



PRIESTLY FRATERNITY OF ST PETER

DISTRICT OF OCEANIA



Assumption 2024



Dear Faithful,

The Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin reminds us of God's goodness. A goodness greater than we can ever know or understand. His goodness shown to His Blessed Mother, and His goodness to us, her children, united to her by faith in her Son. Our Lady's Assumption is the crown of her life here on earth, and the

beginning of her reign in heaven. It reminds us of what the act of saying Yes, *fiat*, to God can bring about. As Our Lady's *fiat* changed the whole world, so our yes to God can bring about change both in our own lives and in the lives of all those we touch. Our Lady's *fiat* to the Father opened the gates that enabled the Son with His grace, to enter into our fallen world, and to take upon Himself our human nature. And since her *fiat* was given totally, without reservation, without any trace of selfishness, then the work of God was unimpeded in her. Her Assumption, then, is the most fitting

conclusion to her life, a life lived not just well, but lived perfectly. A model life. A life for us not just to admire 'from afar' as it were, but to ponder, to emulate, to imitate.

Let us pray, then, to our Blessed Mother, our purest and most faithful intercessor and our most powerful Queen, that she will continue to protect us in this life, and so enable us to reach out true homeland, the place where she reigns with her Son, waiting to welcome all of her children when their earthly toil is completed.

Some news from the FSSP: Fr John Berg was elected Superior General of the FSSP for the next six years at our General Chapter last month. Please keep Fr Berg in your prayers as he takes up this role for the second time.

Secondly, at the invitation of Bishop Kennedy this month we open a new Sunday Mass apostolate in the diocese of Maitland/Newcastle. We thank Bishop Kennedy for his kind offer to us. Please keep this new apostolate in your prayers.

Regina in caelum assumpta, ora pro nobis!

Fr Michael McCaffrey FSSP
District Superior

New property for the Canberra Apostolate

For over two decades, the Fraternity of St Peter has remained steadfast in its mission to minister to adherents of the Traditional Latin Mass in the capital city of Canberra. Despite encountering various challenges over the years, including the instability caused by moving from church to church, we have experienced steady growth. This growth has been particularly notable in recent years, as circumstances have become more favourable for our resident priests.

In 2014, we received a significant boost through the extraordinary generosity of Mr. William and Mrs. Margaret Clifford, who generously gifted a property to the Fraternity. This gracious gesture provided our priests

with a stable residence, alleviating the burden of rent and other substantial expenses. The establishment of this domicile as a canonical house further solidified the presence





New property for Canberra Apostolate

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of the FSSP within the Archdiocese.

Subsequently, in 2021, we were granted near-exclusive use of Sts Peter and Paul Church in Garran, Canberra. This marked a significant milestone, bringing an end to the era of conducting Sunday and weekday Masses in disparate locations. This newfound stability has enabled us to overcome logistical challenges and streamline our operations, enhancing our ability to serve the community effectively.

The priests of the FSSP Canberra apostolate are delighted

to inform you of our recent purchase of a 4-bedroom house on a large property east of Canberra where the priests will live and continue to serve our Mass centre at Garran.

This development marks a significant step forward for the FSSP apostolate in Canberra-Goulburn, and we are excited about the opportunities it presents for future growth and expansion. As we embark on this new chapter, we kindly request your prayers for the continued growth of the Canberra apostolate and for this district of the Fraternity of St Peter. Your continued support is deeply appreciated as we strive to fulfill our mission and serve the faithful in our community.

Fr Paul Leung FSSP

Mary Crowned: The Apse Mosaic of St Mary Major

Our Holy Father Pope Francis loves the Roman basilica of St Mary Major. During his pontificate he has visited it over 100 times and has expressed a desire to be buried there. It is no wonder his heart is drawn to this basilica, which, I opine, is the most venerable of all churches dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Of all extant churches in the world, it is certainly one of the first dedicated to the Virgin. The interior of this basilica is a heaven on earth, and I use the word “heaven” for a reason. The apse of the basilica contains a majestic mosaic of the heavenly Coronation of our Lady – a most fitting subject for contemplation during this month of her Assumption.

A bit of history first. This wonderful mosaic is the work of Jacopo Torriti, who completed and signed it in 1295. Pope Nicholas IV, who expanded the basilica, commissioned him to redo the fifth century apse artwork. This makes the current apse mosaic quite new in relation to the nearly thirty mosaics from the fifth century still present in the basilica. No one knows for certain what the original apse mosaic depicted, but it possibly depicted the same subject of the coronation of the Virgin. And further, the original Marian mosaics of the triumphal arch still exist. The art in this fifth century basilica is therefore powerful evidence that Marian devotion existed in the early Church

Moving on to our examination now, we are at first filled with absolute awe upon looking upwards at this vibrant, gold, shell-like apse which seems to envelope us like the heavens envelope the earth. Nothing in this mosaic is thoughtlessly placed. The medieval artistic mindset loved symbolism and tradition, and so these two factors would have influenced the choices that Torriti made in making this masterpiece. But most exciting is the fact that the medieval religious mindset was powerfully influenced by the liturgy. Let’s see how this is the case here.

Near the bottom we see two lines of latin text. These lines are taken from the Divine Office for the feast of the Assumption. Upon reading them, we can see how they are the inspiration for Torriti’s work. The first says: MARIA VIRGO ASSUMPTA EST AD ETHEREUM THALAMUM IN QUO REX REGUM STELLATO SEDET SOLIO, “The Virgin Mary has been taken up to the heavenly chamber where the King of Kings is seated on his starry throne.” Do you see these elements in the image: the stars, the throne, the King of Kings? And the second text just below reads: EXALTATA EST SANCTA DEI GENITRIX SUPER CHOROS ANGELORUM AD CELESTIA REGNA, “The holy Mother of God is raised up above the chorus of angels to the celestial realms.” Scan side to side and see the angels

surrounding this heavenly coronation. It fills me with awe to consider that we still sing these exact same prayers in the Divine Office on August 15th: how beautiful is liturgical tradition!

Moving up to the book in our Lord's hand, it reads thus: VENI ELECTA MEA ET PONAM [IN] TE THRONUM MEUM, "Come my chosen one and I shall place thee [on] my throne." This prayer is taken from the Divine Office for feasts of virgins. The Church loves to compare consecrated virginity to a state of royalty. For example, in Vespers for the feast of virgins, the Church sings: VENI SPONSA CHRISTI, ACCIPE CORONAM QUAM TIBI DOMINUS PRAEPARAVIT IN AETERNUM, "Come, bride of Christ, receive the crown which the Lord has prepared for you for all eternity." Now all this applies most of all to the Queen of Virgins. We see her royal state quite clearly here: her crown, her footstool, the sun and the moon under her, and her royal purple tunic under her blue maphorion (a shawl covering the head and arms, worn by mothers). She shares the same throne as our Lord, sitting on His right as the Queen Mother, and this placement is a reference to Psalm 44:10, "The queen stood on thy right hand, in gilded clothing; surrounded with variety."

In our limited space, we must run quickly through the rest. Watching this heavenly scene are, from left to right: St Francis of Assisi, St Paul, St Peter, a kneeling Pope Nicholas IV, a kneeling Cardinal Jacopo Colonna (their depiction as tiny and kneeling shows that they were the donors for this work), St John the Baptist, St John the Apostle, and St Anthony of Padua. The presence of Franciscans in the scene hints at the rapidly rising Franciscan order, which at this point was not yet 100 years old. If I were the first Franciscan Pope, as Nicholas IV was, I would have done the same. And now I'm wondering whom I would portray if I became the first FSSP Pope...

Dear reader, Christian art is like faith etched in stone, painted on canvas, or stones arranged to make a majestic mosaic. If ever you find yourself wandering around Rome, remember to see the apse in that most venerable basilica of St Mary Major.

Fr Richard Wallace FSSP

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Upcoming Events

2024 / 2025

Women's Retreat

September 13 - 17, 2024

Benedictine Spirituality for Laity

Men's Retreat

November 11 - 15, 2024

*Journey through the Interior Castle
of St Teresa of Avila*

Retreats are held at Hartzler Park
Retreat Centre, Bowral NSW

To register please contact:

Fr Adrian Wee FSSP:

theoudoulos@gmail.com

Chartres Pilgrimage, France

Led by Fr Antony Sumich FSSP

Pentecost Weekend (June 7-9, 2025)

Contact: fr.sumich@gmail.com

The First Year of my Priesthood

Thanks be to God I was ordained to the Sacred Priesthood on the 24th of June 2023. I would like to once again thank everyone who helped me in any way. To the servers and choir at my ordination and first Mass, to those who helped organise my reception. To my benefactors, and for all those who prayed for me. To all formators and confreres in the FSSP and to my family and friends. Thank you all for everything you have done to help me reach the altar of God. Please be assured of my continued prayers and remembrances at the altar.



The last 12 months as a priest have been very eventful. I was assigned to Auckland, New Zealand, a country that I had not visited before despite it being so close. Here, under the guidance of Fr Sumich FSSP, the chaplain for the Latin Mass community, I have had many firsts as a priest such as: marriages, funerals, leading a procession, and my first Christmas and Easter as a priest.

The priest assists the faithful spiritually through all of life's most significant moments: including baptism, first Holy Communion, confirmation, marriage and extreme unction, and death. The priest is there for joyous occasions and sorrowful occasions. The priest is there to bring God to the faithful, but above all else to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

It is a great joy to be able to serve the faithful and bring God to them through the sacraments. But above all else, the highlight of each day is offering Holy Mass to God. In the Mass, Christ comes down on our altars and offers Himself to the eternal Father. This must be the centre of

every Catholic's life, and how much more for a priest! I am blessed to be able to offer the Holy Sacrifice each day.

Apart from offering Mass, the greatest joys would have to be imparting the other sacraments, particularly reconciling someone with God in the confessional. These are both things which we train for in seminary, but it is quite different to do it for real. At his first Mass, the words of consecration are now real. And when hearing his first confession, the years of theology give way for an inspired word from the Holy Ghost.

There have been many learning experiences and I am sure many more to come. Like any state in life, there are joyful times and sorrowful times, there are good times and there are hard times, but God always gives us the graces necessary to fulfil our duties, we only need to stay close to Him and cooperate with Him, we



have to be His instrument. So, please pray for me that I cooperate with Him and be His faithful instrument.

Thanks be to God I have been able to experience many firsts over this past year. Please continue to pray that God helps me and all priests become holy priests after His Sacred Heart, that we have a great love of Holy Mass and that we have a great zeal for you the faithful.

May God bless you always and Our Lady keep you.

Fr Nathan Pospischil FSSP