
The Cathedral Coronavirus Chronicle



St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney — 22 May 2020 — Seventh edition

“As We Wait in Joyful Hope”

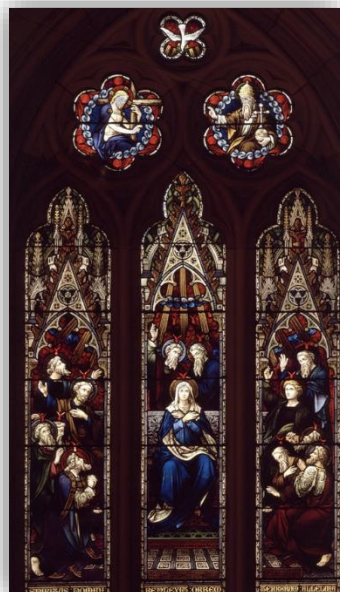
Dear Cathedral Parishioners and friends all,

Our Patronal Feast

Our Lady, Help of Christians is the Patron Saint of our Cathedral, and indeed the Australian nation. This year the feast is celebrated on Monday 25th May.

If you cannot join us in person at Mass this Monday, do please join us online for the 9am Mass, at which we will have some beautiful sacred music.

May the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary continue to protect us from the COVID-19 pestilence.



Come, Holy Spirit!

A reminder that Pentecost is coming, and will be marked this year by some special moments:

- Now that small congregations are possible, on Pentecost Sunday the Archbishop will baptise a small group of our Catechumens, with the others to follow on Trinity Sunday. Participate online at 10.30am.

- On Saturday, 30 May at 6pm an extended Vigil of Pentecost will be celebrated, with additional readings, psalms and prayers at the beginning of the liturgy.

Again, part of the cathedral choir will join us, and this special Mass will be livestreamed.

And in Other News

I have received some criticism about Masses being celebrated in several of the chapels in the cathedral.

Because those altars are not free-standing, but adjacent to the wall, during the Eucharistic Prayer the priest does not stand behind the altar but in front of it, on the same

side as the congregation, facing the altar as he prays.

Some folks, viewing these Masses online or seeing photos of the priest “with his back to the people” have expressed concern that by doing this I am “going against the teachings of Vatican II” or “turning the clock backwards 50 years.”

I do not want to enter into a detailed analysis of the history of the Mass, or engage in a long polemical discourse on “versus populum” and “ad orientem” celebration. Let me just say:

- Its about praying together at Mass, in a slightly more intimate atmosphere than in the vast main body of a large church with just a very few people, at an altar that is historic, artistic, blessed and available.

- I am certainly not motivated by “going against Vatican II” which in any case said nothing about celebrating Mass “facing the people.” (The reform of the Mass was carried out after the Council, and it was at that point that

freestanding altars in new churches appear in the official liturgical documents.)

- It was never mandated that existing, against the wall, altars should not ever be used, or that Mass must always be celebrated with the priest "facing the people."

The instructions in the present, post-Vatican II Roman Missal, make provision for both possibilities, describing carefully the times when the priest should turn to face the people when celebrating this way.

The official documents presume that existing altars would continue to be used for Mass.

- While new freestanding altars became more common, it has continued to be the practice that existing altars are also used.

When we are once more able to travel overseas and you visit Rome, for instance, every day you will see the altars in the chapels in St Peter's Basilica and elsewhere in use by priests and congregations. Some are freestanding, most are not.

- All this is perfectly normal and appropriate, and has nothing to do with rejecting Vatican II or turning back the clock. It is practical, pastoral and permitted.

- To give one prominent example, Pope Francis himself celebrates Mass in this way in the Sistine Chapel each year when he baptises babies there; Just in the last few days he celebrated Mass at the side altar in St Peter's where St John Paul II is enshrined. And I don't think Pope Francis is against Vatican II or wants to turn back the clock.

- Our Cathedral has beautiful chapels dedicated to various saints, with lovely and inspirational altars and decorations.

I'm glad that we use them for the purpose they were built for: the Mass. These daily Masses are the usual "novus ordo", post Vatican II Mass, in English.

- Using these various chapels, each with its own seating area, is part of our "COVID-safe" planning: it allows our hard working staff to manage sanitising the seats and surfaces before and after each Mass without interfering with preparations for the next mass at a different chapel. (Staff and sanitising costs a lot of money, by the way... we need your financial support.)

- We also continue to use the freestanding altar on the main sanctuary daily. When the government permits larger numbers to gather, the great majority of Masses will be celebrated there to retain social distancing clearance for the congregation.

- People in Australia have grown unused to seeing the Mass celebrated "facing the altar", I understand that. But just because something is unfamiliar doesn't mean it's bad or backward-looking.



Fr Don Richardson, Dean,

Administrator of St Mary's Cathedral Parish, Sydney.

Administrator St Philip Howard Parish, Norfolk Island, South Pacific.

Administrator of Sacred Heart Parish, Darlinghurst.

Liturgy Office Director, Archdiocese of Sydney.

Chronicle Notices

SPECIAL SERVICES

Monday May 25
OUR LADY HELP OF CHRISTIANS
9:00am

Saturday May 30
PENTECOST VIGIL
6:00pm

Please do not forget:

St Mary's Cathedral is live-streaming daily Mass via its website:

<https://www.stmaryscathedral.org.au/>

Please keep sending us your
Prayer Intentions and
Petition to Our Lady

PRAYER INTENTION

prayerintentions@stmaryscathedral.org.au

PETITION TO OUR LADY

petitiontoourlady@stmaryscathedral.org.au

Are you struggling in this time of crisis?

Depression. Anxiety. Loneliness. Conflict. Stress.

CCareline 13 18 19 is a free and confidential helpline for counselling, relationships, parenting, ageing, disabilities, addictions and mental health.

For help finding help, call CCareline on 13 18 19



Pope Francis celebrating Mass in the Sistine Chapel, Vatican.



Pope Francis celebrating Mass at the shrine of Our Lady in Loreto, Italy



Pope Francis celebrating Mass at the altar where the body of St John Paul II is enshrined in St Peter's Basilica, this week.



The Dean "backwards 50 years" and "going against Vatican II."

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