



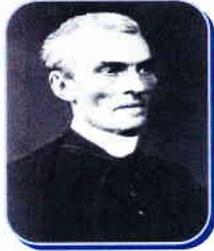
St Peter Julian's Newsletter

March 2014

Volume 7 Issue 3

It's About Time

Part One: The Time of St Peter Julian's Church



The timing seemed perfect, and in many ways it was. The founder of the Blessed Sacrament Congregation, Peter-Julian Eymard, had just been declared a saint by Pope John XXIII. Fifteen months later, on 17th March 1964, the Archbishop of Sydney, Cardinal Gilroy, came to the Haymarket to bless and open St Peter Julian's Church. It will be fifty years ago this month since the first church in the world dedicated to the new saint was officially opened.

Just over a decade earlier, on 30 August 1953, the Cardinal had opened a temporary chapel on the site (the Church of the Blessed Sacrament) for the new community's eucharistic mission in Sydney. Within a few years, plans for a permanent residence and church were being developed by Mr Terry Daly, the architect entrusted with the first building works.



His brief was to create a shrine which would give pride of place to the eucharistic sacrament, the bread consecrated at Mass to become the Body of Christ. His bold modern design was imaginative and inspiring. A throne of exposition surmounted the altar, sheltered by a canopy evoking the cloud of divine presence.

Behind it glowed a multi-coloured window of chunky stained glass. The lines of the church interior gave a powerful visual focus to the Blessed Sacrament placed in the monstrance for adoration.

So far so good. A brand-new church, a dedicated community, a popular devotion, and a flourishing mission – all very good news. At the same time a wealth of good news was flowing in from Rome where the bishops of the world were meeting for the Second Vatican Council.

Less than a year after the opening of St Peter Julian's, the bishops issued their first document, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. This set in motion the first major reform and renewal of Catholic worship for four hundred years. What we now take for granted at Mass – praying in our own language, hearing a wealth of scripture, participating actively, receiving communion under both kinds, sharing in the ministries – is the fruit of Vatican II.

But it soon dawned on the Blessed Sacrament Congregation world-wide that this liturgical renewal demanded a thorough rethink of our eucharistic mission. This huge challenge took years to achieve. While still maintaining the practice of eucharistic adoration, we had to put the celebration of Mass at the centre of our life and mission. Along with the whole church we had to rediscover the action of the Lord's Supper as the very heart of the Christian life, the wellspring of our prayer and mission.

What does all this have to do with St Peter Julian's Church? A great deal. Remember that the church of 1964 was designed to highlight the presence of Christ in the sacrament, placed on high in the monstrance for our adoration. And in this it was a complete success. Everything about the church worked to focus our gaze on the eucharistic sacrament. But before the end of that year changes were foreshadowed that demanded a different centre of attention. Churches everywhere needed to be re-ordered to enable everyone to participate "fully, consciously and actively" in the celebration of the eucharist.

This was especially difficult to do at St Peter Julian's. Over several decades various attempts were made to adapt the church for the reformed liturgy, but the powerful architecture of the building still prevailed. A more radical overhaul was necessary. This got under way in 2008 under the guidance of liturgical architect Randall Lindstrom. On Pentecost Sunday 2009 the thoroughly renovated church was consecrated and re-opened. It is once again a beautiful place for prayer and worship, designed for full participation in the Mass while encouraging personal eucharistic prayer at other times.

For fifty years St Peter Julian's Church has been a remarkable centre of eucharistic

Mass Times

Saturday Vigil:

5.30pm

Sunday:

9.30, 11.00am (Chinese),

12.30, 3.30, 5.00pm (Korean)

1st Sunday:

1.30pm (Filipino)

1st & 3rd Saturday:

2.15pm (Indonesian)

Monday to Friday:

7.30am, 12.10, 5.30pm

Saturday:

12.10pm & Vigil at 5.30pm

Public Holidays:

12.10pm



Blessed Sacrament Congregation

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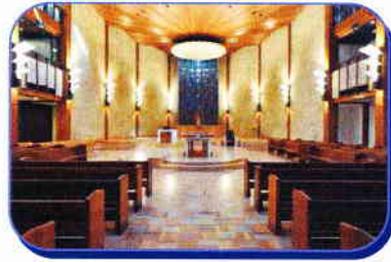
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Back copies also available.

life in downtown Sydney. We have much to give thanks for. Please join us in the middle of March to celebrate this golden jubilee.



Part 2: The Time of Lent

There's another special day in March this year. It's Ash Wednesday, being on the fifth of the month. This is one of the most popular days in the whole of the church's year, in spite of it being a serious, even sombre, observance. When we are signed with the ashes we hear the minister say either "Repent, and believe in the Gospel" or "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." The first reminds us of our need to change, the second of our mortality, both sobering thoughts.

But anyone with a sense of humour can always smile as we flock forward for the ashes. In the gospel of the day, Jesus issues three solemn warnings. Don't parade your good deeds in public, don't make a show of your prayer, and don't flaunt your fasting – do them in secret so that no-one knows except your heavenly Father. A few moments after hearing these prohibitions we process forward to receive a sign that will make a public display of our Lenten observance. We can only hope that God is amused at our folly.

Once we've had a good laugh, it's time to give more thought to the tradition that lies behind Jesus' words. The three practices that he refers to – praying, fasting, almsgiving – not only have an ancient history but also a perennial relevance. Together they guide us on the path that leads through Lent to the freedom and joy of Easter.

Prayer is about communication. No relationship lasts without communication, and what is at stake here is the most fundamental relationship in our lives. It's our relationship with the One who is the beginning and end of our existence, the One who is forever in love with us and our world, the One in whom love ceaselessly flows between Father, Son and Spirit and from whom love overflows into the entire universe. Prayer is about paying attention to this Divine Lover. It's about listening deep in our hearts to God's whisper of love

and letting love stir in us in response. Strangely, we can find this difficult to do. Much of the time we are divided and distracted, busy with many things, bombarded with noise. Creating the space and time for prayer, and persisting with it, takes effort. We have to be convinced it's worth it, even when there seems to be no immediate payoff. Lent's a time to re-open our conversation with God.

What about fasting? It's a popular exercise for dieters these days. It's not a bad thing to care for our bodies and keep obesity at bay. Fasting, especially from foods that are unhealthy or non-nutritious, is also a worthy spiritual exercise that can help free us from the tyranny of our appetites. But the fasting that really matters is purifying our minds and hearts from toxic attitudes and practices. Fasting of this kind frees us to put our energies to work for a more just world. The prophet Isaiah put it plainly ages ago: "Is not this the sort of fast that pleases me – it is the Lord who speaks – to break unjust fetters and undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free and break every yoke, to share your bread with the hungry, and shelter the homeless poor, to clothe the man you see to be naked and not turn from your own kin?" (58:6-7). Lent dares us to scrutinise how we live and ask ourselves the hard question. Does my way of life help to liberate others or do I enjoy it at others' expense?

Almsgiving is not a common word these days. It means giving food, money or goods to the needy. Australians are relatively generous in contributing to charities, especially when tragedy strikes. But charity has its critics. It creates welfare dependency and a false sense of entitlement, they say, and there's some truth in that. Others criticise charity for doing nothing to change the factors that condemn people to a life of deprivation and poverty; what we must do, they say, is to reform the system to give everyone access to the basic necessities of life. Wiser heads realise that charity and justice are not opposed to one another, in fact they must go hand in hand. Lent can open our eyes to this truth. It can help us see ourselves in the faces of those who struggle to survive and move us to give generously of who we are and what we have. In God's eyes we are one human family, sharing the precious resources of one earth.

Will you understand what you are doing when you present yourself for the sign of the ashes on Ash Wednesday? You're signing up for a season of these three transformative exercises – praying, fasting, giving. You don't know how new you'll be by Easter.

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