

# St Pat's Matters

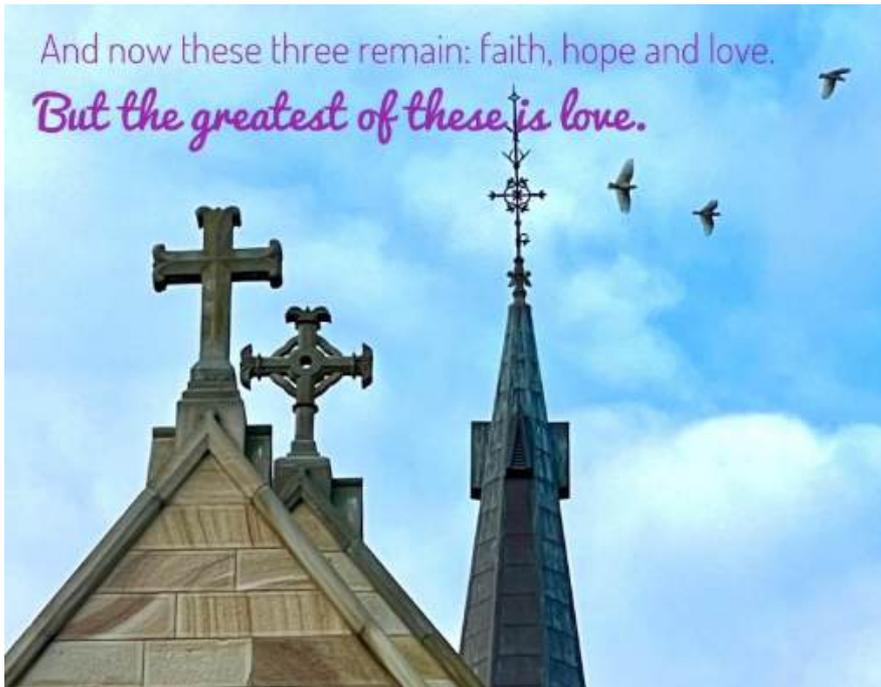
A magazine for parishioners and friends of  
St Patrick's Cathedral, Parramatta



October 2025 | Issue 123

# Faith through the lens

Capturing God's presence in everyday moments



There's something truly magical about pausing to see the world through a camera lens. A shutterbug from a young age, I can't recall a time when I didn't have a camera of some sort at hand. These days, I rely on my phone to capture moments that speak to my soul. For me, this simple act of catching an image has become a way to deepen my faith and experience God's presence in the ordinary. I feel privileged to be shown a fleeting moment – a reminder of His artistry woven into creation.

St Patrick's Cathedral has been my sanctuary of inspiration. Its arches, stained glass, and peaceful courtyards have an almost timeless beauty that draws my camera to them. Drawing on learnings from the recent Lenten Reflection Group led by Fr Robert, every image I now take tells a story – not just of the place, but of the moments I spend in quiet meditation. In fact, you can pick any image from my phone, and I can tell you how I was feeling then or what compelled me to take the photo in the first place.

Some of these images also evoke cherished memories, like a curious cloud formation over the Cathedral spire, birds flying overhead, or seeing the day moon over the word 'HOPE' on Murphy House and the church altar bathed in glorious light on Easter Sunday – unmistakable signs of hope and faith.

These snapshots remind me to find grace in the everyday and see God's fingerprints in even the smallest details.



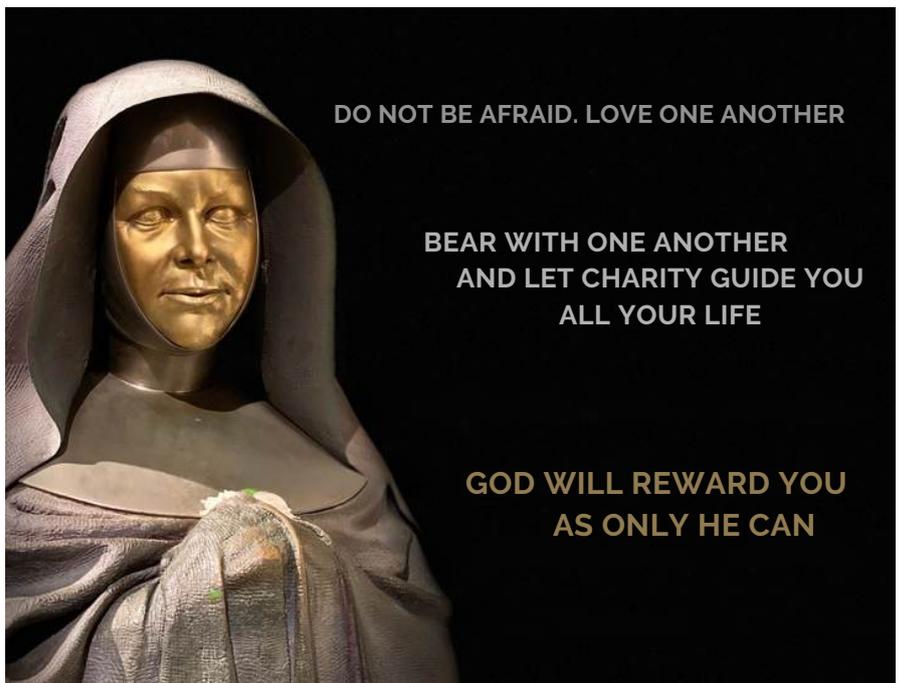
Photography has also taught me not just to see, but to truly look. As I've grown in this passion, I've learned some simple ways to compose better shots — even with a phone camera. A good friend and fellow photographer summed up some of these tips:

- Use the rule of thirds to create a compelling and eye-catching composition.
- Pay attention to the light, whether it's natural or artificial, to set the mood.
- Look for leading lines, like pathways or arches, to draw the viewer's eye.
- Experiment with different angles — sometimes kneeling or looking up can transform a shot.
- If you're feeling adventurous, you can also edit, add filters or text to your images (all within your phone), using free apps such as Snapseed. The resulting images make great personalised greeting cards, posters or bookmarks to share with your loved ones.
- Above all, capture what moves your heart, as that emotion will shine through.



Sharing these glimpses of faith through photography has been a humbling journey for me. My hope is that these images — and perhaps this article — might inspire others to pick up their phones or cameras, not to chase perfection, but to embrace the beauty of God's world in their own unique way. After all, sometimes all it takes to feel His presence is to see the world with fresh eyes.

Marian Cabrera



# Wrapped in Love

## Homelessness Week Memorial Service

*The Homelessness Memorial Service honoured those who have died in and around Parramatta in the past year. Hot food and new clothing was given out before the service began. Readings and prayers followed, led by local community and religious leaders, with music and candles contributing to the reflective atmosphere on the Cathedral forecourt.*

### Claire Pospischil reports

On Friday 8 August 2025, approximately 150 people gathered in the Cathedral forecourt for the second Parramatta homelessness memorial service, 'Wrapped in love'. The service was designed to give the Parramatta community experiencing homelessness an opportunity to remember friends who have passed in the last year, alongside people from agencies and groups who minister and support them.

Just prior to the service it was discovered that our friend Dinah had died earlier in the afternoon. Dinah was a quiet gentle soul known to many parishioners involved in volunteering at Parramatta Mission and other feeding ministries. Dinah had been living in the rotunda near the Cathedral in Prince Alfred Park. The news of Dinah's passing added a raw emotion for attendees, emphasising the experience of being without shelter.

The memorial service was planned by a collaborative group of Parramatta agencies and led by the Chancery. The Maronite Heaven on Earth ministry served dinner prior to the service, with the social justice group preparing home-made soup, served by Catherine McAuley students. I was moved by the discussions I had with the attending McAuley students, who found being at the service inviting reflection on 'wants' versus 'needs' across food, clothing and shelter.

Thanks to to Dianne Starkey and Marilyn Cook for making beautiful home-made soup and to Fr Robert for his reading and involvement in planning. Thanks also to the attending agencies: Vinnies (including students from St John XXIII Stanhope Gardens), Parramatta Mission, Salvation Army, Thread Together, Catholic Care, Heaven and Earth, St Merkorious Charity, Parramatta Marist and Catherine McAuley, plus the Diocesan social justice team for planning a reflective event. 🍀



# Meet our Parish Coordinator

I am honoured to join the St Pat's community as Parish Coordinator. As a proud Maronite Catholic, it is truly a blessing to be part of such a vibrant, welcoming, and faith-filled parish.

Faith and family are truly at the heart of who I am — they are the foundation of my life and the compass that guides all that I do. My spiritual journey has been deeply enriched by a strong devotion to Our Lady, whose presence I find both comforting and powerful. I am especially drawn to her many beautiful apparitions around the world, each offering a unique message of hope, peace, and love.

My Confirmation name is Bernadette, chosen in honour of St Bernadette of Lourdes, whose humility, courage, and unwavering faith have long inspired me. I feel a profound connection to Our Lady of Lourdes, whose message of healing and trust in God continues to resonate deeply with me. I also hold a strong devotion to Our Lady of the Rosary, whose call to prayer and deep love for the faithful invites us into closer communion with Christ and Our Lady of Lebanon, a cherished figure in my Maronite Catholic tradition who unites communities in faith.

One of my greatest joys is travelling to visit holy sites and Marian shrines around the world. These sacred places—steeped in prayer, healing, and grace—offer me a chance to deepen my faith, reflect, and renew my spirit. Each pilgrimage strengthens my connection to God and reminds me of the universal beauty of our Catholic faith.

Alongside my devotion to Our Lady, I also find great inspiration in the lives of the saints, who guide and support us through their powerful intercession and example. Saint Joseph, protector of the Holy Family and a model of humility, strength and silent service, holds a special place in my heart. I often turn to him for guidance, especially in times of uncertainty. I also admire Saint Anthony of Padua, whose deep love for Scripture and reputation as a helper in times of need have made him a faithful companion in prayer. Saint John the Evangelist, with his profound love for Christ and unwavering witness to the truth, reminds me of the call to remain close to Jesus. I have a growing devotion to Saint Bridget of Sweden, whose mystical visions and



commitment to prayer inspire a deep reverence for the Passion of Christ. And of course, the example of the Holy Family—a model of love, faith, and unity—continues to guide my own family life and vocation. These saints, among many others, are spiritual friends whose lives encourage me daily to walk in faith and trust.

Professionally, I come with a rich background as an educational leader and teacher, roles in which I have had the privilege of helping others grow, both academically and personally. I am deeply committed to nurturing growth, building meaningful relationships, and fostering a strong sense of community in every space I am part of. I believe that through authentic connection and shared purpose, we can truly live out the mission of the Church.

I am truly grateful for the warm welcome I've already received from the St Pat's community. It is a blessing to be part of such a vibrant parish, and I'm excited to journey together as we grow in faith, strengthen our community, and joyfully live out the mission of the Church. 🍀

***“Never be in a hurry; do everything quietly and in a calm spirit. Do not lose your inner peace for anything whatsoever, even if your whole world seems upset.”***

*Saint Francis de Sales*

# Sing a New Song

## Children's Choir

During the July school holidays, St Patrick's Cathedral held its first-ever Children's Sacred Music Workshop—a one-day event designed to introduce young voices to the beauty and tradition of sacred music. Led by Assistant Director of Music, Mr Eric Grella, the workshop welcomed 18 children between Years 3-12 from across the Diocese for a day of singing, learning, and sharing in the joy of liturgical music.

The morning began quietly, as the children arrived with a mix of nerves and curiosity; however, as the day unfolded so did their confidence. By the afternoon, their voices rang out with clarity and enthusiasm, transforming the room with vibrant sound.

Throughout the day, students were introduced to key musical skills—such as vocal warm-ups, breath support, projection, and even singing in other languages like Latin and Greek. The repertoire included traditional sacred chants and familiar hymns as well as modern compositions, offering a rich and varied experience that deepened both their artistry and appreciation for the Church's liturgical tradition.

One parent shared: "Zoe and her friends loved the experience, and she's been singing 'Sing to the Lord a New Song' on repeat since last week! They really sounded great—it's hard to believe they only had two rehearsals and most had no prior musical experience."

Following the workshop, participants were provided with a special opportunity to lead the music at the 11:00am Sunday Solemn Mass at the Cathedral, celebrated by Bishop Vincent.

Inside the Cathedral, the atmosphere was filled with anticipation and excitement. As the children took their places and began to sing, their voices carried with confidence and joy, uplifting the liturgical celebration.

Parishioners and families were visibly moved, especially during the hymn "A Jubilant Song," which quickly became a favourite among the young singers.

Another parent remarked: "Thank you for this beautiful opportunity. Evelyn thoroughly enjoyed singing for the choir. Such a wonderful way to give praise and glory to God."

The response to the workshop was overwhelmingly positive, from both participants and their families. Many expressed a strong desire for more opportunities like this in the future. Plans are already underway for a second Children's Sacred Music Workshop in January 2026.

With such enthusiasm and talent on display, the future looks bright for young singers across the Diocese who are eager to share their gifts and grow in faith through sacred music. ☘



# Giving back

## Questions that disturbed

It goes back to my school days: while in grade 8 at the Jesuit run high school, we had a spiritual counsellor who encouraged me to join the Marian sodality, now known as "Christian Life Community." Over the years I became an active member of this CLC growing in faith and also accepting various responsibilities until my journey to Dubai for employment. For the next 25 years I was just a "practising Catholic" striving to grow in my faith but did not venture to join any parish group.

As our children were completing their high school studies and Sunday catechism, a thought disturbed me: "As I am growing old, what do I have to show about my growth in faith? What have I given back to the society which enriched me in my faith?"

### From reflection to response

The reflection that followed prompted me to become a Catechist and while undergoing the 9-month long training process, I really started to deepen in my faith. As a Catechist it became a necessity for me to prepare well and to study all related material connected with the topic that I was teaching. Subsequently, as a blessing, we Catechists initiated the Bible study program which I had desired for a long time but was not able to do. Later, as one of the facilitators for this program, I enriched myself with further knowledge and understanding of the Holy Bible.

Upon returning to native India, I continued being a Catechist and part of the Bible study program in my home parish. Last year when we migrated to Australia and settled in Parramatta, I approached the SRE Coordinator Mrs Maria Valentin and Fr Robert Riedling and enrolled myself to be a Special Religious Educator (SRE) Catechist. The initial training has helped me to understand the local requirements and the methodology of teaching to the public school children.

Catechism was just the beginning here. My wife and I were privileged to be invited for the Alpha pilot group which has now ended. It has further enriched and strengthened me in my faith.



Gaulbert Pais

As the opportunities showed up, we participated in the training for readers, Eucharistic ministers and ministers of the altar so we can assist in these ministries as well, when the need arises. We were humbled when we were invited for the washing of the feet during the Holy Thursday liturgy, which prompts us to be of more service to the Church and the community here in days to come.

Being away from my home-town, even though I miss being part of the liturgical celebrations like the feast of the nativity of Our Lady with the family meal of new harvest, solemnity of the parish feast and parish Confraternity Sunday procession, I am equally thrilled to witness and participate in liturgical events like the Red Mass and Office of Tenebrae here, which are not celebrated in India. In addition, last year we also witnessed a priestly ordination, a deacon's ordination, and a Bishop's funeral liturgy, to name a few solemn celebrations. That inspires me to appreciate the richness of our faith and its diversity across the universe.

The words of Christ, "the harvest is abundant, but the labourers are few..." (Matthew 9:37-38) even now echoes true, when we look at the need of volunteers in various parish ministries. It would be a true blessing for the church and also the individual concerned, if we make up our minds and join at least one parish ministry, be it SRE/Catechism, Credo (youth), Legion of Mary, Social Justice, Hospitality or any liturgical ministry. ☁

*Christian Life Communities are active in Australia, inspired by the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits. Their way of life invites people to encounter God in all the various aspects of ordinary everyday life, reflect on these experiences, become more aware of God's activity in these experiences, and respond in ever more authentic ways to God's desire individually and communally.*

# Sacrament of Confirmation

Congratulations to thirty young people from St Patrick's Cathedral parish who recently received the Sacrament of Confirmation after five weeks of listening, discussion and prayer in partnership with their parents, St Patrick's parish Sacraments of Initiation team and St Patrick's school.



On Saturday 06 September the young people (ranging in age from 10 – 16 years) attended Mass with their sponsors, families and friends. The Confirmation was celebrated during the Mass by Monsignor Ron McFarlane this year as Bishop Vincent was interstate and concelebrated with Fr Robert Riedling. It was a beautiful day with the young people participating prayerfully and with sincerity.

During the preparation they spent time researching the saint whose name they wished to use during Confirmation whether it was their Baptism name or another saint's name. The saints chosen were quite diverse – with traditional saints like St Joan of Arc, St Rose of Lima, St Patrick, St Matthew and St Joseph but also other saints such as St Mary MacKillop, St Sebastian and St Justin.

Thank you to all those involved with the Confirmation preparation – parents, sponsors, and teachers. Thank you also to the Sacraments of Initiation team – Fr Robert, Fr Tom, Deacon David, Franca Bonserio (St Patrick's Religious Education Coordinator) and Jessy Seba. A special thank you to the thirty young people from St Patrick's Cathedral parish community.





Isaac Barber  
Sofia Barroso  
Melissa Black  
Rebecca Black  
Emilie Blazek

Jayden Blazek  
Aldric Calalang  
Richelle Dmello  
Deon Don  
Quintus Feng

Jessica Hahm  
Monica Hahm  
Mahalia Jackson  
John Kerr  
Daniel Lawrence

Noelani Lee  
Maximilian Markovic  
Ian Mason  
Mateo Nario  
Miguel Nario

Noah Naudi  
Kayla Oliver  
Olivia Pijaca  
Brayden Ratnam  
Stacey Ratnam

Lucia Reyes-Mangabat  
Lucas San Pedro  
Esperanza Thompson  
Florentina Thompson  
Isabelle Velasquez



# Inspector of Nuisances

Local historian Judith Dunn reports

When Patrick Hayes died on January 11, 1890, his obituary filled much space in the local paper, *The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate*. Noted as the foremost businessman of the old town, he had been active in the life of Parramatta trade in one form and another for many years. His remarkable career spanned innkeeper, contractor, baker, seaman, brewer, Small Debts Bailiff, valuer, explorer of the Clarence River area, miller and lastly, Inspector of Nuisances for Parramatta Council.

Born in the colony, Hayes was educated to become a Catholic priest but did not continue in a vocation. He next turned to the sea but it did not suit his constitution. From then on he became a leader in the commercial enterprises of the colony. Hayes was one of the leaders of an expedition to the Clarence River and instrumental in setting up sawmills and pastoral activities in the area, operating a mill which was later known as Breillat's Mills. In the 1830s he settled in Parramatta and managed Messrs Tingham and Walker, a well-known merchant business.

The one part of Hayes' business life that was most outstanding has the slightest mention in his obituary. Until 1845 he ran the very successful Emu Brewery in George Street near the park gates. There was some suspicion he was distilling spirits but over several months it could not be proved, despite several snap inspections.

In December 1844, a cask of spirits was seized in Sydney with the Emu Brewery brand on it, yet, despite a thorough search, nothing was discovered. Two men stole ale from the Emu and to their astonishment very quickly became roaring drunk, despite their protests they had only stolen a little. Had they inadvertently stolen illegal spirits?

In June 1845, *The Parramatta Chronicle* was headlined "TREMENDOUS WICKED VILLANY." At last, a snap inspection had caught Patrick Hayes tasting spirits that he was running from two artfully disguised stills, one holding 300 and the other 500 gallons, with 75 gallons of completed spirits. This was the largest illicit distillery ever seized in the colony. Patrick Hayes pleaded not guilty. Unfortunately for him after a lengthy court case, he was fined £110 and £600 worth of brewing equipment was seized, an enormous penalty for the time.

After these events, Patrick Hayes became Inspector of Nuisances for Parramatta Council and was still undertaking that work when he died aged 80 years in January 1890. He was said to be one of the last links between colonial Parramatta and the mercantile life of the growing town. Hayes proved to be a man of remarkable resilience who managed to survive plunging from wealth to disgrace in business, then worked his way back into the warm regard of his fellow man through his work for Parramatta Council as "Inspector of Nuisances and Hackney Carriages." 🍀

References: CAFA, Parramatta Chronicle, Catholic Archives



Judith adds: To my delight Patrick Hayes' official bell was recently returned to Parramatta and is now in the archives of Parramatta and District Historical Society. It was bought some time ago by a person who has no connection to Hayes but liked to collect interesting items. No longer wanting it they returned it to Parramatta. The inscription on the bell is curious:

Patrick Hayes  
Parramatta Settlement  
Colony of NSW

# Stories to inspire

## Seniors at the Mary MacKillop Spirituality Centre

About 30 people from the Seniors Ministry along with Fr Robert and Pascal El-Hage gathered at the Mary MacKillop Spirituality Centre, Norwest on Monday 4 August to spend a morning reflecting on the qualities that mark our first Australian saint.

After morning tea, the group was capably led by Sr Jeanette Foxe RSJ in reflecting on several stories from Mary's life to identify some of the characteristics that make her so admirable.

Sr Jeanette made the point that Mary didn't know she was destined to be a saint; she simply did what the situation in front of her demanded, day-to-day, just as we also are called to do.

For example: In poor weather Mary was called to travel by train and boat from Sydney to the orphanage she had established at Kincumber where a boy was near death. The boy was afraid, had asked Mary to come, and was confident she would; in her presence he found peace, and died not long after.

Listening to that story and others led us to consider Mary's many qualities: we saw her as compassionate, caring, motivated, determined, courageous, generous, trustworthy, self-sacrificing and a leader in her immediate response to the needs that were presented to her. She was a real doer.

Several group members relayed their experiences of visiting places associated with Mary, such as Penola in South Australia and the Scottish Highlands where the MacKillops and McDonalds originated.

Parish coordinator Pascal El-Hage took the opportunity to introduce herself and thanked Sr Jeanette on behalf of the gathering. Fr Robert presided at midday Mass, then the group enjoyed a beautiful lunch before departing the peaceful surrounds of the Centre, the former Josephite novitiate, where Mili Lee is Centre Host. ☁



*God's presence seems to follow me everywhere (1870)*

*We know not what the hidden designs of God may be (1873)*

*Take care of yourself and don't work beyond your strength (1901)*

*Keep your mind in peace whatever happens (1890)*

*There where you are, you will find God (1871)*

*Let no weariness or dryness make you discouraged (1876)*

*Ah! God was good to me. I can see it all now more plainly than ever (1897)*

# The experience of service

## Volunteering at Parramatta Mission

### Marthe Nalletamby

I have been doing some kind of volunteering for most of my life. Pre-PM (Parramatta Mission) I was already busy and wasn't looking to add another activity to my already long list. The next time there was a call for a few helping hands at the ungodly hour of 6 am, I turned up and again was welcomed like an old friend and was put to work amid other friendly volunteers. PM to me is love in action. I have a great admiration of all these men and women who have been a friendly face to those in need, feeding both bodies and souls with compassion and love.



### Lylian Francis

It's a place many call home. It's heartwarming to watch as visitors and volunteers catch up with each other or sit quietly in a peaceful corner. Parramatta Mission is Jesus' mission at heart. A place of His Grace, which is gifted through all who share it through charity, hope, mercy and friendship. The free 'Op Shop' is wonderful, but it is heart-breaking turning so many of our male visitors away because we rarely have men's clothes and shoes donated (hint: we'd love more men's clothes please).

### Hilda Pais

Listening to the stories the senior volunteers (senior by experience, not age) told me about the guests coming into the Mission revealed stories of resilience and strength that had weathered unimaginable storms. Their narratives became a testament to the capacity of the human spirit to endure and adapt, igniting a newfound spirit of empathy within me.

Even though I hate waking up very early, I find myself getting up to be at the mission by 7:15 am (I know not early for many) to help out whenever they are short-handed and it was amazing! Hanging out with the other volunteers and making tons of salad or loads of French toast or cracking boxes of eggs is a typical day at the mission. But the warmth and the friendship that we share united for a common cause are by far the most heart-warming moments for me.

The more I get to know the guests and hear their stories, the more I come to realise just how relatable their challenges were. Sometimes I tried to step into their shoes and understand what they were going through. In the end, it was knowing we had helped a guest to feel that they are welcome here without any judgement and with respect and dignity, giving them a place to be 'normal' that made it all worthwhile. I felt empowered in that I was a part of something far bigger, far greater than myself.

Working at the Mission has taught me a few things, to appreciate what I have and to listen. It has grounded me when times get rough and inspired me to look for the good in people and things. This, to me, is the power of community service. And this, to me, is what it means to make a difference.

### John Lowe

The role of a volunteer at PM is to serve the poor, the homeless and the lonely, through the preparation of meals, the handing out of clothing to those in need and vegetables and bread. Support services are also available, such as Centrelink and accommodation.



When lunch is served Monday to Friday, there may be anywhere up to 150 clients who are poor, homeless or simply lonely who walk through the doors. Without PM, where would these clients go? Some of these clients are victims of domestic violence or other abuses, homeless because of crippling financial debt or bankrupt through failed business.

I believe that PM gives back hope to those who may have lost hope somewhere in life. It has been a blessing for me to meet so many other wonderful and dedicated volunteers who provide hope for those in need through positive interaction, empathy and caring.

### Lucy Koelmeyer

I spent much of 2024 praying for community, meaningful relationships and the opportunity to put my faith into action. These prayers were answered in abundance when I was invited to serve at Parramatta Mission.

A highlight has been the sense of community and belonging I have quickly found within the volunteer group. We have so much fun together serving food and interacting with the guests. We also have lots of laughs in the kitchen. I am inspired by the dedicated volunteers who give so much of themselves to the Mission every day.

It brings me great joy knowing I have made a small contribution to the lives of those needing assistance around our parish. However, the biggest joy has been my heart transformation. Prior to Parramatta Mission, I was quick to judge and saw outreach opportunities as separate to my faith. This worldview has been smashed to pieces as I now see my faith and service as inextricably linked. Volunteering has prompted me to reassess my priorities and selfish tendencies, creating more space for Jesus' love that I aim to share with others. My hope is that guests accessing Parramatta Mission feel seen and heard, whether through a smile, a listening ear or a hearty meal.

I started at Parramatta Mission to give of myself, yet the Mission has given me more than I could have imagined.

### Clare Carrington

Volunteering at Parramatta Mission has shown me that we're not just providing a meal, we're providing connection. A smile, a kind word, a shared laugh, or simply remembering someone's name can bring a moment of dignity and warmth to a person who may not experience that anywhere else. As a Catholic, I feel a strong call to serve those who need it most, and this work has become a meaningful expression of my faith. The people we meet are not defined by their circumstances; many are resilient, generous and deeply grateful. And in giving my time, I've received so much in return, new friendships with fellow volunteers, and a humbling reminder of what really matters.



This experience has grounded me and helped me to step outside of myself, shifting my focus from the trivial worries of daily life to something far more meaningful. It brings me joy to start my mornings in service, and with my workplace just down the road, I have no excuse not to give in this simple way. I hope to continue volunteering for years to come; it's become a source of strength, perspective and genuine connection in my life.



### Mitch Gourlay

In July last year when I started volunteering at Parramatta Mission, I thought I was simply giving my time to help others. What I didn't expect was how much I would receive in return – laughter, friendship, perspective and purpose.

Each shift brings something different. Sometimes it's sharing a conversation over a warm meal, preparing hot beverages, or just being there to listen. There's a sense of community at Parramatta Mission that's hard to describe: it's welcoming, real and filled with moments that stay with you.

There are challenges, but they are far outweighed by the rewards. The smallest acts of kindness can make a big difference, and seeing someone's face light up because they feel seen and valued is the reason that keeps me returning each week.

It's not just about service; it's about connection and that's what you are promised while volunteering at Parramatta Mission. 🌱

"If Christ shows us the face of a compassionate God, then to believe in him and to be his disciples means allowing ourselves to be changed and to take on his same feelings. It means learning to have a heart that is moved, eyes that see and do not look away, hands that help others and soothe their wounds, shoulders that bear the burden of those in need." - Pope Leo

# Apha to Omega

## Anne-Marie on the Alpha experience

One Sunday I was early for Mass and I was approached by Dianne Starkey who offered me a brochure. I had taken the Alpha course many years ago and found it a wonderful way to connect with people I had seen in the parish but didn't know their names. I thought this might be a wonderful way to meet new people and rekindle my faith Journey. Well, I wasn't disappointed!

The hosts really went all out to make sure everyone felt welcome. There was mingling, games to break the ice, and then slowly, slowly, after sharing a meal together, we watched some lovely videos that asked thought-provoking questions about what gives life purpose and meaning, what is happiness, and who is God. As the weeks went on, the questions began to drill down into what it means to be a Christian.

I must mention that this course isn't just for those who already have found God, it is also for those who just don't know and want to find out more.

The videos were not too long, but just long enough to make me think about my personal relationship with God. It made me realise that my Faith was such a wonderful gift, one I had taken for granted for too long. It made me want to build up that gift and use it to its fullest potential.

### **Humbling, enriching, strengthening**

Sharing insights and stories with team members was a beautiful way to experience Faith through the eyes of others, finding out what worked for them, their struggles and knowing that I was not alone. As we built up trust, we helped each other grow, each week a little step further along the journey.

The highlight for me was the Holy Spirit weekend. Humbling, enriching, strengthening, it was a transformative experience, that I was blessed to have had the opportunity to experience. I felt a healing change within myself, and I can only describe it as joyful.

When I started Alpha, I must admit to feeling somewhat lost in my direction in life. I can say that as the weeks went on, that subsided and the reflection that I went through made the future seem much brighter and clearer.

I am not saying that Alpha has all the answers but it will ask guiding questions that, when pondered, can direct our path. I believe that it is in learning from the people we meet along the way and experiencing the changes that take place within ourselves as we travel that path, that we can grow to become better versions of ourselves and help others.

I would encourage you all to try the Alpha Course. It is just the beginning of a beautiful journey! ✨



Anne-Marie (L) with her table group



Group leaders pray before each session



Catering team

# Parramatta multicultural stew

## Too many cooks? Not at all!

### Mili Lee reports from the hot stove

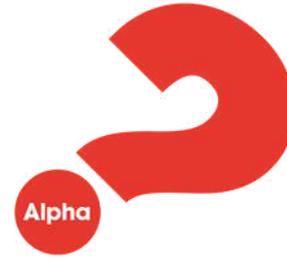
Each Wednesday afternoon, around 4.30pm, the kitchen at St Patrick's Cathedral Parish comes alive. Pots are clanging, chopping boards are busy, and the smell of garlic, onions, and spices fills the air. This is when the Alpha catering team gathers — seven faithful ladies (and a few others who join when they can) — to plan, prepare, and cook the meal that will be shared later that evening.

Meal planning is always an adventure. Shopping lists are written, dishes are debated, and cultural food memories inevitably sneak into the conversation. Recently, the spotlight fell on that hearty Irish classic: the Irish stew.

For the uninitiated, a traditional Irish stew is simple — lamb or beef, potatoes, onions, carrots and perhaps a little parsley. No frills. No extras. And certainly no ginger.

But when you have a multicultural kitchen crew, things take a creative turn.

I was quite adamant that a good stew must have ginger. Imagine my surprise when I was told, kindly but



firmly, that the moment ginger goes in, it is no longer an Irish stew. At that point, I had apparently transformed it into an Asian-infused creation.

Then someone else added a vegetable not usually found in Irish stew. Another variation followed. Before long, what started as an Irish stew became something altogether new — a dish full of substitutions, alterations, and joyful meddling.

At the end of the night, we looked at the steaming pot and smiled. “This is no longer Irish stew,” someone said. “This is Parramatta Multicultural Stew.”

And you know what? It was a hit. On a cold winter's evening in Parramatta, bowls were filled, spoons clinked, conversations warmed, and people went back for seconds.



What happened in the kitchen that night is exactly what happens in community. Each of us comes from different places. We carry different gifts, cultures, and “flavours.” On their own, they are beautiful — but when we dare to put them together, when we are courageous enough to add our own spice and generous enough to taste another's, something marvellous is created.

That stew — no longer strictly Irish, nor strictly Asian, nor belonging to any one tradition — became a mirror of who we are as a parish: a multicultural family, blending our lives into one dish of faith, hospitality, and joy.

So next time you sit down to a meal, remember the words of St Paul: “Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it” (1 Cor 12:27). Each of us brings our own flavour, and in Christ, all these flavours blend into one banquet of beauty and grace. - Mili Lee 🍀

*Simple Irish stew recipe available on request*

# Spring bazaar

## Supporting Open Arms of St Patrick's

The Cloister was alive with activity on Sunday 14 September in perfect Spring weather as people from near and far gathered for fun and food in support of a great cause.

The support given by parishioners and others (including a group of year 10 students from Parramatta Marist) was also deeply appreciated. Over 70 volunteers had a joyful day working together for a great cause, unflappably managed by the bazaar organiser Dianne Starkey, Open Arms group coordinator.

Volunteers did all the work that goes into preparing and running such an event: the planning, sourcing wonderful raffle prizes and other donations, gathering plants and books and DVDs and craft items and lots of bric-a-brac for sale, arranging for the jumping castle, the visit of the Parramatta Fire Brigade, heritage Corvette display, cooking the barbecues and more! Truly something for everyone. And of course all the setting up and cleaning and packing away at the end.

Most of the food and other goods sold at the bazaar were donated by many of our parishioners, and the labour was freely given. The hire costs for the gelato bar and the jumping castle were covered by a donation and sponsors provided raffle prizes. Hindu friends donated delicious Indian food. The prizes in the ring toss were donated. Our face painters worked for free and supplied the face paint. The plants were donated by a number of wonderful people with green thumbs. Our oranges came from Di Smith's mum's orange trees. Claire Pospischil and her assistants made, donated and sold the preserves.

The money raised is going to the Open Arms of St Patrick's. Five people (three from the parish) have taken on the government-required responsibilities, applying to the Commonwealth to sponsor a refugee family on behalf of the parish through the CRISP program.

The family with two children aged eight and three, displaced from Ethiopia, is due to arrive soon. With support from parishioners and the Parramatta community, they will have emotional and practical assistance for their first 12 months in Australia.





## Trivia night

On Saturday 26 July 2025, approximately 100 parishioners and friends gathered in the cloister hall for the 2025 parish trivia night. There was plenty of friendly banter between competing tables as attendees tested their thinking skills and enjoyed a convivial night of company.

Fr Tom and Clare Carrington were the event MCs. Fr Tom's bird impression will be long remembered by those attending.

The trivia night raised \$2,582!

Thanks to Anna Cox the quiz maestro, the social justice group for donating prizes and coordinating the event, Peter and Brendan the markers, Aileen for the online booking, and to parishioners and friends who baked goods and supported the evening.



## Carwash

Just four weeks later on Saturday 23 August there were more baked goods which attracted enough drivers of dirty cars to raise over \$1,000! Students from Parramatta Marist were on hand again putting in the work.

Other Parramatta Marist students are helping some of our ministry leaders prepare short videos about their activities and to inspire new people to join. Coming soon to a screen near you! 🌱



# Sound and video upgrade

## Fr Robert tells the story

Those of you who are regulars at the Cathedral will know that over the past few months we have had a new sound system installed here which, based on the feedback I have received from a few people, seems to have made a considerable improvement to the clarity of the sound, particularly when individuals are speaking through one of the main microphones or through a lapel microphone.

There was clearly a need for a major overhaul of the sound system. The system that has been in use until now was installed at the time of the building of the new Cathedral in 2003. Of course, one of the difficulties in the Cathedral is that we have a large, cavernous space with a high ceiling and no soft surfaces (except the parishioners). This means that sound bounces around the area creating distortion, a problem that has been prevalent since the new building was consecrated in November 2003.

Fr Peter Williams, who has a long history with the Cathedral and a love for the building and the liturgies that take place in it, was instrumental in organising the overhaul of the system and securing Diocesan funding for the project at a cost of well over half a million dollars. Let us be grateful that the Diocese was willing to fund this project as it is a cost that would be very difficult for the parish to bear without taking out a loan. Geoff Officer, CFO of the Diocese, approved the application and it was, of course, signed off by Bishop Vincent.

Sitting in the Cathedral and looking up, it is easy to think that all that the work undertaken was restricted to the installation of new speakers. Nothing could be further from the truth! Certainly, the visible changes from the point of view of the parishioner are obviously the eight new speakers (bespoke) that hang from the ceiling, but behind the scenes, a lot of “invisible” work was done which involved the stripping of the old hardware in the A/V cupboard, which was outdated and restricting the possibility of any further improvements. For the new speakers to be effective, new hardware and software was necessary.

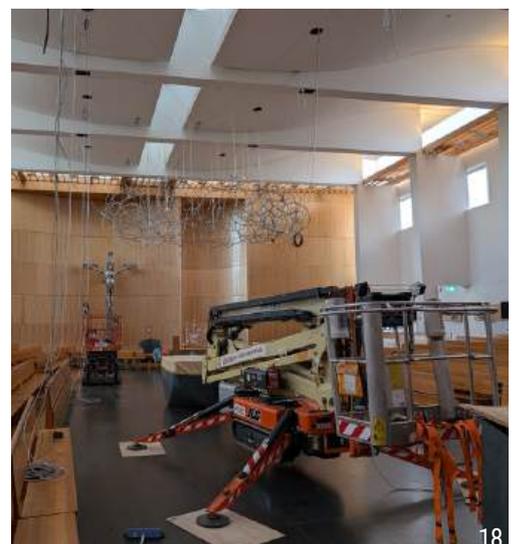
And it wasn't only the Cathedral that had improvements made to it – the chapel too had new speakers installed which has brought about improvements in clarity in that space too.

I have to thank everyone for their patience during the months that the work was undertaken, both Cathedral and chapel spaces being off-limits for long periods of time, to say nothing of having lifting equipment around the place and an awful lot of dust.

One of the great benefits of the upgrade to the sound system has been a better quality of sound on the livestream that we conduct at the 11:00am Solemn Mass on Sundays, as well as other special Masses and liturgies, particularly in relation to the music. Our wonderful choir and organists put a lot of work into the producing high-quality music at the Cathedral, and it is good that their efforts are rewarded not just in the physical space of the Cathedral, but also in the digital realm. This is something that our Director of Music, Bernard Kirkpatrick, has been wanting for some time.

Another part of the project that might have escaped people's notice is that we have had several more cameras installed around the outside of the Cathedral to enable us to better broadcast more complex liturgies such as the Easter Vigil and other liturgies which involve processions outside the body of the Cathedral. Our external speakers have also been replaced and the sound thus improved.

There is more that could be said about the impact of this project and there is, in fact, still some “tweaking” to be done to fine tune the system. The improvement helps ensure that the liturgies that take place at the Cathedral into the future will be undertaken with the best possible sound to help everyone participate fully, one of the key points made in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, published at the time of the Second Vatican Council in 1963.✠



# March for Palestine

## Pat Baticic: Why I walked across the Harbour Bridge



The seeds of Palestinian support were planted in my heart in 2012 when I went on that unforgettable pilgrimage organised by Fr Robert Riedling to the Holy Land. One of my defining moments came when we visited Bethlehem. The first message I saw as we entered the walled city was “Welcome to Bethlehem. We welcome you on your journey as we welcomed the Prince of Peace. Pray for the Freedom of Palestine.” Prior to that pilgrimage, I already knew from my Palestinian friends in Australia about their struggle against occupation.

It is the destruction of the lives of little children which spurred me to walk across the Harbour Bridge on Sunday, 3 August 2025. What were once young lives looking forward to their future as human beings to grow up, to love, to have children of their own – all gone. The slaughter of the innocents must stop.



When the Supreme Court authorised the march across the Harbour Bridge, I eagerly went – rain, hail or shine. This was my fourth march in Sydney in solidarity with the Palestinian people. The organisers of the march – the Palestinian Action Group – envisaged that there would be up to 50,000 marching. It turned out to be 100,000+ people. Yes, I was saturated to the skin but not from the march itself but by the downpours getting there.

When I arrived at York Street near Wynyard Station, I met my long-time friend, Joan Suter, and we were emotionally overwhelmed at the massive crowd. I also met my Palestinian Christian friend, Honida Beram, whom I have not seen for years. What a wonderful surprise to see her. In an instant we all became united. We became Palestinian. It was wonderful to be a part of this historic walk and to be with like-minded people.

For me, it is important to stand up for what is right. I know that bad people do bad things but good people do even worse when they allow bad people to continue doing bad things.

I am very happy that the Australian government recognised the State of Palestine at the General Assembly meeting of the United Nations in September.

Will there be a two-state solution where the Israeli and the Palestinian people can live side by side in peace? I do not know. I pray that the lands where Jesus Christ was born, lived and died will one day find lasting peace.✚



On Tuesday 23 September the UN Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Territories published a report which found that Israel has committed genocide in Gaza. Former Australian Human Rights Commissioner Chris Sidoti was one of the three Inquiry members.

*“I renew my urgent appeal to the parties involved and to the international community to put an end to the conflict in the Holy Land, which has caused so much terror, destruction, and death.*

*“I call for the release of all hostages, the establishment of a permanent ceasefire, the facilitation of the safe entry of humanitarian aid, and full respect for humanitarian law, particularly the obligation to protect civilians and the prohibition of collective punishment, the indiscriminate use of force, and the forced displacement of the population.”*

Pope Leo, 27 August 2025

# Into the heart of the Church

**Thomas Do**

This past year, my family and I embarked on a journey that has changed our lives forever. After months of prayer, study, and fellowship through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), we were received fully into the Catholic Church and confirmed on Easter Sunday, 2025. That holy day sealed in our hearts the joy of finally coming home to Christ and His Church.

My wife, Stefani, was baptised as a baby in the Catholic Church but never received the Sacrament of Confirmation. I was baptised 12 years ago in a Baptist Church. In God's providence, we were blessed to be able to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation together this year.

What made this moment even more moving was what followed immediately after. Months earlier — without knowing how perfectly it would align — we had planned a family trip to Rome for the Jubilee celebrations. To be welcomed into the Catholic Church and then to walk through the Holy Doors of St Peter's Basilica felt like a personal gift from God. Praying in Rome alongside the thousands of pilgrims from around the world gave us a deep sense of belonging to something far greater than ourselves: the universal Church.

Our pilgrimage, however, carried a bittersweet note. On the very day we left Sydney, news broke of the passing of Pope Francis. We found ourselves in St Mary Major for his funeral Mass, watching the first black smoke rise during the conclave, and then hearing the announcement of Pope Leo's election as our new Holy Father just as we were boarding our flight home. To witness the Church at such a pivotal moment, right after our own reception into it, felt like the Lord was drawing us into His story in a very real way.

Looking back, I see clearly how God's providence wove everything together: the RCIA journey, our Confirmation, the Jubilee pilgrimage, and even the timing of the papal transition. All of it has strengthened our faith and filled us with gratitude. My prayer is that our lives may reflect the joy of the Gospel and that we may always live as witnesses to the hope of the Resurrection.

**Tom adds:** Our daughter, Tiffany, received the Sacraments of Baptism, Holy Communion and Confirmation last year on the feast of St Monica (27 August), at St Monica's North Parramatta, where our son, Theo, received the Sacrament of Baptism on the same day and his first Holy Communion this year, also at St Monica's. 🍀



*Do you know someone who is seeking a deeper relationship with God or a sense of belonging within the Catholic Church? Our Cathedral parish offers the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), a spiritual journey designed for adults who are considering becoming Catholic, particularly those who have not yet been baptised. It is a time of reflection, prayer, and learning, where individuals are invited to explore the richness of our Catholic faith and discern whether God is calling them to enter into full communion with the Church. For more information or to express interest, please contact the team at [rcia@stpatrcathedral.com.au](mailto:rcia@stpatrcathedral.com.au)*

# Circles of life



**Melanie Joy Magpayo writes about her journey of faith and questioning that has led her from being raised Catholic, to agnosticism, to Pentecostalism, and back to her Catholic belief**

Every now and again I have an existential crisis which stems from not knowing exactly what I'm doing with my life. But it's not all bad news: there are some days, I wake up amazed that I exist, that I am a physical being with the autonomy to think, act and do whatever it is that I want to do.

Sometimes I wonder why God put me on this earth and specifically placed me in the body and circumstances that I was born into. And don't get me wrong, as a Christian I am now extremely grateful for the life that I have received and have realised, even with its trials and tribulations, just how blessed I am. What I want to do is to live a life that is pleasing to God. I have thought long and hard about what this means and have come up with the following.

Jesus calls us to love God and to love one another as He has loved us. Jesus was friends with the poor, powerless and the outcasts. He didn't judge them, he said, "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone" (John 8:7), but did ask them to repent their ways. In saying this, there are a lot of things that I have done which without doubt in my mind would be considered not Christ-like. This occurred especially when I was going through the phase of being agnostic. Now I realise how silly it was to put such value on earthly things such as job-titles instead of loving my neighbour which God has called me and each and every one of us to do.

I am sure we have all heard the parable of the talents in the bible (Matthew 25:14-30). It tells of the master reprimanding the one who hid their talents (which was a large sum of money) because he was afraid of losing them. I think the story means to take opportunities and make good use of them; that God put us here on earth for a reason and that we should seize every opportunity that comes our way to improve our lives and improve the lives of others. ☁

**Darren Jadraque has just become a parent. He and Guada are members of the Cathedral Choir**

This year's Father's Day is different for me. A few months ago, I held my son in my arms for the first time. Since then, I have come to glimpse more profoundly how deeply God, our Father, loves me. The little things of every day, like quality time with my wife, my son's smiles and laughter, and even the simple joy of holding him close, have become reminders of God's goodness.

The Church teaches that being a father is more than a title. It is a vocation. The Catechism teaches that parents have "the first responsibility for the education of their children in the faith, prayer, and all the virtues" (CCC 2252). My son is first and foremost God's child, and it is my duty to guide him towards heaven. He may be too young to understand my words, but I know he is already watching and learning — how I try to pray, love, and serve. Catholic schools and youth groups can be great help in educating our children in the faith, but they cannot replace the daily witness of a mother and father living their faith at home.

The saints also remind us that fatherhood is not about power, but about responsibility. St Joseph shows this so well. He was the faithful and humble protector of the Holy Family. Like him, I hope to live with integrity and faith, docile to God's will, so that my son may learn virtue through my example. I am especially grateful for the example of my own Dad, whose love and care helped shape me into the man I am today.

This Father's Day, I thank God for this vocation. I pray for all fathers in our Diocese that we may lead our families closer to Christ with courage and humility. May we always look to God the Father, the source of all fatherhood, for strength and inspiration. ☁



Guada, Darren and Nicholas

### Return of the Chalice

Not since early 2020 have the laity been able to receive communion from the Chalice, but finally with health concerns no longer a barrier, we can now receive the Precious Blood at weekday Masses and the 11:00am Sunday Mass from 3 August 2025 (with extension to other Masses coming). A very long wait is ending.



### A family's walk with Christ

Attending the Feast of Corpus Christi this year was a profoundly moving experience for my family and me (Marietta Guillema). Joining the tens of thousands who walked together in faith at the Walk with Christ was not just a public declaration of our belief in the Eucharistic presence of Christ, but also a deeply personal journey of devotion. Participating in the Walk with Christ affirmed for me the beauty and power of the Eucharist: Christ made present, Christ shared, and Christ sent forth.



### Victory in the Pacific, 15 August 1945

As I (Frank Duff) compose this on 15 August 2025, I recall, 80 years ago to the day, sitting in 4th Class in St Joseph's Primary school, Merewether. All teachers were nuns, Sisters of St Joseph. The Sisters were very sure of the influence of the Blessed Virgin Mary in ending WWII, citing the great feast of her Assumption. That day became known as VP Day. The whole school was boys and girls, I think about 50/50. This was before integration; there was no discrimination - except between parishes! [Photo: Adelaide River cemetery]



### Men's Rosary group

These men, including some from the parish, meet regularly in Prince Alfred Square to pray the Rosary, and on this day in June the light fell at just the right angle for a very special effect.



Front cover: Homelessness Week Memorial Service  
Back cover: Madonna and Child, Marian Chapel



### Jubilee of Hope

Our Cathedral is one of three pilgrimage sites in the Diocese. Bishop Vincent: “Jubilee, in the biblical tradition, is about a reset in favour of freedom, equity, regeneration and alignment with God’s plan... Let this Jubilee year be an opportunity for all of us, even those who are not able to travel overseas, to reset and realign the direction of our lives.”



### Parishioner generosity continues

The food drive supporting the Jesuit Refugee Service near the Cathedral at 10 Victoria Rd never fails to elicit great generosity from our parish. Among other activities, JRS Australia offers emergency assistance, food bank support, specialist casework, community development activities, and employment assistance to asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in vulnerable situations.



### Judith Dunn knows her history

As a regular contributor to St Pat’s Matters, Judith has a seemingly endless series of fascinating stories of characters from Parramatta’s history since colonial times, with particular knowledge of St Patrick’s Cemetery and those interred there. Her wonderful storytelling ability and experience as a tour guide have been recognised by the top award in 2025 from the Australian Institute of Tour Guides. Congratulations, Judith!



### St Pat’s Matters

*We acknowledge the Burrumattagal people of the Dharug Nation, the traditional custodians of this area, and honour the spiritual and cultural wisdom of the First Peoples — wisdom grounded in care for Country, reverence for story, and a sacred connection to creation. We pay respects to Elders past and present. May we walk gently together, in justice, healing, and shared hope.*

Share your stories of Cathedral parish life at [stpatsmatters@stpatscathedral.com.au](mailto:stpatsmatters@stpatscathedral.com.au).  
Martin Graham, Aileen Bernardo, Caitlin Bernardo



**ST PATRICK'S  
CATHEDRAL**

PARRAMATTA