

Welcome to the community of the Catholic Parish of St John 23rd Glenwood-Stanhope Gardens where the love of Christ is shining in so many ways.

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."

Gospel Reflection

I think those who write self-help books and work as life coaches would find today's gospel passage baffling and ridiculous. Today we hear from chapter 5 of Matthew's Gospel, the first of the discourses or preaching of Jesus, which is known as the Sermon on the Mount, and in these nine sayings of Jesus, the nine Beatitudes, we have a summary of what it is to be Christian. A life coach, for those who want to spend the money, tries to help you to identify areas of your life you want to change, to develop your goals and an action plan, to develop new skills to achieve those goals and overcome blockages that prevent you from reaching your potential, and to make you feel happier and more content. As Christians, we already have our life coach; we already have our path to happiness, and these nine Beatitudes are it.

Yet for those of us who believe that happiness comes from what we earn or what we own, that self-worth comes from what we achieve and from being a success, then the words of Jesus in the Beatitudes are hard to swallow. Who wants to be a peacemaker when it is easier to fight back? Who wants to be gentle and stepped on? Who wants to stand up for what is right when it is easier to go with the flow? Who wants to be sad? Who wants to be abused? Who wants to be merciful and forgiving when our natural instinct is to get even and punish someone who has hurt us? Who wants to be persecuted? Who wants to be pure in heart when there is too much fun to be had? Who wants to be poor?

The great fifth-century North African bishop, Augustine of Hippo, realised the paradox of the Christian life. Fulfilment comes not from filling up our lives but from emptying them. The new life that Jesus brings comes from dying to self, not buying 'to' self. This is what Augustine said (Sermo 53A): 'Why are you afraid of being poor? Think of the wealth of the kingdom of heaven. People are afraid of poverty; let them be afraid, rather, of iniquity. After the poverty of the just, in any case, will come great prosperity, because there will be complete security; here, on the other hand, the more you increase what are called riches but are really not so, you also increase fear, and you don't put an end to greed. You can find me many rich people, can you find me one who has no worries? He's in a fever to go on getting, he's in a sweat about losing. When can such a slave ever be free?'

Today we are thankful that God loves us who are poor and weak. We are thankful that God loves us who are humble and foolish. We are thankful that God loves us who are common and ignored. We are thankful that God loves us who endure the unendurable, who forgive the unforgivable, who protect the unprotected, who are faithful to the faithless, who are just to the unjust, who shelter the homeless, who find the good in the bad, who encourage the dispirited, who love the unlovable. We thank God who loves us for those who build up rather than tear down, who bring together rather than divide, who give rather than take, who share rather than hoard, who understand rather than judge. Let us thank God that God is our wisdom and virtue, that God is our holiness and freedom. To us who follow Jesus through the power of the Spirit, to us who allow our bodies to be broken thanks to this broken bread that we eat, and to us who allow our lives to be poured out in service for others, thanks to this wine poured out that we drink, God promises the happiness and blessedness of the kingdom of heaven. For this we give God thanks and praise.

Geoffrey D Dunn

Mass Times

Mon	8:30am
Tues-Fri	9:15am
Sat	9:00am, 6pm Vigil
Sun	7:30am 9am 10:30am 6pm
Holy Cross Primary School	
Wed	9:15am <i>during school days</i>
2nd Sat	7:30pm Indonesian Mass

Masses of Devotion

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

Exposition + Benediction

1st Fri	after 9.15am, 7.30pm
Wed	8:00pm Holy Hour

Reconciliation

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

Sacraments

Sun	12pm Baptism <i>by appointment</i>
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Prayers

Tue	7:00pm Rosary and novena prayers (<i>Church Tabernacle</i>)
Thurs	7:00pm Lectio Divina (<i>church</i>)
Fri	6.30pm Christ Catholic Community Prayer Group (<i>office</i>) <i>Pauline Camilleri 0407 417039</i>

Special Blessings

Blessing during masses	
1st Sun	Birthday celebrants
3rd Sun	Wedding anniversaries

Homebound?

Homebound and would like to receive Holy Communion please contact the parish office or send text message to Rose Franco on 0401 387427

COELIACS

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

Join & be part of our community.
Welcome pack at the church foyer or scan the QR code



If you want to be part of our mailing list please email

✉ Communications@john23rd.org.au



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/>

Caring for our parish 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 provides for the running costs of our church, ministry expenses.

We have a Planned Giving Program. We encourage parishioners to register for direct debit or credit card deductions as alternative to an envelope system. Support can be provided via the registration forms available at the church foyer or from the website or scan the QR Code



TapnGo machines available by the entrances.

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

Save us, O Lord our God! And gather us from the nations, to give thanks to your holy name, and make it our glory to praise you.

First Reading

Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13

In your midst I will leave a humble and a lowly people.

Seek the Lord all you, the humble of the earth, who obey his commands. Seek integrity, seek humility: you may perhaps find shelter on the day of the anger of the Lord. In your midst I will leave a humble and lowly people, and those who are left in Israel will seek refuge in the name of the Lord. They will do no wrong, will tell no lies; and the perjured tongue will no longer be found in their mouths. But they will be able to graze and rest with no one to disturb them.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 145:7-10

R. Happy the poor in spirit; the kingdom of heaven is theirs!

It is the Lord who keeps faith for ever, who is just to those who are oppressed. It is he who gives bread to the hungry, the Lord, who sets prisoners free. **R.**

It is the Lord who gives sight to the blind, who raises up those who are bowed down, the Lord, who protects the stranger and upholds the widow and orphan. **R.**

It is the Lord who loves the just but thwarts the path of the wicked. The Lord will reign for ever, Zion's God, from age to age. **R.**

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

God has chosen what is weak by human reckoning.

Take yourselves, brothers, at the time when you were called: how many of you were wise in the ordinary sense of the word, how many were influential people, or came from noble families? No, it was to shame the wise that God chose what is foolish by human reckoning, and to shame what is strong that he chose what is weak by human reckoning; those whom the world thinks common and contemptible are the ones that God has chosen - those who are nothing at all to show those who are everything. The human race has nothing to boast about to God, but you, God has made members of Christ Jesus and by God's doing he has become our wisdom, and our virtue, and our holiness, and our freedom. As scripture says: if anyone wants to boast, let him boast about the Lord.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

Gospel Acclamation

Matthew 5:12

Alleluia, alleluia!

Rejoice and be glad; Your reward will be great in heaven. Alleluia!



THE BLESSED LIFE



COLUMBARIUM

If you are considering purchasing a niche, we still have spaces available. These are open to parishioners, families, friends and our neighbouring parishes. For more information, please contact the Parish Office.

Special Intentions

Names published with permission

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen

Born to eternal life

Alfred Degiorgio, Avelino Olan

Remembrances:

Jovencio Benesa

Death Anniversary

Enrigueta Benesa

Sick

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.

Brian McCunnie, John Tipton, Valeria Laureta, Bev Osborn, Lucas Colleta, Dr Bronwyn Andrews Dudley Francis, Marilyn Nalapo, Christina Properzi, Raymond Lanzona, Elizabeth Langley, Gerald Simbulan, Brendan Prideaux Marcelino Matteazi, Carlo Bueno, Helen West, Victor Pons, Ksenija Bosnic Emma Q Fernando, Isagani Ocampo, Myrna Manalili, Lenka Olivier Talija, Florentina Elisura, Peter McArdle Emma Matoza, Rosanna John Pellissery, Zena Samar, Charlie Busuttill, Elsie Knapp, Perla Magculang, Fausto Bayot, Margaret Harrison, Elizabeth Candame, Joshua McCarroll, Cathie Christie, Lily Camilleri, Melissa Nava, Imelda Vinluan, Cindy Dadivas, Louise Smith, Hilary Regan, Mary Phillips, Jude Newnes, Manuel Sarris, Jerwin McCarron, Rosie Carbonel, Maria Romeo, Zoey Illic, Mary Bormate, Bev Lewis, Noah, Carrie Conolly, Jonathan Gemin, Babies with Blister disease, Renado Naldo Ryan Dixon, Barbara Thompson, Natasha Leitao, Troy James, Mr Thomas, Nicollo Benesa, Carlo Dominic

Thanksgiving

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

Gospel

Matthew 5:1-12

Happy are the poor in spirit.

Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up the hill. There he sat down and was joined by his disciples. Then he began to speak. This is what he taught them:

'How happy are the poor in spirit; theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Happy the gentle: they shall have the earth for their heritage.

Happy those who mourn: they shall be comforted.

Happy those who hunger and thirst for what is right: they shall be satisfied.

Happy the merciful: they shall have mercy shown them.

Happy the pure in heart: they shall see God.

Happy the peacemakers: they shall be called sons of God.

Happy those who are persecuted in the cause of right: theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

'Happy are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.'

The Gospel of the Lord

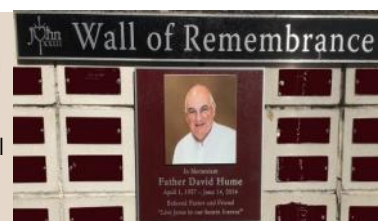
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

Communion Antiphon

Let your face shine on your servant. Save me in your merciful love. O Lord, let me never be put to shame, for I call on you.

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
The plaques cost \$600.00



CONTACTS

PARISH OFFICE
Office Hours
 Tue - Fri 8.30 - 4.00pm
Office Contacts
 ☎ (02) 8883 5981
 (AH Emergency)
 ☎ 0434 033 326
 160 Perfection Avenue,
 Stanhope Gardens NSW 2768

MAILING
 PO Box 23, Stanhope Gardens,
 NSW 2768

CLERGY
Parish Priest:
 Fr Jolly Chacko
 ✉ jolly@john23rd.org.au
 ☎ 0417 541 637 (emergency only)
Assistant Priest:
 Fr Bartholomew Chukwu
 ✉ chukwu@john23rd.org.au

STAFF
Secretary: Tanya Gatt
 ✉ secretary@john23rd.org.au
Finance: Renuka Soosaipillai
 ✉ accounts@john23rd.org.au
Sacramental Coordinator:
 Helen Zammit
 ✉ sacramental@john23rd.org.au

OTHER CONTACTS
Parish Council:
 John McCabe
 ✉ johnmccabe5@gmail.com
Maintenance issues:
 David Gorkic
 ✉ maintenance@john23rd.org.au
Columbarium queries:
 ✉ columbarium@john23rd.org.au

John McCabe
 Mei Velasco
 Julian Martin
 Suni Fernando
 Helen Festejo
 Ajith Lobo
 Rebecca Reynolds



PARISH COUNCIL

OUR PARISH SCHOOLS

Ambrose Early Learning
 160 Perfection Ave Stanhope Gardens
 ☎ (02) 9852 0585
 ✉ celstanhope@parra.catholic.edu.au
 🌐 www.celstanhope.catholic.edu.au

Holy Cross Primary
 49 Meurants Lane, Glenwood
 Principal: Attila Lendvai
 ☎ (02) 8664 7100
 ✉ holycross@parra.catholic.edu.au
 🌐 www.boglewood.catholic.edu.au

St John XXIII Catholic College
 160 Perfection Ave Stanhope Gardens
 Principal: Frank Chiment
 ☎ (02) 9852 0500
 ✉ stjohn23stanhope@parra.catholic.edu.au
 🌐 www.stjohn23stanhope.catholic.edu.au

Praying together

When we pray together, our faith is strengthened and our community is drawn closer. Join us to deepen your faith and open your heart to the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Rosary Statue Family Roster					
Feb	3	10	17	24	
	Erasmo	Ring	Jacob	Ruggiero	
Mar	3	10	17	24	31
	Paguinto	Hala	Available	Available	Available
Apr	7	14	21	28	
	Available	Available	Available	Available	
May	7	14	21	28	
	Available	Available	Available	Available	

"A family that prays together, stays together - Fr Patrick Peyton"
 Rosary statue contacts Techie Sarlabus techie.sarlabus@gmail.com or
 Melva Paguinto mcipi85@yahoo.com.au

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION
 We will resume these sessions in
 February.



Lectio Divina
 Moderator - Jeff Hood

February Calendar

Mon	02	The Presentation of the Lord (F) 8:30am - Mass
Tues	03	9:15am - Mass 7:00pm - Rosary prayer 7:30pm—Novena Mass Our Lady of Perpetual Help
Wed	04	9:15am - Mass 8:00pm - Holy Hour
Thur	05	Saint Agatha (M) 9:15am - Mass
Fri	06	Saints Paul Miki and companions (M) 9:15am - Mass
Sat	07	9:00am - Mass 6:00pm - Mass 7:00pm - Gala Dinner Dance
Sun	08	7:30am, 9:00am, 10:30am - Mass 6:00pm - Mass

Pastoral Ministries

The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others. Mahatma Gandhi
 We are in need of 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.

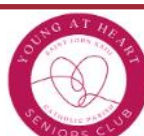
⇒ **CLEANERS AND GARDENERS**
 As we give our heartfelt thanks to the wonderful volunteers who faithfully keep our church clean, our gardens green, and our surroundings welcoming, we also invite others to join this valued ministry. A few more helping hands would make a great difference in caring for our shared spiritual home. If you are able to assist, please contact Tanya at the parish office.

⇒ **CAKE ANGELS**
 If anyone is interested to be involved and take leadership of this fun loving dynamic group please contact Tanya at the parish office or Techie at 0438 201436.



A Friendly Reminder to Our Parish Community

We kindly ask all parishioners to help care for our church by cleaning up after themselves after masses. Small actions—such as returning items to their place and disposing of rubbish properly. Help keep our church clean, welcoming, and ready for everyone. Thank you for your care and consideration in looking after our shared spiritual home.



Young at Hearts Seniors Group
 Contact either of the following:
 Frank Coleiro - 0459 504625
 Trevor Coutinho - 0407 150399



Vinnies
 join the good works
 Message Rose Franco 0401 387427

YOUTH/YOUNG ADULT GROUPS

BLAZE YOUTH Year 7 to 12
WHEN: 7:00 - 9:00pm
WHERE: St John XXIII College (C Block Bell space)
 For any queries, please email blaze@john23rd.org.au or DM @blazeyouthsj23 on Insta | FB

IGNITE YOUNG ADULTS 18 - 35 years of age
WHEN: First Sundays each month 7:00 - 9:30pm
WHERE: St John XXIII Staffroom
 For any queries please either email gnite.stjohn23@gmail.com or DM on @ignite_sj23

CRL (Community of the Risen Lord)
 Rojith de Silva 0405 9563210
 Nimeshi Fernando 0417 101009

YFC (Youth for Christ)
 Dominic Lim 0468 826253 Australia
 Ronan Linguangco 0478 629629 International

Diocesan News



SOUL FOOD PODCAST
 HEALING THROUGH THE POWER OF WORDS
LISTEN NOW



MET
 Pastoral Formation



OFFICE FOR WORSHIP
 CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF PARRAMATTA



the well



Caring for our parish together

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TapnGo machines available by the entrances.

HALL PROJECT

Prayer

Almighty God, we thank you for your many blessings to our parish and to each of us.

We pray for your guidance and wisdom as we prepare ourselves to begin the construction. May your Holy spirit be with all our Engineers, architects, builders and all involved in this project. Protect them from harm and grant them skill and diligence. May this hall be a place of unity, fellowship and faith formation for our community, a space where we can grow in faith and serve others. Bless all our sponsors, donors and each of us who contribute in our own humble ways and means. Whatever we do, may we do it for your glory.

St. Joseph, the patron of families and workers, **Pray for us**
St. John XXIII, Patron of our parish, **Pray for us**
St. Vincent Ferrer, Patron of all builders, **Pray for us**

Ways to donate

Bank transfer

Account name: Blessed John XXIII Parish

BSB : 067 950 A/C : 00000313

Reference: BD (your name)

BPOINT

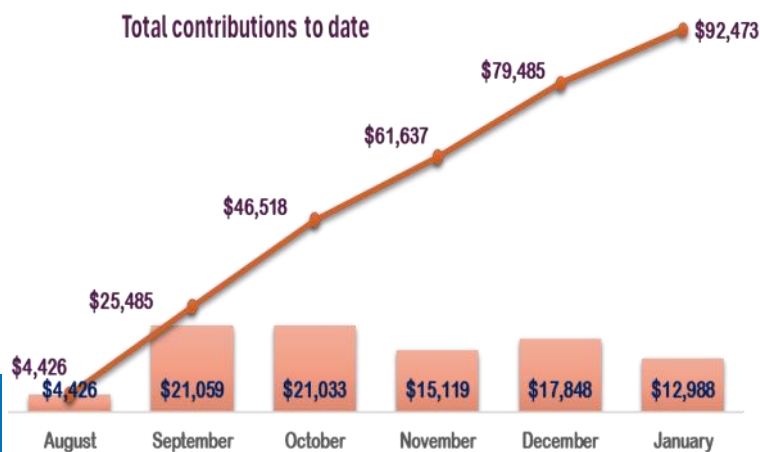
For credit card donation visit

<https://www.bpoint.com.au/pay/StJohnXXIIIPGSG>

scan the QR code



CONTRIBUTION UPDATE



Let's Build our future together

With the Parish Hall project now underway, we are excited to step up our fundraising efforts. This new hall is a lasting investment for our children, our youth, our families, and all parishioners — young and old. It will be a welcoming space for faith formation, community gatherings, and a strong sense of belonging, where future generations can continue to grow in Christ.

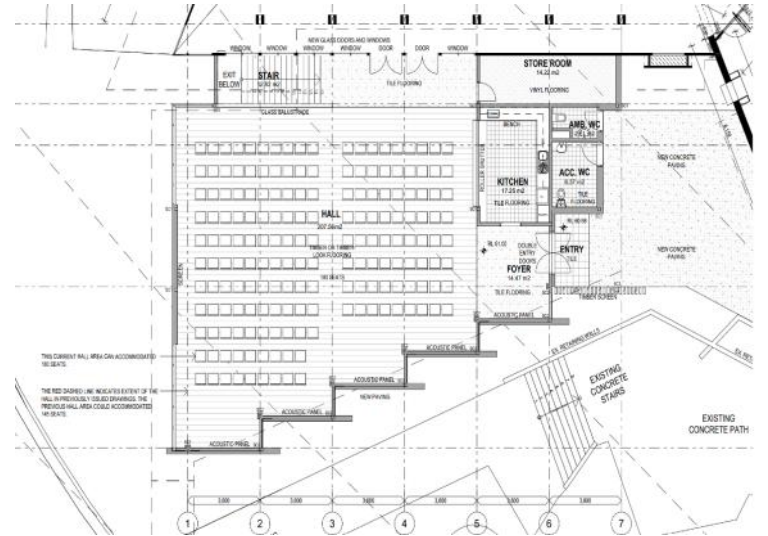
Thank you for being part of our shared mission to build a parish founded on prayer, love, and service. As we continue to strengthen our community and enhance our parish facilities, we warmly invite you to partner with us by becoming an event sponsor. Sponsorship is a meaningful way to support the life and mission of our parish, with your generosity recognised during this special event and beyond.

1. Our secret sponsorship. - Be a sponsor and donate whatever amount you wish to donate to this event.
2. Table companion sponsor: \$250 - Acknowledgement on event slides and parish notices and mention in parish community communications for a month.
3. Evening partner sponsor: \$400 - Acknowledgement on event slides, name listed in parish bulletin for 2 months and name and logo displayed on table cards and formal acknowledgement during the opening welcome address.
4. Gala Patron Sponsor: \$500 - Name listed in the Dinner Dance program and acknowledgement during formal opening address, logo displayed on table cards and name listed in the Bulletin for 4 months.
5. Community Building Sponsor: \$1000 - A special certificate of Appreciation from the parish that can be displayed in your business establishment or home tables, presented on the Dinner Dance, name listed for 6 months in the Bulletin adds:

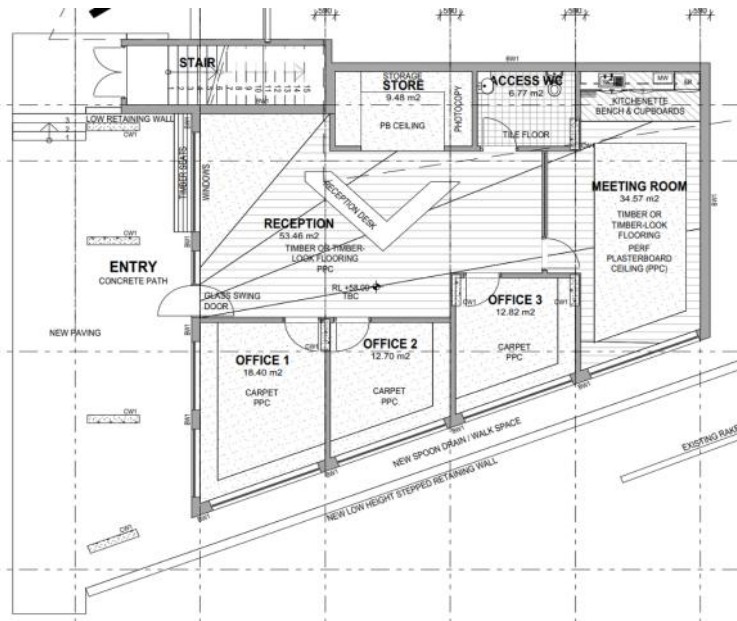
Parish Hall/Office Project Plan



Hall Floor Plan



Office Floor Plan



UPCOMING Community EVENTS



Building our Community
TOGETHER

Please contact either

Nanette - 0404 465600

Techie - 0438 201436

As a vibrant community of St John XXIII Parish, we invite our various cultural groups and ministries to take part in our parish life by hosting a Saturday Vigil or Sunday morning mini-event after our Mass celebrations. These gatherings are a wonderful way to share your culture, connect and strengthen our sense of family and belonging within the parish.

We encourage everyone to come along, participate and support these community-led activities. We also welcome suggestions for future events, fundraising ideas, or any offers of help — your creativity and support are always appreciated and play an important part in making our parish life joyful and thriving!

St John XXIII
Catholic Church
ST JOHN XXIII PARISH
PROUDLY INVITES YOU TO

Gala Dinner Dance

In support of our Parish
Hall Project

Live Music | DJ | Entertainment

SATURDAY, 7TH FEB 2026 @ 7PM

Entry \$100 per person | St John XXIII School Hall
160 Perfection Ave, Stanhope Gardens.

Save 10% when you book a full table (10 guests)

Free entry for children under 10
Child minding available

BOOK YOUR
SPOT NOW

Come and join us for an evening of live music, dancing and delicious buffet dinner. As we continue to strengthen our relationships with one another and enhance our parish facilities with a shared dream of a parish hall, we invite you to our fundraising event—**Parish Dinner Dance on 7 February 2026.**

MAINS

Beef with Mushroom - Savoury tender beef slices sautéed with button mushrooms in a rich gravy.

Chop Suey - A colourful medley of crisp stir-fried vegetables with shrimp, quail eggs, and meat.

Chicken Pastel - A creamy, comforting Filipino stew made with chicken, chorizo, and vegetables, topped with a golden flaky crust.

Sweet and Sour Fish - Crispy deep-fried fish fillets tossed in a vibrant, tangy sauce with bell peppers and pineapples.

Mixed Noodles - A celebratory blend of Bihon and Canton noodles, stir-fried with vegetables and savoury seasonings.

Roasted Pork Belly (Lechon) - Succulent, slow-roasted pork with perfectly crispy skin and tender meat.

Steamed Rice - Fluffy white rice to complement the various savory sauces.

DESSERTS

Leche Flan - A silky, rich Filipino caramel custard.

Turron - Crispy, deep-fried banana rolls dusted with brown sugar.

Fruit Platter - Assortment of sliced seasonal fresh fruits.

DRINKS

Soft Drinks, Coffee and Tea

Table Wines and Dessert Liqueur - A curated selection kindly provided by Fr. Jolly.

PARTS OF THE MASS EXPLAINED (con't)

The Introductory Rites

“OFF TO A GOOD START”: The Introductory Rites

The “General Instruction on the Roman Missal” describes the structure of the Mass this way: The Mass is made up as it were of the liturgy of the word and the liturgy of the eucharist, two parts so closely connected that they form but one single act of worship. For in the Mass the table of God’s word and of Christ’s body is laid for the people of God to receive from it instruction and food. There are also certain rites to open and conclude the celebration. (GIRM 8) Clearly the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist are the “heart and soul” of the celebration. The secondary parts of the Mass – the Introductory Rites, Preparation of Gifts and Concluding Rite – serve respectively as an introduction, transition and close in the liturgy.

Although one of the secondary elements, the Introductory Rites have a very important role. Their purpose is to gather the people together as a worshipping community, to prepare them to listen to the word and celebrate the Eucharist and to begin the liturgical celebration.

Every human action has to have a beginning. This is true of ordinary events like cooking a meal and planting a garden, and it is true of sacred actions. Before we do anything important, we need to prepare ourselves, set the scene, and make sure everyone is focussed.

It is clear that throughout the history of worship this need for preparation before the celebration was felt strongly. From a simple opening prayer in the liturgy of the early church, the introductory rites gradually became quite elaborate. During the Middle Ages they were also “privatised”: the Introit chant and the Kyrie litanies were recited by the celebrant alone and a collection of private penitential prayers by the priest were added.

Some of the elements of the present Introductory Rites date back to antiquity while others come from the medieval period. The revision of the rites was aimed at shortening and simplifying what had become protracted and complex over time.

More importantly, the private nature of the prayers was reversed. All of the ritual elements of the current rites are now intended for the preparation of the assembly as a whole. They demonstrate the principle that the liturgy is the action of the whole church and the human need for preparation in order to participate fully in that action.

The ordinary sequence of Introductory Rites includes: the entrance song and procession; the sign of the cross and exchange of greetings, formal and informal; a penitential rite, which includes the Kyrie; the Gloria (according to the season); and the opening prayer, which is the climax of this series of ritual actions.

These rites are dropped in whole or part for certain special occasions such as a nuptial or funeral Mass, and the celebration of some seasonal feasts requires the rearrangement of these elements to accommodate other rituals.

There is a popular children’s book about a symphony orchestra. It begins with some hundreds of people, scattered throughout the city, rising from their afternoon naps, getting themselves ready, setting out for the orchestra hall on various modes of transportation, taking their places, tuning their instruments.... and it concludes with the first, glorious, totally harmonised opening chord of the symphony. Perhaps it is not too far-fetched to think of gathering for the Eucharist in these terms, the Introductory Rites being everything that precedes and enables us to offer God total and harmonised worship.

Liturgy of the Word: Readings and Homily

“THIS IS THE WORD OF THE LORD”

The Liturgy of the Word is the first of the two central rites of the Mass. Unfortunately, some people seem to see it as the preliminary event before the main game, so it doesn’t really matter if you arrive after the start!

The official documents of the Church knock that idea on the head. The 1963 Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy says: “*The Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist are so closely connected with each other that they form but one single act of worship.*” (CSL 56)

This concept is elaborated beautifully in the Introduction to the Lectionary for Mass: “*The Church is nourished spiritually at the table of God’s word and at the table of the eucharist: from the one it grows in wisdom and from the other in holiness. In the word of God the divine covenant is announced; in the Eucharist the new and everlasting covenant is renewed. The spoken word of God brings to mind the history of salvation; the Eucharist embodies it in the sacramental signs of the liturgy.*” (LMI 10)

One of the strongest statements about the importance of the readings from scripture in worship is included in the introduction to the Missal: “*When the scriptures are read in the Church, God himself is speaking to his people, and Christ, present in his own word, is proclaiming the Gospel.*” (GIRM 9)

The pattern of the Liturgy of the Word is one of dialogue – between reader and listener, between God and us. God speaks, we listen; God nourishes, we digest; God is present, we respond. We play our part in the dialogue by attending to what God is saying to us and by participating fully in the assembly’s responses.

The structure of the Liturgy of the Word is: First Reading, Responsorial Psalm, Second Reading, Gospel Acclamation, Gospel, Homily, Profession of Faith, General Intercessions.

Except in the Easter season when we hear the story of the early Church as recorded in the Book of Acts, the first reading is from the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament). A passage is selected which has a thematic link with the gospel reading. The first reading should be followed by a period of prayerful silence.

The responsorial psalm that follows is itself the word of God and the prayer of the Church through the ages. The psalm set down for the celebration has been chosen as the appropriate response to the first reading. For these reasons, the psalm is not replaced by a hymn. “*The singing of the psalm, or even of the response alone, is a great help toward understanding and meditating on the psalm’s spiritual meaning.*” (LMI 21)

The second reading comes from one of the New Testament epistles (letters). During Ordinary Time the passages are chosen to give a semi-continuous reading over six to seven weeks from one of the letters. At other times, the pericopes are chosen to link with the gospel.

The gospel reading, the high point of the Liturgy of the Word, is given special gestures of respect. The assembly stands and acclaim Christ’s presence by singing the gospel acclamation. “*The Alleluia or the verse before the gospel must be sung ... by the whole congregation together.*” (LMI 23)

The homily unfolds the mysteries of faith contained in the word that has been proclaimed and relates this word to our lives today. “*It must always lead the community of the faithful to celebrate the Eucharist wholeheartedly.*” (LMI 24) The homily is followed by a short silence.

Next week’s column will look at the remaining elements of the Liturgy of the Word – the profession of faith (creed) and general intercessions (prayers of the faithful).

The Eucharistic Prayer: Great Prayer of Thanksgiving**THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER**

The eucharistic prayer is the heart and apex of the celebration of the Mass. It is addressed to God and proclaimed by the priest celebrant in the name of the whole assembly. The people participate in the prayer in the opening dialogue and the three acclamations and by joining their personal praise and sacrifice to that of the Church.

The assembly approves and ratifies the words and actions of the eucharistic prayer by their strong and convincing ‘Amen’ at the end. Because this prayer is the most solemn prayer of the liturgy, all the texts used are authorised by the Church. The assembly should never be put in the position of saying “so be it” to what is not the prayer of the Church.

The origins of the eucharistic prayer are to be found in the blessing prayer (berakah) of the Jewish Passover meal. At the last supper, Jesus gave this traditional prayer of thanksgiving a new dimension by adding the words “This is my body”, “This is my blood”. After Christ’s death, resurrection and ascension the apostles continued to gather for table fellowship in memory of the Lord. The traditional Jewish prayer forms over the bread and cup were gradually altered and simplified. As there were no liturgical books, the leader improvised using the structure of the berakah. It wasn’t until the 4th century that fixed forms, which differed according to geographic regions, began to appear.

Down through the centuries the Church has used a number of names for what is now known as the eucharistic prayer, the two most common being “canon”, the Greek word for a fixed rule or standard (the Roman eucharistic prayer was fixed from the sixth to the twelfth century) and “anaphora”, Greek for “lifting up” or “offering”. (In German the eucharistic prayer is called *Hochgebet* or “high prayer”).

The eucharistic prayer is not a series of separate prayers strung together but one unified prayer of thanksgiving from the opening dialogue to the great Amen. The various parts of the prayer fulfil different functions in giving praise and thanks to God.

The eucharistic prayer always includes the following elements which may vary in their order: thanksgiving, especially in the preface; acclamation, the “Holy, holy” sung by the people and presider after the preface; invocation or epiclesis, the calling down of the Holy Spirit on the gifts of bread and wine; institution narrative, the retelling of the scriptural account of Christ’s words and actions at the last supper; memorial prayer or anamnesis which recalls the paschal mystery; offering (oblation) in which the entire Church and this assembly offer Christ and themselves to God in union with Christ; a second invocation of the Spirit, this time on those gathered that they may become “one body, one spirit in Christ”; intercessions for the Church and the world, the living and the dead; final doxology (“through him, with him,....”) the prayer of praise in which the celebrant sums up and concludes the thanksgiving offered to God.

According to Augustine, our “Amen” is like putting our signature to the prayer. Do we realise what we have signed?

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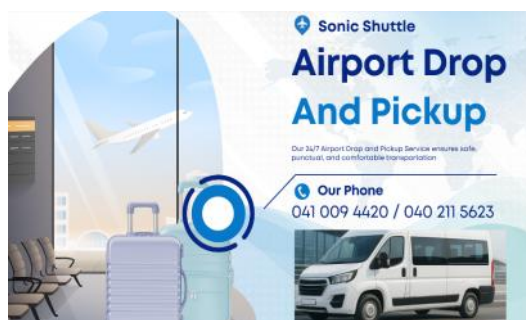


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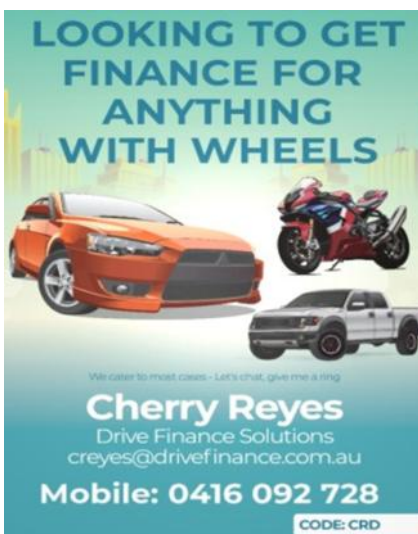
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