



THE MASSABIELLE

THE WEEKLY NEWSLETTER OF ST BERNADETTE'S PARISH COMMUNITY CASTLE HILL

ST. BERNADETTE'S PARISH

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Office Hours: Mon-Fri 9am-5pm

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Fr Menard Gaspi

Pastoral Associate
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Ms Laura Burton
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Youth Ministry
ym@stbernadette.org.au

Groundskeeper
Mr Darren Edwards

SCHOOL

St Bernadette's Primary
(02)9407 6600
Principal: Bianca Cooke

WEEKLY MASS TIMES

Monday, Tuesday
6:45am
Wednesday, Thursday, Friday
6:45am, 9:15am
Saturday and Public Holidays
8:00am

WEEKEND MASS TIMES

Saturday Vigil
5:00pm
Sunday
7:30am, 9:00am, 10:30am,
6:00pm

RECONCILIATION TIMES

Saturday
8:30am-9:00am,
4:00pm-4:30pm
Or by appointment

17-18 JANUARY 2026 *THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME YEAR A*

Hello everyone!

This week, the church will offer us the chance to celebrate the memory of St Agnes, one of the most popular saints from the early history of the church and known as the patron saint of young girls.



St. Agnes, one of the most revered virgin martyrs of the early Church, suffered martyrdom in Rome at the tender age of twelve or thirteen, likely during a third-century persecution after Decius, though traditionally dated around 304 under Diocletian. Honoured since the fourth century for her heroic defence of virginity and faith, her feast is celebrated on January 21. St Agnes is named in the Roman Canon of the Mass, she exemplifies purity confounding the strong, as invoked in her memorial collect: "Almighty ever-living God, who choose what is weak in the world to confound the strong, mercifully grant that we, who celebrate the heavenly birthday of your Martyr Saint Agnes, may follow her constancy in the faith."

Born into a noble Roman family, Agnes consecrated her virginity to Christ from childhood, rejecting wealthy suitors who vied for her hand due to her beauty and riches. When pressed, she declared: "I have consecrated my virginity to a heavenly spouse who cannot be beheld by mortal eyes." Her suitors, enraged, accused her of Christianity before the governor (prefect), confident that threats would break her youthful resolve.

The governor first tempted her with promises, then threats of torture—racks, hooks, and fire—but Agnes remained undaunted, even joyful, declaring Christ her sole spouse. St. Ambrose marvelled at her fortitude: "In a body so tiny, was there room to strike? Girls her age cannot bear their parents' angry looks or the prick of a needle without tears... Agnes, fearless amid her executioners stained with her blood." Pope Damasus's inscription notes she voluntarily professed faith post-edict, endured fire steadfastly, veiling her body with flowing hair from the crowd's gaze. Prudentius adds a threat to expose her in a brothel; divine awe repelled assailants, one struck blind but healed by her prayer, affirming her purity's protection.

Details about her martyrdom vary: Ambrose and Prudentius suggest decapitation ("she bent her neck," head struck off); Damasus and an ancient hymn imply stabbing after fire threats, as she modestly covered herself post-wound. Later Acts elaborate miracles (untouched by flames, decapitation), deemed legendary by scholars, yet her martyrdom's historicity is undisputed—early witnesses agree on her youth and heroism. As St. Augustine noted, she was "a girl of thirteen years."

Executed, likely by sword, Agnes went "more cheerfully than brides to their wedding," as recounted by St. Ambrose. Her body was buried in a sepulchre on the Via Nomentana, spawning catacombs named after her. By 354, the Depositio Martyrum records her site. Constantina, daughter of Constantine, built a basilica over her tomb before 354, remodelled by Pope Honorius (625–638); its apse mosaic shows her amid flames, sword at feet. A fourth-century marble relief adorned its altar; her original slab, inscribed Agne sanctissima, survives in Naples.

Veneration flourished early: Fathers and poets like Prudentius extolled her; she's in gold glasses, processions (Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna), and St. Martin's visions. Medieval art depicts her with lamb and palm—agnus (lamb) punning her name, symbolizing innocence. On her feast, two lambs are blessed at Sant'Agnese fuori le Mura; their wool weaves pallia for archbishops, signifying Petrine jurisdiction. Relics include her skull in Sancta Sanctorum (teeth indicate ~13 years), and her body under the basilica altar is venerated headless since the ninth century.

Popes praised her: John Paul II highlighted her "maturity of judgment despite young age, firmness despite feminine sensitivity, fearless courage amid threats," urging heroic faith. Though hagiographic embellishments exist, her core witness endures, her virginity as double martyrdom of modesty and religion, yielding Christ's crown.

In sum, St. Agnes's brief life shines as youthful defiance against pagan power, her blood sealing fidelity. Buried near Rome, her legacy endures in liturgy, art, and pallia—reminders of consecrated purity's triumph. St Agnes, pray for us!



Peace in Jesus

Fr. Fernando Montano

DONATIONS TO SUPPORT THE PARISH

Donations can be made using the bank details below, the QR code, or via the Tap-and-go machines and cash collection boxes in the church. Your donations are greatly appreciated.



SUPPORT DONATIONS

For EFT to the First Collection - supporting the priests

BSB 067 950
 Account No 00004265
 Account Name Diocesan Clergy
 Reference 6006 Your name

EFT to the Second Collection – for support of the Parish

BSB 067 950
 Account No 00000032
 Account Name Castle Hill Catholic Church
 Reference Second Collection (Your Name)

SACRAMENTS

For Reconciliation, First Holy Communion and Confirmation programs for school children please contact the Parish Office on 9634 2622 or at sacraments@stbernadette.org.au.

For Baptisms, Weddings, Funerals and Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), please contact the Parish Office on 9634 2622 or at admin@stbernadette.org.au for bookings and further details. Baptisms are held on the 1st, 2nd and 5th (when occurring) Sunday of each month at 12noon.

Note the church law: parents are obliged to take care that infants are baptised within the first few weeks. As soon as possible after the birth indeed even before it, they are to approach the pastor to request the sacrament for their child and to be prepared properly for it. [Can. 867§1]

NEW TO THE PARISH

We would like to welcome all new parishioners. If you are new to the parish, please collect a registration form from the foyer or the Parish Office and please come and say hello to one of the Clergy or Nancy at mass.

Welcome

Youth

St Bernadette's Parish Castle Hill
Youth

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!

On Instagram

@st_bernadettes_youth

@st_bernadettes_young_adults

On Facebook

@St Bernadette's youth Castle Hill

@St Bernadette's Young Adults

JUNIOR YOUTH (years 5-8) and SENIOR YOUTH (years 9-12)

Welcome Back BBQ Social Friday 6th February 2026.

We will be kicking off the year with a combined welcome back BBQ social on Friday 6th February at 7pm on the basketball courts.

Families welcome. To assist us with catering, we kindly ask you to RSVP via the QR code or by emailing ym@stbernadette.org.au

YOUNG ADULTS BIBLE STUDY (16-35yrs)

Our Young Adults Bible Study is held every Wednesday evening 7:30-9:30pm in the St Joseph's Room. We will be reading through the coming Sunday's readings through Lectio Divina.



YOUNG ADULTS NIGHT 15TH FEBRUARY

Our Young Adults Nights (18-35 Yrs) is on Sunday 15th February 7:00pm-9:00pm in the hall.



Guest Speaker Anne Younis will be presenting her talk: "I am not holy enough"

Dinner included. Please let us know any dietary requirements by contacting ym@stbernadette.org.au.

ROSTERS 24-25 JANUARY 2026

Ministry	Mass	Vigil	7:30am	9:00am	10:30am	6:00pm
Lectors		Judith Donoghue John Geoghegan Lourdes Nathan	Wayne Vergano Jackie Willard Margaret Ash	Dawn Wickramasinghe Ranmalee De Silva Sherry Rozario	Joanne Dobry Malena del Gallego	Timothy Leong Anabel Formosa
Communion Ministers		Charles D'Emanule Cynthia D'Emanuele Kris Murgatroyd Sue Pinkerton Ross Pinkerton	Lucille Wilson Claire Lagunzad Doug Desouza Bill Lee	Brian Blacklock Jenny Blacklock Ellen MacMahon Skirma Cervin +1	Sylvia Rego Venetia Lee Winnie Li Henry Li Nina Irwin	Mandy Leong Don de Leon Puspa Winendiah
Bookshop		Kathleen Abernethy	Eugenia Fidel	Margaret Stedman	Coney Lau	Remy de Leon
Flowers	1st Collection		2nd Collection	Children's Liturgy	Housekeeping	Church Linen
N/A	Tues 27th Jan Dorothy Finucane Margaret Stedman		Eugenia Fidel Elizabeth de Jesus Helen Fidel	N/A	Julieann Gething Risa Sidik Lim Nguyen Cheryl D'Sylva	Remy de Leon

Congratulations

Campion and Ranee Fernando celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary recently. May God continue to bless them and their family.



RECONCILIATION SACRAMENTAL PROGRAM 2026

Registrations are now open for the 2026 Reconciliation Sacramental program. This preparation process is suitable for children who are currently in Year 3 and above who have received the sacrament of Baptism. For more information, please contact the Parish Office at sacraments@stbernadette.org.au.

Registrations close Monday 2nd February 2026.



LITURGICAL MINISTRY COURSE 2026

The Liturgical Ministry Formation Courses for 2026 will be held in Blacktown and Penrith. This free formation is open to anyone interested in serving within the Liturgical Ministries as Readers, Extraordinary Ministers of Communion, or Communion to the Sick. To enrol, please contact the Parish Office on 9634 2622 or at nancy@stbernadette.org.au. We are in particular need of readers at the 7:30am (x2 readers), 9am (x2 readers), 10:30am (x4 readers), and 6pm (x2 readers) masses. Please see Laura or Nancy for further details.



KEEPING OUR PARISH SAFE

Do you volunteer with children or vulnerable adults in our parish community? Help keep our parish safe and compliant by making sure you are up to date. Safeguarding training through the Parramatta Diocese is valid for 2 years. For more information, or to explore the available resources and online training modules visit <https://parracatholic.org/safeguarding/>



CONFIRMATION 2025 PHOTOS

Photos from the Confirmations for 2025 can now be collected from the Parish Office or at Mass. We still have a number of photos from Confirmations and First Holy Communions 2020-2025 that have not been collected.



ST BERNADETTE STATUE

The statue of Our Lady with St Bernadette is available for Parishioners to borrow for a week during 2026. Consider booking it for a special occasion: feast day, birthday, anniversary, thanksgiving, a special intention or simply to encourage family prayer. The bookings roster for 2026 is on the noticeboard in the foyer. For enquiries and bookings contact Janina Mousley on 9899 6060 or 0444 599 502.

SHIRE GLUTEN FREE STALL

This Friday 23rd February Shire Gluten Free will be holding a stall in the parish carpark from 11am-1pm. For more information visit shireglutenfree.com.au



AUSTRALIA DAY PUBLIC HOLIDAY

Monday 26th January, there will be **8am Mass** only, and the church will be closed after Mass. The Parish Office will be closed. The church and Office will reopen as per normal Tuesday 27th Jan.

CATECHISTS WANTED

We are incredibly fortunate to still have the opportunity to go into the local public schools and spread the Word of God with primary school students at a number of public schools in our area. As the number of families in the Hills continues to grow, so does the number of students attending Public Schools.



St Bernadette's currently provide Catechist teachers to 5 local public schools, and we are looking for more teachers to assist in this growing need. All our teachers are provided with the training and support required, as well as the lesson plans and resources used in the classroom.

Our volunteer teachers currently consist of a fantastic team of parents, grandparents and young adults from various backgrounds, careers and experiences. We are looking for volunteers who are available to take a half-hour lesson on a Wednesday, Thursday or Friday at one of our local public school. For more information please contact the Parish Office on 9634 2622 or admin@stbernadette.org.au

2026 ANNUALS FOR SALE -cash only



Daily Mass Books 2026 \$35 each-available from the bookshop and the parish office



Break Open The Word \$35 each available from the Parish Office

Upcoming Events

Please see notices for further details.

January

Tues 20th

Tuesday Morning Prayer Group 10am

Reparation Prayer Group 7:00pm

Wed 21st

Young Adults Bible Study 7:30pm

Thurs 22nd

Holy Hour 8pm-9pm

January

Mon 26th Jan

Australia Day Public Holiday
8am mass only. Church closed after mass.
Parish Office closed.

February

Mon 2nd Feb

Reconciliation Registrations close

Fri 6th Feb

Combined Youth Welcome back BBQ

Sun 15th Feb

Young Adults: Anne Younis

Wed 18th Feb

Ash Wednesday

Thurs 19th Feb

Lenten Program with Fr Menard 7pm

Sun 22nd Feb

Fundraiser BBQ: Parish Council

Thurs 26th Feb

Coffee and Chat: Virtual Pilgrimage

Today's Readings

Entrance Antiphon

All the earth shall bow down before you, O God, and shall sing to you, shall sing to your name, O Most High!

First Reading Isaiah 49:3. 5-6

The Lord said to me, 'You are my servant, Israel, in whom I shall be glorified'; I was honoured in the eyes of the Lord, my God was my strength. And now the Lord has spoken, he who formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, to gather Israel to him: 'It is not enough for you to be my servant, to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back the survivors of Israel; I will make you the light of the nations so that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.'

Responsorial Psalm Ps 39:2. 4. 7-10. R. vv.8. 9.

Here I am, Lord; I come to do your will.

Second Reading 1 Corinthians 1:1-3

I, Paul, appointed by God to be an apostle, together with brother Sosthenes, send greetings to the church of God in Corinth, to the holy people of Jesus Christ, who are called to take their place among all the saints everywhere who pray to our Lord Jesus Christ; for he is their Lord no less than ours. May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ send you grace and peace.

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia!

The Word of God became flesh and dwelt among us. He enabled those who accepted him

Alleluia!

Gospel John 1:29-34

Seeing Jesus coming towards him, John said, 'Look, there is the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. This is the one I spoke of when I said: A man is coming after me who ranks before me because he existed before me. I did not know him myself, and yet it was to reveal him to Israel that I came baptising with water.' John also declared, 'I saw the Spirit coming down on him from heaven like a dove and resting on him. I did not know him myself, but he who sent me to baptise with water had said to me, "The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and rest is the one who is going to baptise with the Holy Spirit." Yes, I have seen and I am the witness that he is the Chosen One of God.'

Communion Antiphon:

You have prepared a table before me, and how precious is the chalice that quenches my thirst.

Readings Next Weekend

24-25 January 2026

The 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A

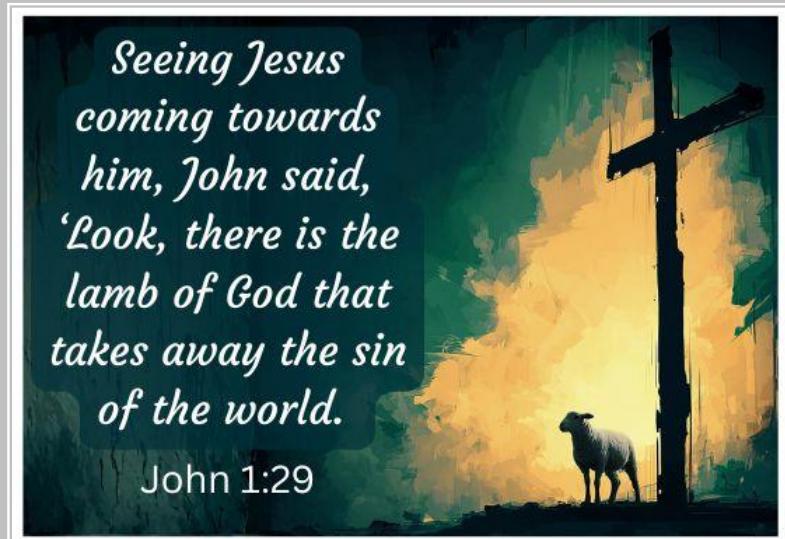
First Reading	Second reading	Gospel
Is 8:23-9:3	1 Cor 1:10-13, 17	Mt 4:12-23

Feast Days This Week

20 Jan	Saint Fabian
	Saint Sebastian
21 Jan	Saint Agnes
22 Jan	Saint Vincent
24 Jan	Saint Francis de Sales

*Seeing Jesus
coming towards
him, John said,
'Look, there is the
lamb of God that
takes away the sin
of the world.'*

John 1:29



PLEASE PRAY FOR THE SOUL OF

Recently deceased: Joseph Boudib (funeral Friday 23rd 11am)

Anniversaries: Augusto De Leon, Justo De La Paz, Valsamma Gevarghese, Rita Serasinha, Rex Perera, Felicia Perera, Henry Costa, Shiranee Lokuge

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK

Lukas Ivanic, Victoria Rix, Eleanor Ross, Tony Kearney, Minda Robles, Eric Cardenas, Marge Kleinsmith, Jeanne Atlapattu