

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

Today, on our thirty-sixth day of the Easter season, our attention shifts from the risen Lord to the promised Spirit. We are thankful today because we are people of hope. What is the basis of that hope? One of the grounds for our hope is the fact that all the earth can cry out to God with joy. The purpose of Acts of the Apostles is to show that the good news brought by Jesus is not limited or restricted in any way: it does not belong to one people but to all people. The author outlines how the gospel reaches to the ends of the earth.

We hear about the first step in that expansionary process in chapter 8 of Acts. We met Philip last week, like Stephen, one of the seven chosen to help with the distribution of food to the widows among the Hellenists in the Jerusalem community. These Hellenists were Greek-speaking Christian Jews who seem to have been discriminated against on cultural grounds. The ministry of service exercised by the seven would later be seen as the basis for the ministerial order of deacons. Philip is to be distinguished from Philip who was one of the Twelve. Interestingly, while chapter 6 of Acts presents the seven being chosen so that the Twelve could devote themselves to preaching, here in chapter 8 we find Philip also engaged in preaching.

He is in Samaria. We know that, after the death of Solomon, according to the biblical accounts, the kingdom had been split into two: the kingdom of Israel in the north and the kingdom of Judah in the south. Two hundred years later (720 BC), the Assyrians destroyed the northern kingdom and some of the people were taken away in captivity. The land later became known as Samaria and the people living there regarded as foreigners, even though they worshipped the same God as the Jews.

Philip baptised, but the author of Acts says that the people did not receive the Spirit until Peter and John laid hands on them. This is a little odd, since elsewhere we are told that baptism conferred the Spirit. It seems that what the author wanted to emphasise is that Philip's practice of taking the Good News outside the borders of Judaea was confirmed by the Twelve. It is a statement about the unity of the followers of Jesus, whatever their background. This piece of Scripture would become the later justification for the separation of baptism and confirmation in our western tradition.

What happens to the person who receives the Spirit? John's Gospel, recounting the words of Jesus in the discourse at the Last Supper, says that such a one is united in truth and united in Christ. The indwelling of the Spirit is the indwelling of the Trinity and the unity of the community. To have the Spirit is to be driven towards unity; it is to be impelled towards care for others, all others. In the fifth century, Augustine told the newly baptised what it meant for them to be filled with the Spirit in loving God and keeping God's commandments. 'Thus, before all else, Christ came so that they might learn how much God loves them, and might learn this so that they would catch fire with love for him who first loved them, and so that they would also love their neighbour as he commanded and showed by his example—he who made himself their neighbour by loving them when they were not close to him but were wandering far from him.' [Footnote: De catechizandis rudibus 4.8. The excerpts from Augustine's De catechizandis rudibus come from Augustine, *Instructing Beginners in Faith*, trans. Raymond Canning (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 2006).] Let us give thanks to the Lord for that Spirit who makes us one. We are an Easter people and alleluia is our song.

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</i> <i>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 Or if you would like a visit from the Vincentians, please contact the Parish Office or share the relevant contact details with us.

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/>

Happy Mother's Day

"She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come. She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue." PROVERBS 31:25-26



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

Proclaim a joyful sound and let it be heard; proclaim to the ends of the earth: The Lord has freed his people, alleluia.

First Reading

Acts 8:5-8, 14-17

They laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

Philip went to a Samaritan town and proclaimed the Christ to them. The people united in welcoming the message Philip preached, either because they had heard of the miracles he worked or because they saw them for themselves. There were, for example, unclean spirits that came shrieking out of many who were possessed, and several paralytics and cripples were cured. As a result there was great rejoicing in that town.

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, and they went down there, and prayed for the Samaritans to receive the Holy Spirit, for as yet he had not come down on any of them: they had only been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 65:1-7, 16, 20

R. Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

Cry out with joy to God all the earth, O sing to the glory of his name. O render him glorious praise. Say to God: 'How tremendous your deeds! **R.**

'Before you all the earth shall bow; shall sing to you, sing to your name!' Come and see the works of God, tremendous his deeds among men. **R.**

He turned the sea into dry land, they passed through the river dry-shod. Let our joy then be in him; he rules for ever by his might. **R.**

Come and hear, all who fear God. I will tell what he did for my soul: Blessed be God who did not reject my prayer nor withhold his love from me. **R.**

Second Reading

1 Peter 3:15-18

In the body he was put to death, in the spirit he was raised to life.

Reverence the Lord Christ in your hearts, and always have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you all have. But give it with courtesy and respect and with a clear conscience, so that those who slander you when you are living a good life in Christ may be proved wrong in the accusations that they bring. And if it is the will of God that you should suffer, it is better to suffer for doing right than for doing wrong.

Why, Christ himself, innocent though he was, had died once for sins, died for the guilty, to lead us to God. In the body he was put to death, in the spirit he was raised to life.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

Gospel Acclamation

John 14:23

Alleluia, alleluia!

All who love me will keep my words, and my Father will love them and we will come to them. Alleluia!

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

Lucy Camilleri, Roselily Leonardo, Imelda Escordial, Leticia Hitchen

Remembrances:

Death Anniversary

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

Thanksgiving

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

Gospel

John 14:15-21

I shall ask the Father and he will give you another Advocate.

Jesus said to his disciples:

'If you love me you will keep my commandments. I shall ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you for ever, that Spirit of truth whom the world can never receive since it neither sees nor knows him; but you know him, because he is with you, he is in you.

I will not leave your orphans; I will come back to you. In a short time the world will no longer see me; but you will see me, because I live and you will live. On that day you will understand that I am in my Father and you in me and I in you. Anybody who receives my commandments and keeps them will be one who loves me; and anybody who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I shall love him and show myself to him.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Communion Antiphon

If you love me, keep my commandments, says the Lord, and I will ask the Father and he will send you another Paraclete, to abide with you for ever, alleluia.



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 via the following methods:

- direct debit arrangements to your nominated bank account or credit card
- Regular bank transfers set up at your end to the parish bank account
 Account name - Glenwood Stanhope Gardens St John 23rd Parish
 BSB - 067 950 A/C - 100002469 Reference: PG (your initial and family name)
- Donating through cash or using the "Tap & go" machines which are available by the entrances.

Please contact the parish office to update us with your preferred giving option. Either by phoning 02 88835981 or emailing accounts@john23rd.org.au.



Support can be provided via the registration forms are available at the church foyer or from the website or scan the QR Code

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**

Church building project - Ways to donate

- ★ Dedicated "Tap & go" machines
 - ★ Bank transfer
 Account name - Glenwood Stanhope Gardens St John 2
 BSB 067 950 A/C 100002469
 Reference - BD (your name)
 - ★ BPOINT - For credit card donation visit
<https://www.bpoint.com.au/pay/StJohnXXIIIPGSG>
 - ★ scan QRCode
- Thank you for your support!



THANK YOU TO OUR DINNER DANCE SUPPORTERS



Trust the sale of your home with your local Parishioner and award-winning licensed real estate agent, **John Irudayaraj.**

A member of your church who believes in the power of giving back, mention this advert and if John sells your home he will make a donation directly to the Church.

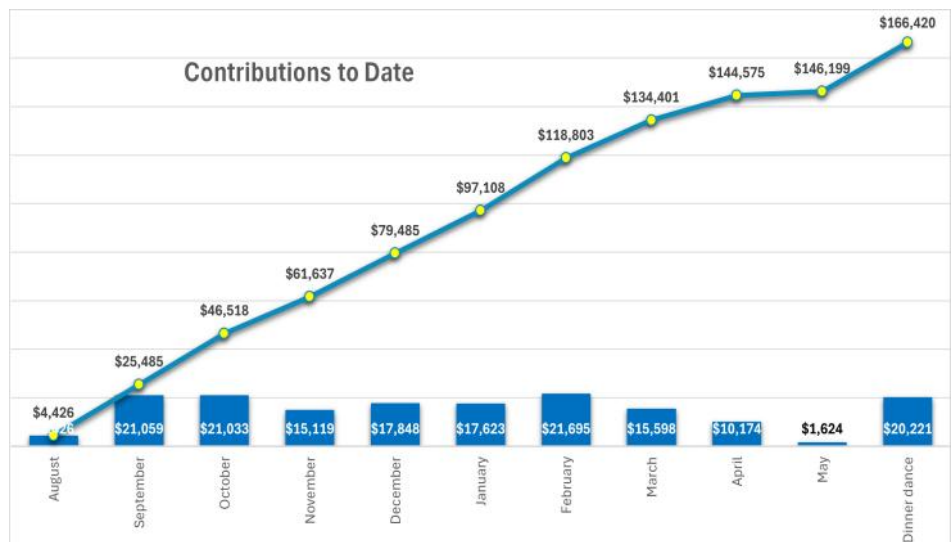
0433 969 731
 johnirudayaraj@mcgrath.com.au
 McGrath Northwest



BUILDING PROJECT UPDATE

We have now invited tenders for our building project and received submissions from four builders. We anticipate finalising our selection and accepting a tender by 15th of May.

The successful builder is expected to take possession of the site by 25th of May. Please continue to keep this project in your prayers and support it through your generous financial contributions.



CLIMBING LADDERS
 Early Learning & Montessori Centre

Where the journey begins
 For children aged 6 weeks to 6 years

EXPLORE OUR LEARNING PLACES

- (02) 8610 3775 Stanhope Gardens
- (02) 8678 9149 Rouse Hill
- (02) 9629 4444 North Kellyville

www.climbingladders.com.au

CONTACTS

PARISH OFFICE

Office Hours

Tue - Fri 8.30 - 4.00pm

Office Contacts

☎ (02) 8883 5981

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



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

✉ bolycross@parra.catholic.edu.au

🌐 www.hcglenwood.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 come together in prayer, our faith is strengthened and our community grows closer. Join us every Tuesday at 7:00 PM at SJ23rd Parish Church as we pray the Rosary. This is an opportunity to deepen your faith and open your heart to the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Rosary Statue Family Roster					
May	5	12	19	26	
	Ruggiero	Sebastian	Tina B	Mandapat	
Jun	2	9	16	23	30
	Hala	Mina B	Deang	Erasmus	Fernandes
Jul	7	14	21	28	
	Tambolero	Ring	Available	Available	
Aug	4	11	18	25	
	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 emcpi85@yahoo.com.au



Diocesan News

Support the Bishop's Good Works Appeal

Bishop's GOOD WORKS APPEAL

Supporting Faith in Action across Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains

Scan to help them answer God's call
parracatholic.org/appeal

DIocese of PARRAMATTA



Nominations open for the 2026 Papal & Diocesan Awards

Nominations are now open for the 2026 Papal and Diocesan Awards, recognising individuals - both religious and lay - who have made outstanding contributions to the Catholic Church and its community. Do you know someone who deserves to be recognised?

Nominations close at midnight on 30 June 2026. For more information or to submit a nomination, visit parracatholic.org

Positions Vacant

- ⚙ Housekeeper Supervisor - Holy Spirit Seminary
- ⚙ Parish Secretary - St Monica's Church, Richmond

Learn more at parracatholic.org/jobs

Diocesan News



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

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.



⇒ Liturgical Ministry

"The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest." Luke 10:
The St. John XXIII Parish Liturgy Team warmly invites parishioners to serve and contribute in the following ministries below

Training sessions are planned for late April to early May.

Please contact Parish Office if you are interested or for additional information.



Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

Assist in the distribution of Holy Communion during liturgies and bring Communion to the sick and homebound.
Open to men and women aged 18 and above.



Ministers of the Word

Proclaim the Scriptures and offer commentary during liturgies.
Open to men and women aged 18 and above.



Junior Servers

Assist the Celebrant, Deacons, and Acolytes during liturgical celebrations.
Open to boys and girls aged 10 and above who have received First Holy Communion (Confirmation preferred)



Tech Ministry

Support and coordinate technical aspects of the liturgy, including sound systems and projection.
Open to men and women aged 16 and above.
No prior experience is required.



Ushers & Greeters

Greet and assist parishioners, helping to create a warm and welcoming environment.
Open to men, women, and children aged 12 and above.

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 or Contact Ellena - 0478 685 191

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 Limguangco 0478 629629 International



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



Try Alpha?

EXPLORE FAITH WITH YOUR ST JOHN XXIII COMMUNITY.

Alpha is a series of sessions that allows people to connect, discover more about their faith and answer life's biggest questions.

We invite you to join us as we go on this journey together.

Contact: Joyce Celestino
☎ 0450 001 047

✉ joyce_claire16@hotmail.com

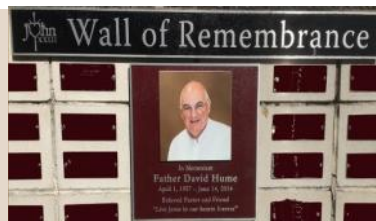


COLUMBARIUM

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.

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



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!

Pentecost Sunday

24th May 2026, 10:30am

Let us celebrate and take pride in your heritage!

Be part of this vibrant cultural gathering. Come dressed in your native attire and join us for a food bazaar. Bring along your traditional dishes to share with the community and/or to offer for sale.

Enjoy a day filled with games, fun, and exciting prizes!

For more information and food coordination, please contact either
Techie 0438 201436 or Nanette 0404 465600



A Friendly Reminder to Our Parish Community

We kindly ask all parishioners to help care for our church by tidying up after Mass. Simple gestures - such as disposing of rubbish properly and returning items like bulletins (if not taking them home) make a meaningful difference. Together, let us keep our church clean, welcoming, and ready for all who enter. Thank you for your care and consideration in looking after our shared spiritual home.

May Calendar

Mon	11	8:30am - Mass
Tues	12	9:15am - Mass 7:00pm - Rosary Novena prayer <i>Our Lady of Perpetual Help</i>
Wed	13	9:15am - Mass 8:00pm - Holy Hour
Thurs	14	<i>Saint Matthias (F)</i> 9:15am - Mass
Fri	15	9:15am - Mass
Sat	16	9:15am - Mass 6:00pm - Mass
Sun	17	<i>The Ascension of the Lord</i> 7.30am 9:00am 10:30am masses 6:00pm - Mass

YAHS CALENDAR OF EVENTS

15th May, Friday, 11:30am	Mother's Day lunch, CSI Marconi, RSVP 8th May
10th July, Friday after mass	Morning tea
For all inquiries/confirmation/RSVPs please call or text Frank 0459 504 625 or Trevor 0407 150 399	



Watch out for the 8D Alliance Food Truck serving up a delicious sausage sizzle on the day Sunday, 17th May after the 9:00 AM & 10:30 AM morning Masses. Come along, grab a bite, and enjoy great food and community! All proceeds to go to the Church Hall Project.

DIOCESE of PARRAMATTA

On Trinity Sunday, please join
His Excellency, Archbishop Charles Balvo,
the Apostolic Nuncio to Australia and
Most Rev Bishop Vincent Long OFM Conv,
Bishop of Parramatta
for a special Mass to celebrate
40 years of the Diocese of Parramatta.

Together, let's celebrate and give thanks for the growth, development and many blessings that have shaped our faith and Catholic community over four decades.

Sunday 31 May 2026 | 2pm
St Patrick's Cathedral Parramatta

SCAN HERE TO RSVP

Please bring a plate of afternoon tea to share
(NOTE: no access to heating or cooling)

MARY QUEEN OF THE FAMILY

Be The Witness

St John 23rd will be hosting a sneak peek into the choral group of an upcoming Gospel musical, **Be The Witness**, organized by Mary Queen of the Family parishes. Embark on a journey of music, movement, and mission beautifully woven with the message of the Gospel of Christ.

17th May, Sunday, 5:30pm before the 6:00pm mass

WHAT IS PENTECOST?

Christians celebrate Pentecost (meaning '50th day' in Greek) 50 days after Easter. What are its origins and significance?

Pentecost—originally a Jewish festival—is celebrated in the Christian Church as the occasion when God sent his Holy Spirit to both transform and empower the followers of Jesus for the mission that he had given them. In Great Britain it is also known as Whitsun, from an Old English word meaning 'White Sunday'—the day on which converts to Christianity wore white garments and were baptised.

The first Christian Pentecost

Before Jesus returned to his Father in heaven in an event known as the ascension, he told his disciples to stay in Jerusalem and “wait for the gift my Father promised”. Through this gift, he said, they would “receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:4-8).

For the next 10 days, they devoted themselves to prayer, not really sure what they were praying for or what exactly to expect. But then, unexpectedly and dramatically, they found out. The book of Acts goes on to tell us: “When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them” (Acts 2:1-4). So, what was going on? Let's ask a number of questions about it.

What happened?

Wind and fire came! Or at least, what sounded like a violent wind and what looked like tongues of fire. Why these two things? Because every Jew of that time knew that wind and fire were common symbols of God's coming and presence in their Scriptures (what Christians now call the Old Testament). In other words, this event was about GOD coming! God coming to ordinary people to transform and empower them, from the inside, just as Jesus had promised (e.g., John 14:15-18; Acts 1:4-8), and just as the Old Testament prophets had foreseen (e.g. Joel 2:28-29). Just how very much they were transformed is seen at the end of Acts 2 where we find the new Christians generously and freely sharing their possessions with one another. Just how very much they were empowered is seen in how these disciples who had been hiding in an upstairs room suddenly became bold preachers of the Christian message. It was this act of transformation and empowerment that gave birth to the church.

Where did it happen?

Traditionally, this coming of the Holy Spirit has been located in the Upper Room where Jesus had shared the Last Supper with his disciples and where they had been praying since his ascension. But many New Testament scholars feel this is unlikely, and that the Pentecost event is far more likely to have happened in the Temple in Jerusalem. Why?

First, the Jewish festival of Pentecost was one of three occasions every year when all Jewish men were obligated to attend the Temple; and after a lifetime of following this tradition, it is highly unlikely that Jesus' disciples would have neglected it. Second, there were at least 120 of them praying (Acts 1:15), far too many for a house in those days, but easy to accommodate within the Temple's great courtyard. Third, the coming of the Spirit attracted a huge crowd quickly (Acts 2:6)—something that certainly couldn't happen in the Upper Room (or even the very narrow streets nearby, assuming they had rushed outside, which the text doesn't say), but that could easily happen in the Temple courtyard at a festival time. Fourth, the converts were baptised immediately (Acts 2:40-41), something that would have been very easy to do in the many ritual bathing pools that surrounded the Temple. And fifth, we read that the wind filled “the whole house where they were sitting” (Acts 2:2)—and the Temple was often called ‘the house’ or ‘the house of the Lord’. So, it seems most likely that the Pentecost event took place in the great Temple courtyard as they waited for the start of the Jewish Pentecost ceremony, rather than in the Upper Room.

Does this matter? Yes. Because this very public location underlined from the very beginning that the Holy Spirit was given, not for personal enjoyment or private mystical experience, but rather for turning the disciples outwards to a needy world. Which leads to our final comment...

Why did God send the Holy Spirit?

God sent the Holy Spirit to Jesus' followers, not as some kind of ‘happy pill’ (though no doubt they all felt exceedingly happy!), but for a specific purpose. And the fact that God waited till Pentecost to send his Spirit, rather than on any other day, underlines what that purpose was.

By Jesus' time, Pentecost celebrated two things: first, the completion of the Spring harvest, and second, the giving of the Law through Moses. So, choosing this day as the day when the Holy Spirit was given was God's way of underlining that this was a season of a new law and a new harvest: a new law, written now, not on stone tablets like those given to Moses, but on human hearts, just as the prophets had foreseen (e.g., Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-28); and a new harvest, now not of grain, but of people. It was harvest time, just as Jesus had said (John 4:35).

Even the strange sign of speaking in tongues pointed to this human harvest. Speaking in tongues wasn't some kind of ecstatic experience or gibberish; the word ‘tongues’ in the original Greek text simply meant ‘languages’. In other words, the Holy Spirit came upon these followers of Jesus to help them pray and preach in the languages of the many different nationalities that had come to Jerusalem from across the world for the Jewish festival (Acts 2:7-11). This was a complete reversal of what had happened in early human history at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9) when God brought judgment on proud people by confusing their languages so they couldn't understand one another; but at Pentecost, God reversed that, showing that this was a season, not of judgment, but of blessing, by enabling everyone to understand the message of Jesus through these Spirit-filled followers and so have the chance to be saved.

What's the relevance of this for today?

So, how does this event of 2000 years ago have any relevance today? Peter gives us the answer at the end of the message he preached after the Spirit's coming. It was so convincing that the crowd asked, “What shall we do?” And Peter replied, “Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:38-39).

This was the first time anyone had ever asked, ‘How can we experience what you have experienced?’—which is what makes Peter's answer so important. He told the crowd to repent (owning up to sin and turning away from it), to be baptised (being immersed in water as an expression of a new beginning), to be assured of forgiveness (on the basis of Jesus' death on the cross and not anything we ourselves have done)—and said that those who did this would also receive the Holy Spirit, just like they had. And the good news for us is that he added, “The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off”. We are far off, both in terms of geography and time; yet we too can experience being filled with the Holy Spirit if we will follow these steps. And once we are filled with the Holy Spirit, not only can we start to connect with God as our Heavenly Father, for we are now his children (Galatians 4:4-7), but we are also given some of the many gifts of the Holy Spirit to enable us to do the work that God has given us to do (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11, 27-31)—the tools for the job.

Some 3000 people responded to Peter's message at that first Christian Pentecost, leading to every aspect of their life being transformed, as we see at the end of Acts 2. Still today, the Holy Spirit wants to do the same in the life of everyone who will submit to Jesus and ask him to come and fill and change them too, just like at that first Christian Pentecost.

<https://www.christianity.org.uk/article/what-is-pentecost>



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