



PRIESTLY FRATERNITY OF ST PETER

DISTRICT OF OCEANIA



Dear Faithful,

Christmas 2024

O Clavis David, et sceptrum domus Israel; qui aperis, et nemo claudit; claudis, et nemo aperit: veni, et educ vincitum de domo carceris, sedentem in tenebris, et umbra mortis.

New Apostolate for the FSSP

Maitland-Newcastle, NSW

O Key of David, and Sceptre of the house of Israel, Who opens and no man shuts, and shuts and no man opens, Come and liberate the prisoner from the prison, and those who sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death.

The fourth great O Antiphon, in which Our Lord is described as the Key of David, draws in a combination of texts from the prophet Isaiah, the books of Numbers, Revelation, and the Psalms.

Keys in the ancient world were symbols of power and authority. Keys allow or prevent entry...entry into spaces, buildings, cities, and in our digital age - even computers! The one who holds the key can be considered to be the 'gatekeeper'. Keys in their most exalted form are a symbol of royal authority. David was Israel's most successful king, and it was during his reign that the Kingdom of Israel reached its greatest extent. David was God's chosen one, His anointed ruler and on him God's Spirit came in power (1 Kings 16:13). The holder of David's key has David's authority, power and status. Since David was God's anointed one, his successors would also share in that special favour.

In Advent, the Church awaits the coming of Christ, who, as a descendent of David, inherited his authority, symbolised by his keys, and Christ will unlock the chains of sin that bind us. We cannot do this for ourselves, no matter how much we may wish it. We need one who is more powerful than we are, one who is Himself sinless. We await the coming of our Divine Saviour, born in Bethlehem.

Earlier this year, the Holy See announced a canonical visitation of the Fraternity of St Peter. This has been



Part of the Maitland TLM community gathered after Mass.

Earlier this year, Bishop Michael Kennedy of the diocese of Maitland-Newcastle invited the Fraternity of St Peter to take over the chaplaincy of the Latin Mass community in his diocese, which had been without a priest for some time. On 18 August, Fr Richard Wallace FSSP celebrated the first Mass for the community at St John the Baptist Chapel in East Maitland. About 65 people were in attendance and that number has been increasing.

The historic chapel of St John the Baptist was opened in 1846 and was for a brief time the original Cathedral of the Diocese of Maitland (in 1995 it became Maitland-Newcastle).

The FSSP offers Mass at the chapel every Sunday at 9.30am, as well as on Holydays of obligation and some major feasts. Contact Fr Wallace FSSP at Maternal Heart of Mary Parish for more information.

We thank Bishop Kennedy for inviting us into his diocese to assist him in providing the sacraments and catechesis to the Catholic faithful of Maitland-Newcastle.

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entrusted to the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. The Superior General and senior members of the FSSP had a cordial meeting with the Dicastery officials in Rome to discuss and plan this visitation.

This visitation initially caused some anxiety amongst our faithful, but visitations are a normal part of the life of the Church and there is nothing to indicate cause for concern.

The various traditional Catholic congregations were previously under the jurisdiction of the former Ecclesia Dei Commission, however oversight of these communities has been transferred to this aforementioned Dicastery. The Prefect, Cardinal João Braz de Aviz of Brazil, has stated his desire to get to know these communities that have recently come under his care. This will be done by means of a canonical visitation to each, starting with the FSSP which is the oldest and the largest of these communities.

The FSSP celebrated its 36th anniversary in October. Since our humble beginnings we have steadily grown and now number 386 priests, 15 deacons, 182 seminarians, and are present in 155 dioceses around the world. We trust that God will protect the good work that He began in our Fraternity. Please pray that we will be faithful to our charism and to the authentic obedience that the Church expects of her children.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support during 2024 and please be assured of our prayers for you and your loved ones this Christmas.

Fr. Michael McCaffrey FSSP
Superior, District of Oceania

2025 Retreats

Location: Hartzler Park, NSW
Contact: Fr Adrian Wee FSSP,
theoudoulos@gmail.com

WOMEN 21 – 25 March

Liturgical Spirituality of
St Gertrude the Great

MEN 19 – 23 May

The Seven Vices & Seven Virtues

WOMEN 7 – 11 November

Journey with St Bernard to
Union with God.

2025 European Pilgrimages

3 – 15 May - Rome

Contact Fr Wallace
fssp.pilgrimage@gmail.com

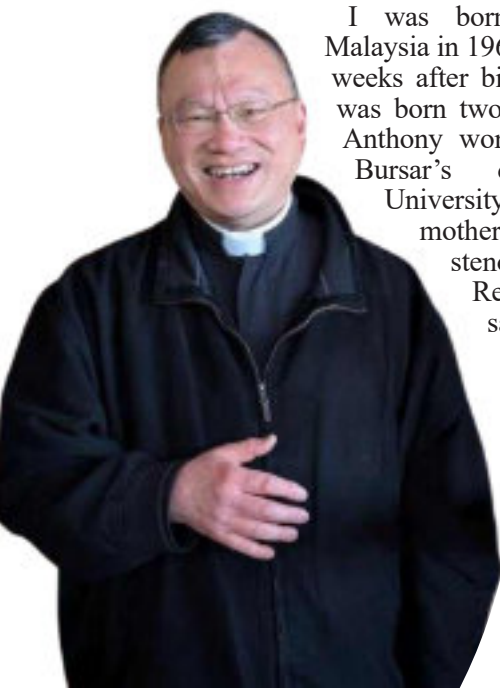
7 – 9 June - Chartres pilgrimage,

France Contact Fr Sumich at
office@fssp.nz

In conversation with Fr Adrian Wee, FSSP

upon his 25th ordination anniversary

Fr Wee, you recently celebrated 25 years of priesthood. Quite a significant milestone! Can you please tell us a little of how your vocation to the priesthood all started beginning with where you were born and grew up.



I was born in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in 1966 and was baptised two weeks after birth. My brother Simon was born two years later. My father Anthony worked as a clerk in the Bursar's department of the University of Malaya and my mother Veronica was a stenographer at the Registrar's Office in the same place.

What were your experiences growing up Catholic in Malaysia?

We were both sent to a Catholic school, St John's Institution, which was managed

by the De La Salle Brothers. My family attended Mass at the nearby St John's Cathedral, where I served Mass regularly on Sundays and weekdays before school hours.

I was impressed by the example of the Archbishop and priests who were very kind and generous with us servers, and would bundle us all occasionally into their cars and bring us to the rural areas to see what they do as priests. Christians are free to practise their religion although attempts have been made to restrict the practice of their faith, but these have generally been unsuccessful as the bishops and priests, together with leaders of the other denominations, have been very strong in voicing their objections to such measures.

How did your vocation to the priesthood develop?

I was very much inspired by the example of priests who lived very devout and dedicated lives and were greatly respected by the people for the sacrifices they made in providing for all their needs both material and spiritual. It was also the atmosphere of peace and well-being which they exuded in their behaviour in spite of their lack of material resources for themselves personally.

Where did you undertake your training and studies?

I began at the seminary in Malaysia, but after a year I felt

drawn to a more contemplative context and left for Taiwan to begin my novitiate with the Discalced Carmelites. The student master however returned to Malta and by default I was sent to Rome for my theological studies, upon completion of which I was sent to Singapore where I was ordained in 1999 and served there for 4 years. There wasn't much of a challenge. People were friendly and hospitable. The only challenge was to say Mass in three languages – English, Mandarin and Cantonese. They are three entirely different languages not just phonetically but in terms of diction as well. It takes a lot of experience and patience to adjust and not to make ludicrous mistakes.

At some point you felt strongly drawn towards the traditional Roman liturgy. When was your first encounter with the Traditional Latin Mass and what were your thoughts about it? Do you think the Latin Mass is 'Eurocentric'?

After a few years of my priesthood working in Singapore, I became aware of the traditional liturgy of the Church with its strong emphasis on the Sacrifice of our Lord on Calvary, which then explains the aspect of Communion in the Mass. I do not see it as 'Eurocentric' as this was the Mass celebrated by Missionaries wherever they went for hundreds of years, and its rituals and gestures resonated with peoples of every culture and ethnicity which explains the conversions to the faith in these places.

How did you come to join the Fraternity of St Peter in

Australia?

My superiors suggested that since I wanted to offer the Latin Mass exclusively, they were willing to facilitate my transition to a congregation where I could devote myself solely to the celebration of the Latin Mass. It was Fr Duncan Wong who helped me tremendously in this regard, and that was how I eventually came to join the Fraternity.

What has been a highlight of the first 25 years of your priesthood? What lessons have you learned?

The most outstanding highlight was perpetual movement. I was never in one place for more than three years except for Adelaide where I was for 8. All that movement has taught me patience and detachment.

What advice can you offer to a young person discerning either priesthood or religious life?

The primary essential is to know and love the Lord Jesus, since He is the Eternal High Priest who calls us to share in His priesthood. It is this which gives vitality to the spiritual life of the priest.

Which saints have most influenced you and why?

St John Marie Vianney for the simplicity and zeal with which he lived his spiritual life and exercised his ministry. Likewise, Padre Pio for the primacy of his love for Jesus and his participation in the priesthood of Jesus through suffering.

St Benedict's School

A new classical curriculum school in Adelaide



After I retired from politics, I took up bike riding through the Adelaide Hills. In December 2022 I rode through the village of Springhead which consists of dairy farms, a Lutheran Church that had been built in the mid-19th century by German settlers, and a Lutheran school that had opened in 1893.

As I rode past, seemingly by chance, I recalled that I had been told a few years earlier that the school had closed because of insufficient enrolments.

After some phone calls, I confirmed that the school was closed and that the property was owned by the Lutheran congregation who worshipped in the church. This was the

moment when St Benedict School went from being a dream to something real. In the face of so many obstacles, God had cleared the way.

For many years, families attending the Latin Mass at Holy Name Church in Adelaide had requested our chaplain, Fr McCaffrey FSSP, that a school be established for the growing number of children in our community. These families desired a school that aligned to the customs and rhythms of the liturgy their children experienced on Sunday.

But they also recognised that there was something not right with modern education.

When we listen to leaders in the sector, much is said about the importance of producing graduates who have relevant skills and are 'job-ready'. Children, we are told, must be familiar with the latest technology so as not to be left behind in a rapidly evolving workplace.

There is nothing wrong with teaching skills that are useful in the workplace, but when this becomes the *raison d'être* of a school, it unwittingly adopts the materialist narrative that human flourishing comes from no purpose beyond satisfying our desires.

Rather than developing a sense of being a 'divine locus of value', students see their value in their utility. This is the reason that in our age of material abundance many of our children fail to flourish.

Our vision is for a school that teaches children that they are loved by God. If a child leaves St Benedict School knowing this, we have succeeded in our mission.

The Montessori-inspired Catechesis of the Good Shepherd has been running in our church community for several years, and it taps the potential for children to slow down, to be still



and to contemplate. If I hadn't seen rumbunctious four-year-olds working quietly in our Atrium, I would not have believed it. We want our school to capture that same environment of *festina lente* (hasten slowly).

St Benedict School opened in January this year (2024) with 29 children enrolled from Reception to Year 4. Next year we will add Year 5 and then Year 6. We are discerning whether to keep adding year levels beyond primary schooling. We have almost 50 enrolments next year; there is a deep hunger for what St Benedict School offers.

When you visit the school, the sense of peace and order is striking. Children are polite and friendly, welcoming visitors with '*Salve, et benedicat te Deus.*'

The school is on beautiful grounds, surrounded by dairy farms and vineyards, and the children keep chickens and an orchard. A creek winds through the property. The children are immersed in God's creation.

It is more than we could have imagined or hoped for. Understandably, some parents initially resisted the school being so far from Adelaide (about 45 minutes). But recently

when talking with parents, they told me that their children were so in love with the property that even if an opportunity presented to re-locate closer to Adelaide, they would prefer we remain at Springhead.

God has been generous in the teaching staff who have joined the community. Our principal is a leader of courage and deep faith, and our teachers are gifted and model Christ to the children.

We are blessed to have Fr Thomas Sofatzis FSSP as an unofficial chaplain to the school. Several times a year, the Traditional Mass is said in the historic church on the school property.

The children learn Latin and Gregorian chant as well as the core subjects of English, science and maths. They learn the Catholic faith in all the richness of its traditions. While technology has a place, it is not in the early years when we want children to love beautiful books and to learn the fine motor skills required for beautiful handwriting.

Our parents strengthen each other and participate in the life of the school. Every day there are at least several parents helping in some way. They are integral to the smooth operating of St Benedict School.

The school is operated by an independent board, with Fr McCaffrey as an observer and



with oversight of our Religious Education curriculum.

A series of seemingly unconnected events led to the establishment of St Benedict School – COVID, my taking up bike riding, the closing of a Lutheran school in 2017 and the evolution of classical education, among others. It reminds me of God's intimate involvement in my life if I allow Him the space to act. It is not only the children who are learning "*Deus Caritas est!*"

The young people who attend St Benedict School go out into a world that has forgotten its patrimony and is experiencing an existential crisis. Our prayer is that, like St Benedict in the 6th century, the witness of their lives – by Jesus shining on others through them – will remind the world that God is near.

Mr. Jack Snelling



For more information about the Fraternity of St Peter please visit our website fssp.net or contact us via email at enquiries@fssp.net or phone (02) 96884287