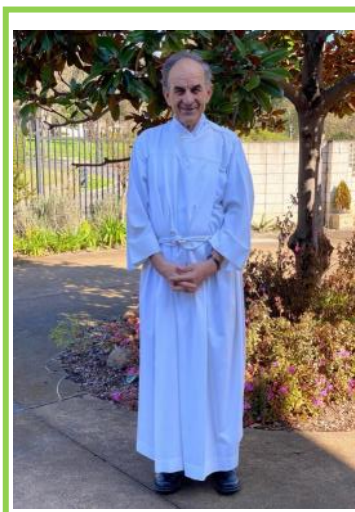


Today's readings are rather repetitive, for there is nothing major that has not already appeared on the previous Sundays. The first reading (Acts 3:13-15,17-19) has part of Peter's speech after the healing of a man at the Temple. The steadily repeating point that Jesus was raised from the dead and that the apostles (and others) are witnesses to this is made at the end of the first paragraph. The second steady point appears at the end of the second paragraph: there is forgiveness of sins, which Peter and the Church proclaim.

The second reading is again from 1 John; last Sunday we read from its concluding section, but from today and over the next three Sundays we read four extracts in their proper sequence, and thus it is the only work read cursorily this Eastertide. Today's passage reiterates that in Christ we have forgiveness of sins, or remission of debt—not only ours, but those of the whole world. Our translation says of Christ that "he is the sacrifice [hilasmos] that takes our sins away", which seems to suggest Christ was sacrificed, like an animal offering, to effect expiation for sin. However, since hilasmos appears only twice in the New Testament, both times in this letter, it is something of hapax legomenon, leaving the intended nuance unclear. It is used in the Septuagint a mere seven times, but its compound exilasmos eighteen times. Many instances in this older usage properly translate as atonement or refer specifically to Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, but in two, Psalm 130(129):4 and Daniel 9:9, it translates a rarer Hebrew word [seliyh a] that has only three instances, the other being Nehemiah 9:17, meaning each time forgiveness. We must consider the possibility that John is not saying Jesus is a sacrifice offered by someone in the way that word usually means, but that "he is forgiveness for our sins". This may be supported by its instance in 1 John 4:10, in the reading on the Sixth Sunday of Easter this year (B), which also more precisely translates as "This is that love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as forgiveness for our sins." This might also be rendered Sign/Sacrament of forgiveness or as conciliation.

The gospel reading, Luke 24:35-48, has remarkable similarities to the two parts of John's narrative told over the two preceding Sundays. It picks up from the pericope read on this in year A and on Easter Wednesday, that is, of the encounter on the road to Emmaus. Here again we hear of Jesus suddenly appearing in the midst of the disciples, greeting them with "Peace be with you", and showing them his (wounded) hands and feet. As with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, Jesus opens to the awe-struck disciples the Law and the Prophets, but here adding also the Psalms, so they may understand that the Scriptures speak of him, his death, and his resurrection. It concludes with the constantly repeating point: forgiveness of sins is to be preached to all nations in his name, and they are witnesses to this.

The consistent thread through all three readings, and across these Sundays, thus concerns the importance of the apostolic witness to the resurrection, and the charge to proclaim (and effect) the forgiveness of sins, the remission of debt.



Dear Parishioners,  
Father Zvonimir has been with us for the last four years. He has done wonderful pastoral work and touched many people in his own ways. He was very good to our public-school children as well as children and staff in our own schools. He worked very hard for the good of everyone. Now after so many years of hard work, he is going for his sabbatical leave for a few months and upon his return he will move to another place.

There is no doubt all of us will miss him in our parish. To thank him and appreciate the great service he has done to the community of St. John XXIII, we will have a thanksgiving mass at 10:30am, the 28<sup>th</sup> of April, followed by a morning tea. Let us all come together on that day to give him a farewell party. Please bring a plate for sharing.

FR. Jolly

### Our Parish Mission

*The Parish of St John XXIII is a faith community with the Eucharist as its heart. Inspired by John XXIII's prophetic opening of the windows of the Church, we welcome the fresh air of the Holy Spirit, inviting every person to share in the responsibility of enriching the life and faith of our community by sharing their gifts and talents."*

#### Mass Times

<b>Mon</b>	8:30am
<b>Tues-Fri</b>	9:15am
<b>Sat</b>	9.00am, 6pm Vigil
<b>Sun</b>	7:30am, 9am, 10:30am, 6pm
<b>Holy Cross Primary School</b>	
<b>Wed</b>	9:15am during school days

#### Masses of Devotion

<b>1<sup>st</sup> Tues</b>	7.30pm Novena Mass <i>Our Lady of Perpetual Help</i>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Fri</b>	7:30pm Novena Mass <i>Sacred Heart of Jesus</i>

#### Exposition + Benediction

<b>1<sup>st</sup> Fri</b>	after 9.15am 7.30pm
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#### Reconciliation

<b>After the weekday masses</b>	
<b>Sat</b>	after the 9am mass until 10.30am 5:15 - 5:45pm before the Vigil Mass or upon request

#### Sacraments

<b>Sun</b>	12pm Baptism by appointment
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#### Prayers

<b>Mon</b>	7.30pm Christian Meditation <i>Frances Pegram 0417 406715</i>
<b>Tue</b>	7:00pm Rosary and novena prayers ( <i>Church Tabernacle</i> )
<b>Fri</b>	6.30pm Christ Catholic Community Prayer Group <i>Pauline Camilleri 0407 417039</i>

#### Praise & Worship

<b>Fri</b>	7:30pm Risen Lord Comm
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Sat</b>	7:30pm SJ23rd Prayer Grp

#### Special Blessings

<b>Blessing during masses</b>	
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Sun</b>	Birthday celebrants
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Sun</b>	Couple's Wedding anniversary

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

In the spirit of reconciliation, we acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands in which the Catholic Parish of St John XXIII and the Diocese of Parramatta sits, the land of the Darug and Gundungurra people. We would like to pay our respects to the Aboriginal Elders past, present and future for they hold the traditions, memories and wisdom of Mother Earth on which we place our feet upon today.

### Entrance Antiphon

Cry out with joy to God, all the earth; O sing to the glory of his name. O render him glorious praise, alleluia.

### First Reading

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles 3:13-15, 17-19

*You have killed the prince of life; God, however, raised him from the dead.*

Peter said to the people 'You are Israelites, and it is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our ancestors, who has glorified his servant Jesus, the same Jesus you handed over and then disowned in the presence of Pilate, after Pilate had decided to release him. It was you who accused the Holy One, the Just One, you who demanded the reprieve of a murderer while you killed the prince of life. God, however, raised him from the dead, and to that fact we are the witnesses.

'Now I know, brothers, that neither you nor your leaders had any idea what you were really doing; this was the way God carried out what he had foretold, when he said through all his prophets that his Christ would suffer. Now you must repent and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out.'

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

### Responsorial Psalm

Ps 4:2, 4, 7, 9

**R. Lord, let your face shine on us.**

When I call, answer me, O God of justice; from anguish you released me, have mercy and hear me! **R.**

It is the Lord who grants favours to those whom he loves; the Lord hears me whenever I call him. **R.**

'What can bring us happiness?' many say. Lift up the light of your face on us, O Lord. **R.**

I will lie down in peace and sleep comes at once, for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety. **R.**

### Second Reading

A reading from the first letter of St John 2:1-5

*Jesus Christ is the sacrifice that takes away our sins and those of the whole world.*

I am writing this, my children, to stop you sinning; but if anyone should sin, we have our advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, who is just; he is the sacrifice that takes our sins away, and not only ours, but the whole world's. We can be sure that we know God only by keeping his commandments. Anyone who says, 'I know him', and does not keep his commandments, is a liar, refusing to admit the truth. But when anyone does obey what he has said, God's love comes to perfection in him.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

### Gospel Acclamation

cf Luke 24:32

Alleluia, alleluia!

Lord Jesus, make your word plain to us: make our hearts burn with love when you speak. Alleluia!

### Gospel

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke 24:35-48

*It was written that the Christ would suffer and on the third day rise from the dead.*

The disciples told their story of what had happened on the road and how they had recognised Jesus at the breaking of bread.

They were still talking about this when Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you!' In a state of alarm and fright, they thought they were seeing a ghost. But he said, 'Why are you so agitated, and why are these doubts rising in your hearts? Look at my hands and feet; yes, it is I indeed. Touch me and see for yourselves; a ghost has no flesh and bones as you can see I have.' And as he said this he showed them his hands and feet. Their joy was so great that they could not believe it, and they stood dumbfounded; so he said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' And they offered him a piece of grilled fish, which he took and ate before their eyes.

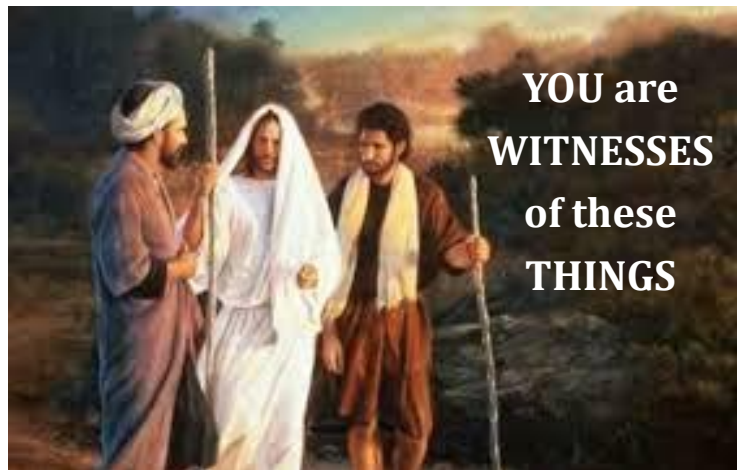
Then he told them, 'This is what I meant when I said, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets and in the Psalms, has to be fulfilled.' He then opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, 'So you see how it is written that the Christ would suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that, in his name, repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses to this.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

### Communion Antiphon

The Christ had to suffer and on the third day rise from the dead; in his name repentance and remission of sins must be preached to all the nations, alleluia.



*Our Lady of Sorrows* by Michael Torevel

**Easter Offertory**

**For God so loved the world that He gave his only Son**

[parracatholic.org/easter-offertory](http://parracatholic.org/easter-offertory)

Your gift supports our parish to share Christ's message of love and salvation with all

**GIVE TO YOUR PARISH**

## Special Intentions

### Recently Deceased:

Maurice Chambers, Katarina Chuchek, Felicidad Aliermo

### Anniversary:

Eli Chacko

### Deceased:

Helpless souls in purgatory

**Sick:** Names published with permission.

*Lord Jesus, heal me. Heal in me whatever You see needs healing. Heal me of whatever might separate me from You. Heal my memory, heal my heart, heal my emotions, heal my spirit, heal my body, heal my soul. Lay Your hands now gently upon me and heal me through Your love for me. Amen.*

Lucas Colleta, Stella Drummond, John Tipton, Jovita Castillo, John Todhunter, Manuel Sarris, Barbara Thompson, Emma Matoza, Fr Joseph, Maria Romeo, Florentina Elisura, Paco Matias, Gil Dormido, Cristina Arceo, Matteazi Family, Virginia Santos, Bev Lewis, Raymond Lanzona Jonathan Gemin, Cathie Christie, Hilary Regan Wally Atie, Jennifer Estrada, Virgie Villanueva, Valeria Laureta, Carrie Conolly, Jovita Castillo, Dudley Francis, Cindy Dadvivas, Obet Dionisio Peter McArdle, Dr Bronwyn Andrews, Jo Daly Isagani Ocampo, Cesar De Jesus, Jerry Bondoc Geoffrey Robinson, Zoey Illic, Marilyn Nalapo Mary Phillips, Jakov&Marija Franich, Pat Daly, Ben&Etta Benesa, Victor Pons, Gloria Bueno, Jack Canlas, Elizabeth Langley, Peter Dawson, Carlo Bueno, Charlie Busuttil, Anna Sebastian, Susanne Krajancic, Helen West, Louise Smith, Elsie Knapp, Perla Magculang, Ksenija Bosnic, Lenka Olivier Talija, Rosanna John Pellisery, Emma Q Fernando, Elizabeth Candame, Christina Properzi

### Thanksgiving:

If you or a family member is homebound and would want to receive communion in your home please contact the parish office.

### PRAYING in the *SILENCE* of the HEART

God, you love every human person. When we surrender ourselves to you, we come to understand that even what pains our heart is made bright by the Holy Spirit.

*Brother Roger of Taizé*

### April Church Calendar

Mon	15	8:30am - Mass
Tues	16	9:15am - Mass 7:00pm - Rosary & novena prayer to Our Lady of Perpetual Help
Wed	17	9:15am - Mass
Thurs	18	9:15am - Mass
Fri	19	9:15am - Mass 7:00pm - Holy Hour for Vocations
Sat	20	9:00am - Mass 6:00pm - Mass
Sun	21	7:30, 9:00, 10:30am - Mass 6:00pm - Mass

## Praying together

### Our Lady of Perpetual Help Prayer

*O Mother of Perpetual Help, grant that I may ever invoke your powerful name, the protection of the living and the salvation of the dying. Purest Mary, let your name henceforth be ever on my lips. Delay not, Blessed Lady, to rescue me whenever I call on you. In my temptations, in my needs, I will never cease to call on you, ever repeating your sacred name, Mary, Mary. What a consolation, what sweetness, what confidence fills my soul when I utter your sacred name or even only think of you! I thank the Lord for having given you so sweet, so powerful, so lovely a name. But I will not be content with merely uttering your name. Let my love for you prompt me ever to hail you Mother of Perpetual Help. Mother of Perpetual Help, pray for me and grant me the favour I confidently ask of you. (Then say three Hail Marys).*



**Novena mass - 7:30pm every First Tuesday**

**Join us for rosary and novena prayers every Tuesday at 7:00pm**

For the opportunity of having the statue of Our Lady visit your home, please contact Bart Sarlabus [bart.sarlabus@gmail.com](mailto:bart.sarlabus@gmail.com) or Melva Paguinto [emcipi85@yahoo.com.au](mailto:emcipi85@yahoo.com.au).

Families on the roster, if unable to pick up please don't hesitate to contact Bart or Melva.

**You may invite either Fr Jolly or Fr Zvonimir to join you in prayers at home.**

**Please organise with the parish office.**

### Rosary Statue Family Roster

Apr	2	9	16	23	30
	<i>Festejo</i>	Vasram	Sebastian	Ring	Lali
May	7	14	21	28	
	<b>Shalini</b>	Sebastian	Shanti	Gan	
Jun	4	11	18	25	
	<b>Erasmus</b>	Dennis	Tina B	Meena	
Jul	2	9	16	23	30
	<b>Dennis</b>	Tanganan	<i>available</i>	<i>available</i>	Jacob
Aug	6	13	20	27	
	<b>Barnouti</b>	<i>available</i>	<i>available</i>	Pangilinan E	

*"A family that prays together, stays together - Fr Patrick Peyton"*

### ALPHA PROGRAM

- ? Looking for a welcoming space to ask your life and faith questions?
- ? Interested in meeting other people in the parish?
- ? Want a space where you can invite your family and friends into the parish community?

St John XXIII's Alpha program is a great next step for you! We meet weekly, always with food, lots of laughter and wholesome life and faith conversation!

For program schedule or to express your interest, contact Mei and Donnie on 0432 042140 or fill up the form or scan the QR code



<https://forms.gle/sdEMryVwvhUpNPnZ7>

**Our program will start on the 17<sup>th</sup> April and every Wednesday onwards. Join us for morning tea this Sunday, 14<sup>th</sup> April and meet up with other Alpha members. Looking forward to meeting you 😊**

## Paying our debt together

We are very grateful to all our parishioners who always generously support our Parish.

**FIRST COLLECTION** supports the priests and deacons of the Diocese. **SECOND COLLECTION** goes to the running costs of our church, ministry expenses and specially to pay off our church mortgage.

A Planned giving Program is in place to help with the planning/budgeting of church expenses. The Parish Finance Committee encourages parishioners to register for direct debit or credit card deductions instead of the envelope system. An SJ23rd registration form is available at the church foyer or from the website.

scan the QR code



**Parishioners who want to make a financial contribution are encouraged to use the TapnGo machines by the entrances or online via BPoint.**

## Pastoral Ministries

The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others. Mahatma Gandhi  
We are in urgent need for volunteers to assist in the different pastoral ministries in our Parish.



### WE NEED YOU

#### ⇒ SRE Teachers

If you could spare an hour during weekdays to spread God's word teaching the scriptures to children, **WE NEED YOU**. We currently have 4 public primary schools and a high school in our parish where we hold scripture classes during school hours for 30 minutes during Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. For more information please call Asoki 0430 020265 or Renuka 0414 795814. Training and resources will be provided.

#### ⇒ GARDENERS AND CLEANERS

Now that the church is open for celebrations, its floors need to be swept of dust, cobwebs brushed off, candle stands cleaned and garden kept green. We would like to request all our volunteer cleaners and gardeners to come back and continue their ministry. For more information contact [maintenance@john23rd.org.au](mailto:maintenance@john23rd.org.au) or the parish office.

#### ⇒ MUSIC MINISTRY

If your passion is music and are interested to assist with the music ministry, you are most welcome to join and make our liturgy celebrations more alive.

Please contact Neil Mascarenhas, our music ministry coordinator via email [neil.mas@gmail.com](mailto:neil.mas@gmail.com)



We still have aprons for sale \$30.00  
Please contact Techie on 0438 201436 or the parish office for orders. Proceeds goes to our church funds

#### FLOWERS FOR THE CHURCH

If you wish to donate flowers for the altar, please phone James David on 0413 787596



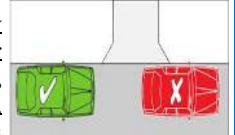
John McCabe  
Karen Green  
Julian Martin  
Suni Fernando

Mei Velasco  
Ajith Lobo  
Helen Festejo  
Rebecca Reynolds

#### DRIVEWAY/CARPARK SAFETY

For everyone's safety, please park at least 1.8 meters from the church's driveway entrance.

Your parked vehicle must not block the flow of traffic or impair the vision of other drivers getting into or out of the parking lot, basically impeding vehicles from entering, exiting or turning into or from the church's driveway.



**Vehicle safety is more than just staying alert when parking your car. Let us not become a danger to other road users.**

Remember to please always use the footpath on both sides of the church car park when walking around the church parking lot, again for safety reasons.

Please make sure when you come to Mass, let us consider our neighbours. Do not block the neighbours' driveway.



#### GOD LOVES US ALL!

Be inspired and liven up your spirit through Lanni Fides Books

Book 1: ENCOUNTERS WITH GOD THROUGH DREAMS AND VISIONS - author's testimonials of God's messages in sleep.

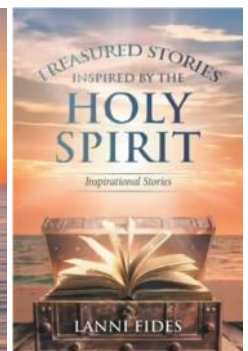
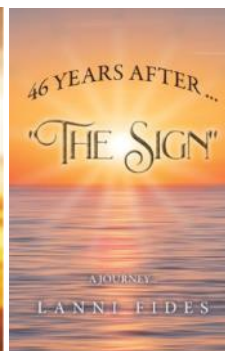
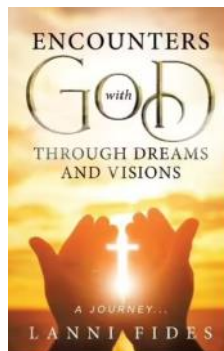
Book 2: 46 YEARS AFTER ... "THE SIGN" - author's remarkable revelation of her inspiring life story on faith, love, marriage, family, and purpose in life.

Book 3: TREASURED STORIES INSPIRED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT - inspirational stories of 22 different people in all walks of life, who experienced God's loving hands.

"Nihil Obstat" Published with Ecclesiastical Approval by Fr Wim Hoekstra, Censor Deputatus, Diocese of Parramatta

Now on sale at [amazon.com.au](http://amazon.com.au) / search lanni fides books or order directly from the author via email on [lynpangi@outlook.com](mailto:lynpangi@outlook.com). Only books 1 & 2 are in her stock, first come, first served basis applies.

Cost/book \$20. A portion of sales goes to Parish SS Project. Author's website: [www.lannifides.com.au](http://www.lannifides.com.au)



#### COLUMBARIUM

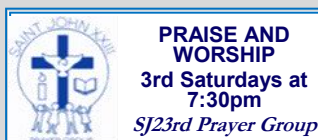
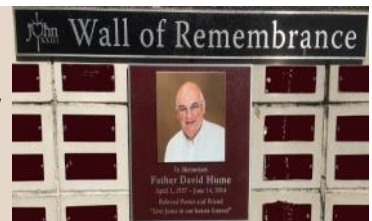
For our parishioners who are planning to buy a Niche, do so without delay, because we always want to prioritise members of our parish who wish to buy the Niches.

For further information please contact the Parish Office.

#### MEMORIAL WALL

The wall in front of the church is devoted to the memory of our deceased family and friends, especially if they are buried overseas. For any enquiries please email [columbarium@john23rd.org.au](mailto:columbarium@john23rd.org.au)

The plaques cost \$500.00



## Community Events



We are organizing some mini events to contribute to our much needed church funds but **most especially** to boost our parish community engagements. It's about time to get together, know each other and begin to build up our Parish Community of St John 23rd.

We invite our different cultural community to host a Saturday Vigil or Sunday mornings mini event after our mass celebrations for a full community involvement. We encourage our parish community to support these mini endeavour.

Any other suggestions for church fanfare, activities or just availability of support are most welcome and greatly appreciated. Please contact either Nanette - 0404 465600 or Techie - 0439 201436.

**JOIN US,  
ENJOY WITH US**

**UPCOMING  
EVENT/S**

**Save the dates in  
your diary**

### THANK YOU!!

Firstly, thank you to our Indonesian Prayer Group for hosting an Indo Sate mini fundraising. It was definitely another delicious spread. You know it's good when you run out of serving.

Thank you to all who supported this endeavour and hopefully had their bellies full.



### YOUTH MINISTRY

*"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" Philippians 4:13*



For all youth ministry enquiries  
✉ [blaze@john23rd.org.au](mailto:blaze@john23rd.org.au)  
Follow us  
[www.facebook.com/blazeyouthsj23/](https://www.facebook.com/blazeyouthsj23/)  
<https://www.instagram.com/blazeyouthsj23>

#### REGISTRATION FORM

BLAZE youth group is an initiative from Stanhope Parish to encourage community amongst the youth. It is a space for encouragement and open faith talk. Our sessions focus on one relevant theme each term. We start the night with casual conversation and dinner followed by games and then a faith-based talk, concluding with a discussion.

We encourage all youth from Year 7 to Year 12 to join in on the fun, meet like-minded people and gain a deeper understanding of their faith.

Sessions run from 7pm to 9pm every second Friday throughout the school

If you would like to come along to one of our sessions, please contact the team at [blaze@john23rd.org.au](mailto:blaze@john23rd.org.au)

### OUR PARISH SCHOOLS

**Catholic Early Learning Centre**  
160 Perfection Ave Stanhope Gardens  
☎ (02) 9852 0585  
✉ [celstanhope@parra.catholic.edu.au](mailto:celstanhope@parra.catholic.edu.au)  
🌐 [www.celstanhope.catholic.edu.au](http://www.celstanhope.catholic.edu.au)

**Holy Cross Primary**  
49 Meurants Lane, Glenwood  
Principal: Louise O'Donnell  
☎ (02) 8664 7100  
✉ [holycross@parra.catholic.edu.au](mailto:holycross@parra.catholic.edu.au)  
🌐 [www.hcglenwood.catholic.edu.au](http://www.hcglenwood.catholic.edu.au)

**St John XXIII Catholic College**  
160 Perfection Ave Stanhope Gardens  
Principal: Dr Peter Webster  
☎ (02) 9852 0500  
✉ [stmarks@parra.catholic.edu.au](mailto:stmarks@parra.catholic.edu.au)  
🌐 [www.stjohn23.stanhope.catholic.edu.au](http://www.stjohn23.stanhope.catholic.edu.au)

Youth Coordinator	Asst Youth Coordinator	Youth Leaders		
Amanda Lee 0413 545 318	Caitlin Green 0425 579 594	Taylor Coutinho Natasja Surjanto Brendan Weber	Charlotte Todhunter Anna Todhunter	Johnathan Soosaipillai Earl Carvalho

### MORE YOUTH GROUPS

CRL (Community of the Risen Lord)		YFC (Youth for Christ)	
Rojith de Silva 0405 9563210	Nimeshi Fernando 0417 101009	Vince Erasmo (International) 0406 253698	Jonathan Montaos (Australia) 0401 478733

## Explaining why Catholics pray to saints

At some point during your faith journey, you've likely been asked a question somewhere along the lines of "why do you Catholics pray to saints?"

Saintly devotion is an integral aspect of our faith. But it can be perplexing to non-Catholics who may not fully understand this practice. To bridge the gap and help those in your circle comprehend the role of saints in Catholicism, it's essential to explain the rich tradition, purpose and significance behind this act of veneration.

### The Communion of Saints

Saintly devotion is so central to Catholicism that it's embedded, word for word, in the Apostle's Creed – which sums up the core beliefs of all the faithful.

To explain the concept of praying to saints, you can start by introducing the idea of the communion of saints. This is a fundamental belief in Catholic theology that recognizes the interconnectedness of all members of the Church, whether they are living on Earth, in purgatory, or in heaven.

Catholics believe that canonized saints, who are individuals recognized by the Church for their exceptional holiness, continue to be a part of this communion even after death. When Catholics pray to saints, they are reaching out to these holy individuals, seeking their intercession and guidance in their relationship with God.

It should be noted: the Church teaches all people in heaven are saints. But some are officially designated as having lived lives of heroic Christian virtue and are thus worthy of imitation and veneration.

### Intercession, not worship

It's crucial to clarify that Catholics do not worship saints.

Worship is reserved exclusively for God. Instead, when Catholics pray to saints, we are asking for their prayers and intercession on our behalf.

Just as you might ask a friend or family member to pray for you during a difficult time, Catholics believe that saints can intercede on their behalf with God due to their closeness to Him.

By doing so, we express their belief in the power of prayer and the understanding that saints can empathize with our struggles.

"St. Paul" by Giovanni Francesco Barber, also known as Guercino

### Role models and inspiration

Another way to explain the practice of praying to saints is by highlighting the part they play as role models and sources of inspiration.

Saints are not just abstract figures from the past; they are individuals who led virtuous lives, faced challenges, and overcame them through their faith. Their stories can serve as a source of inspiration and guidance in our own spiritual journeys.

By praying to saints, we seek to emulate their virtues and gain their guidance in living a more Christ-like life.

### Specialized intercessors

Catholics often pray to specific saints who are associated with particular concerns, professions or circumstances.

For example, St. Anthony is the patron saint of lost items. St. Jude is known as the patron of desperate causes. St. Paul is patron of missions, writers and publishers. St. Thérèse of Lisieux is the patron saint of missionaries.

This personalized aspect of devotion to saints allows us to seek intercession for specific needs or challenges we may be facing.



### The greatest saint

Mary holds a unique and revered position among all the saints. As the Mother of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, she has a role unlike that of any other saint. Mary's significance can be understood in several ways:

**Immaculate Conception:** The dogma of the Immaculate Conception states that Mary was preserved from original sin from the moment of her conception. She went on to live a life without sin, making her a pure and holy vessel chosen by God to bring His Son into the world.

**Mother of God:** Catholics believe that Mary gave birth to Jesus, who is both fully human and fully divine. This divine motherhood sets her apart and emphasizes her extraordinary closeness to God.

**Mother of the Church:** At the crucifixion of Jesus, He entrusted Mary to His beloved disciple John and by extension to all believers. In this sense, Mary is seen as the spiritual mother of all Christians, representing the caring and intercessory role she plays in the life of the Church.

When Catholics refer to Mary as the greatest of all saints, it is in recognition of her exceptional virtues, her unwavering faith, and her pivotal role in the salvation narrative. Her "yes" to God's plan at the Annunciation and her steadfast support for Jesus throughout His life are emblematic of her extraordinary holiness.

This status as the greatest saint is not meant to diminish the importance of other saints but to acknowledge her unique position as the Mother of Christ. Many saints' holiness can be attributed in large part to their own Marian devotion.

### Tradition and history

The veneration of saints has been a part of Catholicism for centuries, dating back to the early Church. The recognition of saints by the Church, their feast days, and the construction of churches and shrines in their honor are all rooted in a deep historical tradition.

This tradition provides a sense of continuity and connection with the Church's historical roots, enhancing the spiritual experience for all Catholics.

<https://saintpaulseminary.org/general/explaining-why-catholics-pray-to-saints/>



For more events please go to <https://parracatholic.org/connect/events/> or <https://catholicoutlook.org/>



Do you find life & faith inspiration by listening to the experiences of others? The Mission Enhancement Team's *Soul Food Podcast* features life & faith stories of people from our diocesan family. Listen now for FREE via our website or on Spotify: <https://pfparrarra.org.au/soulfood/>



**The Divine Mercy Sunday Devotions**, held at our Church for the very first time this year, was well attended and appreciated by many parishioners. The afternoon ended with Benediction by Fr Zvonimir. We hope these devotions on Divine Mercy Sunday will continue every year, for many years to come.



## Good Shepherd Appeal Support our seminarians to "go out into the deep."

Your Lenten gift will help our future priests cast their nets wide to nurture faith and meet the spiritual and pastoral needs of our community.

Please support our Seminarians Good Shepherd Appeal Weekend 20th and 21st April



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### Holy Hour for Vocations

Please join the Diocesan Vocations Office and the young people of the Diocese of Parramatta to pray for Vocations.

A Holy Hour will be led by the Blaze Youth of the parish, followed by a meal and fellowship.

Friday 19th April, starting 7pm at

St. John 23 Parish, Stanhope Gardens

All are welcome.

For more information, please call the Youth Leaders.

## CONTACTS

### PARISH OFFICE

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(AH Emergency)  
☎ 0423 160567  
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Stanhope Gardens NSW 2768

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**Assistant Priest:**  
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### STAFF

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**Columbarium queries:**  
✉ [columbarium@john23rd.org.au](mailto:columbarium@john23rd.org.au)

### NEW TO OUR PARISH?

Welcome to our parish community!

Please take a welcome pack from the church foyer

Visit our website  
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### COELIACS

Those who are gluten intolerant may receive communion with a gluten low host. Please inform the acolyte before Mass.



**Office for Safeguarding Parramatta Way is to:**

- ◆ Act with Justice, and state that we have a zero tolerance for any form of abuse or harm to children or any person
- ◆ Act with justice and ensure that laws and obligations are upheld, and safety is paramount  
<https://safeguarding.org.au/>

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**Risen Lord Community Praise & Worship Night**



**7.30pm FRIDAYS, St John 23rd College Hall**

Come join us for an evening of deep intimacy with the Lord. Learn about the abundant and victorious life that Jesus died and purchased for us to have.



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