and reconcile, and then you can show your love freely."

Vince said, "I believe God is calling all Christians throughout the world to unite in humility and love and to celebrate around one altar.

"Division has never been inspired by God." ✚



Parishioners enjoy the parish's feast day celebrations in September 2025 Image: Supplied

An important step **IN THE JOURNEY OF FAITH**

BY GUS LIM

On 13 December 2025, at St Nicholas of Myra Parish, Penrith, a ceremony was held for 11 devotees who are in the process of becoming Catholic. Before this Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens, also known as the Rite of Welcome, these devotees are classified as inquirers, a term for people who have not yet been baptised.

This Rite of Acceptance is an important and essential step in their journey of faith. During the ceremony, all inquirers are asked two foundational questions as a public statement of faith:

Question 1: *What are you hoping for from this community?*

Answer: *Faith.*

Question 2: *And what does Faith offer you?*

Answer: *Eternal Life.*

This moment marks the beginning of a formal relationship with God and requires the following commitments:

1. *A stated intention to change their lives and enter a relationship with Christ.*
2. *An understanding of the need for repentance.*
3. *Establishing the practice of calling upon God in prayer.*
4. *Developing a sense of Church.*
5. *Gaining experience of the companionship and outlook of the Christian community through contact with a priest or other members of the parish.*

This is the first time the inquirer publicly declares their faith before the community. Each must be accompanied and supported by a sponsor. Through this rite, the inquirer becomes an official member of the Church as one preparing for baptism. From this

Want to become a Catholic? **HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW**

BY ANTONY LAWES



Karen Verlinden was first introduced to God by her grandmother when she was a little girl. But it wasn't until decades later that she finally decided to do something that had long been in the back of her mind – get Baptised and become Catholic.

“I have always felt drawn to becoming a Catholic,” she said. “I began going to church with my husband last year. I had always wanted to be baptised Catholic and with my husband’s encouragement, I made some enquiries with our local parish to begin the process.”

That process is called Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) and is a spiritual journey that can take between six and 12 months, culminating in the person receiving the sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist) at the Easter Vigil.

If someone has been attending Mass at their local church and decides to take the next step to become

point forward, the inquirer is known as a catechumen, meaning “one in whom the Word of God echoes.” Lessons to be learned from the Christian community include eradicating selfishness, learning to forgive others, living the Good News, and growing in hope through the Holy Spirit.

During the Rite of Acceptance, the five senses – sight, touch, smell, hearing, and taste – are highlighted, as all are used in Catholic worship. The catechumens are signed with the Cross of Christ so that they may always recognise Christ when they see Him, hear His voice when He speaks, be the voice of Jesus to others, do the work of Christ, and walk the path He sets before them.

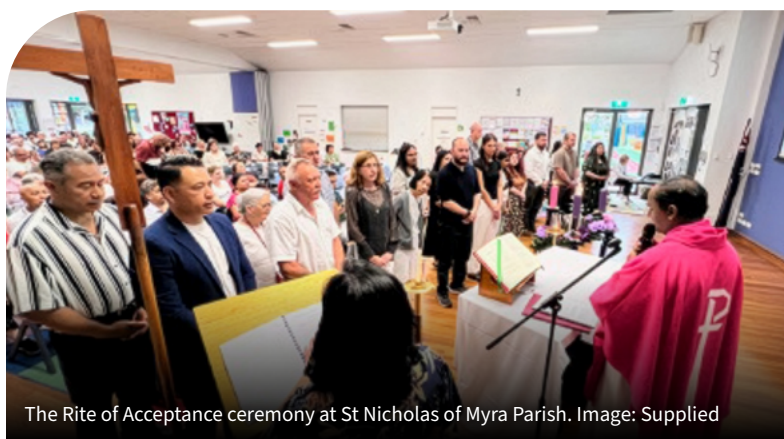
Parish priest, Fr Joe Manjaly, blessed the catechumens with the sign of the cross. Each was presented with a small wooden cross, symbolising their relationship with God. They will also receive a Bible – God’s written Word – along with an explanatory guide to help them unlock the many spiritual treasures it contains.

The next step on the path to becoming a Catholic is for these catechumens to undertake the Rite of Election, which formally ratifies their readiness for

the sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist) at the upcoming Easter Vigil. †

My prayer for the catechumens is that they may be instruments of God’s Love, Hope, Joy, and Peace.

Gus Lim is a parishioner of St Nicholas of Myra Parish, Penrith.



The Rite of Acceptance ceremony at St Nicholas of Myra Parish. Image: Supplied

Catholic, their first port of call should be to talk with their parish priest or pastoral director, said Deacon Roderick Pirotta, the Pastoral Director of Sacred Heart Parish, Mount Druitt South.

This will give them a good understanding of what is involved, their suitability and the significance of what they are about to undergo.

Becoming Catholic might be the end of the RCIA process, but it is just the start of a person’s ongoing relationship with Christ, Deacon Roderick said.

“It is not just becoming a Catholic, it’s about becoming a disciple of Christ. That is a lifelong journey, not a moment or an event in your life.

“Therefore, speaking to a member of the clergy is extremely important,” he said.

The next step is to contact the parish office who will put the person, also called “the inquirer”, in touch with the parish’s RCIA Coordinator. They will discuss the process in detail and the time commitment that it involves. Sessions are held every week and include prayer, scripture sharing, presentation on an aspect of the faith and time for discussion.

“I stress that it is their own spiritual journey and it is their decision whether they decide to continue with the process,” said RCIA Coordinator of Our Lady of the Rosary Parish, Kellyville, Annette Tan.

“In our parish, the RCIA process is about six months from the first group meeting, which is at the beginning of September. This group would complete the RCIA process a few weeks after Easter.”

When the inquirer commits to the process, the RCIA Coordinator finds a suitable parishioner to act as the sponsor for the person, and they will remain with that person during the rest of the RCIA process. If the inquirer misses a session for any reason the RCIA team will organise a catch-up session, Annette said.

Karen Verlinden is nearing the end of her RCIA journey in the parish of Baulkham Hills, and is looking forward to being Baptised and the “sense of belonging” that will come with it.

“I am looking forward to being able to receive the Eucharist alongside my husband,” she said. “As time passes I will gain a greater understanding which I believe will strengthen my faith.” †

Easter Mass Times

ACROSS THE DIOCESE OF PARRAMATTA

The observance of Holy Week and Easter is a time for reflection, renewal, and celebration, deeply rooted in the spiritual heritage of the Catholic Church. We invite you to join your local faith community throughout Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains for this special time of renewal and hope.

Baulkham Hills Parish

St Michael's, Baulkham Hills

Palm Sunday: 5:30pm Vigil, 8am, 10am, 6pm
Holy Thursday: 7:30pm
Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
Holy Saturday: 7pm
Easter Sunday: 8am, 10am

Our Lady of Lourdes, Baulkham Hills South

Palm Sunday: 6pm Vigil, 9am
Holy Thursday: 5pm
Good Friday: 11am (Stations), 6pm
Holy Saturday: 7pm
Easter Sunday: 9am

Blacktown Parish (Mary, Queen of the Family)

St Patrick's, Blacktown

Palm Sunday: 5:30pm Vigil, 7am, 10am, 5:30pm
Holy Thursday: 7:30pm
Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
Holy Saturday: 7:30pm
Easter Sunday: 7am, 10am, 5:30pm

St Michael's, Blacktown South

Palm Sunday: 8am, 9:30am, 6pm
Good Friday: 3pm
Easter Sunday: 8am, 9:30am, 6pm

Castle Hill Parish (St Bernadette's)

Palm Sunday: 5pm Vigil, 7:30am, 9am, 10:30am, 6pm
Holy Thursday: 7:30pm
Good Friday: 9:30am, 12pm, 3pm
Holy Saturday: 7pm
Easter Sunday: 7:30am, 9am, 10:30am, 6pm

Cranebrook Parish (Corpus Christi)

Palm Sunday: 6pm Vigil, 7:30am, 9:30am
Holy Thursday: 7pm
Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
Holy Saturday: 7pm
Easter Sunday: 7:30am, 9:30am

Doonside Parish (St John Vianney)

Palm Sunday: 6:30pm Vigil, 7:30am, 9:30am
Holy Thursday: 8pm
Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
Holy Saturday: 6:30pm
Easter Sunday: 7:30am, 9:30am, 11am (Melkite)

Dundas Valley Parish (St Bernadette's)

Palm Sunday: 6pm Vigil, 8am, 10am
Holy Thursday: 7pm
Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
Holy Saturday: 7:30pm
Easter Sunday: 8am, 10am

Emu Plains Parish (Our Lady of the Way)

Palm Sunday: 6pm Vigil, 8am, 9:30am
Holy Thursday: 7:30pm
Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
Holy Saturday: 7pm
Easter Sunday: 8am, 9:30am

Glenbrook Parish (St Finbar's)

Palm Sunday: 5:30pm Vigil, 7:30am, 9:30am
Holy Thursday: 7:30pm
Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
Holy Saturday: 7pm
Easter Sunday: 7:30am, 9:30am

Glenmore Park Parish (St Padre Pio)

Palm Sunday: 5:30pm Vigil, 8am, 10am
Holy Thursday: 7pm
Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
Holy Saturday: 7pm
Easter Sunday: 8am, 10am

Glenwood-Stanhope Gardens Parish (St John XXIII)

Palm Sunday: 6pm Vigil, 7:30am, 9am, 10:30am, 6pm
Holy Thursday: 7:30pm
Good Friday: 10am Stations, 3pm
Holy Saturday: 7pm
Easter Sunday: 7:30am, 9am, 10:30am, 6pm

Granville Parish (Holy Cross Parish)

Holy Trinity, Granville

Palm Sunday: 6pm Vigil, 10am
Holy Thursday: 7:30pm
Good Friday: 10:30am (Stations), 3pm
Holy Saturday: 8pm
Easter Sunday: 10am

Holy Family, East Granville

Palm Sunday: 4:30pm Vigil, 8:30am, 5pm
Holy Thursday: 5:30pm
Good Friday: 9:30am (Stations), 3pm
Holy Saturday: 5:30pm
Easter Sunday: 8:30am, 5pm

Greystanes Parish (Our Lady, Queen of Peace)

Palm Sunday: 5pm Vigil, 7am, 8:30am, 10:30am, 6pm
Holy Thursday: 8pm
Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
Holy Saturday: 8pm
Easter Sunday: 7am, 8:30am, 10:30am

Guildford Parish (St Patrick's)

Palm Sunday: 5:30pm Vigil, 8am, 10am
 Holy Thursday: 7pm
 Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
 Holy Saturday: 6pm
 Easter Sunday: 8am, 10am

Harris Park Parish (St Oliver Plunkett)

Palm Sunday: 5:30pm Vigil, 8am, 10am
 Holy Thursday: 7pm
 Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
 Holy Saturday: 7pm
 Easter Sunday: 8am, 10am

Kellyville Parish (Our Lady of the Rosary)

Palm Sunday: 6pm Vigil, 7am, 9am, 11am, 6pm
 Holy Thursday: 7pm
 Good Friday: 10:30am (Stations), 3pm
 Holy Saturday: 7pm
 Easter Sunday: 7am, 9am, 11am

Kenthurst Parish (St Madeleine Sophie Barat)

Palm Sunday: 5:30pm Vigil, 8am, 10am, 5:30pm
 Holy Thursday: 7pm
 Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
 Holy Saturday: 5:30pm
 Easter Sunday: 8am, 10am, 5:30pm

Kingswood Parish (St Joseph's)

Palm Sunday: 6pm Vigil, 8:30am, 10am
 Holy Thursday: 7pm
 Good Friday: 11am (Stations), 3pm
 Holy Saturday: 7:30pm
 Easter Sunday: 8:30am, 10am

Lalor Park Parish (St Bernadette's)

Palm Sunday: 5:30pm Vigil, 8am, 10am
 Holy Thursday: 7:30pm
 Good Friday: 9:30am (Stations), 3pm
 Holy Saturday: 5:30pm
 Easter Sunday: 8:30am, 10am

Luddenham-Warragamba Parish (Sacred Heart)**Holy Family, Luddenham**

Palm Sunday: 5:30pm Vigil, 7:30am
 Holy Thursday: 7pm
 Good Friday: 3pm
 Holy Saturday: 7pm
 Easter Sunday: 10am

Sacred Heart, Warragamba

Palm Sunday: 9:30am
 Good Friday: 10am
 Easter Sunday: 8am

Marayong Parish (St Andrew the Apostle)

Palm Sunday: 5pm Vigil, 7:30am, 8:45am, 10:30am
 Holy Thursday: 7pm
 Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
 Holy Saturday: 7pm
 Easter Sunday: 7:30am, 8:45am, 10:30am

Marsden Park Parish (St Luke's)

Palm Sunday: 5:30pm Vigil, 8am, 10am, 5:30pm
 Holy Thursday: 7pm
 Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
 Holy Saturday: 7pm
 Easter Sunday: 8am, 10am, 5:30pm

Merrylands Parish (St Margaret Mary's)

Palm Sunday: 6pm Vigil, 7:30am, 9am, 10:30am, 6pm
 Holy Thursday: 7pm
 Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
 Holy Saturday: 6:30pm
 Easter Sunday: 7:30am, 9am, 10:30am, 6pm

Mount Druitt Parish (Holy Family)**Holy Family Church, Emerton**

Palm Sunday: 5:30pm Vigil, 9am, 10:30am
 Holy Thursday: 7pm
 Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
 Holy Saturday: 7pm
 Easter Sunday: 9am, 10:30am

Willmot Community Hub, Willmot

Palm Sunday: 7:30am
 Easter Sunday: 7:30am

Mount Druitt South Parish (Sacred Heart)

Palm Sunday: 6pm Vigil, 7:30am, 9am
 Holy Thursday: 7:30pm
 Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
 Holy Saturday: 7:30pm
 Easter Sunday: 7:30am, 9am

North Rocks Parish (Christ the King)

Palm Sunday: 5:30pm Vigil, 8am, 10am
 Holy Thursday: 7:30pm
 Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
 Holy Saturday: 6:30pm
 Easter Sunday: 8am, 10am

Parramatta Parish (St Patrick's Cathedral)

Palm Sunday: 6pm Vigil, 8am, 9:30am, 11am, 6pm
 Holy Thursday: 7:30pm
 Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
 Holy Saturday: 7pm
 Easter Sunday: 8am, 9:30am, 11am, 6pm

North Parramatta Parish (St Monica's)

Palm Sunday: 5pm Vigil, 9am, 6pm
 Holy Thursday: 7:30pm
 Good Friday: 10am, 3pm
 Holy Saturday: 6pm
 Easter Sunday: 9am, 6pm

Parish of Richmond**St Monica's, Richmond**

Palm Sunday: 6pm Vigil, 7:30am, 9:30am, 5:30pm
 Holy Thursday: 7pm
 Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
 Holy Saturday: 7pm
 Easter Sunday: 7:30am, 9:30am, 5:30pm

St Gregory's, Kurrajong

Palm Sunday: 8am
 Good Friday: 10am (Stations)
 Easter Sunday: 8am

Parish of the Upper Blue Mountains**Our Lady of the Nativity, Lawson**

Palm Sunday: 5pm Vigil, 8:30am
 Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
 Holy Saturday: 7pm
 Easter Sunday: 8:30am

Sacred Heart, Blackheath

Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
 Holy Saturday: 7pm
 Easter Sunday: 9:30am

St Bonaventure's, Leura

Good Friday: 10am (Stations)
 Easter Sunday: 10am

St Canice's, Katoomba

Holy Thursday: 7pm
 Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
 Holy Saturday: 7pm
 Easter Sunday: 10am

St Francis Xavier, Wentworth Falls

Good Friday: 9am
 Easter Sunday: 8am

Penrith Parish (St Nicholas of Myra)

Palm Sunday: 6pm Vigil, 7am, 8:30am, 10am, 6pm
 Holy Thursday: 7pm
 Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
 Holy Saturday: 7pm
 Easter Sunday: 7am, 8:30am, 10am, 6pm

Plumpton Parish (The Good Shepherd)

Palm Sunday: 6pm Vigil, 7am, 9am, 6pm
 Holy Thursday: 7:30pm
 Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
 Holy Saturday: 7:30pm
 Easter Sunday: 7am, 9am

Quakers Hill-Schofields Parish (Mary Immaculate)

Palm Sunday: 5:30pm Vigil, 7:30am, 9am, 10:30am, 12:30pm, 5:30pm
 Holy Thursday: 7:30pm
 Good Friday: 9:30am (Stations), 3pm
 Holy Saturday: 7pm
 Easter Sunday: 7:30am, 9am, 10:30am, 12:30pm, 5:30pm

Riverstone Parish (St John the Evangelist)

Palm Sunday: 7am, 9am, 11am
 Holy Thursday: 7pm
 Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
 Holy Saturday: 7pm
 Easter Sunday: 7am, 9am 10:30am

Rooty Hill Parish (St Aidan's)

Palm Sunday: 6pm Vigil, 7:30am, 9am, 10:30am, 5:30pm
 Holy Thursday: 7pm
 Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
 Holy Saturday: 7pm
 Easter Sunday: 7:30am, 9am, 10:30am, 5:30pm

Rouse Hill Parish (Our Lady of the Angels)

Our Lady of the Angels, Rouse Hill
 Palm Sunday: 5:30pm Vigil, 8:30am, 10am, 5:30pm
 Holy Thursday: 7pm
 Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
 Holy Saturday: 7pm
 Easter Sunday: 8:30am, 10am, 5:30pm

Santa Sophia Catholic College, Box Hill

Palm Sunday: 6:30pm Vigil, 11:30am
 Good Friday: 3pm
 Easter Sunday: 11:30am

Rydalmere Parish (Holy Name of Mary)

Palm Sunday: 5:30pm Vigil, 8am, 10am
 Holy Thursday: 7pm
 Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
 Holy Saturday: 5:30pm
 Easter Sunday: 8am, 10am

Seven Hills Parish (Our Lady of Lourdes)

Palm Sunday: 6pm Vigil, 8am, 9:30am
 Holy Thursday: 7:30pm
 Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
 Holy Saturday: 6pm
 Easter Sunday: 8am, 9:30am

Springwood Parish (St Thomas Aquinas)

Palm Sunday: 5pm Vigil, 8am, 9:30am
 Holy Thursday: 7pm
 Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
 Holy Saturday: 7:30pm
 Easter Sunday: 8am, 9:30am

St Clair-Erskine Park Parish (Holy Spirit)

Palm Sunday: 6pm Vigil, 8am, 9:30am, 6pm
 Holy Thursday: 7:30pm
 Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
 Holy Saturday: 7pm
 Easter Sunday: 8am, 9:30am

St Marys Parish (Our Lady of the Rosary)

Palm Sunday: 6pm Vigil, 7:30am, 9am, 10:30am, 5:30pm
 Holy Thursday: 7:30pm
 Good Friday: 11am (Stations), 3pm
 Holy Saturday: 8pm
 Easter Sunday: 7:30am, 9am, 10:30am

Toongabbie Parish (St Anthony of Padua)

Palm Sunday: 5:30pm Vigil, 8am, 10am, 5:30pm
 Holy Thursday: 7pm
 Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
 Holy Saturday: 6pm
 Easter Sunday: 8am, 10am

Wentworthville Parish (Our Lady of Mount Carmel)

Palm Sunday: 6pm Vigil, 8am, 10am, 6pm
 Holy Thursday: 7:30pm
 Good Friday: 9am (Stations), 3pm
 Holy Saturday: 7:30pm
 Easter Sunday: 8am, 10am

Westmead Parish (Sacred Heart)

Palm Sunday: 6pm Vigil, 8am, 9:30am
 Holy Thursday: 7pm
 Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
 Holy Saturday: 7pm
 Easter Sunday: 8am, 9:30am

Windsor Parish (St Matthew's)

Palm Sunday: 7:30am, 9am, 5pm
 Holy Thursday: 7pm
 Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
 Holy Saturday: 6pm
 Easter Sunday: 7:30am, 9am

Winston Hills Parish (St Paul the Apostle)

Palm Sunday: 5pm Vigil, 8am, 9:30am, 5pm
 Holy Thursday: 7pm
 Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
 Holy Saturday: 6pm
 Easter Sunday: 8am, 9:30am

Chaplaincies**Chinese Catholic Community****St Monica's Parish, North Parramatta**

Palm Sunday: 11:30am (Cantonese)
 Holy Thursday: 7:30pm (English & Cantonese)
 Good Friday: 11:30am (Cantonese), 3pm (Cantonese in Church Hall)
 Holy Saturday: 8:30pm (Cantonese)
 Easter Sunday: 11:30am (Cantonese)

Our Lady of the Angels, Rouse Hill

Palm Sunday: 3pm (Mandarin)
 Easter Sunday: 3pm (Mandarin)

Korean Catholic Community (Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Baulkham Hills)

Palm Sunday: 1pm
Easter Sunday: 1pm

Latin Mass Chaplaincy (Croatian Catholic Centre, Blacktown, unless specified)

Palm Sunday: 7:15am (St Mark's Coptic Catholic Church, Prospect) 10:30am, 4pm (Our Lady of the Nativity, Lawson)
Holy Thursday: 7pm
Good Friday: 10am (Stations), 3pm
Holy Saturday: 8:30pm
Easter Sunday: 7:45am (St Mark's Coptic Catholic Church, Prospect), 10am, 11am (Our Lady of the Nativity, Lawson)

Slovenian Catholic Community (St Raphael's Slovenian Catholic Church, Merrylands)

Palm Sunday: 9:30am (Slovenian)
Holy Thursday: 5pm (Slovenian & English with Adoration)
Good Friday: 3pm (Slovenian)
Holy Saturday: 7pm
Easter Sunday: 8am

Vietnamese Catholic Community (Holy Trinity Church, Granville, unless specified)

Palm Sunday: 12pm (Good Shepherd Church, Plumpton), 5pm
Holy Thursday: 5pm
Good Friday: 9am (Stations), 6pm (Good Shepherd Church, Plumpton), 8pm
Easter Sunday: 12pm (Good Shepherd Church, Plumpton), 5pm

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Supporting our community



Call 8843 2500 | catholiccarewsbm.org.au

Catholic Care supports people across Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains with counselling, housing, family support and community programs – offering practical help and care when it's needed most.

Care when you need it most

Families, youth & children

Parent education programs, home visits and casework support for families, parents and carers facing challenges. Offered in both Blacktown and Penrith LGAs.

Housing for women

Safe, transitional housing and personalised support for young mothers (16–25) and women 55+ at risk of homelessness, hardship or family and domestic violence.

Counselling & wellbeing

Confidential, flexible and affordable counselling for individuals, couples and families including grief, trauma, relationship and family law support. Offered in Parramatta, Blacktown, Emerton, Nepean and Springwood.

Project Elizabeth: Specialist counselling support for expecting parents and families with young children for 0-3 years residing in the Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District.

Early childhood education and care

Early learning and care through family day care (50+ locations) focused on the Early Learning Years Framework.

Community programs

English classes, food and material aid, work readiness courses, wellness groups and social programs. Includes a creche service at Mamre House and Farm to support parents to participate and access these community-based programs.

Chaplaincy

Pastoral and spiritual care in hospitals and correctional facilities – available to all.

Aged Care Volunteer Visitor Scheme

Our volunteers comfort and support older people in aged care facilities, offering companionship, conversation and a friendly presence to brighten their day.

Chancery Office

www.parracatholic.org

(02) 8838 3400

diocese@parracatholic.org

Bishop Vincent Long OFM Conv

(02) 8838 3400

bishop@parracatholic.org

Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese

parra.catholic.edu.au

(02) 9840 5600

communityliaison@parra.catholic.edu.au

Community Ventures

(Catholic Diocese of Parramatta Services Limited)

1300 2VENTURES (1300 283 688)

enquiries@cdpsl.org.au

www.communityventures.org.au

Ambrose Early Years Education

and School Age Care

1300 4AMBROSE (1300 426 276)

enquiries@ambrose.org.au

www.ambrose.org.au

Catholic Care Western Sydney

and the Blue Mountains

(02) 8843 2500

catholiccarewsbm.org.au

Mission Enhancement Team

(MET Parramatta)

Catholic Youth Parramatta;

Peace, Justice, Ecology; Marriage; Natural

Fertility; Worship; MET Facilitators

met@parracatholic.org

parracatholic.org/connect

Confraternity of Christian Doctrine

(02) 8838 3486

ccd@parracatholic.org

Tribunal Office

(02) 8838 3480

tribunal@parracatholic.org

Vocations

(02) 8838 3460

vocations@parracatholic.org

Parramatta Catholic Foundation

(02) 8838 3482

yourfoundation@parracatholic.org

Diocesan Development Fund

(02) 8839 4500

enquiries@parrddf.org.au

Holy Spirit Seminary

(02) 9296 6300

Office for Safeguarding

(02) 8838 3419

safeguarding@parracatholic.org

COMMUNITY CENTRES

Emerton

Holy Family Parish, Aboriginal Catholic Services

Orchard Hills

Mamre House and Farm

Springwood

163 Macquarie Road

Contact Catholic Care for program times and availability.

GET INVOLVED

Call: 8843 2500

Email: enquiries@catholiccarewsbm.org.au

Visit: catholiccarewsbm.org.au

Volunteer: Scan the code to get started



AT A GLANCE

50+ service locations

Nationally accredited housing and early childhood education programs

Services welcome to all backgrounds and faiths

Stay Active and Connected with Catholic Healthcare

AT CATHOLIC HEALTHCARE, what matters to you, matters to us. If your goal is to stay active and connected, we offer personalised support and services that will make a genuine difference to your health and wellbeing.

Whether you are seeking support with one-on-one consultations at home, in one of our clinics, or in a group, we can help you. Our comprehensive suite of allied health services are available in-home and in-clinic across NSW, and include:

- Physiotherapy
- Nursing services
- Occupational therapy
- Allied health assistant services
- Tailored group classes (in-clinic only)

Our dedicated Allied Health team also includes social workers who offer emotional and practical support, helping older Australians and their families navigate aged care and advocate for their rights and preferences.

Make a difference to your wellbeing this year

Catholic Healthcare provides holistic care to nurture your mind, body and spirit.

“ The movement classes have helped improve my balance and confidence. I feel stronger and more independent, and the instructors are always so encouraging. ”

Frank, Catholic Healthcare Stepping On client

In addition to our allied health services, we offer programs to help you stay strong, active and socially connected to the community you love.

- Mind and Move – Helps you move better, feel better and connect better through movement, learning programs and social outings. Available virtually in your home or at a community location.



Mind and Move: We offer health and wellness programs to help you stay strong, active and socially connected to the community you love.

- Stepping On – A seven-week, evidence-based falls-prevention program designed to build strength and confidence. Available at a community location.

We can also help you access Support at Home funding via My Aged Care or choose flexible private care options.

To enjoy a free trial session of Mind and Move with us, scan the QR code below or call us to enquire. At Catholic Healthcare, we offer more ways to keep you or your loved one healthy, safe, and connected.

If you're ready to take the next step towards living well, call our expert team on 1800 225 474 or visit catholichealthcare.com.au/wellness



What matters to you, matters to us

SCAN ME



Whether you are seeking personalised support with one-on-one consultations at home or keen to join our lively group movement sessions, we offer more ways to keep you or your loved one healthy, safe and connected. Take the next step towards living well today.

To learn more, call 1800 225 474 or visit catholichealthcare.com.au/wellness

SIMPLIFYING GIVING THROUGH DIGITAL PAYMENT SOLUTIONS

The **Diocesan Development Fund (DDF)** offers a selection of secure digital payment solutions that support parishes, schools, ministries and other Catholic organisations in today's cashless society, making it easier for people to make a payment - whether it's for Planned Giving, donations, facility hire, weddings, sacraments, or fundraising events. The DDF can help with online payment platforms provided through the Commonwealth Bank of Australia including CommBank's:

SMART TERMINAL



SMART TERMINAL WITH DONATION TAP



SMART MINI



Digital systems assist your organisation by:

- Offering secure online giving through trusted platforms provided by the Commonwealth Bank of Australia.
 - Receiving funds promptly for Planned Giving, one-off events, donations, purchases.
 - Minimize on-site cash handling while ensuring financial transparency.
- Reducing reliance on physical cash, you not only streamline your event and transaction management but also make reconciliation and financial tracking more efficient.

The DDF provides financial services that helps to promote the continued growth and development of a vibrant and evangelising Catholic Church in the Diocese of Parramatta by:

- Providing loans to assist Catholic agencies to further their Mission.
- Facilitating transactional services available to all Catholic organisations.
- Operating efficiently to generate income for the Diocese to support the Mission of the Church, pastoral priorities, and ministry programmes.
- Developing deep long-term relationships with all Catholic entities within the Diocese.

To contact the DDF please phone **(02) 8839 4500** or email enquiries@parraddf.org.au
Visit the DDF website at www.parracatholic.org/ddf