



ST PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL

DIOCESE OF PARRAMATTA

ANNUAL
REPORT

| 2021





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OUR MISSION

✝ *MISSIONARY*

✝ *PRAYERFUL*

✝ *PROPHETIC*

✝ *PASTORAL*

✝ *FOCUSED ON SOCIAL JUSTICE*

✝ *EMPOWERING THE FAITHFUL*

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ABOUT US

This year marked two very important occasions in the life of St Patrick's Cathedral parish, namely 200 years of Catholic Education in Australia and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the fire which ravaged the Cathedral in 1996.

St Patrick's Parramatta has a proud history. In 1820 the first Catholic school was founded by Fr Therry, the first parish priest of Parramatta, in Hunter Street with an enrolment of 31 pupils. The school was run by lay teachers, highlighting the partnership of lay people and the ordained clergy in taking mutual responsibility in promoting the Catholic faith in the parish community.

The fire of 1996 and the rebuilding and opening of the new Cathedral in 2003 further highlights the parish's strength of purpose. The resilience and devotion shown during that time was crucial to the growth of the community.

While the two events may have passed by quietly, without much celebration amidst COVID-19 lockdown and restrictions, these events of building and growing a faith community are a testimony to the faith of the Catholics of Parramatta. As the parish discerns its mission post-Covid, these two events serve as reference points from which the parish can draw inspiration.



FROM THE DEAN

The parish is to be missionary, prophetic, prayerful, and pastoral, with a focus on social justice and empowerment of the faithful.

To say the time that has elapsed since the publication of the most recent Annual Report for St Patrick's Cathedral two years ago has been extraordinary is surely an understatement. Never in living memory has such disruption been caused to our lives in general, to say nothing of the difficulties people of faith have experienced in trying to nourish and sustain their faith while being unable to attend Mass or receive the sacraments. I speak, of course, of the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. On my return from England earlier this year, after enduring a very strict lockdown for most of last year, I was relieved to be home and experience the freedom of being able to visit family, friends, shops and restaurants with ease and not having to wear a face mask whilst doing so. Like you, I never suspected that by the middle of the year I would be living once again under harsh lockdown restrictions. I thought I had left those behind on the other side of the world.

This being so, my time here as Dean has been somewhat unusual. Just as I was getting to know parishioners and people with particular roles, those nascent relationships were set back by the pandemic; likewise, my grasp of routines, procedures and various administrative details. That being said, I have been very gratified by the warm welcome I received here when I undertook my new role in March, a welcome equally sincere on the part of parishioners and staff. I also want to acknowledge all the hard work that has been undertaken by staff members and parishioners, some over many, many years, in order that the parish may bear fruit in its Christian mission, including all those who lead various ministries and groups, too numerous to mention individually..

I do also, of course, want to thank previous Deans of the Cathedral, especially Fr Bob Bossini and Fr Peter Williams, for their leadership of the parish in recent years. I want to thank too the clergy who have assisted them so selflessly and tirelessly, most especially Fr Chris and Deacon Rod, as well as Fr Chadi, recently appointed to Mary, Queen of the Family Parish, Blacktown.

The first gathering I attended after assuming my role as Dean was a half-day retreat at Kellyville, attended by members of our Parish Pastoral Council and Parish Finance Committee. Bishop Vincent was present, and he began the day by laying out his vision for the Cathedral Parish - a vision which holds for the diocese as a whole. He highlighted several areas of focus, areas which the Parish Pastoral Council and the Parish Finance Committee will consider in their future deliberations. The parish is to be missionary, prophetic, prayerful, and pastoral, with a focus on social justice and empowerment of the faithful. This vision accords with the initiatives of the Second Vatican Council and is emphasised repeatedly by Pope Francis. All the faithful have a role to play in implementing this vision. It will be messy and untidy at times and will create debate and passionate discussion...and thus we will know we are doing the work to which God has called us.

The financial situation of the parish is, as can be imagined following the significant drop in income during the lockdown, not as healthy as we would wish. Details of the financial situation will be found in the Parish Finance Committee's report. Fortunately, many of our parishioners choose to donate via direct debit and other electronic means so that the income stream

from parishioners has not dried up entirely during the lockdown, but it has dropped enough to have a significant effect on the parish's finances moving forward. Of course, this situation is replicated throughout the diocese and, on a larger scale, throughout the universal Church. We are fortunate at St Patrick's Cathedral that the Diocese offers substantial financial support to the parish, especially with regard to repairs and maintenance, the music ministry and utility bills. Nonetheless, it is evident that some difficult decisions will need to be made if the parish is to regain and maintain adequate financial health to undertake its mission fruitfully moving forward. Essentially, the pandemic and its deleterious effects on income have increased the impetus to examine a different way for the parish to conduct its collections and the manner in which people give of their generosity to the parish.

It would be remiss of me not to focus on the pandemic and the effect it has had on our parish from a pastoral standpoint. I mentioned at the beginning of my report how surprised and disappointed I was by the imposition of the

lockdown in Sydney. As a parish, we did what we could during the first few weeks of the lockdown to ensure that parishioners could still have some contact with the sacraments and so nourish their faith. We kept the Blessed Sacrament exposed in the window of the cathedral and live-streamed our Masses on both YouTube and Facebook. We did our best to minister to people but inevitably, as the situation worsened in the Parramatta LGA, I was forced to close off access to the cathedral precinct to not only ensure the health and well-being of parishioners but to make sure that we were not risking legal censure. Practically, it was not a difficult decision to make as there was no other choice, but as a priest with responsibility for the spiritual leadership of the parish it was heartbreaking to lock the gates around the precinct because it meant that the personal contact which is essential for quality pastoral care was being likewise closed off. Our principal method of nourishing parishioners' faith as I write this report is via the live-streaming of Masses, phone calls, emails and a couple of social media platforms.



It is fair to say, I believe, that for most of us, access to the sacraments and the other benefits of parish life has been relatively easy throughout our lives. To be deprived of them so suddenly has been difficult for many, perhaps harder for some than others. Though the lockdown is a difficult and testing time for everyone in the parish, it provides an ideal opportunity to reflect on aspects of our faith and our attitude to them, the Eucharist being but one example. When we are deprived of something we value, we can choose to succumb to something approaching despair or see it as a chance to assess why we value that entity. My hope moving forward is that once some semblance of normality returns to parish life, we will not seek simply to "go back to the old ways" but will take the opportunity (perhaps God-given?) to seriously ponder how we wish to "be church" at St Patrick's Cathedral in the future. I hope that when some sort of normality is restored, we will see things through a different lens, the lens that has been imposed on us by our recent collective experience. The vision outlined by Bishop Vincent will be the foundation for us into the future and the break from normal parish life gives us the space we need to prayerfully contemplate this vision and the manner in which we will implement it.

But first we need to think about the transitioning back to regular worship once the restrictions are lifted, albeit in a limited way. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales issued a statement on this issue in April this year, titled "The Day of the Lord". They noted that the Church faces the post-COVID challenge "of bringing our communities and the practice of the faith to a still greater expression and strength." They noted three specific aspects to this challenge. Firstly, there are those who are fearful of returning to enclosed spaces and who may have simply "lost the habit of coming to church." Secondly, there are those who may no longer see the practice of their faith within the Catholic community as being a priority. Thirdly, there may be those who,

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conversely, have developed an online connection with a Catholic community and who therefore present us with an opportunity to develop and deepen that connection once restrictions are eased. Plenty of food for thought.

I would like to have presented a more upbeat first report as Dean to the Annual General Meeting but circumstances have made that impossible. Nonetheless, I remain optimistic for the future, particularly in light of the history of this community. The St Patrick's Parish community rallied tremendously twenty-five years ago after the disaster of the fire which ravaged what was then the cathedral, now the Blessed Sacrament Chapel. This community of faith helped produce a magnificent building out of that challenging time, along with a renewed cohesiveness and vitality in the time that followed.

Time will tell whether the challenges ahead of us will be of the same magnitude as the aftermath of the fire, but I am confident that, as happened in 1996 and the years following, St Patrick's will be more than up to the challenge of rebuilding once again after this disaster, though now it will be about rebuilding a community rather than physical structures. I commit myself to walking along with you on this journey, listening and responding as best I can. I believe good leadership on my part does not involve me and other clergy coming up with good ideas and implementing them but ensuring that the good ideas of others, especially those who know the parish better than me due to their years of commitment, are not disregarded and prevented from implementation.

My first report is longer than I expected it to be (or which you had hoped for, no doubt, but under the extraordinary circumstances in which we find ourselves, outlining a vision for the future was essential and for that I offer no apologies. I look forward twelve months from now, writing a report for the Annual General Meeting which summarises the many strategies undertaken to rebuild the community and starting to bring Bishop Vincent's vision to fruition. I hope to be able to thank all those who have contributed to this rebuilding and report on the terrific news of a parish which is marked by its cohesiveness, vitality and sense of mission, seeking to bring the Good News of God's love and mercy to the community that we are called to serve.

With every blessing,

FR ROBERT RIEDLING
DEAN AND ADMINISTRATOR



PASTORAL COUNCIL

There have been many significant changes in St Patrick's Cathedral parish in the last twelve months. We farewelled Fr Bob Bossini, our Dean and Parish Priest of the last six years, as he completed his time with us and moved to his next parish. The Council thank Fr Bob for his leadership and guidance as well as his dedication and commitment to the parishioners of St Patrick's Cathedral over the last six years. Fr Bob's leadership in the Light Up St Pat's and St Patrick's Business Breakfast contributed to the success of these and other initiatives.

In July 2020 Fr Robert Riedling was appointed as the new Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral. However, Fr Robert was completing his studies in the UK at the time and was unable to return to Australia until January 2021. Consequently, on 6th July 2020, Fr Peter Williams was appointed as interim Dean until Fr Robert could take up his appointment in 2021. Fr Peter has had a long

association with St Patrick's Cathedral Parish starting with his involvement in the rebuilding of the Cathedral after the fire in 1996 as well as his time as Dean for a few years prior to World Youth Day in 2008. The Council thank Fr Peter for his leadership, support, and guidance during this time of transition. On 1st March 2021 Fr Robert Riedling took up his appointment as Dean and Administrator of St Patrick's Cathedral with the Most Reverend Bishop Vincent Long as parish priest.

Some changes to the membership of the Parish Pastoral Council also occurred in late 2020. Two members of the Council, Naomi Mazzitelli, our Chairperson, and Alan D'Souza resigned after several years of dedicated service to the St Patrick's community. The Council wish to thank both Naomi and Alan for their years of dedication and commitment to supporting the pastoral needs of the parish community.



In August 2020 Fr Peter appointed Debbie Grigson and Kerry Giumelli to the Council. Debbie and Kerry moved from the Parish Finance Committee to the Parish Pastoral Council in September 2020. The Council members for 2020/2021 are: Fr Robert Riedling (President), Kerry Giumelli (Chairperson), Debbie Grigson (Deputy Chairperson), Marietta Guillema (Secretary), Sesilia Loto'aniu, George Manassa, Marian Polizzi, and Charlotte Pinto. Several ex-officio members join the Parish Pastoral Council to plan for the needs of the parish community and these were expanded in 2021 to include more ministries. These ex-officio members represent various ministries in the parish including youth, music, children's sacraments, RCIA, the parish school, the parish office manager as well as members of the clergy (assistant priests and deacon).

The challenging conditions we have all experienced over the last 18 months have had an impact on the parish community and on the work of the Parish Pastoral Council. The experience of lockdowns and restrictions has meant that we have not been able to be together as a community as often as we would have hoped. Meeting as a group in person has been impossible in the environment of restrictions and lockdowns and we have all become more experienced using video conferencing.

These times have made us all reevaluate what is important and in March the Council joined with Bishop Vincent, Fr Robert and the Parish Finance Committee in a parish community. During this gathering at the Shrine of the Holy Innocents in Kellyville, we joined in prayer and reflection while participating in Carmelite Spirituality and Lectio Divina. Bishop Vincent also shared his vision and hope for our community in a Cathedral parish. His vision is for the Cathedral parish to be: a community of disciples where the Gospel message is

proclaimed and lived; a place of prayer, meditation and contemplation involving a range of prayer practices; a place where there is a compassionate ministry orientated to the poor, to strangers and to those who have no one to help; a community that is an example of synodality and collaborative values embedded in our parish life; and a place where the lay faithful, particularly women, are involved in the life of the Church. The morning concluded with Mass and lunch together.

In response to the Bishop's hopes and vision for the Cathedral parish, the Council has begun an inquiry into the establishment of a Social Justice group in the parish. Fr Robert asked for expressions of interest in a Social Justice group from the parish community and several people have expressed interest. Progressing this Social Justice group is not possible in the current lockdown restrictions, but the Council will continue to develop this group in 2022. This will also give us time to seek support from the Diocesan Social Justice office.

In 2022, the Council plans to continue to explore our response to the Bishop's vision for the Cathedral parish. It may also be a time for us to examine what we have learnt from our experiences with lockdown and how we can reconnect as a faith community. What have we been doing in this challenging time that might be valuable to continue? How do we reach out to those in our parish community who don't have family or other supports to rely on? These and many other aspects of making our parish more connected and compassionate are important issues to explore in the future.

KERRY GIUMELLI - CHAIR

FINANCE

PURPOSE AND MEMBERSHIP

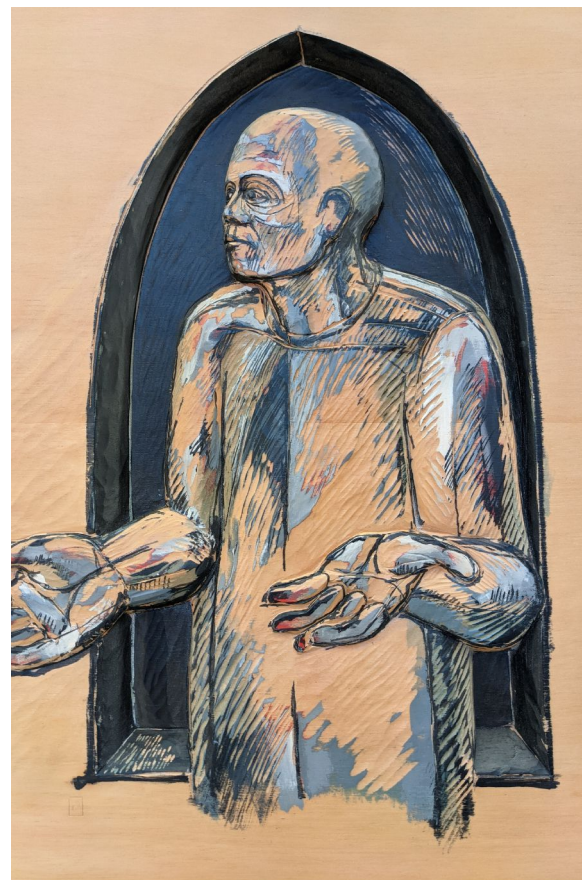
All parishes are required under Canon law to have a Parish Finance Committee (PFC) to assist the parish priest in the administration of the goods of the parish. The PFC is required to include at least three members of the faithful of the parish, has a consultative role and meets approximately four times per year. As a result of the pandemic, committee meetings have included both in-person and online meetings. All members have attended all meetings.

The challenging conditions we have all experienced over the last 18 months have had an impact on the parish community and on the work of the Parish Pastoral Council. The experience of lockdowns and restrictions has meant that we have not been able to be together as a community as often as we would have hoped. Meeting as a group in person has been impossible in the environment of restrictions and lockdowns and we have all become more experienced using video conferencing.

The members of the current PFC are: Fr Robert Riedling (Dean), Fr Chris del Rosario, Fr Chadi Ibrahim (prior to his transfer in August 2021), Mr Sabu Thomas (member), Ms Cathy Dearie (member), Ms Margery Jackman (Chair), Ms Mili Lee (ex officio - Parish) and Mr Alfie Ramirez (ex officio - Diocese).

The present committee acknowledges the contribution of the past chair, Mr Anthony Khoury and past members, Ms Kerry Giumelli (appointed chair of the Parish Pastoral Council) and Ms Debbie Grigson (appointed member of the Parish Pastoral Council) and thanks them for their commitment and expertise over a number of years.

As a cathedral parish, St Patrick's is more than a parish church – it is also the seat of the Bishop of Parramatta. The facilities available to the parish are bigger and more extensive than that of many parish churches and with that comes additional expense. In recognition of this, a shared funding model with financial contributions from the Diocese of Parramatta to the operating costs of the Cathedral parish has operated in various forms since the creation of the Diocese. However, since this arrangement was not reviewed regularly, there were inconsistencies in its application, resulting in a number of problems for both the Diocese and the parish.



ADMINISTRATIVE DEVELOPMENTS

In September 2020, following an independent review of the parish finances, Father Peter Williams (VG, Dean and Administrator of St Patrick's), in consultation with the PFC representing the parishioners of St Patrick's, oversaw an agreement on an equitable model of shared financial responsibility for the ongoing maintenance of the facilities of the Cathedral parish, as well as the support of faith formation opportunities and other activities of the parish community.

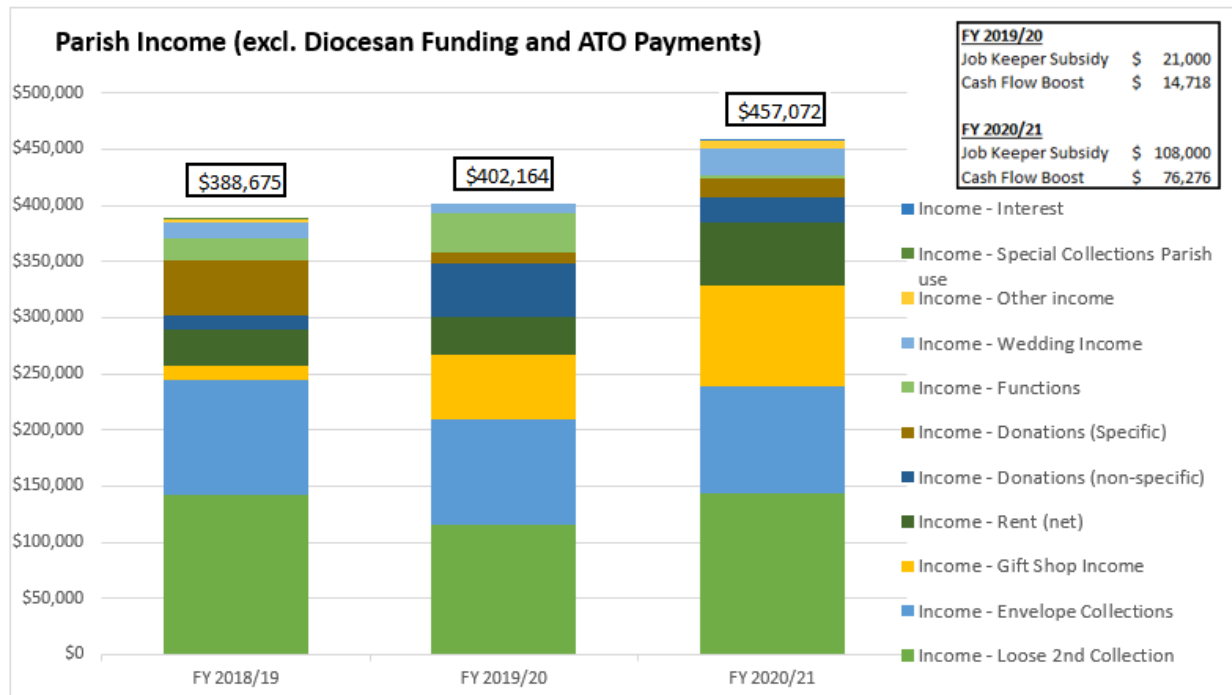
- Father Robert Riedling, as the Dean of the Cathedral, is responsible for the finances of the parish. This is a delegated responsibility of the Bishop.
- Chancery provides the professional financial resources to do the day-to-day financial management involved, in consultation with the Dean and the Cathedral Parish Manager. This involves such things as record keeping and transactions related to cathedral income and expenditure.
- Mr Alfie Ramirez has been appointed as the Financial Administrator of the cathedral.
- Diocesan Grants are to be reviewed annually to reflect the expenses incurred as a cathedral parish.
- The financial overdraft, which involved high interest payments, was converted to a long term, lower interest loan, with the Diocese of Parramatta and the parish sharing the repayment of the loan on an equal basis.

The PFC thanks Fr Peter for his leadership in reaching this agreement which we believe will resolve the concerns of the past.

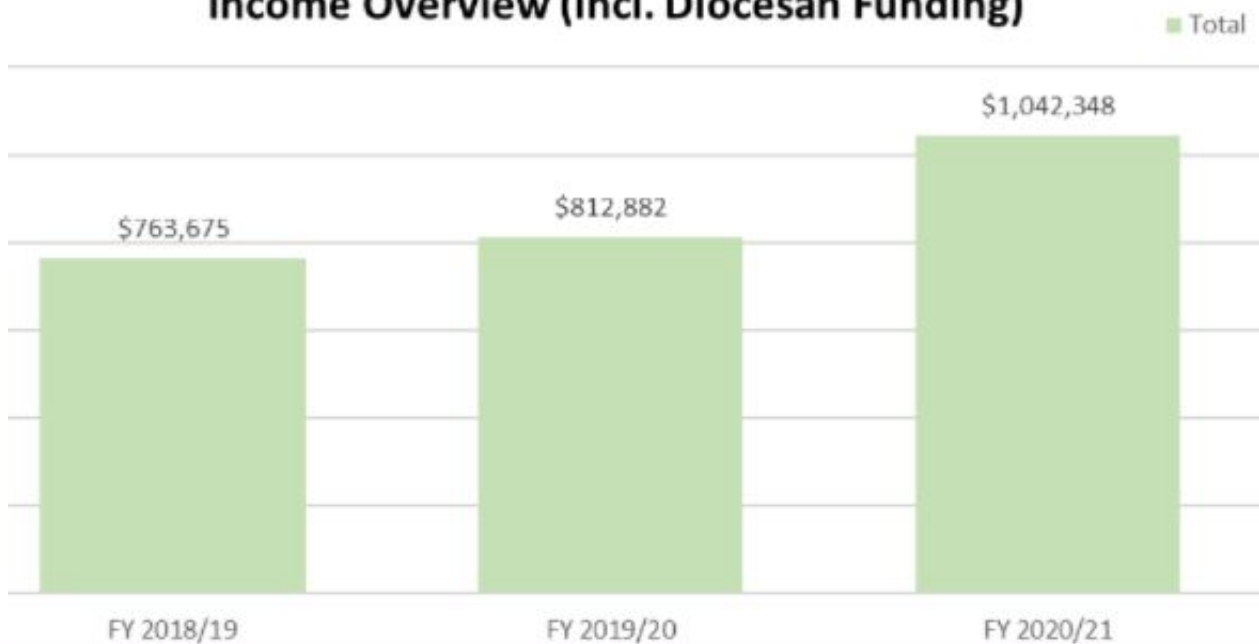


2020/2021 FINANCIAL YEAR

- Parish Income

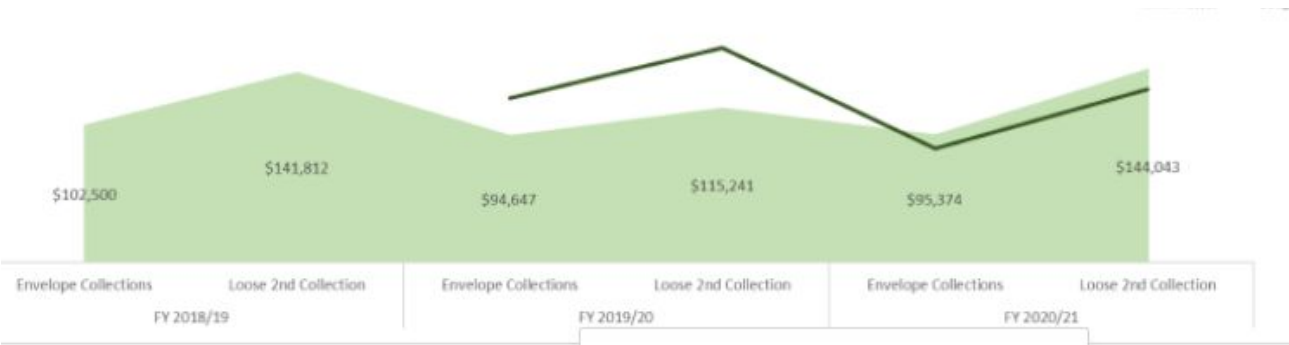


Income Overview (incl. Diocesan Funding)

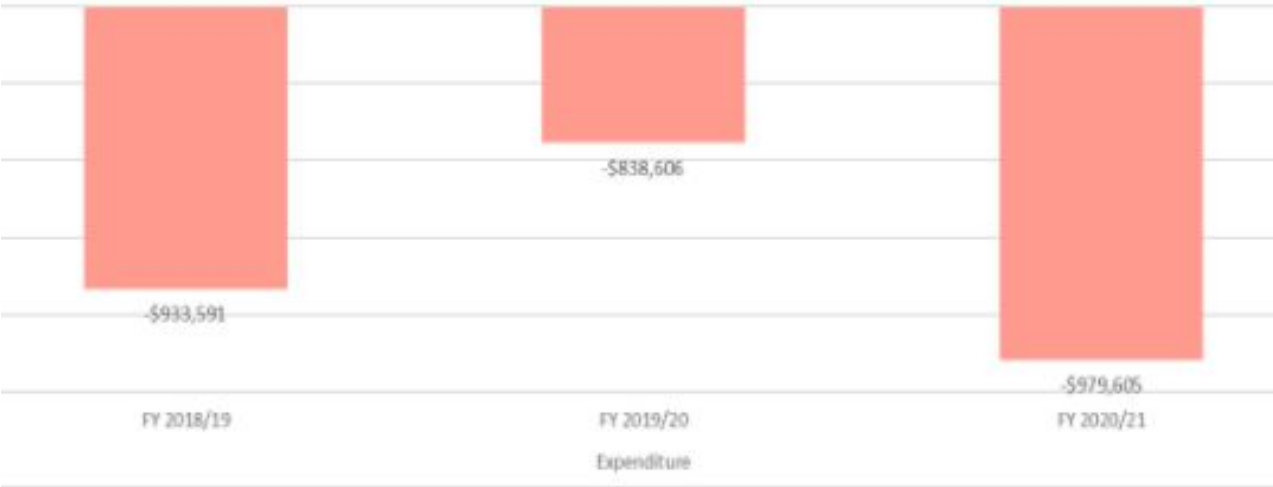


2020/2021 FINANCIAL YEAR

Envelope Collections and Loose Second Collections

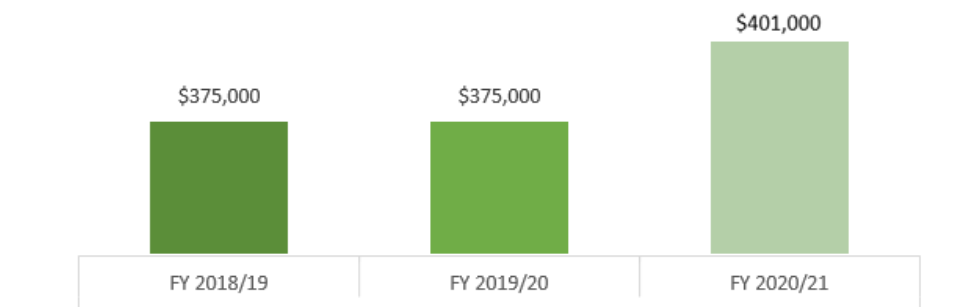


- Parish Expenditure



2020/2021 FINANCIAL YEAR

- Recurrent Diocesan Grant



- Overall Financial Position.



LOOKING AHEAD

The PFC looks forward to the time when pandemic restrictions are lifted and the parish is once again able to meet together for worship and to conduct its various ministries and events face-to-face. It thanks all those who have

continued to contribute financially to the parish, our priests, members of the parish staff and, in particular Mr Alfie Ramirez, for their work in supporting the work of the Finance Committee on behalf of the Parish of St Patrick's, Parramatta.

MEMBERS OF THE PARISH FINANCE COMMITTEE



St Patrick's
Gift Shop

Opening Hours

Monday to Friday: 10:00am - 3:00pm

Sunday: 9:00am - 1:00pm

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or to find us on Facebook:



LITURGY



Since July 2020 liturgy at St. Patrick's Cathedral has maintained its excellent standard despite the pandemic. Credit goes to our generous ministers for their reverence, dedication and flexibility throughout the changing climate of NSW. During this time a few of our ministers have, understandably, moved on from our liturgy team to exercise caution in light of the virus. I recall at one point contacting several of our ministers to assist in more than one Mass on the Sunday. However God in His goodness always provides for His Church, as such this difficult period was a short spell. An advertisement was placed in the bulletin calling for those interested in the ministry of Acolyte/Senior Server or Altar Server which was received well. I can't recall how many inquires I received but it was much more than I expected. So much so that I was forced to have more servers than needed during our Sunday Masses. God is truly good.

With the onset of the pandemic in full force our liturgical practice had to be adjusted. The year 2020 saw the suspension of Communion under both kinds with the faithful to receive only the Body of Christ. This, of course, was a difficult decision as it had been a long standing practice of St. Patrick's Cathedral to distribute Communion under both kinds. Unfortunately our situation worsened which lead to the suspension of the ministry of extraordinary ministers. It was a trying time for the Cathedral as we also grappled with a maximum limit of 100 worshippers per Mass.

Respite was on its way as December 2020 saw an easing of restrictions. This allowed us to celebrate the Nativity of the Lord in full, bells and smells. It was an incredible sight to see as it seemed things had returned to normal. God continued to bless us as we were fortunate to celebrate Lent, Holy Week and Eastertide with continued joy and reverence. This was a stark contrast with Holy Week 2020 where

places of worship were closed and the Cathedral was forced to celebrate a subdued Triduum with the Bishop and two servers. When it seemed things were looking up the NSW Government announced the Greater Sydney lockdown which put a halt to our progress.

As I write this report I can say with confidence that I am proud of the liturgy team and their continued generosity to the liturgical life of the Cathedral. Without their support and willingness to learn, the Cathedral Church of St. Patrick's couldn't maintain its high liturgical standard within the Diocese. To them I tip my hat and say 'Thank you and God bless you'.

Liturgical ministers as of 06 September 2021

Acolytes	14
Altar Servers	35
Extraordinary Ministers	31
Readers	46

FR CHRIS DEL ROSARIO
LITURGY COORDINATOR

Receiving the Eucharist means adoring Him whom we receive. Only in this way do we become one with Him, and are given, as it were, a foretaste of the beauty of the heavenly liturgy.

Pope Benedict XVI



20 LITURGY



CHILDREN'S LITURGY

The year 2021 has been a strange one for all of us. We were so pleased to return to Children's Liturgy in Term 2 and you could tell how much the children had missed the experience as well. They were so eager and happy to be involved and share their experiences. Both the children and leaders had an enhanced value of the experience and this will assist their understanding for the future.

Unfortunately, we completed only one term before the lockdown struck again. We are so looking forward to being involved as soon as we can and enjoying meeting up with the children and sharing their faith journey.

We have been so fortunate to have such a willing and enthusiastic group of leaders who happily share their knowledge and skills with the children. They do an amazing job of explaining the Gospel to the children in a simplified style to help their understanding of this important message each week.

We are also happy to welcome Kaz and Helena to our team this year. We are always looking for interested people to join with us and share the load. It is not hard and it only involves being on a roster for one Sunday per school term. You will be assisted and guided before you begin and can join with a friend or partner or join as an assistant with one of our volunteers.

After co-ordinating the Children's Liturgy group for about 25 years I would like to thank Kirrily Aguilera for kindly taking over this role in the coming months. She will be a great asset for this position as she and Oscar have been valued members of the team for many years.

Let's hope 2022 will see us all back to our normal routine and seeing the happy faces of the children as we meet week to week and share the important gospel messages with them.

MARILYN COOK - COORDINATOR

MUSIC

Since the last AGM report published in 2018, the music ministry at the cathedral has continued to provide ongoing musical service to the St. Patrick's Cathedral community and the liturgy, in spite of a difficult last 18 months, caused by the Coronavirus pandemic.

2019 "IT WAS A VERY GOOD YEAR"

2019 was a relatively normal year with the usual round of musical activities, including Masses and various liturgies, weddings, funerals, and a number of concert performances by regular presenters such as the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra ("Noel, Noel") and the Sydney Philharmonia Society. There were a few special extras during 2019, however, including the Inaugural "Red Mass" with members of the legal fraternity, judges and lawyers, to mark the opening of the Legal Year in February. On May 29, 2019 – the "Month of Mary", a Concert in honour of Our Lady, was presented by St. Patrick's Cathedral Choir members and instrumentalists, co-ordinated by Ivy Wallace. Music featured cathedral singers and friends presenting female vocal group, male vocal group and combined voices, with violins, cello, keyboard and organ. Mothers were given a special blessing by Fr. Chris del Rosario, newly appointed Assistant Priest to the cathedral (and Diocesan Master of Ceremonies) following his ordination in October 2018. Deacon Roderick Pirotta also arrived, and had to undertake the process of coming up to speed on the liturgical chants.

2020 YEAR OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

2020 commenced with the second "Red Mass" in February, and sadly, we farewelled our Organ Scholar and assistant conductor, Tim Coorey, who departed Parramatta to take up a position in London. In March, the choir participated in the Liturgical Reception of the Relics of St. Therese of Lisieux during the national tour around Australia. Soon after, the Diocese of Parramatta hosted the Bi-ennial National Liturgical Conference, at which St. Patrick's Cathedral Choir sang for Vespers and the final Mass, just days before the announcement of the first lockdown due to the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic.





The lockdown presented many challenges for all of us, and severely impacted the operation of the Cathedral. Liturgies were suspended, events cancelled, and it was uncertain as to whether Holy Week and Easter could even proceed. The NSW government did finally allow Easter to proceed in churches, under very stringent restrictions, allowing only a minimum number of liturgical ministers and a very limited number of singers. The usual splendid liturgies attended by large numbers of parishioners were not to be. The Office of Tenebrae and the Chrism Mass were cancelled, and a choir restricted to eight voices, socially distanced, scrambled to put together a limited repertoire for the trimmed down ceremonies of the Sacred Triduum and Easter Sunday. As worshippers were unable to attend in person, the diocese arranged a very hasty installation of video cameras and livestreaming equipment allowing the liturgies in the empty cathedral to be streamed out to parishioners at home. The adjustments were nerve wracking, with everyone having to learn to adapt quickly to the exceptional circumstances.

After Easter, the restrictions stayed in place for several months, with only a choir of eight voices (in rotation from week to week) providing music for liturgies in an empty cathedral. This was surreal and unlike anything I had ever experienced in forty-five years of liturgical music practice. With such a small number of singers per Mass, each chorister was required to be even more prepared than usual. Wednesday evening rehearsals remained cancelled, with only a one hour preparation before the Sunday Solemn Mass. Musicians rose to the challenge and the additional pressures had the unexpected, yet positive effect of sharpening each singer's musicianship and ability to deliver in the challenging circumstances. Eventually, restrictions eased, with limited numbers permitted again in the congregation, just in time for the great Solemnities at the end of the Easter Season, Pentecost and Trinity Sunday. As masked congregations (not permitted to sing) slowly returned, we continued on until Christmas, when suddenly restrictions were back in place as the virus took off again. Christmas was celebrated with a small choir and a string orchestra, kindly organised by Mr. Johanne Pereira.

During the “reprieve” in 2020, we farewelled Fr. Bob Bossini, whose term as Dean had concluded, and Fr. Peter Williams VG, was appointed the interim Dean until the arrival of Fr. Robert Riedling (originally expected around October, but delayed due to travel restrictions preventing his return to Australia until early 2021). We were fortunate enough, however, to celebrate some significant events during these few months.

Highlights included:

- A choir presentation for “Worship Wednesday” Video Streaming (part of a series run by the Diocesan Youth Ministry team) in October, organised and MC’d by chorister Samuel Verceluz.
- First Holy Communion, Confirmations and School Graduations were allowed to proceed, albeit with just organ music, cantor and no congregational singing (a practice not seen since Pre-Vatican II days), and with each liturgy being conducted twice due to restricted numbers of 100 per session.
- Solemn Vespers for the Presentation of Papal and Diocesan Awards on 07 December, the eve of the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. This event included the bestowing of a Papal Knighthood in the Order of St. Sylvester on myself, as Director of Music. (This was a complete and unexpected surprise).
- The Rite of Blessing and Baptism (Chrismation) of the new Bells for St. Patrick’s Cathedral bell tower, which took place on 08 September – Our Lady’s Birthday.

2021 RETURN OF THE CORONAVIRUS PART II – THE DELTA VARIANT

Over the 2020 Christmas/2021 New Year period, restrictions remained in place, coinciding with the usual choir recess. The “Red Mass” took place again but was scaled back to cantor only.

Optimism returned as we approached Holy Week and Easter, and the choir returned, starting up again with eight voices in rotation and gradually building up to twelve. It was pleasing to all that the ceremonies could again be carried out, with more splendour than the previous year. Mid-week rehearsals resumed, and music at the Solemn Mass returned to some normality, with congregations once again allowed singing, although still limited to some degree. Live-streaming of Masses was scaled back to just the 11:00am Mass on Sundays, and continues, having become a regular part of the cathedral’s outreach to viewers online. Music continued at the Vigil Mass, 9.30am, 11.00am and 6.00pm Masses until July. The Cathedral Youth Group “Credo” resumed their regular contribution to the music ministry at the 6.00pm Mass on the 3rd Sunday of each month. Unfortunately, the Tongan Choir, which withdrew from the 4th Sunday 9.00am Mass remained in limbo, not having reconstituted at this time. A few weddings, rescheduled after being cancelled in 2020, were able to take place as were several funerals.

Very few special liturgies took place, but three significant occasions occurred:

- Mass to Commemorate 200 years of Catholic Education in Australia.
- The Ordination to Diaconate of two permanent deacons
- Ecumenical Service of the NSW Ecumenical Council of Churches.

Hope once again turned to disappointment when, in June, the COVID virus returned with the more virulent “Delta” variant and infection case numbers escalated rapidly. We went into lockdown again, except this time, the restrictions placed upon churches (and music) were even more draconian. Choirs were forbidden, congregants locked



out, and our three principal cathedral organists (Vigil, 9.30/11:00am), myself, Eric Grella and Patrick Newman found ourselves locked out of the Parramatta Local Government Area (LGA) and not permitted to cross over. Efforts were made to classify us as "essential" workers, and eventually after a two week suspension of all music, I was granted a permit, as Director of Music, to travel into the cathedral to play the organ for the one and only Sunday Mass. The 11:00am Solemn Mass, previously the cathedral "High" Mass, was stripped back to a minimum of celebrant, deacon, acolyte, thurifer, reader, cantor, organist and livestream operator. Mass was not so "High" anymore, but we were at least grateful that a livestreamed Mass with music was still possible. Music for Cantor and Organ was constrained to standard "congregational" Mass settings, with occasional Gregorian Chant Mass settings and simple two part settings.

At the time of writing this report we are still in lockdown and the format described above continues until such time as restrictions might ease again. Uncertainty about the future for Christmas remains, but God-willing, we may be able to re-constitute some Masses with more liturgical ministers, some choir and congregations, albeit expected once again to be limited in numbers.

The current period does however afford a window of opportunity to make plans for the future. Maintenance and (overdue) repair works on the cathedral organ have been approved and will be scheduled to take place in the near future, without impacting on the daily operation of the cathedral.

The cathedral as a venue for performances of concert music has already started to receive enquiries and potential bookings to resume some wonderful performances, including a return of the "Bach Akademie" around Easter 2022 and the popular Brandenburg "Noel Noel" concert.

We pray that the most difficult period of the COVID pandemic impact will soon be behind us, and that we can look forward to a restoration of the cathedral's liturgical prayer and sacramental life in 2022 for the benefit of all and the greater glory of God... "Ad maiorem Dei gloriam".

BERNARD KIRKPATRICK KSS
DIRECTOR OF MUSIC



SACRAMENTS

SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

Please note that the following will report on our parish's sacramental program covering the period from the last AGM report in August 2019 to the present.

COVID Challenges

The advent of COVID-19, and the ongoing complications in its wake, have presented unique challenges to all aspects of our lives throughout 2020 and 2021. Here at St Patrick's Cathedral our parish life, including the Sacraments of Initiation program, have, by no means, been exempt from the effects of these challenging times. Nevertheless, throughout this time we have endeavoured to continue in ministry. Thankfully, following the initial lockdown of 2020 we were still able to complete First Eucharist and Confirmation and even commence First Reconciliation in Term 4 (and within the regular program timeframe). First Eucharist was also completed this year, 2021, and it was only with the most recent lockdown that, for the first time, we have had to suspend the Sacraments of Initiation program. Although it has been unfortunate that we have not been able to run the 2021 programs for Confirmation and First Reconciliation, nevertheless, we look forward to recommencing the Sacraments of Initiation with renewed dedication in 2022 and once lockdown and restrictions have eased sufficiently, and it is safe to do so.



Statistics (numbers for children who received the sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation):

Confirmation 2019:	32
Reconciliation 2019:	49
First Eucharist 2020:	49
Confirmation 2020:	40
Reconciliation 2020:	49
First Eucharist 2021:	52

Program

The Sacraments of Initiation program, used here in our parish of St Patrick's Parramatta, follows the official program recommended by the diocese. We are closely guided by the team from the Office for Worship (OFW) and utilise the materials which OFW has created specifically for preparation Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation.

Following diocesan policy we, as the Sacraments of Initiation team, "support the home by providing a more systematic catechesis through parish-based, family-centred, school-supported programs of sacramental preparation." (Diocese of Parramatta Policy on Sacraments of Initiation). The preparation for each sacrament consists of at least two parent formation evenings followed by two child/parent afternoon sessions. The important role of the parents and the family in preparing their child for the sacrament is reiterated throughout the formation process and attendance is mandatory for all preparation sessions.

Under normal circumstances, the sacramental program runs on a yearly rotation and is held to coincide with the school terms. The two main phases in the preparation process are as follows:

First Eucharist

Preparation for First Eucharist is held over three terms and starts with preparation for the sacrament of Reconciliation. In Term 4 the children commence their preparation for this sacrament, which is usually held in December before school breaks for the Christmas holidays. This is during the season of Advent and serves as a good way for us to remind the children that this is a time of preparation and repentance as we look forward to welcoming Jesus at Christmas.

After the summer break the program recommences in Term 1 with a segment called 'Reflecting on Baptism' which is crucial to helping the children who are participating in the Sacraments of Initiation program come to understand this sacrament and its place as the very first sacrament by which they became a member of God's family. In Term 2 the focus is on the Eucharist as the children get ready for First Eucharist which is usually held on the feast of Corpus Christi. Seven years of age is the minimum required for enrolment and participation in the Reconciliation and First Eucharist program.

Confirmation

The next phase of the Sacraments of Initiation program commences in Term 3 with preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation. Also referred to as "the sacrament of Christian maturity" (CCC 1308) this final sacrament for the full initiation of children into the faith gives us

all – children, parents and team, alike – a chance to reflect and remember how as Catholics we are called to witness to Christ in every moment of our lives. As per diocesan policy, the minimum age requirement for children completing this sacrament is ten years

Team

Here at St Patrick's Cathedral, we are truly blessed with a team dedicated to bringing quality learning and formation to the children participating in the sacramental program. Our team includes our two priests, Fr Robert and Fr Chris, as well as representatives of our parish community, our parish youth group and St Patrick's Primary School. Most of the team members have a background in education or currently work professionally in this field, so the program is greatly enriched through the many skills and vast experience they bring. The support of Mrs Chantal Tuetue, REC at St Patrick's Primary, is of great importance to the program and the parish works closely with our school to nurture the faith in our young parishioners as they prepare for the sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation.

Formation and Planning

Pre-COVID and lockdown, members of the Sacraments of Initiation team regularly attended the training days and coordinator/team meetings held through the Diocesan Office for Worship. These meetings are important for our ongoing commitment to best practice and to ensure our team continues to offer updated teaching methods as well as the latest resources to the children and their parents participating in the program and we look forward to returning to this important formation when we are finally able to do so.

Thank you

In conclusion, the team would like to thank the parish community for their support throughout these past couple of years and for their ongoing prayers for our ministry and the children participating in Sacraments of Initiation program.

MARGARET GALE

SACRAMENTAL COORDINATOR



RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS (RCIA)

Introduction

In 2020, the Cathedral was closed during the Triduum due to the COVID-19 lockdown. The elect could not receive the Sacraments of Initiation at that time, and we waited for our first liturgical opportunity to gather as a community in the Cathedral. We had five elect that received the three Sacraments of Initiation on Saturday 04 July 2020. They finished their RCIA journey on the Feast of the Assumption, 2020. The elect kept strong in their faith, and they truly went through the death and resurrection of Christ when they were finally baptised, confirmed and received their first Holy Communion.

Making Disciples of Christ

We had another three seekers that we journeyed with after that. We still had some restrictions, but we could meet mostly face to face during the months of their faith journey. They received their Sacraments of Initiation this Easter Vigil 2021 with the Cathedral full of people. Their experience of the community has touched their hearts to follow Christ more closely and more fervently.

We also had several other young adults who received the Sacrament of Confirmation during 2021. They also needed support from the RCIA team. Although baptised and catechised, they came from other parishes to complete their Sacraments of Initiation. The oldest lady to join our Catholic



community was a housebound lady of 92 years of age from the Parish of Quakers Hill. After long years of searching, she found Christ in the Catholic Church. This was an experience that I will treasure all my life. Her enthusiasm, thirst for the truth and sense of living the Mysteries would lift anyone's heart to the Lord.

While I am writing this report, we are back in lockdown, but people are still seeking for a deeper meaning in their life. We have two or three adults in the pre-Catechumenal stage of their journey. These seekers, or enquirers as they are called, look at us, observe how we pray and we invite them to 'come and see'. The best way to do this is in our liturgies. This is quite hard in a lockdown when the churches are closed for worship. All efforts are being made to keep in contact with these enquirers via Zoom meetings, Diocese websites and other electronic means.

Challenges and Opportunities

It is very easy to fall into the temptation of measuring the success of the RCIA by counting the number of adults baptised, how many of them are still attending Mass or committed to ministry in the parish. This is completely the wrong approach for many reasons. Firstly, contrary to what many parishioners think, the RCIA is not a program to become Catholic but a journey of faith to make disciples of Christ. There is an important distinction between a program and a journey. A program is started and finished within a period of months or years. A journey of faith has a beginning, but it will never finish on this earth. It has no end.

The RCIA is a process for the enquirer that is completely driven by the Spirit and the community of faith and not by the RCIA team.

It is a great challenge to convince parishioners that the act of making disciples of Christ is the responsibility of the whole community and not just for the RCIA Team. Currently, the RCIA team comprises three members only. Although we welcome more members to join us at any time, this is not an issue in itself. What we must grasp is that nowhere does the church ask us to run an RCIA program or have an RCIA team. We are called to live a sacramental life — an apostolic life. The entire parish is responsible for living as the apostles did. The entire parish is responsible for welcoming the seekers into their conversations, their homes, and their lives. Seekers will learn to live like apostles by imitating the Christian community.

As Christians, the liturgy teaches us to: make gestures of reconciliation; show concern for the poor; exercise and defend justice and right (cf. Am 5:24; Isa 1:17); admit our faults to one another; fraternally correct one another; examine our conscience; seek spiritual direction; accept suffering; endure persecution for the sake of righteousness; and, take up our cross each day (see Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1436-1437). The job of the RCIA team is mostly to act as matchmaker, coach, and cheerleader. We facilitate the integration of the seeker into the lives of our parishioners, and we inspire and encourage our parishioners to act more "Catholic" around the seekers. The parish is the curriculum for making disciples.

Therefore, in summary, this is our vision of the RCIA journey of faith:

- For parishioners to take interest and responsibility for those who are seeking to join our community. This can be done by approaching the enquirers when introduced to the community, invite them to home, say 'Hello' after Mass, or become a sponsor. We surely need more sponsors.



- Know when the Rite of Acceptance or the Rite of Election are happening in the parish and attend to support the catechumens.
- Pray for the catechumens especially during Lent to strengthen their bond with Christ.
- Strengthen your journey of faith by participating in the Scrutinies during Lent.
- Be a godparent or a sponsor.
- To have a year-round RCIA where any seeker can have the opportunity to 'come and see'. They can be connected and welcomed to any parish group including the youth group, choir, formation and devotional groups. In this way, we are embedding our future candidates in the parish from day one. It is too late to start integrating them into the community after they are baptised.

Conclusion

The first fruits of Easter happen when newly baptised adults join the Body of Christ and enter into the Mystery of the Life and Resurrection of Jesus. Making disciples of Christ is the work of the Spirit but we need to do our part and create the right environment. This responsibility falls to any of the baptised community and not just onto the RCIA team.

DEACON RODERICK
RCIA COORDINATOR

DIANNE & JOHN STARKEY
MEMBERS - RCIA TEAM



SOCIAL JUSTICE

OVERVIEW

St Patrick's Cathedral parish has always been active in promoting the Catholic Social Teaching within the local community and beyond.

While the pandemic has limited our involvement with various groups that the Cathedral used to support, it has also provided a new opportunity to respond to the current pandemic situation in ways that are crucial to keeping our community safe and cared for.

Since July, while places of worship are closed, the Cloister Function rooms have been a vaccination centre for refugees and the homeless of Parramatta. The vaccinations will continue until the end of September.

Prior to lockdown the function rooms have been home to the House Of Welcome, an initiative of the Franciscan Order, to train refugees for work.

The Cathedral grounds have also been a shelter on rainy days to various charity groups to feed, clothe, shower and medically attend to the homeless of Parramatta.

Apart from opening our parish home to the wider community, we are grateful to the Parramatta chapter of the St Vincent de Paul Society for their tireless work in supporting those who knock at our parish door for assistance.

As we prepare to open churches once again, let us pray that our hearts may always be open to the will of God. May we not only go to church but be a church that the Holy Spirit is asking us to be.





ST VINCENT DE PAUL

The St Vincent de Paul team has been active throughout the year delivering a hand up to parishioners and non-parishioners. We have been able to provide substantial material goods, food vouchers and elements of hope for a better future, to needy singles and families not only in the local area but nearby suburbs currently without a Vinnies Conference

The year has been, however, extremely disrupted and difficult at times due to the effects of COVID and the general economic disruption that has resulted. While making life difficult, this disruption has also increased the need for Vinnies support services as the less well off in our community have been disproportionately affected. On the other hand, there have been periods when the extra Government assistance to welfare recipients has for a short time reduced the need for our support.

During the lockdown periods the Harris Park Support Centre and the North Parramatta Vinnies Shop have needed to close their doors, and we do rely on these centres hugely in our day to day delivery. This certainly has been a very real challenge, both for our team and for our clients. However we have at all times been able to deliver a basic service delivery through phone calls and deliveries to clients' letter boxes or safe drop arrangements.

"God does nothing
without some good
purpose."

St Vincent de Paul

What changes have we seen in our client base during the pandemic as we provide goods and services to greater numbers of people affected by this virus?

- People coming from the country to the city looking for work.
- Increasing need as a result of domestic violence.
- More people who have lost jobs or are affected by reduced working hours.
- Families in stress requiring advocacy for bills and payments.

These needs are very often severe and desperate, and they require a range of assistance. We are very conscious of the fact that children are very often the most affected by these family emergencies and through our assistance the home situation for them is greatly improved. We often also provide specific assistance to help these children through their schooling and home life.

Another glaring change as a result of COVID is the fact that Vinnies' revenues are way down. In normal economic times Vinnies' funds come in through the retail stores and donations. Both these sources of revenue have been severely affected during the last year or so. Therefore we would encourage you to consider making a donation through the Vinnies' website if you can in these uncertain times, to support our community assistance programs. Any contribution would be very much appreciated.

GRAHAM COOK
PRESIDENT



CREDO YOUTH



Overview

Credo Youth Ministries is the main organising body of youth groups operating at St Patrick's Cathedral. We have two active youth groups at present: 'Junior Credo' for primary school aged children and 'Teen Credo' for high school aged youth.

The Latin word 'Credo' means, 'I believe'. Credo Ministries aims to create a generation of young people who are ready to proclaim their belief in Jesus and live the words of the Creed. Each group is facilitated by a small team of dedicated young adult volunteers; some who are new to the ministry and some who are familiar with Credo. To embody this new vision and team, Credo ministries has adopted a new crest designed by parishioner Olivia Axiak.

Youth ministry at the Cathedral has looked different for each group this year due to the restart of Credo after a short hiatus and the ever-present pandemic. Despite this, each group has continued to receive faith formation and build community through social events.

As Credo Youth Ministries enters its ninth year, it is heartening to see how the youth of the Cathedral have continued to serve and receive. Though I have only been in this position since February, I can say with complete confidence that the young people of our parish are truly the Church of today and tomorrow.

JUNIOR CREDO

Junior Credo, for primary school aged students, meet fortnightly on Fridays during the school term. This group has been led by young adult volunteers Melissa and Rachel. In February we relaunched this group and welcomed ten eager and excited primary school aged children to what would be the first of many sessions. Each child came willingly and ready to engage and learn more about their faith, accompanied by parents who have diligently committed to bringing them to each fortnight's session.

Over the course of terms one and two we saw our small ten-person group grow bigger each week. The group over this time have not only learnt to fall deeper in love with Christ through Adoration each session, but to also love and serve each other to create community. Each session we delve into topics of building the Church, virtues and being the light of Christ in our lives.

Due to the current COVID situation, we were unable to run this group for Term Three but are looking forward to regrouping in Term Four.

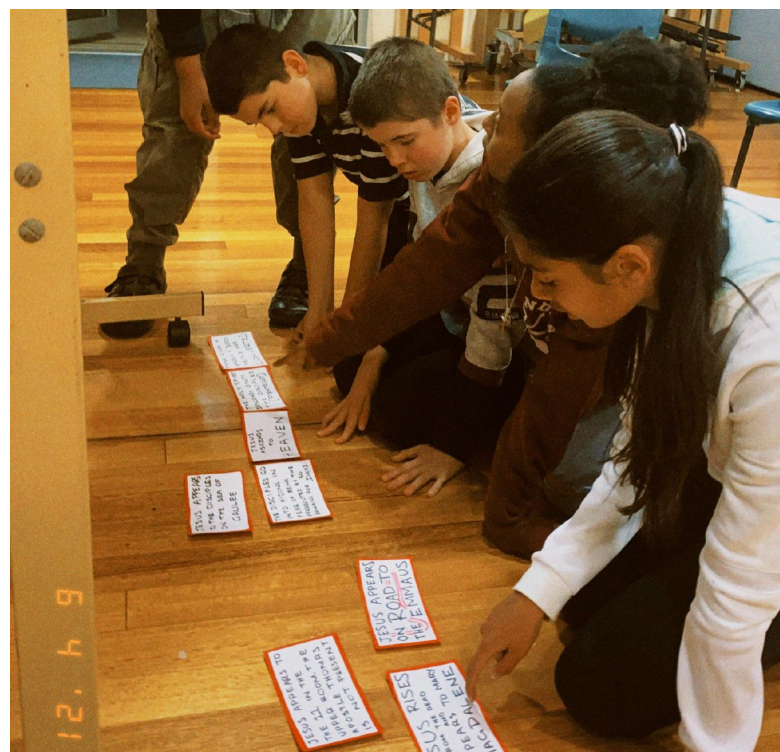


TEEN CREDO

Teen Credo, for high school students, meets every fortnight on Friday during the school term. Lead by young adult volunteers Jerick and Shefin, the program for this group revolves around understanding identity in Christ, addressing social issues of today, and theological formation.

Over the past seven months, this group has begun to form new friendships and connections through regular faith and social sessions. Much like our Junior group, each session begins with Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament before moving into a session directed by our leaders.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, the Credo team moved the group's meetings online, via Zoom, for the duration of Term Three. Though not the same, these sessions have proved to be beneficial in continuing to strengthen the Teen Credo community.





COMMUNITY

The Credo Community has become an essential part of the success of the ministry. Our community is made up of 16 different families in the parish across the two groups. To nurture this community the team have planned "Credo Community Day" as an opportunity for the families to come together outside of a youth setting. These days take place at the end of each term. Our first community day at the end of Term One was well attended, however we were unable to continue this into the Term Two and Three holidays due to restrictions.

CREDO LEADERS

The launch of a new era of Credo comes with a new team.

- Melissa Fardella – Melissa has led Junior Credo for that past three years and is a primary school teacher who is passionate about youth and ensuring they find their worth in Christ.
- Rachel Touche – A past member of Teen Credo, Rachel now moves into coordinating Junior Credo with Melissa. Rachel is currently studying a Bachelor of Primary School Education.
- Jerick Perez – An engineering graduate, Jerick has been an active member of the parish and now steps into leading our Teen Credo group.
- Shefin Shaji – Shefin is new to Credo Ministries, and is bursting with new ideas on how to engage the young people of our parish.

GENEVIEVE LEE
YOUTH COORDINATOR

FORMATION

SPECIAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SRE)

We returned to our classes this year with a very positive outlook that the interruption to learning that COVID-19 caused last year was well behind us, Little did we know! Our classes have been suspended again as we undergo another lockdown. Please pray for our students and their families during this difficult time.

We are Special Religious Educators (SREs), often referred to as Catechists and more fondly by our students as their "Scripture Teachers" and we go into the State Schools to bring the 'Good News of Jesus' to the Catholic children there. Currently we visit approximately 243 children in five primary schools: Bayanami, North Parramatta, Oatlands, Parramatta and Parramatta East and 91 girls at Macarthur Girls High School.

There are 22 Catechists taking these classes with another who fills in when necessary.

During the past year we have had two successful Recruitment Drives which resulted in eight new Catechists. In the same time six SREs have left the ministry. While they are waiting for the classes to resume our new recruits are undertaking their initial training.

Training for our new recruits and also for all SREs to update their qualifications has moved to Zoom and Online Learning. Important modules for all SREs to complete are Curriculum, Safeguarding and Classroom Management.



Thank you to Fr Peter Williams, Father Robert Riedling and Father Chris del Rosario who have guided us during the last twelve months. As well, the assistance and time given by the staff in the Cathedral Office are greatly appreciated.

Thank you to Cecilia Zammit, our Confraternity of Christian Doctrine Director, and Fiona Clarke, our Regional Co-Ordinator for all their ongoing support and encouragement.

Also, thank you to Marian Polizzi, the Editor of St Pat's Matters for her informative articles about SRE and our personnel. And 'Thank You' to all our Catechists who give so freely and generously of their time.

For more details about this Ministry, how it works and how you could become involved, please contact the Parish Office.

PAMELA BAIN
SRE COORDINATOR



LIVE CHRIST, SHARE CHRIST

We thank the Lord for St Patrick's Cathedral parish for its continued support of the Live Christ, Share Christ (LCSC) movement, which is now in its sixth year of providing regular monthly formation teachings.

By the grace of God, despite the lockdown restrictions of the pandemic, our formation sessions last year continued their regular monthly schedule. We were able to utilise live streaming via St Pat's Facebook and gained a broader audience. We started using this technology at Fr. John Rizzo's presentation in April last year on the topic "Overcoming the Works of the Evil Spirit". The following May, we had our successful first online Pentecost Retreat that concluded with the 6:00pm online Vigil Mass. This trend continued with the following formation sessions: June session by Fr. Chris del Rosario on "Repairing Wrongdoing" (a memorable session because it was the last time Fr. Bob Bossini attended our sessions since 2016); July session by Mili Lee on "The Christian and Money"; August session by George Manassa on "Headship and Submission"; September session by Annette Hartmann on "Faithfulness and Order"; and October session by John Missio on "Unity in Christ". We then ended in November and December with a beautiful series of Lectio Divina sessions as part of the Advent program.

In February this year, as part of our Lenten Reflection sessions, we started six weeks of Lectio Divina sessions, conducted by Fr. Chris





and Fr. Chadi. This year, the formation sessions have been a collaboration between St Patrick's Cathedral, Live Christ, Share Christ and The Catholic Toolbox. Our central theme will be to explore the Fruits of the Holy Spirit. The first formation session started last April, and Deacon Rod Pirotta presented "Charity and Joy". This May, we also had our annual Pentecost Retreat conducted by Fr. Chris and Annette Hartman. Fr. Chadi presented on "Peace and Patience" in June. In July, our new Dean and Administrator, Fr. Robert Riedling, presented the topic on "Kindness and Goodness".

In the coming months, we will continue the formation session exploring the Fruits of the Holy Spirit. We will end this year with a series of Advent Lectio Divina Reflection sessions.

Our vision for next year, as always, is to continue our monthly formation teachings with new inspiring topics to deepen the faith, nurture parishioners and spread the good news to others and other Parishes.

God bless.

MICHAEL AND MARIETTA GUILLEMA
COORDINATORS



NOVENA TO MARY FULL OF GRACE

43



The "Novena" is a monthly prayer group dedicated to praying the Scriptural Rosary and gathers, usually, on the last Tuesday of the month. We begin the year in January and end in November and, as much as possible, we follow the Liturgical Year by observing the special feast days in the Liturgical Calendar.

Sadly, like many other activities in the parish, the Novena has been severely affected by the impact of the lockdowns and restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020 we managed to gather together on four occasions, if memory serves, at the beginning of the year in January, February and March and then in November, when it appeared that the "situation" was under control and the virus had all but disappeared. In 2021 we began on a positive note and managed to gather in prayer from January to

May before the new Delta variant of the virus reared its ugly head and stopped everything in its tracks, causing much more damage in human terms than the original strain. Though this has stopped us from gathering together, communication in the form of "spiritual nourishment" is being forwarded to the regular attendees in order to keep in touch and make sure everyone is keeping well and the virus is held at bay.

This communication takes the form of prayers that reflect a particular feast day; prayers for various needs and intentions; spiritual readings and ideas for lockdown prayer activities initiated in neighbouring parishes; writings and extracts of Catholic documents about our faith and the history of our faith. From 06-14 August 2021, we embarked on a nine-day "Novena" within the confines of our homes, to prepare for and observe the great feast of the Blessed Mary Assumed into Heaven on 15 August. In this way it is hoped that we keep our minds and hearts focused in the one thing that keeps us safe: the knowledge that our Lord and God walks each day with each and every one of us, shares our joys and our triumphs as well as our trials and tribulations, and our Blessed Mother Mary joins her prayers to ours, to comfort and console us. No matter what life and this virus will throw at us, we will place ourselves under God's protection and our Blessed Mother's loving and constant intercession:

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

**SILVANA RECHICHI
COORDINATOR**

HOSPITALITY

Great occasions for serving God come seldom. Little ones surround us daily.

This has been the Hospitality Group's motto since members began serving morning tea to parishioners and visitors on Sunday mornings from its formation in 1995, before the disastrous 1996 fire in the old Cathedral.

For the benefit of parishioners who have only recently joined the community, we revisit the brief history of our Ministry Outreach's venues mentioned in the 2019 Annual Report:

Over that time [26 years], our venues have included the old parish hall (pre-fire), the Grotto Café operating out of the old Marist School block during the Pro-Cathedral "era", then offsite at St Pat's in the Field in the grounds of Cumberland Hospital, Fleet Street, Parramatta, during the rebuilding of our spiritual home and finally the return, in November 2003, to the new Cathedral and a brand new hall with much-appreciated modern facilities. (A fuller history of the café's travels were published in the 2018 Annual Report).

ABOUT US

The team currently comprises 36 members. The breakdown of current personnel, is as follows:

29 women and seven men, which includes three married couples and one mother and daughter

Worthy of note: most of the members have been long-time volunteers committed to this important ministry outreach. As the coordinator, I am truly grateful for their dedication.



Needless to say the pandemic's presence has greatly impacted upon St Pat's Parish life — both on the worship front and in areas of ministry. For the Hospitality Group it has been a roller coaster affair. In normal times morning tea is served in the Cloister Café on most Sundays after 9:30am and 11:00am Sunday Masses. (except when special functions necessitated it being cancelled e.g. First Holy Communion).

So, though Masses were still operating with restrictions to numbers allowed into the Cathedral, the Cloister Café remained closed because the small number of people allowed into the hall made operation unfeasible. So regrettably, hospitality was "shut down".

Then when restrictions eased, the Café was given the go ahead to open, but with strict protocols in place:

- people had to sanitize upon entry;
- those on duty wore gloves to serve the beverages as well as serving out the refreshments; and
- once served, people were encouraged to move out into the Cloister to maintain social distancing.

The situation was less than ideal, but it was better than no gathering at all.

Despite the upheaval brought about by COVID-19 restrictions, there were, thankfully a few occasions on which hospitality was allowed to be joyfully served.

- After the Easter Vigil — organising the Celebratory Supper in the Cloister Function Room. This was the opportunity for parishioners to congratulate and welcome to St Pat's community the three Neophytes initiated into the Catholic Church.
- Members volunteered to set up and serve at the special morning Tea for the Diocesan Pastoral Council, following their commissioning by Bishop Vincent at 11:00am Mass on 23 May 2021.
- On 20 June, The Biggest Morning Tea, St Pat's Style, was held to raise funds for cancer sufferers. Hospitality members were happy to be involved in this initiative instigated by parishioner Freeda Sawant. It was a great success with attendees generously donating in excess of \$1,300.00 on the day alone. How blessed were we, on the day alone. How blessed we were, the event escaping the government's mandatory mask wearing indoors, and then the next weekend the closing of the cathedral as Greater Sydney went into lockdown.

Looking Forward

- This report is likely to be published in September 2021. The initial lockdown of two weeks in late June is now expected to continue until at least the end of October.
- When we return to the "new normal", our first endeavour will be to organize a special Welcome Back Morning Tea for the parish community.
- Fr Chadi Ibrahim will be invited back for his "Farewell Morning Tea" that was initially planned for Sunday, 08 August, 2021.
- Hopefully we will be able to resume three-monthly duty rosters for members.
- Recruit new members by approaching people personally during Morning Tea as well as advertising in the Sunday Bulletin.
- Render assistance at parish functions.
- An important outreach is the greeting of the worshipping community who are part of the Body of Christ. We will support Fr Riedling in his mission to encourage parishioners to volunteer to be Welcomers before Sunday Masses — by personal invitation and through recruitment notices in the bulletin.

In tandem with our team's motto, we endeavour to uphold the advice St Mary of the Cross gave to her sisters:

"Bloom where you're planted."

MARIAN POLIZZI
COORDINATOR

ST PAT'S MATTERS MAGAZINE

The magazine is now in its twenty-fourth year of publication. Since the 2019 Annual Report, Issues 100-107 have been published.

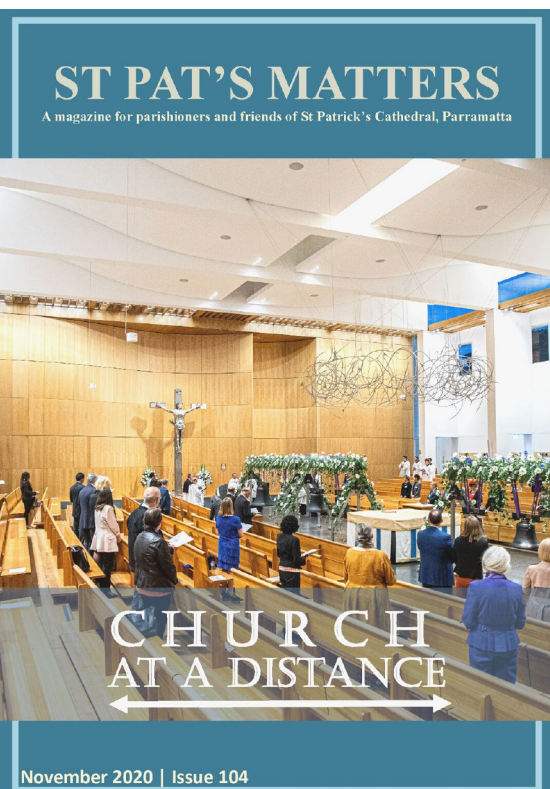
The purpose of St Pat's Matters

- to build a sense of our identity as a parish community;
- to report on the various liturgical, sacramental and social events that take place at the Cathedral; e.g the Sacramental Programme, RCIA, Easter Vigil, St Patrick's Day;
- to encourage parishioners to write about their involvement in ministry —as Acolytes, Altar Servers, Readers, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, Choristers, Special Religious Educators, Leaders in Children's Liturgy, Hospitality, Visitation to the Sick;
- to highlight the good works of individuals in and beyond the Cathedral parish, and of parish groups such as Live Christ Share Christ, Credo Youth, Legion of Mary; and
- to revisit St Patrick's long parish history —priests, people and events — and record present-day happenings.

Sourcing Content

Notices are published in the Sunday Bulletin with requests for submissions, but the most effective method of garnering articles has proven to be directly approaching people to share their stories. Even looking back now to any of the earlier issues shows how parish life has developed and changed. May those of future generations in perusing issues of St Pat's Matters in the parish archives gain an appreciation of our era and how we strived to live as true disciples of Jesus.

MARIAN POLIZZI
COORDINATOR







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