



# St Peter's Church, Surry Hills

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**Most Reverend Danny J Meagher:** Bishop in Residence, Episcopal Vicar for the Northern Region

**Fr. John A Macdonald:** Administrator

**Fr. Nicola Falzun OP:** Priest in Residence for the *Missio ad gentes* of the Neocatechumenal Way

## Feast Days for the week (Year A)

Mon 2 Jan

Saints Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen

Sat 7 Jan

Saint Raymond of Penyafort

**Mass Times for New Year's day (1 Jan 23), Mary, the Holy Mother of God  
For this Sunday 1 Jan 2023: 9:00am and 10:30am**

**For the remaining Sundays in January, i.e. 8, 15, 22 and 29 Jan: 10:00am**

## We Pray For:

*Our sick and injured:* Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI, Josephine Finneran, Anna Seow, Ricardo Francisco, Catherine Murphy, Adi Soediarso, Gerry Cassar, Makram Nammour, Camilla Pascoe, Ana Teresa Rodrigues, Mafalda Triolo, Aimi McEwen, Louise McCann, Marija Barclay, Dan Southee.

*Our deceased:* Joachim Kerowa, Newton McMahon, Lydia Garrone (4/12 death anniversary, (Patrizia O'Brien's mother)), William Henry Lewis (26/11 death anniversary, (Florence's father)), Mackenzie Lamb, Henrietta Pham, Frederick, Edward & Margaret M Hailwood & Margaret D Hailwood.

*Our house bound elderly:* Bernadette Hailwood, Robert Pearce, Joyce Regoski, June Holt, Shirley Kennedy, Anna Maria, Patricia Wells.

**Partaking in the Eucharist commits us to others, especially the poor, teaching us to pass from the flesh of Christ to the flesh of our brothers and sisters, in whom he waits to be recognised, served, honoured and loved by us.**

*Pope Francis  
Catechesis on the Mass 2018*

The Parish office will be closed over the Christmas period and re-open on Tues, 10 Jan 2023

Wishing all our parishioners and visitors a joyous, holy and safe New Year 2023



## Mass to honour Servant of God Eileen O'Connor

Our Lady's Nurses for the Poor invite you to an annual Mass to mark the anniversary of the death of Eileen O'Connor who is on the path to becoming Australia's next saint.

**Date:** Tuesday 10 January 2023

**Time:** 11am

**Where:** St Brigid's Church (Cnr Brook and Waltham Streets, Coogee)



### Reflection for the feast of Mary, the Holy Mother of God (Solemnity 1 Jan)

Feast of Mary, the Mother of God is a very appropriate way to begin a new year.

**Homily starter anecdote: Smiling child and his mother:** There is a beautiful little story about a long, tedious train journey, made one Christmas day by some elderly residents of a nursing home who were on their way to a vacation spot. At one station, a young mother with a small child entered the train. The child smiled at all the grim faces around him and began moving from one lap to another talking, shouting with joy and chatting with everyone. Instantly, the grim and silent atmosphere in the train was changed to one of joy and happiness. Today we remember with joy and gratitude how Mary and her Divine Son Jesus transformed a hopeless, joyless and sinful world into a place of joy and happiness.

**Introduction:** Since we celebrate the *Feast of Mary, the Mother of God*, on New Year's Day, may we take this opportunity to wish you all a Happy and Peaceful New Year? I pray that the Lord Jesus and His Mother Mary may enrich your lives during the New Year with an abundance of God's blessings. Today's *Feast of Mary, the Mother of God* is a very appropriate way to begin a new year. This celebration reminds us that the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, is also our Heavenly Mother. Hence, our ideal motto for the New Year 2018 should be "Through Mary to Jesus!" This is an occasion to renew our devotion to Mary, who is also Mother of the Church because she is our spiritual mother — and we are the Church. In 1970, Pope Paul VI instituted the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. In his encyclical on devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, *Marialis Cultus*, he wrote, "This celebration, assigned to Jan. 1 in conformity with the ancient liturgy of the city of Rome, is meant to commemorate the part played by Mary in this mystery of salvation. It is meant also to exalt the singular dignity which this mystery brings to the holy Mother ... through whom we were found worthy ... to receive the Author of life." The solemnity shows the relationship of Jesus to Mary. It's a perfect example of how we should venerate Mary under all of her titles and is a good foundation for our understanding of Mary's place in Christology. The Church puts the feast of this solemnity on the first day of the New Year to emphasize the importance of Mary's role in the life of Christ and of the Church. We commemorate the various saints on different days of the year, but Mary is the most prominent of them all. She has a special role and mission given to her by God. As Mother of our Redeemer and of the redeemed, she reigns as Queen at the side of Christ the King. She is a powerful intercessor for all of our needs here on earth. In celebrating her special feast day, we acknowledge this great gift for the Church and world; we call on her to be actively involved in our daily life; we imitate her virtuous life as a great inspiration; and we cooperate with all the graces

we get through her. The Church observes this day also as the [World Day of Peace](#) and invites us to pray specially for peace in the world. Inspired by Pope St. John XXIII's 1963 encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*, Pope Paul VI instituted this feast in 1967.

### [Exegetical notes on today's readings](#)

[First reading, Numbers 6:22-27](#): The Book of Numbers tells parts of the story of Hebrews' journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, events that happened in the 13th century BC. In the early 6th century BC, the Chaldaeans invaded and defeated the Israelites in the Southern Kingdom with Jerusalem as its capital, and many were taken as captives to Babylon. Their seventy years there are known as the Exile. When they finally got to return to their homeland, their priests wanted to help restore the nation. One of their methods was to revive a sense of the people's more glorious early history, so they retold a number of ancient stories from the time of Moses, producing what we now know as the Book of Numbers.

Perhaps this reading is in the Lectionary for today because the feast coincides with the civil New Year in many countries, and the blessing formula is a nice way to begin a new year. One of the liturgical acts of the priests in the Temple of Jerusalem was to bless the people after the daily sacrifices and on other solemn occasions. The blessing was a reward for the people's keeping of the Covenant, and a guarantee that the blessing promised to all nations through Abraham would be fulfilled one day. The words of this blessing given by God to Moses (the blessing of Aaron), are recorded in the verses of the book of Numbers which we read today at Mass. This blessing was entrusted by God, through Moses, to Aaron and his sons, that is, to the priests of the people of Israel. In ancient times, blessings and curses were thought to have almost a physical effect: they caused what they said. (The blessing of Jacob by Isaac is an example of this.) For us, the blessing is a prayer; we pray that the Lord will bless us, keep us, and make His face shine on us throughout the year. A key phrase in the formula: "*The Lord let His face shine upon you,*" underlines a change in mankind's understanding of God. Many ancient peoples believed that it was possible to see the face of God, but dangerous, often fatal, to do so. Ancient Israel shared this conviction for a long time (see [Ex 33:11](#), [Dt 34:10](#), and [Gn 32:31](#)). But here the Lord God's words encourage the people to expect to see the face of God shining (smiling, perhaps?) on them. At least, that's the gift the priests ask that those whom they bless may receive. This is a God still awesome to those who obey and worship Him, but less dreadful than previously believed. That's God's mercy in action. "These words of blessing will accompany our journey through the year opening up before us. They are words of strength, courage and hope. The message of hope contained in this blessing was fully realized in a woman, Mary, who was destined to become the Mother of God, and it was fulfilled in her before all creatures." (Pope Francis-2015).

[Second Reading, Galatians 4:4-7](#): Some among the Christians in Galatia were teaching that Christians still had to keep the Jewish law, even to the point of being circumcised, in order to be saved. Saint Paul argued forcefully that there should be no such requirement, because the coming of Christ had fulfilled the Old Law and annulled it. Christians are freed from the slavery of the Old Law for they have been made children of God. Salvation, Paul teaches, comes as an undeserved gift of God, which we accept by Faith in Christ. This passage is in the Lectionary today because it contains a rare Pauline reference to Jesus' birth of a woman. Paul does not mention Mary because here he is not concerned with the details, which are known to his converts. Since he had mentioned the Divinity of Christ earlier in his Epistle, what Paul is stressing here is the reality of the human nature of Christ, the Self-humiliation of the Son of God

Who deigned to be born of a mother like any human child. Paul also speaks of our adoption as children of God. We must be free from the entanglements of this world. Our relationship with God is so close that we can call him "Abba", an intimate term for "Father" (perhaps better translated as "Daddy.")

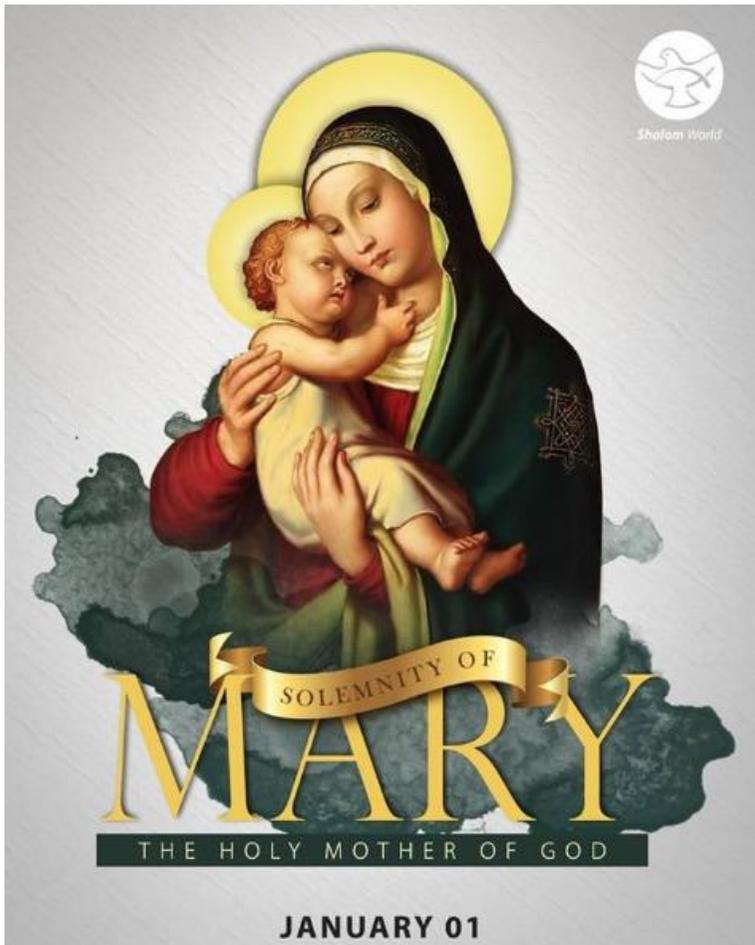
**The Gospel message:** Today's Gospel tells us that the first people who came to adore the Baby Jesus were the shepherds. They were taking care of their flocks of sheep when an angel appeared to them and communicated to them the Good News concerning the birth of the Son of God. The angel told them that they should not be afraid. And that is precisely the message that the solemnity we celebrate today brings us. Through this Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God, the Church tells us that we should not be afraid, that we should prepare ourselves for the beginning of the New Year by asking Our Lord and our Most Beloved Mother, the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, to come to our aid. We should ask her, not just today (although today is an especially important occasion for doing so), but always, to help us to live like people who have been renewed and are ready, with her aid, to identify ourselves more closely with the teachings of the Church and with the Commandments, so that we may follow Christ more closely. Today's Gospel also mentions that Jesus was given the name **Yeshua** – "The Lord saves." The rite of Circumcision unites Mary's Child with the chosen people and makes him an heir to the promises God made to Abraham -- promises to be fulfilled in the Child himself.

**Why did Jesus give us His Mother?** Jesus gave us his Mother so that she would be the Mother of all humanity. After having considered the role of the Virgin Mary in the mystery of Christ and the Spirit, we should think about her role in the mystery of the Church. We know that the Virgin Mary is the Mother of Jesus Christ and, consequently, the Mother of God. But she is also the Mother of the Church, which is the Body of Christ. Because of this, the mission of Mary is totally inseparable from the mission of the Church. And it should be clearly stated that the role of Mary, as Mother of all humanity, in no way eclipses or diminishes Christ. On the contrary, her role can only help to clarify Christ's role. This is one of the reasons God decided to share his Mother with us.

Many non-Catholic Christians really don't pay much attention at all to the Blessed Virgin Mary. We Catholics, on the other hand, recognize her as the Queen of Heaven and Earth. We know that Jesus took her up to Heaven, body and soul, as soon as her earthly mission was over. This is the Dogma of the Assumption, defined by the Church with an infallible papal definition. It makes sense that the woman who bore God in her womb should be borne by God into Heaven and not left in a grave to turn back into dust. In fact, in the Old Testament, the Queen of the Kingdom of Israel was always the Queen Mother. One of King Solomon's first acts when his father David gave him the throne was to raise his mother Bathsheba to his side, to be the royal Queen - a mini-Assumption. There was a practical reason for this tradition: Old Testament Kings used to marry more than one wife, but the King had only one Mother, so she became Queen. But there was also a deeper, prophetic meaning at work. God was already planning to send the Messiah through a Virgin, to involve a Mother intimately in the Redemption, just as a mother (Eve) had been involved intimately in the Fall (original sin). God did it that way on purpose. God gives his Mother a special place in the ongoing history of salvation because He wants to tell us something about His love for us. His love is faithful, strong and indestructible, because He is our Father. But it is also gentle, patient, and ever-present, always watching over us - like a Mother. Mary, our heavenly Queen and spiritual Mother, reminds us of this. (E-Priest).

**Life messages: 1) Let us strive to be pure and holy like our Heavenly Mother.** All mothers want their children to inherit or acquire their good qualities. Our Heavenly Mother is no exception. With Joseph, she succeeded in training the Child Jesus, so that He grew in holiness and in “*favour before God and man.*” Hence, our best way of celebrating this feast and honouring our Heavenly Mother would be to promise her that we will practice her virtues of Faith, obedience, purity and humble service. In this way, we will be trying to become the saintly sons and daughters of our Heavenly Mother, the Holy Mother of God.

**2) We need our Heavenly Mother’s prayers to have a better physical life and spiritual life in the New Year.** Let us ask for our Heavenly Mother’s help so that we may glorify God with a healthier physical and spiritual life and a better appreciation of life in a culture of death. We need a Super-Mother like Jesus’ mother Mary to stop millions of pregnant women from killing their babies by abortion, and to encourage nations to enact and implement laws to stop homicides, suicides, “mercy”-killing and mass-murders by terrorist and fanatic groups.



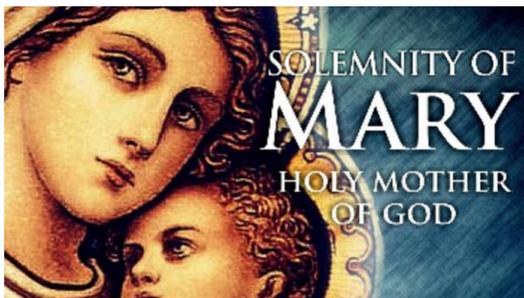
**3) We need to honour Mary as the mother of Jesus:** “We honour Mary by actively participating in today’s Mass and in all the Marian feasts of the Church throughout the year. In these Masses and at other times, we give Mary *hyperdulia*, that is, highest honour, because of the gifts of grace God granted her and because of the way she responded to these gifts. We also honour her in all the forms of Marian prayer we say: The Rosary, the Angelus, the *Regina Caeli*, the Hail Holy Queen, the *Memorare*, and so on. These are prayers we should pray so often we have them memorized. We can honour Mary by cultivating an interior life like hers. Mary meditated on, that is, thought about and prayed over, the events of her life in relation to God’s plan of salvation. We are participants in God’s plan of salvation, too. We are God’s instruments and fellow workers in God’s kingdom. Everything that happens to us has a good meaning, and it is up to us to try to discover and appreciate it. Her words at the wedding feast of Cana reveal her basic orientation, which we can apply to ourselves: ‘Do whatever he tells you.’ We can honour Mary by praying for her intercession.” (DHO).

**4) Three ways to make the New Year meaningful (William Barclay):** a) something to dream, b) something to do, and c) someone to love. “I have a dream” said Martin Luther King. We should all have a noble plan of action (dream a noble dream), for every day in the New Year. We need to remember the proverb: “*Cherish your yesterdays, dream your tomorrows, but live your today.*” It has been truly said that an idle mind is the devil’s workshop. We must not be barren fig trees, nor barren branches in God’s vineyard. We must be always engaged, doing good for others and loving the men and women we encounter in daily life, for they are our brothers and sisters in Christ. This becomes easier when we make God the centre of our life and realize His presence in all the people around us. Let us light a candle instead of blaming the darkness around us. Just as the moon borrows the sun’s light to illuminate the earth, we must radiate the Light of God shining within us. Let’s pray the prayer of Dag Hammarskjöld: “Lord, for all that has been, Thanks! For all that will be, Yes!”

**5) A resolution for the New Year:** We might resolve to start every morning with a short prayer: “Good morning, Lord. Thank You for extending my life for one more day. Please grant me a special anointing of Your Holy Spirit so that I may do Your holy will today and avoid everything evil.” We are advised to transform our daily work into prayer by offering it to God early in the morning. Besides the family prayer and Bible reading, we might also resolve to say a short prayer, every evening, the last thing we do before we go to sleep: “Thank You Lord for helping me to do Your will today. Forgive me, Lord, for saying ‘no’ to Your grace several times today. I am really sorry for all my sins of the day. Please pardon me.” And, as we close our eyes, we might say: “Good night, Lord. Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit.” Have a Happy New Year, overflowing with a “Yes” to God our Father, to the Lord Jesus our Brother and to the Holy Spirit our Advocate and our Guide in every good deed His grace suggests! O, our God and our Hope, glory to You!

**Pope Francis’ prayer on the feast of Mary the Mother of God:** As we celebrate Mary this Jan. 1, we can pray with Pope Francis, who ended his recent exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel)*, with the following prayer: “Mary, Virgin and Mother, you who, moved by the Holy Spirit, welcomed the Word of Life in the depths of your humble Faith: As you gave yourself completely to the Eternal One, help us to say our own “Yes” to the urgent call, as pressing as ever, to proclaim the Good News of Jesus. Filled with Christ’s presence, you brought joy to John the Baptist, making him exult in the womb of his mother. Brimming over with

joy, you sang of the great things done by God. Standing at the foot of the cross with unyielding Faith, you received the joyful comfort of the Resurrection and joined the disciples in awaiting the Spirit, so that the evangelizing Church might be born. Obtain for us now a new ardour born of the Resurrection that we may bring to all the Gospel of life, which triumphs over death. Give us a holy courage to seek new paths, that the gift of unfading beauty may reach every man and woman. Virgin of listening and contemplation, Mother of love, Bride of the eternal wedding feast, pray for the Church, whose pure icon you are, that she may never be closed in on herself or lose her passion for establishing God's Kingdom. Star of the New Evangelization, help us to bear radiant witness to communion, service, ardent and generous Faith, Justice and love of the poor, that the joy of the Gospel may reach to the ends of the earth, illuminating even the fringes of our world. Mother of the living Gospel, wellspring of happiness for God's little ones, pray for us. (Fr. Antony Kadavil) 29 Dec 2017



## **PRAYER TO MARY MOTHER OF GOD**

**Mary, Mother of God my mother,  
Queen of Peace, ask your Son Jesus to  
give me the gift of peace. Pray for me  
for peace; peace in my heart, peace of  
mind and of soul, peace in my family,  
peace with all whom I meet, the  
peace of Jesus.**

**I put all my hopes in thee, all my  
salvation. Receive me as thy servant  
and cover me with the mantle of thy  
protection, thou the Mother of mercy!**

**Amen.**



**Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I give you, my heart and my soul.  
Jesus, Mary and Joseph, assist me in my last agony.  
Jesus, Mary and Joseph, may I breathe forth my soul in  
peace with you. Amen**