

ST PAT'S MATTERS

A magazine for parishioners and friends of St Patrick's Cathedral, Parramatta

Hope of the World



December 2021 | Issue 109

Editorial

This issue is bookended with Christmas stories beginning with Father Robert's and ending with Judith Dunn's memories of family Christmases. Wonderful sharing. To be sure Judith's foray into the history of Christmas fare in early times is quite an eye-opener and perhaps far from tempting the taste buds. Then the article about *The Twelve Days of Christmas* is intended to educate you in Faith Matters.

Sandwiched in between is a wealth of parish matters: Deacon Rod bids us au revoir and touches on the subject of *Gospel-centred care of the Dying*. Silvana Rechichi and Bob Edgar write about attending Mass at St Patrick's Cemetery on All Souls Day.

Meet Macnos Mutano who shares his story of being confirmed as an adult; while another parishioner takes us on her lockdown journey to *Karabi* leading her to further pursue social justice issues.

Catch up with Emeritus Bishop Kevin Manning via Annette Hartman. She notes some highlights of his time as Bishop of Parramatta and alerts us to his diamond jubilee —60 years as a priest! In tandem you can read about Australia's Convict Priests — Fr James Dixon in particular — via an article sent in by Vince Murtagh.

Mary Wehbe, Pamela Bain and Mili Lee reflect on their long tenure as Special Religious Educators and recently received awards for 25 and 20 years in the ministry.

In the feature on Children's Liturgy Marilyn Cook writes about her time as coordinator; Kiriilly Aguilera takes up that role; Claire Pospischil writes about her involvement; beginners Kareme and Helena give their reasons for volunteering; and we also meet the other team members.

Find out who features in *Getting to know parishioners matters* and what edifice has just celebrated its 18th anniversary.

The few features not mentioned, I leave you to discover for yourselves.

Remember: JESUS IS THE REASON FOR THE SEASON.

M Polizzi



Although the Season of Advent is in its final days, it is still worth looking at the history of the Advent Wreath. It has its origins in the pagan rituals of the peoples of Northern Europe hundreds of years ago.

In the middle of the dark, cold days of winter, these pre-Christian people gathered to celebrate the winter Solstice, from December 21st to 23rd. The main focus of their ritual was a wheel, on which they would arrange evergreen branches and lighted candles. With

this symbol they created a circle of light in the midst of their darkest days. They prayed/ yearned for the signs of change of season which was about to 'turn' as the sun began to come 'round' again.

With the coming of Christianity, this mid-winter candle wheel was gradually adopted as the Advent Wreath, and the candles were lit, not to anticipate the return of the sun, but rather the coming of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, the Light of the World.

Australian tradition creates the wreath around a circular base, symbolizing the never-ending cycle of the seasons and our place in eternal time. The base, covered with evergreen leaves creates a link with the evergreen Christmas tree it will supplant. The green symbolises God's everlasting love and new life which Jesus won for us, and the hope to which we are called as God's People.

Four coloured candles are placed on the wreath and are lit in sequence during Advent. The four candles symbolize Jesus as the light of the world and as we watch them burn down each week, we are reminded to continue to wait in hope and prepare for the coming of the Lord.

The first purple candle to be lit is the **Prophets' Candle**, which reminds us of the Old Testament Prophecies about the coming of the Messiah. This candle also reminds us that Jesus, the Prophetic Word made flesh, is the fulfilment of the Old Testament.

The second purple candle, the **Bethlehem Candle**, reminds us of the journey of Mary and Joseph to the birthplace of the Messiah.

The third (rose) candle symbolizes joy reminding us that God loved us so much that He sent His Son to us. It's the **Shepherds' Candle**; the shepherds being the first people to worship the newborn Jesus. The candle is also symbolic of our growing joy and excitement as the birth of Jesus draws near.

Finally, the last purple candle to be lit is the **Angels' Candle**, reminding us that the Angels were the heralds of the birth of Christ, the Emmanuel (God is with us).

Here at St Pat's a white candle is placed in the middle of the Advent Wreath to represent Christ and is lit on Christmas Eve. Another tradition has a white flower in the centre of the wreath with buds ready to burst forth. This reminds us that with the coming of the Promised One, life will change and be made new — from the prophet Isaiah 35:1-6: 'Let the wilderness and the dry lands exult, let the wastelands rejoice and bloom.....'

The candles also have special significance: the four candles represent the four weeks of Advent, Three of the candles are purple because the colour violet is a liturgical color that signifies a time of prayer, penance, and sacrifice.

The progressive lighting of the candles symbolises the expectation and hope surrounding Our Lord's first coming into the world and the anticipation of His second coming to judge the living and the dead.

Hopefully, we have all used the time of Advent wisely, that nothing may hinder us from receiving Christ with joy.



Our Dean, Fr Robert Riedling volunteered to contribute an article for this issue of St Pat's Matter's.

I wanted to give him 'carte blanche', but he insisted on having a topic!

The suggestion that he write about celebration of Christmas in our secular society resulted in this story.

Memories of a secular Christmas.

As many of you know, I came into the Catholic Church relatively late in life, being baptised, confirmed and receiving First Eucharist not long before my twenty-ninth birthday, in 1997. I had not been baptised as a baby or child, but I grew up in a loving and supportive family. I had never set foot in a church for the purposes of worship until I was in my early twenties. This meant, of course, that as far as Christmases during my childhood were concerned, going to Mass or doing anything explicitly religious, was non-existent. I expect that my experiences in this regard are not too different from many other families.

So, what did my Christmases as a child entail, if religion was absent?

My memories as a child are of a tinsel Christmas tree which went up in the lounge room every December. I used to enjoy putting on the decorations, many of which my parents had brought over from England when they emigrated in 1964. These decorations were principally stars and snowflakes and little figures of Santa Claus, but also some angels, so there was at least a minimal connection with the divine! Christmas cards, both local and from the UK, hung across the living room wall on string. My Mum always made a phone call to her parents on Christmas Day, sometimes having to make several attempts because so many people were doing the same thing, and using an egg timer to restrict the call to three minutes because of the expense of calling internationally in the 1970s.

My other memory is of the excitement of waking up on Christmas Day and opening up presents. We were by no means a wealthy family but there were always gifts to be opened up, tearing off the wrapping paper in anticipation of what lay beneath. The remainder of the day was spent playing with the various toys I received, invariably more than I needed or deserved.

My parents, being from the cooler climes of the United Kingdom, still carried on the tradition of a hot Christmas dinner in the middle of the day, regardless of the temperature. Hot roast meats and vegetables along with the traditional Christmas pudding boiled in a cloth with custard and so on was the norm. With only a fan to cool us until we could afford air conditioning in the mid-1980s, it made for a sweltering, but still tasty, experience!

Being only four of us together on Christmas Day, my parents, brother and I have met together for Christmas lunch at a hotel over the past twenty years or so. Though expensive, it means that as my parents have aged they have not had to go to undue efforts to produce a Christmas feast for just the small number that we are. These are just a few of the memories that remain with me from forty to fifty years ago.

Each year, we as a Christian people might lament what appears to be the growing secularisation and commercialisation of Christmas, wondering what is going on in people's minds and hearts as we see them rushing around the shopping centres throughout December or moving from one party to another with barely time to catch their breath. Of course, we hope that something of the Gospel message of this season will resonate with people at this time, but let us not be judgemental of the families we see rushing around at this time of year, seemingly oblivious to the Good News of the birth of Jesus...

...you might just be passing judgment on a family which, unknowingly, is raising a future priest!



Here's a future priest at about three years of age!

Unfortunately, Fr Robert couldn't provide any photos of the whole family at Christmas, but is sure his Mum and Dad have plenty in photo albums at home.

He only has this digitized one on his computer, but even though he has a toy, can't ascertain if it was taken at Christmas!

Father revealed to me, 'The bear's name was Barney. He has long since gone to God...'



A fond Christmas memory of Father's: ".....there were always gifts to be opened up, tearing off the wrapping paper in anticipation of what lay beneath."



We bid Fond Farewell to Deacon Roderick

Deacon Pirotta's last official liturgical duty at the Cathedral was assisting at 11am Mass on Sunday 14th November.

Afterwards, parishioners gathered in the Cloister Function Room to say goodbye, express their gratitude for his ministry at St Pat's, and to wish him God's blessing as he takes up his new role as the Pastoral Director at Sacred Heart Parish, Mt Druitt South.

We will remember his well prepared preaching delivered at Mass and the many insightful reflections in the bulletin. He leaves us with the moving reflection, "PLACE ME WITH YOUR SON"



In 1537, Ignatius of Loyola was journeying to Rome with his companions in order that they might offer themselves to the Pope for his missioning. At a shrine at La Storta, a few kilometres North-West of Rome, Ignatius received an extraordinary response to his novena-like prayer to Mary, "Place me with your Son". Ignatius, in describing his experience, said that he experienced such a change in his soul and saw so clearly that God the Father placed him with Christ His Son that he would not dare doubt it — that God the Father had placed him with His Son.

In the "seeing", Jesus was carrying his cross. The Father addresses Ignatius and says, "I shall be favourable to you at Rome." Then the Father turns to Jesus who is carrying His cross and makes this request: "I want you to take this man to serve us." Jesus, with His cross in hand, looks at Ignatius and says, "We want you to serve us." The vision is an obvious answer to Ignatius's prayer to Mary. He is confirmed in his being placed with Jesus in action carrying his cross. This vision becomes an icon of Ignatian spirituality. The vision is about Ignatian service. **TO BE PLACED WITH THE SON** means **TO SERVE**. Hence, my prayer on my bookmark to commemorate my ordination on the 22nd February 2019. [bookmark at right]

I never had any visions like St Ignatius, but the desire to serve as a deacon is something that I feel strongly in my prayers. When Bishop Vincent asked me to serve at South Mount Druitt, my first reaction was, "Why me?". I felt the heaviness of the cross on my shoulder, but I could not say "No" to the bishop if I truly believe that God speaks through the one that is the successor of the Apostles. Since I always regularly pray to Mary to be placed with her Son, then my prayers have been heard! I must carry the cross also, not grudgingly, but with the same will as that of Mary who accepted to be "the handmaid of the Lord". They say be careful what you pray for. The words of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, "Thy will be done, not mine", has now a new whole meaning for me. A few days ago, I retired from nursing, thinking of having a relaxed life. It did not last long. This is what it takes sometimes to serve — to be a disciple of Christ.

I am saying all this with great humility to demonstrate that unless the talk becomes action, then the Gospel is not truly our way of living. Many of you asked me, "Why are you leaving us?". With some humour I answered, "Ask the Bishop!". The answer is more profound than anyone might think, since to do God's will, we need to listen to the ones God sends around us, and to those who really love us. Some of you told me that there is no better person to be appointed as the Pastoral Director of a Parish and others said, "our loss is their gain!". These words were of great consolation in the midst of the uncertainty, fear and anxiety I was

going through during my discernment process.

The support of you St Pat's parishioners has been amazing. Your words of encouragement have been soothing to my soul. We have experienced highs and some lows together during my two and a half years ministering in the Cathedral. I will remember fondly the visit we had of the relics of Therese of Lisieux and of her parents. The historic blessings of the bells of the Cathedral – a once in a lifetime experience. Perhaps, (I stand to be corrected), I can claim that I am the first Deacon to sing and proclaim the Exultet at the Easter Vigil 2021. The Tridium Liturgy is always a highlight, but nothing compares to being part of it and assisting as a Deacon in the Cathedral. The formal reception of the 'Elect' who journeyed in the Rite of Christian Initiation (RCIA) process is one that each year brought lots of grace and joy to me and all parishioners.

You have taught me much and you have become part of my life. For this, I say, "Thank you". How much I wish there are more words to show my gratitude to you and to God! God has formed me and moulded me to be a better person during my stay at the Cathedral. The work in the 'field hospital' is plentiful and the need to move has arrived. My only hope is that I brought you, in some way, closer to God with my example, words and love. Please pray for your priests and deacons.

Au revoir!
God Bless you all.

Deacon Roderick



After 11am Mass parishioners gathered in the Cloister Function Room for the Annual General Meeting. Deacon Rod's farewell luncheon was to follow. The tables are ready to be laden with goodies; the farewell cake is ready for cutting.

Gospel-centred care of the Dying matters

Deacon Rod penned the article below while still nursing. In it, he states:

"The role of a Christian carer is to accompany their loved one and acknowledge that they still belong in the domestic and parish Church, until their last breath on this earth."



Some final moments snapped: Cake-cutting with Fr Robert; receiving the parish's gift from Kerry Giumelli; food ready for the serving tables; relinquishing of keys and swipe car park card to Mili Lee Office Manager.



On Monday 13th September 2021, Deacon Michael Tan (a retired General Practitioner) and I (a nurse specialist in Dementia) presented a Christian approach to caring for the dying on Zoom, in conjunction with the Mission Enhancement Team (MET) of the Diocese of Parramatta.

This was a follow-up reflection on the subject of 'assisted dying' for anyone interested or who had had some experience in caring for the dying.

Our goal was to put forward a positive alternative on the euthanasia debate. As Catholics, we have much more to offer than just opposing a legislation which, whether we like it or not, will affect us and our families, if it passes through the NSW Legislative Assembly.

Deacon Tan emphasized that the core of Gospel-centred care of the dying is based on a journey from birth to death to eternal life. The Gospel is our road map of how to be at peace, living in hope, and looking forward to joining the Communion of Saints after death. Deacon Tan reflected on the journey of the Disciples of Emmaus as a model of our life's journey and beyond when we will meet Christ face to face.

The disciples' journey "has sacramental, pastoral and professional dimensions", Deacon Michael said. The Risen Christ joins the disciples on the road to Emmaus as a stranger. He is a good listener! The disciples are grief-struck by what has happened in Jerusalem, but they are filled with joy when Jesus disappears from them at the breaking of bread.

Our pastoral vocation (calling) to care for others arises from our Baptism since we become images of God and enter God's family. "Whatever you do to one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it to me" (Mt. 25:40). Sacraments continue the healing and real presence of Jesus through the ministry of the bishop, priest, or deacon. To be professional, it means to be ethical and accountable in our relationship with the other person. This is the 'why' and 'how' we truly become the Body of Christ!

With more than half a million Australians

living with dementia, these people are one of the most vulnerable group to be affected by 'assisted dying'. I asked the question: "Does loss of memory strip a person from being a person?" It seems that many people think so, because by this legislation, people with dementia will most likely be the first to be 'killed' without their choice, consent, or awareness. However, as Christians we know that Jesus does not judge our worth on our intelligence, memory, or brain structure.

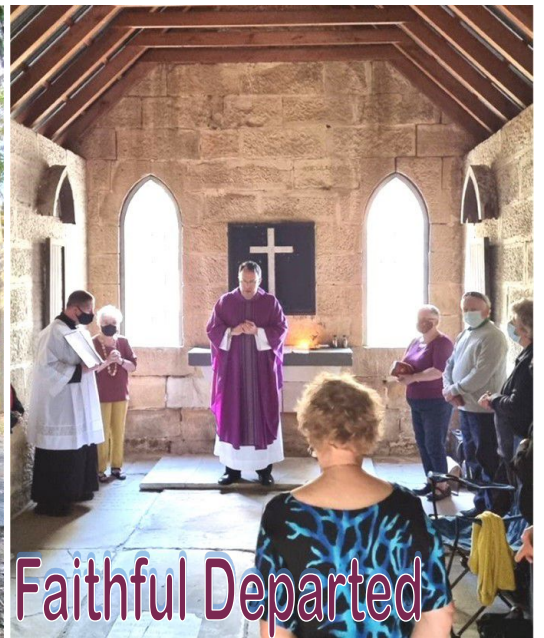
The role of a Christian carer is to accompany their loved one and acknowledge that they still belong in the domestic and parish Church until their last breath on this earth. I argued that our stories and the stories that are told about us constitute who we are. Our memories live on, in the community and in the stories we tell. The biggest tragedy is not that most people with dementia lose their memories, but that their memories are not told by us or are cut short by ending their life prematurely.

The Woman by the Well (Jn 4:39) feels loved by Jesus because He accompanies her in the messiness of her story and made her feel that she 'belongs', even though she is an outcast. She becomes a sacrament of Jesus' message in her town because Jesus knew her story.

Caring is about giving people back their story. It is a matter of heart and compassion (being with those who are suffering). In essence, it is the heart of Jesus who gave everything until the end, for love.

Our faith is based on telling the story of Jesus' salvation for us. It is the story of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus retold from generation to generation and brought to us in the present day by the Sacraments.

For those who do not believe in Christ's salvific actions, "assisted dying" is the anaesthetic and solution for stopping suffering and pain. As followers and disciples of Christ we know that there is no compassion without many tears. We know that God becomes most present when we are the most human and that the seeds of death are at work in us, **but love is always stronger than death.**



Commemoration of the Faithful Departed

It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins. (2 Maccabees 12:46)
 Long-time parishioners, Silvana Rechichi and Bob Edgar, reflect on Mass at St Patrick's Cemetery on All Souls Day.

“The whole Church observes this practice which was handed down by the Fathers – that it prays for those who have died in the communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, when they are commemorated in their own place in the sacrifice itself and the sacrifice is offered, also in memory of them, on their behalf.”
 (St Augustine (354-430) Father & Doctor of the Church)

November is the month when we remember our loved ones who are no longer with us. The way we Catholics, remember and mark the 2nd of November, is by celebrating the Eucharist in our churches and/or in a cemetery. For the community of St Patrick's Cathedral, this year was no different and Mass was celebrated on **All Souls Day** in the Mortuary Chapel of St. Francis of Assisi within the historic St Patrick's Cemetery, the oldest Catholic Cemetery in Australia, located in North Parramatta.

Since the time of Fr. John Boyle, during his time as Dean of the Cathedral, a memorial mass has been celebrated at St Patrick's Cemetery each year since, at 6.00pm on the 2nd November, or the following Monday if the 2nd falls on the weekend, when Sunday Masses take precedence.

This year was no different and, as it can be noted on the group photo, the numbers are up on last year; this is the 2nd year we celebrated the Mass while still in the throes of the COVID Pandemic, with many present wearing their masks.

The new Dean, **Fr Robert Riedling**, celebrated the Mass for the first time since his appointment back in March. The commemoration was well attended by long time "regulars" with some new faces present for the very first time.

Fr Robert's homily reflected the thoughts of St Augustine above and took them a step further by saying that, when our own time on earth is done, we hope that those we leave behind will take the time to *“offer the sacrifice also in our memory and on our behalf”*, for deliverance from

our sins, in the eternal hope that their prayers will lead us into the presence of the Lord, to rejoice for ever with the multitude of saints who have preceded us.

Fr Robert was so impressed by the Chapel that he has 'flagged' the notion of utilising it more frequently during the year for the celebration of the Eucharist and to pray for any special intentions, so watch out for further announcements after he consults with the Parish Council on this new idea, which was pleasantly welcomed by all.

A big **"Thank You"** to

- ◆ to my niece **Josephine Rechichi** for taking photos of the event;
- ◆ to local historian **Judith Dunn**, who together with her husband, **Greg**, vacuumed and cleaned the Chapel of the cobwebs, that had accumulated over the past year, in preparation for the celebration, (with a shout out to **Bunnings** who donated the rechargeable vacuum cleaner for this purpose);
- ◆ to **Michael Lilley** for assisting Fr Robert at the altar;
- ◆ to **Patti Murphy** and **Geraldine Lilley** for proclaiming the Readings; and
- ◆ finally, to **Fr. Robert** for presiding at the Mass.

The history of St Patrick's Cemetery and Mortuary Chapel can be viewed on the link below:

<https://historyandheritage.cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au/research-topics/parramatta/st-patricks-cemetery-parramatta>



Silvana Rechichi

Matters behind the scenes

Remembering Matters

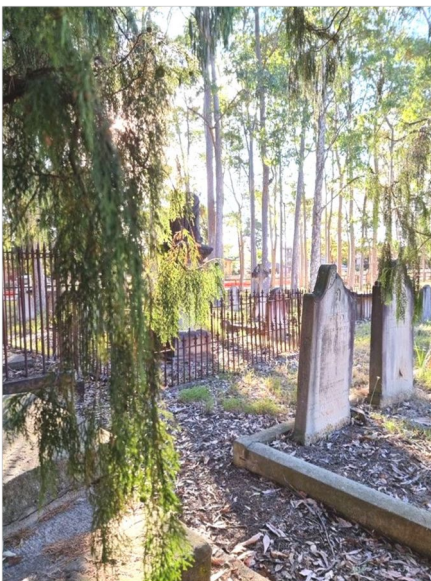


ALL SOULS DAY is always a special day on the Catholic calendar. In Parramatta it is even more special, in that we get to celebrate Mass in St. Francis' Mortuary Chapel at St. Patrick's Cemetery. Mass in the chapel is a once-a-year event and is much anticipated and cherished by the regular congregation. This place is very close, physically and spiritually, to the very beginnings of Catholicism in Australia. Indeed, burials here date back to the early 1820s and include many of the pioneering clergy and parishioners from our district.

I can't recall the year I first attended but I'm sure it was more than 20 years ago. It is this spiritual heritage shared with the other regular attendees that makes it an important event for me, along with the delight and wonder expressed by newcomers.

On 2nd November 2021 there were gathered up to 40 parishioners to celebrate with Fr. Robert Riedling. It is always a very atmospheric Eucharist in the tiny chapel and more so this year with Fr. Robert choosing the Gospel from John in which Jesus is summoned to Martha's house after her brother Lazarus had died. Martha had said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother would not have died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou shalt ask of God, God will give it thee." Jesus said to her, "Thy brother shall rise again."

The Mass is like no other through the year and, although there are as many, or more, people outside unable to fit in the chapel, it attracts a dedicated following.



The cemetery these days is owned and maintained by the Parramatta City Council. There have been various threats to its existence over the years with road widening and from development. We are very lucky to have it still, largely intact.

Thanks to historian and parishioner Judith Dunn and husband Greg who clean the chapel every year before the service.



Bob Edgar

As Editor, I think this email Judith Dunn sent to me on Nov. 3rd is worth sharing, to alert everyone to people's good deeds often carried out, unnoticed and unsung, behind the scenes.

Dear Marian,

Something wonderful has happened!

St Francis Chapel was a mess when I went to clean it for All Souls Day and I put my back out – diagnosed with two bulging discs. (No, this was not the wonderful thing.) Husband Greg came with me the second visit as it always takes more than one sweep to get rid of the enormous amount of dust. He asked if I had ever applied for a vacuum cleaner to clean the chapel. I thought he was crazy – who would donate me an expensive vacuum cleaner? Nothing daunted, Greg, who is a member of Crestwood Lions Club, remarked he would see what he could do through Lions. A letter was written that day by Crestwood Lions supporting my need for a battery powered, wet and dry vacuum cleaner to help keep this sacred heritage chapel clean. It is the oldest mortuary chapel in Australia built in 1844. The letter mentioned I have taken a keen interest in the cemetery since 1985 and due to advancing age!! was finding cleaning more onerous.

THE NEXT DAY when I arrived home from shopping, there in my kitchen was a wonderful Ryobi wet and dry vacuum cleaner, complete with a battery charger and two batteries. Greg, armed with the letter of support from Lions, had attended Bunnings Westmead and they straight away donated the very vacuum I needed! How fantastic is that?

It was put to good use and the chapel was looking clean and cared for, ready for Mass on 2nd November. I will now be able to clean the chapel more easily and regularly to show the site is loved, respected and cared for as part of our Catholic heritage.

Greg has also repaired and glued back together, the original window architrave which had fallen off the wall. It is now fixed firmly back in place for years to come we hope.

What a fantastic result this has been. Many thanks to Greg, Crestwood Lions Club and Bunnings, Westmead.

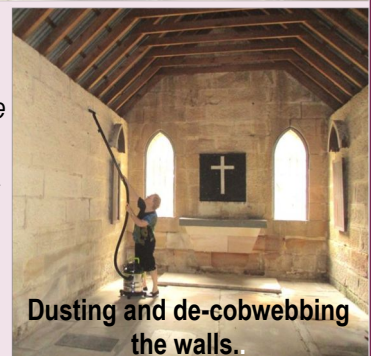
Judith



In a second sweeping the broom disappears in a cloud of dust



The vacuum makes cleaning a breeze



Dusting and de-cobwebbing the walls.

Book of Remembrance

Traditionally, in November, the Church remembers in a special way all those who have died; offering prayers for the faithful departed, for our relatives and our friends, that they may enter into the heavenly kingdom.

The names of those who have died and are to be remembered in our prayers, are inscribed into

The Book of Life.

During November, it is placed either before the Baptismal Font in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel or in the Cathedral on the raised dais in front of the organ pipes. Advent began on November 30th, hence the presence of the Advent wreath



Our faith assures us that love is eternal, that the bonds of love can never be severed.

We continue to be united with our loved ones who have died.

This is the insight behind what we confess each week as our belief in the "communion of saints".

Without denying the reality of physical death, we affirm our eternal connection with our loved ones.

We remember them to God as the source of our life and love, the beginning and end of our destiny.

Parramatta Catholic Foundation

Initiation

MACNOS MUTANO was confirmed in the Faith as an adult at 11am Mass on 7th November, 2021. He writes about receiving Confirmation which is the third and final Sacrament of Initiation into the Catholic Church.

Matters

Being confirmed means my bond with Christ is now stronger than it has ever been in my life and it further inspires me to learn more about the Faith. It also means I now have the welcome responsibility of living my life in a way that maintains and strengthens that bond.

I was baptised on 21st March, 1992 in Harare, Zimbabwe when I was five years old. My uncle, a Jesuit, assisted in my Baptism. Unfortunately, I don't remember when I received my First Eucharist, but I am comforted by the fact that I will always remember my First Eucharist after my Confirmation. I had, for the longest time, always considered myself a Catholic but around five years ago I started wondering why I never went to Mass if I considered myself as part of the Church. While living in Vanuatu, I started attending Mass and over time I felt my Faith grow stronger as a result. When I moved to Parramatta I wanted to continue this so I started attending 11am Mass on Sunday and this is something I always looked forward to.

About six months ago after having quizzed my mother, who is not a Catholic, about details of my Confirmation I was shocked to find out that I had never been confirmed. I was dismayed to find this out, but I reached out to Deacon Rod after having learned about RCIA classes on offer at the Cathedral. Although I was dismayed, at first, at not having been confirmed as a child, I began seeing being confirmed as an adult as a blessing because I was better able to understand the significance of Confirmation.

When Deacon Rod asked me to choose my Confirmation name I immediately thought of St. Augustine. I was struck by the way he completely changed his life from one of sin to one of piety and that really appealed to me because it showed that you could always change your life, no matter what, to live it in a Christian way.

When informed that I needed to have a sponsor, I immediately thought of my friend, Paul Mousley, who's also a parishioner at St. Pat's. He seemed an obvious choice as I really admire his faith and how it is evident without even talking to him.

Editor: *Let our community pray that Macnos will continue to use the gifts given by the Spirit to spread the faith of Christ by words and deed.*

Paul, Macnos and Deacon Rod with Fr Robert who confirmed Macnos.



A Lockdown Journey to Karabi

...and onto social justice matters?

This St Pat's parishioner ends by stating "This experience has been a growth one for me personally, reawakening in me an interest in, and passion for, social justice mattersand I am looking forward to seeing where this journey will take me next."

We all have our stories from our experience of lockdown, here's mine. I found the start of the 2021 lockdown in late June unexpected and jarring. The first virtual mass was gut-wrenching to watch, as I thought we had done with all those things during 2020. Through July I was anxious for the Sydney community and my family, as we were at differing points of coping, or otherwise, with the life changes brought by the lockdown.

After a few weeks I moved from feelings of denial to hopelessness regarding the lockdown. Even though both adults in our family were employed and had transitioned to working from home, I struggled with my role in the broader community. I began to be conscious and uncomfortable about the differing experiences of the Sydney community. We were able to work at home, our children were able to study virtually, yet thousands of workers were needed to keep running essential services across health, emergency services, food, transport and construction. Many of these workers were potentially being exposed to COVID either through their work places, commuting, or at home. Then there were the thousands of people who had lost work, income and small businesses during the lockdown.

At the end of July, my hopelessness progressed to a need for action, but with no clear idea on what that could look like. I contacted friends working at Westmead, or as contact tracers who were grateful to hear from me. However, I was after something more concrete than passive offers of solidarity. I saw a photo in a local paper at the shops of hampers being prepared by a Wentworthville organisation called *Karabi*. This is a long-standing community organisation who were expanding food banking operations to deal with increasing food insecurity being experienced by local residents due to the lockdown. I had lived in the area for nearly two decades and was ignorant of *Karabi's* existence. I made contact and heard there was a need for donations of shelf stable food products. Bingo! I had found something practical I could do, I had plenty of experience with preparing Vinnies hamper donations at Christmas.

I started donating weekly food hampers of non-perishable food in early August. I met many defence and police officers at *Karabi* who were supporting the foodbank delivery of hampers to households either in COVID isolation or experiencing hardship. At times they were some of the few people I met in person during that week due to the lockdown conditions. I would also move amongst people arriving at *Karabi* seeking walk-in assistance from the foodbank. I have often reflected in recent months on how challenging that must be. This was the experience of the team working there, as most people seeking assistance had never needed to before.

After a few weeks, the *Karabi* staff got to know me better and would talk to me about the value of the donated goods and the dire needs with which they were dealing. During September, families were being admitted to and being discharged from Westmead with COVID, who had experienced job losses and did not have society support structures to fall back on. They would visit *Karabi* (which is a short drive from the hospital) to get food to stock an empty kitchen as they returned home. Another story I was told involved a family with three young children emptying petrol from a lawn mower into a car to drive to *Karabi* as they had only \$4 left. The weekly hamper goods I was donating were being kept in the *Karabi* manager's office as an emergency supply for cases such as these arriving at their door.

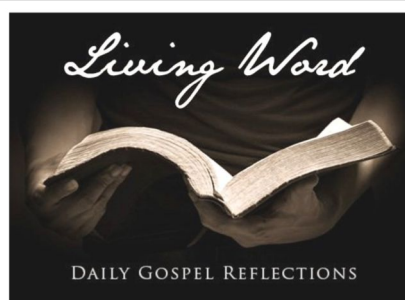
I am very unlikely to ever encounter in person these families who received these hampers. I take consolation that at a time of great need a little effort from me allowed a great organisation like *Karabi* to support people when they really needed it. I think of them often and hope that their life situation is beginning to improve. This experience has been a growth one for me personally, reawakening in me an interest in and passion for social justice matters. I am continuing to visit *Karabi* weekly and am looking forward to seeing where this journey will take me next.

WORTH SHARING

Every day seems to be filled with choices; from the moment the smartphone alarm wakes you (should I give myself another 10 minutes in bed?) to the encroaching night (should I just watch another Netflix show?).

Then there are questions such as should I speed on the way to work, how do I treat today the colleague who was abrupt with me yesterday, how patient will I be in the lunch queue at the sandwich shop or with the family member at the other end of an inconvenient phone call? And on and on it goes...

In this life, choices bring consequences, inevitably.

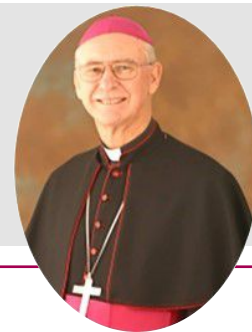


From the Archdiocese of Canberra/Goulburn

Today, from the beautiful sentiments of the book of Wisdom, (13:1 - 9) to Jesus speaking to his disciples in Luke's gospel, (17:26—37) we hear of the "stupid" men who have been charmed by beauty, yet not chosen to seek its creator, the unmindful and unaware people of Noah's time, and the decision of Lot's wife.

In words so appropriate today, we are admonished, if we are "*capable of acquiring enough knowledge to be able to investigate the world*", how have we been "*so slow to find its Master?*"

Wise words, indeed. If we just choose to stop and look, we will see "*the heavens proclaim the glory of God*". 12 November 2021



Kevin Michael Manning was born in Coolah (NSW) on November 2nd 1933, the second child of Kevin and Edith Manning. He attended the local Sacred Heart Primary School. At 14, Kevin left school¹ and joined the Post Office to help support his parents and his six siblings.

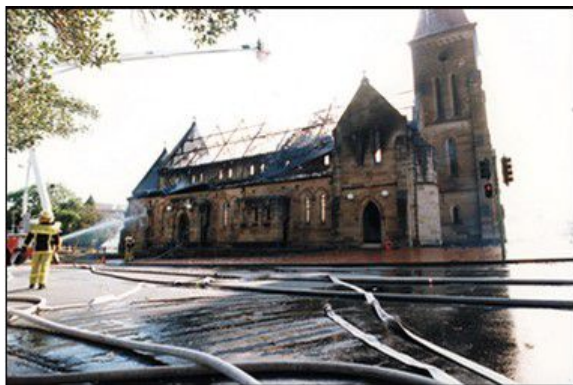
Heeding the Call to become a priest, Kevin began his studies at St Columba's College Springwood. He was selected to complete his studies at the Propaganda Fide College in Rome, where he was ordained on **December 20, 1961**², a priest for the Diocese of Bathurst.

In 1978, Fr Manning was sent to Canberra to work with the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference: he remained there until 1991.

On April 26, 1991, Pope John Paul II appointed Fr Manning as Bishop of Armidale, NSW. His episcopal ordination took place on July 10th 1991³.

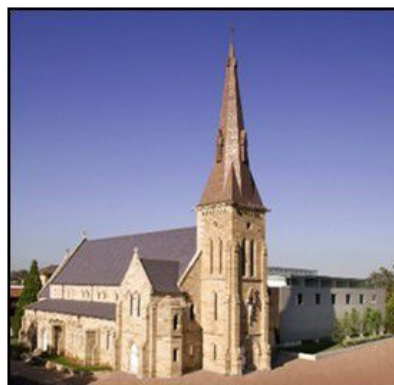
Then on July 10th 1997, Bishop Kevin Manning was appointed as the second Bishop of the Diocese of Parramatta: he was formally installed into the Diocese on August 21, 1997⁴.

Bishop Kevin, (as he was popularly known), faced a daunting task in Parramatta – he needed to build a new cathedral as the original had been destroyed by fire on February 19, 1996!



Then Monday 13th December 1999 was another disastrous day for Bishop Kevin and the Diocese of Parramatta, as the interior of the Pro-Cathedral (the old Marist Brothers High School where the main cathedral now stands), was destroyed by fire! The Cathedral's parishioners were distraught! Where would we celebrate Christmas?

Little did we know that Bishop Kevin had the situation in hand. As Chairman of Catholic Church Insurance Ltd he'd organized all the necessary trades people to work around the clock so the Christmas Masses could be celebrated as planned. (Not wanting the Mercy nuns opposite disturbed unnecessarily, the Bishop had asked if this could be done. They gave him the green light.)



Saturday November 29th 2003, was the most important day so far in the history of Parramatta Diocese, for this was the day the new Cathedral was dedicated.



Australian Cardinal Cassidy — representing Pope John Paul II — was the principal Celebrant with Bishop Kevin and other bishops.

Bishop Kevin retired as the Bishop of Parramatta on January 8th 2010. His retirement was short lived as he was appointed Apostolic Administrator of the Wilcannia-Forbes Diocese⁵ which covers half of New South Wales.

The Bishop finally retired from active ministry on December 1st 2012. and now lives in retirement in his home Diocese of Bathurst.

Let's join with Emeritus Bishop Kevin in celebrating his **Diamond Jubilee of Priestly Ordination**; and let us praise and thank God for his sixty years of Ministry, especially in and for the Diocese of Parramatta



Photo courtesy of Fr Wim Hoekstra: used with permission

1. Mr Bradbury March 10, 2020. <https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;db=CHAMBER;id=chamber%2Fhansardr%2F2010-03-10%2F0116;query=id%3A%22chamber%2Fhansardr%2F2010-03-10%2F0000%22>
2. <https://parracatholic.org/about-us/#FormerBishops>
3. <https://parracatholic.org/about-us/#FormerBishops>
4. <https://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/bmanningk.htm>
5. <https://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/bmanningk.htm>

Learning about Australia's convict priests matters

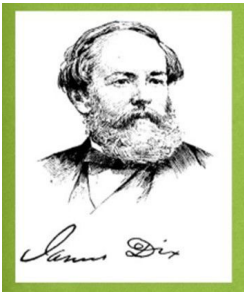
Parishioner Vince Murtagh came across an article, *Australia's Convict Priests* by Fr Ted Cooper SDB which had appeared in *The Mail* in 2003. (Fr Cooper had sourced the article from *The Australian Salesian Bulletin* website with permission). Thinking it worth putting in *St Pat's Matters*, Vince sent it to Fr Riedling. It is published here with some minor omissions.

Most Australian Catholics would have heard of some of our pioneer priests — like Fr Therry, Fr Ullathorne, Fr O'Flynn — but it could come as a surprise to know that the very first priests to come to Australia came as convicts. Of course, there were priests, particularly French, who came with explorers and merely stayed a few days, but three priests came and remained as prisoners for several years in the early 1800s.

Irish history is studded with periods of bitter fighting against their British overlords, struggling against the injustices inflicted on them. A very bitter period flared up in the late 1700s. In March 1798 Ireland was declared to be in a state of insurrection. Under the Insurrection Act, Magistrates and Military officers were empowered to arrest and punish, by death or otherwise, according to their discretion, people committing treasonable acts or even suspected of treason. An Indemnity Act protected them from suits for illegal acts committed by them in suppressing a rebellion, so that many thousands were, without any judicial trial investigation, flogged, tortured, transported or executed.....

It was in the Vinegar Hill uprising just outside Enniscorthy in County Wexford in 1795. that three priests Fathers James Dixon, James Harold and Peter O'Neill, all victims of this turbulent period, were caught and convicted, under the Insurrection Act, as instigators of rebellion.

We will focus on Father James Dixon



Born at Castlebridge just outside of Wexford in 1758. He did some preliminary studies for the priesthood in Ireland, before continuing theological studies on the continent. (The great seminaries of Maynooth [1795] and All Hallows [1842] coming after his time). He studied in Salamanca and Louvain and was ordained in 1875. At his first

priestly posting at his birthplace, Castlebridge, people who knew him well described him as "one of the gentlest and most inoffensive of men", or as another wrote "a simple, sober, virtuous, pious priest."

Fr Dixon's troubles began when a few weeks before the Vinegar Hill episodes, he was accused by a neighbour who was reputed to be a paid informer, one Francis Murphy, of being a United Irishman. This was a revolutionary group with members throughout Ireland, and undoubtedly behind many insurrections.

On Saturday 26th May, 1798, Fr Dixon was brought before a magistrate and accused of leading a company of rebels at Tubbernegrin and had been heard to sing a stirring rebel song with the refrain, "Hurrah for the Shamrock and Erin-Go-Bragh." He was also wearing a rebel badge.

Fr Dixon denied the charges but was found guilty, without a trial and condemned, despite three reputable witnesses testifying to his innocence — two of whom were Protestants and neighbours. He was sentenced to transportation for life, and with eleven others sent to Duncannon Port, close to Waterford.....After ten

months in goal, he was placed on the transport ship *The Friendship* which left Cork on 24th August, 1799, arriving in Port Jackson Sydney 178 days, later on 16th February 1800. Governor Hunter excused Fr Dixon from "public labour" and he was supported from the Government Store. His quiet nature kept him out of the limelight and when there was a convict rising in 1800, his name was not even mentioned.

The authorities were always nervous about convict rebellions, particularly when, from 1798 the transportees began to arrive in increasing numbers. Their urge to rebel might be repressed but not eradicated.

Fr Dixon used his time to keep up a low-key apostolate, attending the hospitals, executions, confessions, but not officially allowed to function as a priest, that is not allowed to say Mass.

In April 1803 Governor King signed an Order granting Catholics the opportunity of attending Mass, which Fr Dixon would celebrate on given days at three designated places, in rotation.

The first Masses were in Sydney on 13th May 1803, at Parramatta on 22nd May and at Hawkesbury on 29th May. A convict made a tin chalice and vestments were made from curtains. This was the first time Mass had been celebrated in the colony since the First Fleet arrived 15 years earlier in 1788.

After six months Governor King wrote of his satisfaction, lauding the influence the priest had over his congregation and ordered that Fr Dixon was to receive a salary of 60 pounds per year.

However, by March 1804 things had changed. A potentially serious rebellion took place around Castle Hill. It backfired and over 300 rebels were captured or surrendered. A large number were hanged or flogged; others were sent to the chain gangs "until they could be disposed of".

In August, Governor King withdrew Fr Dixon's salary for "improper conduct in not preventing the seditious meetings that took place in consequence of the indulgence and protection he received." In November, Catholic worship was disallowed. Fr Dixon did not have to stand trial, but had to attend the executions of the leaders and hold the hands of the men tied to a tree while they were flogged. This experience shattered the poor man.

His official position from hereon is unclear. His ministry continued in a semi-secret way — he celebrated Mass privately; there are records of marriages he performed, baptisms and funerals continued, but his days as official Catholic minister were over.

Dr Patrick Ryan, newly-consecrated Bishop of Dublin made representation for Fr Dixon's return to Ireland, with permission being granted in November 1808 and an absolute pardon issued on 3rd June, 1809.

After almost nine years in the colony, Fr Dixon sailed from Sydney on the *Mary Ann* on 15th October, 1809. From 1811-1815 he lived with his brother Nicholas Dixon near the city of Wexford, then became Parish Priest of Crossabeg. He died aged 82, in the Franciscan Friary, Wexford on 4th January, 1840 and was buried beside the Church at Crossabeg.



Last year's Mass was cancelled due to COVID. This year's was affected by restrictions.

Numbers attending were limited to SREs receiving awards, (for 2020 and 2021), along with two guests each.

Among the awardees recognised for their years of service to the ministry were 3 St Pat's SREs.

With Bishop Vincent L-R are

MARY WEHBE for 25 years

PAMELA BAIN for 20 years

MILI LEE for 20 years

Our congratulations and sincere gratitude to you all.

Naturally each of them was asked to write about their time in the ministry. With Mary's permission, her reflection submitted for Issue 68 of St Pat's Matters in April 2009, has been reprinted below. Her current thoughts follow. Pamela and Mili whose awards were Papal Blessings, 'bowing to editor pressure' too, share their SRE journeys.

MARY'S REFLECTION BACK IN 2009

When my friend Lena had suggested that I become a catechist, I laughed and said that I just could not do it—after all I did not have any teaching experience or training. Even after accepting her invitation to accompany her to one of her classes, I was still not convinced that I could do it — and anyway, I was too busy and had four kids of my own to look after!

Shortly afterwards, when Shirley Wehbe had asked me to become a catechist, I'd given her the same excuse. Shirley persisted in trying to convince me, but I insisted that I just could not do it.

At that time I was on a bowling team. The ladies were discussing what they would be giving up for Lent that year. I had just finished saying I prefer to take up doing something, when Shirley (who was bowling on another team) approached me again to ask if I would do a catechist training course with her friend, Estrellita.

I remember thinking, "Why would I do that? I am not a catechist and have no intention of becoming one."

Shirley persisted, saying that it would only be for 6 weeks, starting that Friday (the first Friday of Lent) and how Estrellita really wanted to do the course but was unsure how to drive to the location, so needed someone to accompany her..... Well, guess what I took up for Lent that year? I was going to give up my Fridays during Lent to help someone, willing and wanting to be a catechist by attending the course with them.

And I loved it! I met new people who became dear friends and I learnt so much from the course. Part of the course programme involved giving a class with another catechist. I was allocated to a kindergarten class with Joanne Uccello at Parramatta North Public School and went along, still thinking to myself, "What am I doing here? I'm not going to become a catechist."

During the lesson I asked the children, "Who gave us the gift of life?" to which one of the children excitedly replied, "Santa Claus!"

For me, that was the defining moment, when I realised I was there to help teach the kids to know that it is God who made them, God who made everything and, most importantly, that GOD LOVES THEM! (no offence Santa Claus!)

Joanne was so encouraging. She asked me to consider taking over her class as she was really keen to teach at high school. Through doing the course I had gained confidence, so I agreed.**And 14 years on, I am still on the job!**

Inspired and supported in so many ways by our much-loved Paula Cowling, (our co-ordinator at the time), I felt part of a family. Even when we moved out of the parish, Paula insisted I stay in St Pat's catechist group. I am still there today.

Like Jonah from the Bible, I have learnt throughout the years that you cannot escape God's purpose for you. I always thought that I was unable to do what God kept calling me to do, yet he did not give up on me. He had more confidence in me than I had in myself. **It continues to amaze me how the Holy Spirit always seems to strengthen me to fulfil God's purpose.**

I have learnt that one cannot ignore God's calling. He will keep trying to get your attention, For me, he used Lena's invitation, Shirley's persistence, Estrellita's companionship, Joanne's encouragement and Paula's support and kindness.

What was supposed to have been a Lenten sacrifice ended up being something that I thoroughly enjoyed and still do so to this day.

PRAISE BE TO GOD ALWAYS!

Ed Note: Guess what? For Lent last year, Mary agreed to take up a high school class to help out Joanne Uccello just for a while. That's rightshe's still doing it!

Fast forward to Mary's current thoughts, page 13 →.....

Mili Lee reflects on 20 years in the SRE Ministry

Sowing the Seeds of Faith –

Why Special Religious Education?

Twenty years ago, I saw a request in the parish bulletin at Our Lady of Lourdes, Baulkham Hills asking for volunteers to teach Scripture in the local public school. The word of St Matthew whispered in my ear, urging me, that since I had time to spare I should, ‘Go therefore, and make disciples of all the nations,....’ (Matthew 28:19). In fact, I was quite excited that at my doorstep was an opportunity to go out and sow the seeds of faith.

When I contacted the SRE (Special Religious Educator) coordinator at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, she assured me of her support as well as that of the Parramatta Diocese CCD (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) Team if I decided to become a member of the Parish’s SRE team. With blind trust I said, ‘Here I am’ and began one of the most challenging, yet joyous parts of my weekly routine over the past 20 years.

Those 20 years as an SRE

Being an SRE involves turning up to a local public primary or secondary school for a lesson period, usually 30 minutes, to teach students about the Catholic Faith. Half an hour a week is hardly sufficient time to teach children about the Faith, nevertheless we are fortunate that here in New South Wales, we are able to go into government schools weekly to share the Good News about Jesus.

After accepting a role to work in the office at St Patrick’s Cathedral Parish, I transferred from Baulkham Hills Public School after 8 years teaching Scripture there, to serve in the local public schools within the Cathedral Parish. I am grateful to

Pam Bain, the parish’s SRE coordinator, for her work in recruiting more SREs as this has enabled me to only step in and assist when someone is sick or on holiday. Due to this arrangement, I have been blessed with the opportunity to serve as an SRE at North Parramatta Public, Bayanami Public, Parramatta Public, Oatlands Public, East Parramatta Public and McArthur Girls High.

There are times when I wonder how effective my efforts have been. Is it worth it? Am I making a difference? In times of such doubt I am reminded of the words of St Paul; ‘I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow.’ (1 Corinthians 3:6). It is not the one who plants or the one who waters who is at the centre of this process, but God who makes things grow. Our task is to be faithful—in preparing for our lessons thoroughly and presenting the Gospel to our students, to the best of our ability.

While there are numerous classroom anecdotes to share and smile about when recalling them, in retrospect, the true joy of being an SRE is sharing the Joy of the Gospel with my students. It is easy to turn up each week knowing that the gift one is bringing to the classroom is not of gold or myrrh or frankincense, but that of the Word of God.

If I were to do a Marie Kondo-inspired cleanup of my hectic weekly routine, SRE would be one of those tasks that would indeed be difficult to kiss goodbye.

Although we might not always achieve the results we’d hope to achieve, nor see the growth of the seeds that have been sown in the lives of the students we have taught, it is certain that there will be a good harvest. With God’s help I look forward to many more years of sowing and watering.

AND SO TO MARY WEHBE’S REFLECTING IN 2021

As I reflect on my involvement in this special ministry, I feel honoured and grateful for the opportunity to serve our God.

What started out as an intended act of Lenten sacrifice all those years ago, has blossomed to 25 years of teaching Catholic children in state schools about our Faith.

John the Baptist saw himself as a ‘voice in the wilderness’ calling people to prepare the way of the Lord. In my role as an SRE, I often feel a bit that way.....trying to use my voice to bring the children to Jesus....to introduce them to someone who loves and cares for them.

I go into my classes hoping to plant the seeds of our Faith,

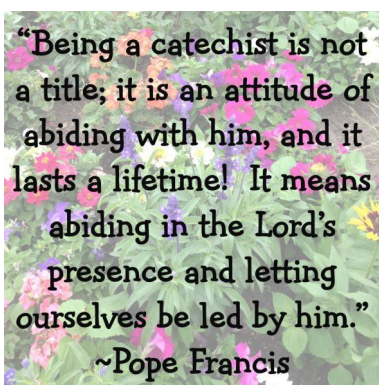
which I pray will grow within all the children and bring them to a close relationship with Our Lord.

Yes, ...taking on this role has involved learning to manage my time as my family commitments grew.

And it has involved preparing the lessons and attending training but with the help of the Holy Spirit, (on whom, I constantly call for guidance), I have found that teaching Scripture has deepened my own faith!

I can guarantee, that if God calls you to be a catechist, that you too will gain a sense of fulfilment if you decide to embark upon this journey.

I thank God for persevering in calling me to be a Special Religious Educator.



What does the Holy Father ask from catechists today?

- > To be teachers and companions.
- > To proclaim the Gospel with their life, with gentleness.
- > To seek out new languages and new paths.

Pamela Bain reflects on 20 years as an SRE.

One cold winter's morning in 1999 I was walking home from early morning Mass with the then SRE Coordinator, Paula Cowling, when she quietly asked me how soon she could put me down to take a 'Scripture Class'? Paula knew that I was retiring, after many years of teaching, at the end of the year. The last thing I was thinking about was going back into a classroom situation.

I asked for a year's leave of grace, during which I completed the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) Level 1 Training and had a wonderful overseas holiday, the highlight of which was the Passion Play at Oberammergau.

Late February in 2001, quite refreshed, saw me tentatively entering the gates of Oatlands Public School to take my first SRE class, — a K/Year 1.

As I walked into the schoolyard, I was approached by a boy who was in Year 6. He said, 'I know you. You worship at Patrick's.' This boy was an altar server and took it upon himself to look after me whenever I visited the school.

That boy, while studying for a Degree in Education, taught SRE at Oatlands for the duration of his university course.

I have been blessed to continue my association with Oatlands School for over twenty years and have fond memories of all the families whose children I have taught. Teaching all the siblings over a number of years is very rewarding.

Because there aren't always enough Catechists to visit all the schools, I have taken classes at Parramatta, Parramatta East and Bayanami as well.

It has been such a joy to bring the Good News of Jesus to so many children, many of whom have been excited to introduce me to their parents when we've met in church or the shopping mall. There was one special girl, now in High School, that I would meet regularly while shopping. She would proudly introduce me to her friends as her Year 1 Scripture Teacher.

There have been several Parish Coordinators during my time, and each has been a source of encouragement and support. Each has had their own way of nurturing our growth, both in faith and teaching skills. Now that I am the Parish Coordinator, I hope to emulate their positive influence.

I completed Levels 2 and 3 of the CCD Training in 2001 and 2002. The lecturer guiding us through St Matthew's Gospel was Sr Therese Quinn, my Home Room teacher the year I studied for

the Leaving Certificate. Knowing that ideas in teaching and classroom management are always evolving I have just completed Levels 1-3 again. I especially enjoyed the Level 3 component on Faith Formation,

The CCD offers Reflection Days. These days are always quiet and relaxing and give the opportunity to be with the Lord. I always come away feeling very refreshed. Inservice Days are always valuable as we are presented with new skills which benefit our teaching, be it technology, craft music or storytelling.

Through attending Training and the Reflection days I have made many beautiful friends, not just in St Pat's Parish, but throughout the Diocese. I am very grateful for all the support I get from our CCD Director, Cecilia Zammit, our Regional Coordinator, Fiona Clarke and the CCD office manager, Maree Collis.

As I begin my third decade as an SRE I ponder all the changes that have occurred in the last twenty years. Our curriculum has become more defined; there is more importance placed on accountability for Child Protection; Technology is more common in classrooms; and we need to follow COVID-Safe restrictions. And I pray that I may continue to contribute to this important ministry for some years to come.



↑ In 2002, I received a Level 3 Graduation Certificate from Bishop Manning, while Margaret Climpson was given a medal for 27 years of service.

→ With my son Kevin after receiving my award for 15 Years of Service.



It was most affirming for St Pat's three awardees to have Fr Robert Riedling attend the annual CCD Mass showing how he values their vital role and continuing commitment to the SRE Ministry..

Pamela and Mili managed to have a photo with him, both proudly displaying their Papal Blessings.

GIVING MATTERS



heeding the cry of those in need

JRS
JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE

Christmas Drive 2021

During this giving season, you can help refugees and people seeking asylum celebrate Christmas by donating:

- Basmati Rice (1kg bags)
- Cooking Oil (750ml, 1L, 2L)
- Longlife Milk (1L)
- Snacks: biscuits and muesli bars (particularly snacks for school lunches)
- Toiletries: toothbrushes, soap, shampoo, deodorant
- Nappies: sizes 3, 4, 5, 6 are most needed right now
- Dishwashing liquid
- Washing/laundry powder

← This Appeal went out from JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE or JRS as it is commonly referred to, asking parishioners to heed the cry of poor, in particular refugees and asylum seekers.

St Pat's people have responded, coming without fanfare to quietly lay their offerings in the designated spot, rather appropriately positioned at the feet of Our Lady Help of Christians and next to the Holy Family in the Nativity Scene; the anonymous donors' actions mirroring those of the Wise Men who bore gifts to the Christ Child born in poverty in a stable.

The photo was taken in the early days of the Christmas Drive. No doubt the pile of goods will increase considerably as St Pat's generous parishioners come bearing more gifts before the cut off date.

You can also help those assisted by JRS to enjoy a happier Christmas and even beyond, by donating Gift Vouchers from Coles, Myer or Westfield. To do so, please contact:

Anne Nesbitt | anne.nesbitt@jrs.org.au
Zoe Grant | zoe.grant@jrs.org.au

Compassion

“None of us can think we are exempt from concern for the poor and for social justice.”
- Pope Francis

“True charity requires courage: let us overcome the fear of getting our hands dirty so as to help those in need.”
- POPE FRANCIS

A touch of humour from IAN GATES in his Pearly Gates cartoon



Children's Liturgy Matters: *The Co-ordinator's Baton passes on.*

Marilyn Cook has celebrated a silver anniversary: 25 years as Coordinator of the Children's Liturgy! This year she has relinquished the role, handing over the reins to Kirrily and Oscar Aguilera. But she and husband Graham will still be part of the team. Here Marilyn and Kirrily write about their reasons for being involved, also informing us as to the liturgy's procedures.



My journey began one morning after 9:30 mass. We had been regulars at this Mass with our three young children when Father John Boyle approached me. I can still remember his words – “God meant you to be here today – I have something to ask you.”

I considered his request to co-ordinate Children's Liturgy and agreed to take on the role. Our children had attended Children's liturgy and I had always thought that it was an extremely important ministry.

To allow young families to be able to spend time to focus on the homily and prayer without being distracted by their little ones is a valuable gift to any parent.

The children also benefit from being in a space where they are together and can have the gospel explained in a basic way to enable them to engage with the message. We have always been excited by the way the older children actively participate in the discussion while the younger ones are often given the opportunity to act out the gospel scenes or experience musical interpretations which greatly assist their understanding. They also gain insight on how to follow the gospel message in their daily lives.

We are blessed to have a dedicated team of leaders who each have their own unique way of interpreting the Gospel message and imparting that to the children in a coordinated way. Many of these leaders have given many years of service to this ministry. We are truly grateful to all of them and the inspiration they show. It has been amazing to have shared this journey with them.

I have been very privileged to watch so many children grow and develop into young adults in the church. It is inspiring to see how much understanding some of them have from even a very early age.

The children enjoy coming to Children's Liturgy and it is extremely rewarding to have contributed in even a small way to their development.

I couldn't have done this role for so many years without the help and support of my husband Graham, who has also contributed so much.

I have total confidence in handing over the role to Kirrily Aguilera. She and Oscar have been regular leaders in Children's liturgy for many years and will ensure that this important ministry continues to provide for the spiritual growth of the young people in our Parish.

Marilyn

At St Patrick's, we are very blessed to have a thriving Children's Liturgy programme which has been part of our 9.30am Mass on Sundays for many years.



This important ministry has been coordinated by Marilyn and Graham Cook for over 25 years and recently my husband Oscar and I were asked to take over the reins. Having personally seen our four children benefit from the programme, as well as having assisted as a Children's Liturgy leader for around 6 years, it was a great privilege to step up and help out.

For those unfamiliar with Children's Liturgy, it is basically a Liturgy of the Word adapted for children (pre-school to mid primary aged). The children are invited to come forward at the start of Mass where they receive a special blessing, and then are led to the Parish Hall for their liturgy. In the hall, we set up a sacred space (a small table with cloth, crucifix, LED candle and lectionary) then lead the children through the introductory rite and proclamation of the Gospel. After proclaiming the Gospel, there is time for a reflection that is age-appropriate and engaging. Sometimes, this might involve re-enacting the Gospel, a guided discussion, craft or song. Next we recite the Apostles Creed, followed by the Prayers of Intercession and prayer of dismissal. The children then return to Mass, where they are involved in the Presentation of the Gifts.

Having had our children participate in Children's Liturgy over the years, I truly believe this is an important ministry to support families with young children to feel included and welcomed at Mass. It is often very hard for parents to keep young children settled during Mass, especially given the homily is usually aimed towards adults who make up the majority of the congregation. Children's Liturgy gives children a special and more relaxed space where they can more meaningfully learn and interpret the Scriptures from a Catholic Christian perspective. I am always so impressed at the children's reverence and knowledge of the faith, and it is delightful to see the children grow and develop as full and active members of our Parish Community.

Special thanks to Marilyn and Graham for your commitment to coordinating Children's Liturgy for so many years. There are literally hundreds of families and children who have benefited from your work over many years. I would also like to say a big thank you to the Children's Liturgy team for 2021 and am looking forward to working with you in 2022 and beyond.

Thanks to Paula, Jessy, Claire and Stephen, Marilyn and Graham Edward and Grace, Sarah and Danielle, Karemeah (Kaz) and Helena.

**If you'd like to get involved, please let me know!
We'd always love more helpers.**

Kirrily

Claire comments



My husband Steven and I have been involved in Children's Liturgy for quite a few years and love many things about the ministry.

• We appreciate the opportunity to communicate to children about our faith in a child-focussed manner.

- We have clear memories of wrangling our two boys during Mass when they were younger, (they are now teenagers) so really understand how wriggly younger kids can get at times sitting through Mass.
- There are many great (and funny) memories of craft activities: the bush-themed Advent wreath built from a cereal box shedding leaves as it was being moved through the cathedral by the children would be top of the list.
- We can also recall many wonderful conversations, listening to different family and cultural traditions for particular feasts, learning about saints revered in certain countries and sharing stories on many topics.
- One of my best memories is of the simple question asked one Sunday morning, *who is your favourite saint and why*, and being overwhelmed by the knowledgeable and passionate responses the children gave.
- We gain so much from our ministry as leaders in Children's Liturgy sessions.

Other Team Leaders

It's good to put faces to names.

Readers, you will now be able to recognize Graham, Marilyn, Oscar, Kirrily, Stephen, Claire, KaremeH and Helen should you bump into them at the Cathedral, or even in other places.

Here are the other parishioners who make up the team.

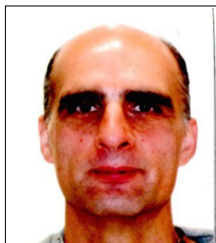
You might recognize or even know some of them.



Sarah



Grace



Edward



Jessy



Paula



Danielle

Getting involved matters

Meet KAREMEH and HELENA, New Kids on the Block who took their first Children's Liturgy on Sunday 28th Nov. They give their reasons for volunteering.



We both decided to volunteer for Children's Liturgy as our children attend the Children's Liturgy each week and absolutely love it. We understand and appreciate how much effort it takes getting small children to church and keeping them engaged. As they are young, their attention is limited, so having a Children's Liturgy group sessions allows them to listen to the Gospel and understand the word of God in a more simplified and engaging manner.

As parents, we have benefited greatly from Children's Liturgy as it helps our kids feel connected and excited about coming to church. We really appreciate the time that other volunteers take out of their Sunday to conduct these liturgies, and now that our children are older, we feel like we can offer more back to the church by volunteering, so that other parents can experience what we have. It is a truly beautiful experience seeing the children happily participate in these sessions and seeing how much they continue to grow in faith and knowledge of our Lord's teachings.

Remembering Lina Nicholas:

It was Lina who was instrumental in Children's Liturgy beginning at St Pat's Cathedral back in the early 1990s.

She had seen it happening when attending Sunday Mass at a church in Regents Park. She questioned Fr John Boyle, then Dean, as to why there wasn't one at the Cathedral. His simple reply was that no one had ever offered to set it up and commit to running it.

Lina took on the challenge, coordinating the liturgy for four years, before deciding around 1998 it was time for a new face to bring fresh ideas to the programme.

Lina's stepping down is how Fr John came to approach Marilyn Cook asking her to take on the role.

At my request Lina wrote an article in Issue 68, October 2011 revisiting her role in initiating the Children's Liturgy. She had sown the seed and her legacy continues to this day.

from the Editor

Getting to know parishioners matters

Fr Robert's initiation of the 'Getting to know you' section in the Sunday Bulletin was indeed a good idea. A compilation of parishioners' stories has appeared in the last three issues of St Pat's Matters. The ones featured here were the last to be published. Maybe the section will be reinstated in bulletins in 2022. So many parishioners to still meet.

MEET THE NEWMAN FAMILY.



We are a small family of three – Peter and Priscilla, and our son, Patrick. For those who attend 11:00am Solemn Mass regularly, our faces might be familiar, especially Patrick who is the Cathedral organ scholar.

Patrick has had the privilege of being taught to play on the fine beautiful organ by

our gifted Director of Music, Bernard Kirkpatrick, for over ten years. Sometimes you can see Patrick playing at the 9:30am and 11:00 am Solemn Mass and some other solemnities.

I (Priscilla) used to work in Parramatta over 20 years ago. Every day during lunch break, I would make a quick dash up the road to the 12:30pm Mass celebrated in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel. I felt so blessed and most grateful that the Cathedral has a midday Mass to accommodate those Catholics who work but do not live in the area.

We have befriended some wonderful people as we journey on in our faith as God's family. The Cathedral parish is very vibrant with many activities catering for all age groups. Every event is well planned and celebrated in style with so many dedicated, welcoming and committed parishioners who work very hard and always serve with a BIG smile. We can feel inclusiveness as a BIG parish family.

As a family, we enjoy short day trips (apple, cherry picking, Devonshire teas), long interstate road trips and spending time with our family and friends, both locally and overseas.

We pray that God will bless all our priests, both past and present and every parishioner richly, especially in these challenging times

HELLO FROM PAMELA BAIN.



When my family first came to St Patrick's in December 1986, we were so warmly welcomed that we made St Patrick's our spiritual home and have continued to worship here ever since.

During that time I have been engaged in various ministries. Currently I am a Reader, a Counter and a Catechist (a Special Religious Educator, taking the

Good News of Jesus to our children enrolled in the State Schools). I am the Parish Coordinator for SRE and am always seeking new recruits to continue this very rewarding work.

I have two wonderful sons who, with their delightful wives, have given me four beautiful grandchildren. I look forward to spending as much time with them as I can.

For thirty-seven years I worked in the NSW Department of Education, through which I taught in many country towns before returning to city schools. I loved teaching the Kindergarten children and watching them develop in their first year of school. In retirement I joined the U3A (University of the Third Age). Holidays over the years have taken me from Cape York to Cape Leeuwin, from Hobart to Broome and many places in between. A special Highlight has been the annual visit to Melbourne for the Australian Tennis Championships.

Although I have no Scottish ancestry, I have been a member of various Scottish Societies since 1973 and have enjoyed many Highland Gatherings. While watching television I like to knit toys for family and friends. New babies in the family always get a knitted teddy.

Here at St Pat's I have made many wonderful friends and look forward to the Saturday Vigil when I can meet up with them and share in the Lord's Supper. I have much to be thankful for – Deo Gratias!

MEET ROD & KATHRYN PIROTTA.



Some parishioners may have never met my wife, Kathryn. Occasionally, she participates at the 11 o'clock Solemn Mass on Sundays while I am assisting during the Mass, as Deacon, and meeting some of the parishioners. This is part of

our journey together.

Kathryn and I met whilst I was the President of the Patrician's Club, a social club for single Catholics that used to run at St Patrick's Cathedral, Parramatta in the 1980s and 1990s — the place where the cathedral hall stands today.

It was the last day of my presidency in May 1993, and I saw Kathryn walking into the hall. I immediately fell for her and somehow, I knew she was going to be my wife. Kathryn is on the record saying that initially she did not feel the same way but was happy to give it a go. A year later we were married!

Unfortunately, we never had children. Kathryn is from Marayong and she is the eldest daughter of Noel (deceased) and Mildred Fitzgibbon. She has three other siblings. Kathryn has been retired for more than 10 years after a career in finance. She is a great cook and does a lot of crafts for charity. She loves reading, doing the sudoku and crossword puzzles. Her parish for the last 27 years of our marriage is Holy Spirit Church in St Clair.

Kathryn's supporting role in my ministry as a permanent deacon is shown in her ability to give me space, encouragement, hands-on assistance, and time to be available to serve others within the sacrament of marriage. **

****Not long after Deacon Rod wrote this for the Sunday Bulletin, he was appointed to his new parish. Hence his words of farewell at the beginning of this issue.**

Getting to know parishioners matters

SACRAMENTAL MATTERS UPDATE

JOANNE EDGAR TALKS ABOUT HER FAMILY.



Robert and I first attended Mass at St Pat's in 1983, a few weeks after our wedding.

Our three children, Elizabeth, Patrick and Max were also baptised there. We had the great sadness of burying Elizabeth in 1986 and Patrick in 1988 from the Cathedral. Max is now 31 and with his beautiful partner Kaylene, are about to have their first child and our first grandchild.

We have felt embraced by our parish community. Rob is always on for a chat and has been active over the years in many areas which include the Parish Council, the choir, gas man, hospitality, and also as chief feral cat catcher! I have been involved in the choir and hospitality and Spring Fairs, to name a few.

Our Cathedral family is one of our lives great blessings. Worshipping here with our friends in this community is an absolute joy.

Editor's footnote: The long awaited grandchild — Levi Patrick — arrived on 28th Oct. Proud parents, Kaylene and Max, cradle their bonny baby boy. And Joanne and Bob, first time grandparents are also filled with joy.



A GOOD IDEA THAT SHOULD CONTINUE

These potted profiles of parishioners is a great way of building the parish community. People having read the articles in the bulletin by fellow parishioners just might be encouraged to approach them in real life.

So, the "Getting to know you" section will hopefully make a return to the bulletins in the new year.

GOOD NEWS:

After ongoing disruptions caused by COVID restrictions in the latter part of this year, the programme for the Sacraments of Initiation seems to finally be making headway.

In preparation for this, parents interested in registering their children (already baptized) for the upcoming programme, attended an Information Evening in the Cathedral Hall on 7th December. It also afforded them the opportunity to learn more about the process.

The next programme for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Eucharist is scheduled to commence in Term 1, 2022.



For any other enquires about the Sacraments of Initiation at St Patrick's Cathedral, do not hesitate to contact Meg Gale, the Sacramental Co-ordinator at

sacrament@stpatscathedral.com.au



THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SACRAMENTS PARENTS: KEEP IN MIND

- ◆ The Sacraments of Initiation — Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation — provide the grace of God to guide and nourish your child through his/her Christian life
- ◆ Celebrating the Sacraments enables your child to make a life-long commitment to God.
- ◆ When your child receives a sacrament, he/she is participating in the life of God, forging a deeper relationship with Him and is growing in the life of Christ.

Family Christmases Matter

Step back in time with Judith Dunn to enjoy her delightful account of childhood memories of family Christmases celebrated in Hampshire in England circa the late 1940s to mid 1950s. Readers, how do your present day celebrations compare to those of Judith's family?



Christmas in our house started in October. It was then that mam gathered together all the ingredients and made the Christmas puddings and cakes, to be set aside in the scullery to improve in flavour. I am the middle of a family of nine and each of us in turn lined up to give three stirs to the pudding whilst making our silent Christmas wish, never to be divulged for fear it wouldn't come true.

From then on any one of us could be found at odd moments busily plying a needle or pencil, making small gifts and cards for each other. As the day itself approached the bustle in our home increased. The whole house had to be cleaned from top to bottom, then decorated, making it both spotless and festive for the Christmas season.

The oldest girls were always given the job of black-leading the large kitchen range and the fireplace in each room, using plenty of elbow grease to buff the metal to a soft glow. The next group down in age sat on the stairs and took the brass stair rods out for a good cleaning with Brasso. They also helped burnish the brass sections of the fireguards. Still younger children glued coloured paper strips into paper chains to be hung as decorations. No glittery tinsel or shop bought decorations for us. Home-made and coloured Chinese lanterns and paper chains plus holly from the woods were all we needed then.

Mam plied the lino in each room first with the scrubbing bush, then with lavender lino polish. Anyone professing to have, "nothing to do" had rags tied firmly to their feet and were set to work scuffing around, buffing the polish to a high gloss. We all worked hard to finish other allotted tasks so we could join in the fun of polishing. So much so that the hall often shone to a high degree and looked a positive death trap! No one was in danger of a fall on the hall lino as I cannot recall anyone, except the priest, calling at our front door and he was too busy at this time of year to make house calls. Everyone other than the priest automatically came to the back door.

Another job that had to be done was to take the glass batteries out of the wireless and carry them by their wire handles to the garage opposite the miller's pond to be filled with acid. The journey back home was always slow as we tried not to bump ourselves with the now heavy batteries and spill the contents on our legs. With acid low in the batteries we would be in danger of the wireless fading while we listened to the King's Christmas message.

A considerable journey also had to be made through two villages and across the river Itchen via a punt. Pushing and pulling a wobbly, derelict pram kept for the purpose, we headed for the gasworks to exchange a token issued to poor families for a sack of coke to help eke out the coal ration. If the conditions were icy it would take our combined efforts to push the pram with its precious cargo up over the brickyard's hill on the way home. This job had the added benefit for mam of getting several of us out of the house for at least two hours.

Christmas Eve would dawn at last and with it came special jobs for dad. Although a large family and somewhat poor, we ate well

as dad bred rabbits and chickens for meat and eggs and grew all our vegetable requirements on our allotment alongside the railway tracks. On Christmas Eve we would accompany him to the allotment and with frozen fingers pick brussel sprouts and pull carrots for dinner. Next, we would callously watch as he wrung the necks of a couple of chickens, tied their feet to the clothes line and plucked them, fluffy down attaching itself to our hair and clothes in the cold damp air. Equally absorbing was watching him draw the innards on the scrubbed pine kitchen table. There was nothing squeamish about us children. Living as we were a semi-rural life, we could pat a rabbit one day and eat it the next with equanimity knowing this was the natural progression of things. Hunger does indeed make good sauce.

As darkness fell dad would trim the wick on the oil lamp and set it in the outdoor privy, not to light our way, but to ensure the water in the toilet bowl didn't freeze solid!

Mam meanwhile had been busy boiling water on the kitchen range and bringing the tin bath in from the usual place on a hook in the shed. It was placed in front of the hearth and in turn, always starting with the youngest and ending with dad, we were scrubbed clean, the water getting increasingly scummy as time went by. Mam would scrub the baby and toddler and turn them over to the older girls to dry, powder and clothe while she got on with scrubbing the next child.

Dressed in our nightwear we would have a quick tea of warm milk and bread sops sprinkled with sugar before climbing the stairs to bed. Childish daytime squabbles forgotten, we would tumble two, sometimes three to a bed, bodies twined round each other for warmth and would soon be fast asleep, sunk deep in the feather mattresses, stone hot water bottles at our feet.

While peace reigned upstairs this was not a time for mam and dad to rest. Mam would place a complete set of clothes for each child in separate piles ready for midnight Mass. These clothes, usually hand-me-downs and often neatly repaired, having previously been scrubbed spotless in the stone sink in the kitchen, now had the finishing touches put to them with a flat iron heated on the kitchen range. Mam always tested the heat of the iron by flicking a drop of water onto the flat surface. If the droplet bounced, the iron was at the correct temperature. A folded rag wrapped around the handle kept mam's hand from touching the hot metal but it meant she was always enveloped in a smell of scorching rag while she ironed.

Meanwhile dad would kneel on the brick-paved kitchen floor and polish our long line of shoes until the uppers gleamed most respectably. Woe betide any of us who appeared at midnight Mass in a dishevelled state. Next he would carefully inspect the soles for holes and any shoe found wanting would be traced around on pieces of cardboard kept especially for the purpose. When cut out, these cardboard inner soles would be slipped into place inside our shoes and would last us the mile and a quarter walk each way to Mass – as long as it wasn't raining!

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Judith Dunn's childhood memories cont'd

Once we were woken it was all hustle and bustle until we were ready to leave, rugged up against the cold. The latest baby was tucked deep inside the high-wheeled pram with the current toddler at the foot. The next two in ascending age held on either side of the pram, leaving us older ones to skitter about, appearing and disappearing in the soft glow of the gas lamps in the street. Electricity did not reach our area until I was in my teens so I have clear memories of the lamplighter weaving his way up the street on his bicycle, balancing his long bamboo pole in one hand and in one deft movement, pulling down the switch that lit each of these lamps as he cycled slowly past on his zig zag route.

Eagerly we sought out frozen puddles and, unmindful of the cardboard footwear or the pain of later chilblains, we listened to the satisfying crack of breaking ice. Almost as good to our ears was the crunching noise made by walking on grass rimed stiff with hoar frost. Eleven-thirty would find us in our pew ready for half an hour of carol singing before Mass to set the Christmas mood. The next hour was pure enchantment for me, gazing at the crib bathed in the soft glow of candle light, enveloped in incense and joining in the rhythmic rise and fall of chanted Latin responses. Latin has remained a magic language for me. I sleep even now with a book of Medieval Latin Lyrics on my bedside table. Such is the power of childhood impressions.

After a quick, "Merry Christmas" to others outside our church, (a corrugated iron building hastily erected beside the bombed out shell of our regular church), our large Irish community set out for their homes, some stopping to collect their wayward men still carousing in "The Harp of Erin."

Though excited, it was no trouble to get us into bed as everyone knew Father Christmas NEVER came while anyone was still awake. However tired we seemed at this time, someone always managed to wake during the night and then we were all up and a general exodus ensued as we made our way to dad and mam's room to examine our gifts. Father Christmas was very practical in our house and left dad's stocking full of a two-penny bundle of faggots and some coal to light the fire. There was also a shiny shilling for the gas meter in case the money ran out and the light switched off. Although candles sufficed in our bedrooms, the master bedroom had a gas light which invariably ran out at inopportune moments.

Dad would light the fire and we would all sit on the floor on rag rugs made for us by Grandad who lived next door. Our stockings always held a tangerine, an apple and some nuts in their shells, besides small gifts. Lovingly knitted mittens or white cotton gloves for summer, wooden toys made by dad, and always books — *Boys or Girls Own Annuals* for the younger ones and a novel for older readers. My bookshelf still contains battered editions of the *Mill on the Floss*, *Sense and Sensibility* and several books by Thomas Hardy and Dickens.

I only grasped the poignancy of one Christmas with the value of hindsight. That year mam lost her winter coat, a much remarked upon event in our cold climate. It was a distinctive dark purple in colour, almost black, with an unusual textured weave. That year several of us received hand-made soft animal toys, — dark purple in colour, almost black. with an unusual textured weave.....

Everything minutely examined and exclaimed over, we would at



Judith has no photos of family Christmases, commenting, "We seldom had pictures taken when we were young – a camera was a rare thing." Luckily, she located one of the family, circa 1957/8, prior to heading off to a Scouting function.

Right to left: Parents Eric and Eileen Veal, Jennifer Mary, Janice Margaret, Judith Madeline, Michael John (reverse of initials being a boy) Jacqueline Marie, Ursula Jane. (Son John is missing from the group.)

Mum gave birth to all of us at home. For the last birth, Mum had a good Irish Catholic nurse attend her. The nurse got out the Bible to see which saint's day the baby was born, on so she could be named after that saint. It was St Polycarp's Feast Day! Mum, good Catholic that she was, would not call the baby Polycarp, so after a verbal tussle the baby was called after the local nuns, the Ursulines instead.

last gather round dad and he would read to us the first chapter of one of the classical novels so recently received. This reading time would be repeated each evening before we went to bed until all the new books had been read and we reverted to Wordsworth, Scott's poems or dad's favourite, *The Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam, considered somewhat scandalous then in a Catholic household.

Christmas Day was one long feast. No gifts from under the tree were ever opened until breakfast was eaten and cleared away. Lashings of black pudding, soda bread and fried apple rings from our apple store in the loft, disappeared in record time. Then, while we tried to solve new jigsaws or tackled French knitting outfits made from wooden cotton reels, dad smoothed out the wrapping paper and folded it away to be used again next year. Mam set to in the kitchen, rosy-hued and enveloped in steam, baking and boiling in time for two o'clock dinner.

And what a dinner it always was, everything but the pudding ingredients grown by ourselves. Plenty of freshly picked vegetables and potatoes from our store with the chickens seasoned with bread and herbs. The piece de resistance was always the pudding, crowned with a holly sprig and carried into the room wreathed in blue brandy flames, to be served with thick custard.

Tea was always eaten "piggy fashion" the name given to this one meal of the year when we did not sit to the table to eat. This was also the only time we ever ate in the front room, usually reserved for Christmas Day and for laying out the dead!

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Judith's Christmas memories cont 'd

Using an extra room meant an extra fire had to be lit from our scarce, rationed coal. A table cloth was spread on the floor by the fire and bowls of jelly, thin slices of bread and margarine, mince pies and shortbread were eaten while sitting cross legged round the cloth. Being unused all year, the room had a cold, damp atmosphere and this brought us close to the fire. We all thoroughly enjoyed the wickedness of not sitting up to the table to eat properly.

The time after tea was reserved for parlour games. "I spy" and "Hunt the thimble" would be followed by "The Family Coach," a game we only ever played at Christmas. Each member of the family was given a name of part of the family coach such as horses, the wheels, the postillions, the reins and the passengers. Dad then commenced to spin a yarn at a cracking pace of a family coach journey full of spills and danger. Each time a coach part was mentioned, that person had to stand up, twirl round and sit down again. Whenever the magic words, "the family coach" were mentioned, everyone had to rise to their feet, twirl round and sit down again. Such simple fun, but full of laughter as invariably one of us did not listen properly and was caught out. Although I have done no specific research into it, this game has the feel of a traditional parlour game handed down from generations previous to mine. The likes of our family would never have had a family coach, but my grandmother had been the laundry maid for Lord Radstock, our local nobility, and may have heard of the game while working there.

All too soon it was time for bed again as the next day we would be going out, and my parents would not consider inflicting a flock of overtired children on their relatives. Boxing Day was reserved for a gathering of the extended family when aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents came together in my uncle's farmhouse to take high tea together and play charades.

Amid half hearted, sleepy protests, clutching our new toys, we would climb the stairs and kneel beside our beds. With stomachs blissfully full of food and minds blissfully full of a store of good Christmas memories, we gave thanks for our day and extra thanks for our special Mam and Dad who taught us how to be poor in a monetary sense without ever being poor in spirit.



KNOWING



MATTERS

THE SONG "THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS" was An Underground Catechism

You're all familiar with the Christmas song, "*The Twelve Days of Christmas*" I think. To most it's a delightful nonsense rhyme set to music. But it had a quite serious purpose when it was written.

It is a good deal more than just a repetitious melody with pretty phrases and a list of strange gifts.

Catholics in England during the period 1558 to 1829, when Parliament finally emancipated Catholics in England, were prohibited by law, from ANY practice of their faith — private OR public. It was a crime to BE a Catholic.

"*The Twelve Days of Christmas*" was written in England as one of the "catechism songs" to help young Catholics learn the tenets of their faith — a memory aid, when to be caught with anything in *writing* indicating adherence to the Catholic faith could not only get you imprisoned, it could get you hanged, or shortened by a head - or hanged, drawn and quartered, a rather peculiar and ghastly punishment I'm not aware was ever practiced elsewhere....

The song's gifts are hidden meanings to the teachings of the faith.

The "true love" mentioned in the song doesn't refer to an earthly suitor, it refers to God Himself.

The "me" who receives the presents refers to every baptized person.

The partridge in a pear tree is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In the song, Christ is symbolically presented as a mother partridge which feigns injury to decoy predators from her helpless nestlings, much in memory of the expression of Christ's sadness over the fate of Jerusalem: "*Jerusalem! Jerusalem! How often would I have sheltered thee under my wings, as a hen does her chicks, but thou wouldst not have it so...*"

The other symbols mean the following:

- 2 Turtle Doves = The Old and New Testaments
- 3 French Hens = Faith, Hope and Charity, the Theological Virtues
- 4 Calling Birds = the Four Gospels and/or the Four Evangelists.
- 5 Golden Rings = The first Five Books of the Old Testament, the "Pentateuch". It gives the history of man's fall from grace.
- 6 Geese A-laying = the six days of creation
- 7 Swans A-swimming = the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, or the seven sacraments
- 8 Maids A-milking = the eight beatitudes
- 9 Ladies Dancing = the nine Fruits of the Holy Spirit
- 10 Lords A-leaping = the ten commandments
- 11 Pipers Piping = the eleven faithful apostles
- 12 Drummers Drumming = the twelve points of doctrine in the Apostle's Creed

Author: Fr. Hal Stockert

History Matters: Christmas Fare

Stepping further back in time to the early days of this Great South Land, Judith Dunn reveals some quite interesting and extraordinary Christmas dinners..... How would you fare with consuming some of this fare?

As we prepare cakes and puddings well in advance of Christmas to rest and improve in taste, I turned my thoughts to earlier times and the food our forefathers ate. Having pulled from my bookshelves all books detailing colonial life in journal or diary form, I turned each time to December 25 to see what was recorded about Christmas food.

1788: Captain Arthur Phillip recorded details of the first Christmas Day spent in the fledgling colony. *“Christmas Day was observed with proper ceremony. Mr Johnson preached a sermon adapted to the occasion and the major part of the officers of the settlement accepted my invitation to be entertained at dinner afterwards. In the afternoon Mr and Mrs Pugh’s house was burgled of a pound of flour.”* The last line of this entry shows food scarcity was already a problem and a pound of flour being stolen was of sufficient importance for it to be recorded in the official journal.

In **1804** the food crisis seemed to be abating as the Government Orders in Sydney Gazette noted special Christmas rations. *“Tuesday next being Christmas Day, the commissary is directed to issue an extra ration to each person on the Civil and Military Establishment. Constables, Watchmen and Overseers; one pound of fresh beef, half a pound of suet with the addition of half a pound of raisins to each Soldier’s family.....To such prisoners receiving a ration, one pound of salt pork, one pound of flour or wheat equal thereto.”* The distinction between “respectable” people and convicts is clear.

James Kelly, born in Parramatta, set out to circumnavigate Tasmania in a five-oared rowing boat in **1815**. December 25 *“Great swells rolling in from the sea, we got into a cove which we named Macquarie Harbour by giving three cheers and throwing a glass of brandy into the sea. Ate a black swan cooked in an iron pot.”* Is it probable even a second generation Irishman would throw a good glass of brandy into the sea? The journal was written for the person funding his exploration.

From 1814, all the Parramatta natives and tribes in the surrounding districts

were invited to attend the Market Place (now Centenary Square) on the day of the first full moon after Christmas. There they were treated to what became known as the annual Native Feast at which they were given roast beef, soup and plum pudding washed down with ale. The Australian newspaper in **1824** noted, *“The natives enjoyed their feast and conducted themselves altogether in the most orderly manner.”*

Many exploration parties suffered great privation as they opened up the interior of Australia. In **1844** Ludwig Leichhardt was on an overland expedition from Moreton Bay to Port Essington. His journal for 25 December noted, *“We returned to Brown’s Lagoon and entered our camp just as our companions were sitting down to their Christmas dinner of suet pudding and stewed cockatoos.”*

Explorers were sometimes able to procure the necessary ingredients to make a proper celebration but the results could be indifferent. Francis Augustus Hare arrived in Spring Creek (now Beechworth) at Christmas **1852** and set to work to make a pudding. *“I remember it as though it were yesterday. I bought the materials for a plum pudding, I forget the price of raisins but I shall never forget the pudding. We boiled it in an iron pot for twenty-four hours! – it took us a week to digest – it was as hard as a cannon ball – it lasted a long time and was something to remember.”*

In the *Letters of Rachael Henning*, the author describes Christmas **1862**. She lived with her brother Bidduph at Appin before moving to newly-opened country. *“Mr Taylor managed to come over twenty miles on Christmas morning, carrying before him on his saddle a hind-quarter of mutton for Christmas dinner..... We sat on the veranda and were rather merry and drank to absent friends in lime juice which the gentlemen warmed with brandy. Biddulph sent some to the shepherds in pickle bottles.”* Although these settlers, while isolated, were doing well, they thought of their shepherds who were even more isolated, living in the bush with the sheep and sent them a Christmas drink.

Colonel Peter Warburton left Alice Springs going west, looking for grazing

land. Eventually reaching Roeburn in Western Australia, his party only just survived.

Christmas Day 1873 *“We lie sweltering on the ground starving, and should be thankful to have the pickings out of any pig’s trough. We have fish close to us but though we deprived ourselves of the entrails of a bird as bait, they will not take it. Prejudiced cooks may not accept my advice but I am quite satisfied all birds ought to be cooked whole, extracting what you please afterwards.”*

December 26 *“Obtained a shag and two white cockatoos.”* (Eaten, no doubt, entrails and all!)

Bernard O’Reilly wrote his reminiscences in his delightful book, *Green Mountains*. *“We had ordered a leg of lamb, but when it arrived green and smelly after two days journey from Beaudesert, it was given to Superfluous Hound who decided quite correctly that Christmas had indeed come. That is why our dinner passed without a variation from the eternal corned meat.”*

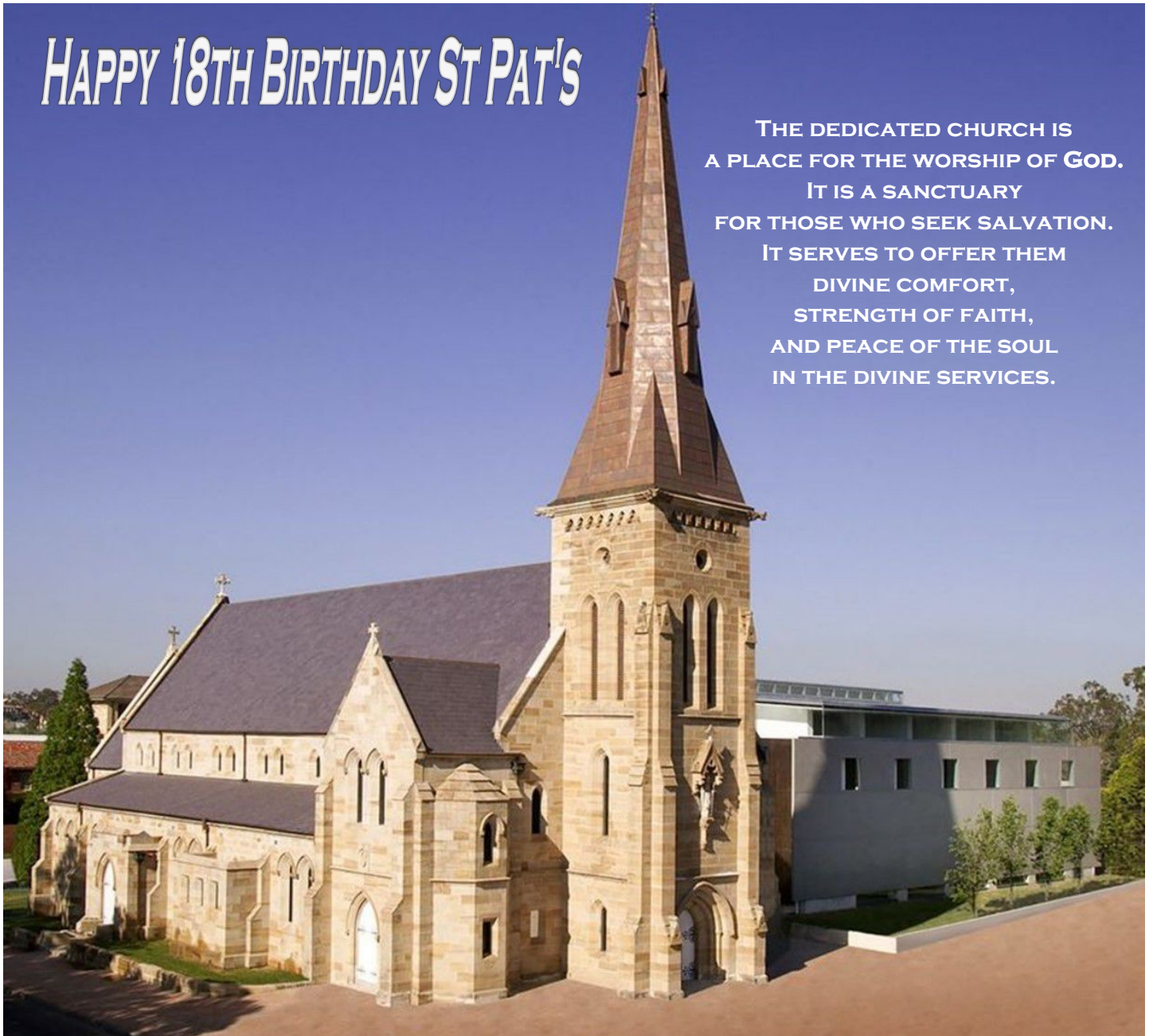
Granger’s Bakery (now the site of MacDonalds, North Parramatta) in **1907** were advertising, *“ready-made Xmas cakes — mixed fruit, seed, plain or with icing from 1s 2d per pound.”* They were a very modern bakery and installed a 5hp gas engine to assist with the baking.

In **1937** Cumberland Argus and Fruit-growers Advocate issued a Christmas supplement, mainly for gifts but Joe Belmore’s butcher shop, “in Church St and opposite the railway station” was advertising his Christmas meat specials. Corned brisket at 3 pence three farthings a pound, pork for 8 pence three farthings a pound, and young roosters for 1s 9d a pair. Small hams were noted merely as being “cheap” and could be cooked free by the butcher.

Whatever you are doing for Christmas dinner, even if there are minor disasters such as the gravy being lumpy or the pork crackling won’t crackle, your dinner will be a hundred times better than our pioneers. Raise a toast to our pioneers and thank them for making Australia as it is today.

HAPPY 18TH BIRTHDAY ST PAT'S

THE DEDICATED CHURCH IS
A PLACE FOR THE WORSHIP OF GOD.
IT IS A SANCTUARY
FOR THOSE WHO SEEK SALVATION.
IT SERVES TO OFFER THEM
DIVINE COMFORT,
STRENGTH OF FAITH,
AND PEACE OF THE SOUL
IN THE DIVINE SERVICES.



Bishop Kevin Manning was the chief celebrant at the Mass of Dedication of the new St Patrick's Cathedral on 29th November, 2003.

This saw the fulfilment of the promise made by Bishop Bede Heather that 'a new St Patrick's will rise from these ashes' (after the fire of February 1996).

The old St Patrick's Cathedral is now the Blessed Sacrament Chapel. Adjoining it is the large contemporary Cathedral. **It is the first Australian Cathedral of the new millennium.**

In the dedication prayer our new Cathedral was dedicated to its sacred purpose in the name of the triune God: it was consecrated as a place where the Holy Spirit reveals Himself. Here the Word of God would be proclaimed, and here the Sacraments dispensed.

On 29th November, 2021, the 18th Anniversary of its Dedication, Fr Chris del Rosario celebrated the 6:30am Mass. During the homily he emphasized the fact that every church when dedicated goes through its Sacraments of Initiation. It is Baptised, Confirmed and celebrates its First Holy Communion.

Before the anniversary Mass the candles were lit in the four Consecration Crosses that mark the spots where the walls were anointed during the Rite of Dedication. (Look for them.)



For those present at the Mass of Dedication in 2003, it was an unforgettable experience. So many uplifting, once-in-a-lifetime rituals to witness — like that of Bishop Kevin consecrating the huge Altar of Chinese granite with the Oil of Chrism.

On a personal note, I had the privilege of being the first person to proclaim the Word in the new St Patrick's Cathedral.

The reading was from Nehemiah. 8: 1-6, 8-10.

From the editor