



St Patricks



St Patricks Church Hill

1817... 1840... 1868... 1926... 1939... 2023... beyond



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1817 ... 1840 ... 1868 ... 1926 ... 1939 ... 2023 ... beyond

St Patricks Church Hill

Grosvenor and Harrington Streets, The Rocks, Sydney, NSW, 2000, Australia

Parishioners & the Parish Team with Paul Bullen

October 2023

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Sources

History

The Harmonising Influence of Religion. St Patricks Church Hill, 1840 to the Present. Peter Mc Murrich sm. 2011. 2017

Source for all historical events and dates

Videos

St Patricks Church Hill YouTube Channel. [Video Channel link.](#) Videos include:

- Masses
- Eucharist adoration
- Novenas
- Gospel reflections
- Spiritual reflections
- Food for thought

Picture Gallery and web site

St Patricks Church Hill Web site. [Web site link.](#)

Group reflections

Team

Team group reflections in each of 2018, 2022, 2023

Parishioners

Four focus groups in 2022 (with 15 to 20 participants in each)

Interviews

Team

Individual Team Member interviews in 2018, 2022 and 2023

Parishioners

Individual interviews (10) in 2018 and 2022 and 2023.

Surveys

National Church Life Survey – 2016 (931 completed surveys)

St Patricks Volunteers Survey – 2022 (84 completed surveys from 120 volunteers – 70%)

St Patricks Parishioners Survey - 2023 (862 completed surveys from 1,200 attendees – 72%)

Attendance records

St Patrich's Church attendance records 2013 to 2023

Australian Bureau Statistics

Population data - 2021 Census

Forward

St Patricks is part of “the pilgrim Church”

Fr Jeremiah O’Flynn ministered here, **1817-1818**

The lay faithful kept the faith alive until the arrival of

Frs Joseph Thierry and Philip Conolly 2 May **1820**

Foundation stone for St Patricks was blessed in 1840

on land donated by William Davis

Archdeacon McEncroe ministered at St Patricks **1861-1868**.

Mother Ignatius (Elizabeth McQuoin) RSM and two other Sisters of Mercy

arrived at St Patricks **1865**.

The Marist Fathers began ministering at St Patricks in **1868**

Br Ludovic FMS and three other Marist Brothers opened

their school in Harrington Street **1872**.

First St Vincent de Paul Meeting with Charles O’Neill **1881**.

St Mary of the Cross established Providence Houses in the **1880s**.

In **1892**, three pioneer Marist Sisters, stayed at St Patricks en route

for Fiji, to found their first Mission in Oceania.

In **1926**, Daniel Hurley SM, the first non-French Marist,

was appointed parish priest at St Patricks.

The dedication (consecration) of St Patrick’s Church

on 3 September **1946** by the Archbishop of Sydney, Cardinal Gilroy.

The baptismal and marriage registers record the names of thousands of people who have come and gone, baptized or married at St Patricks. There are no written records of the enormous number who came to St Patricks, sat or knelt in silence, celebrated Eucharist, sought forgiveness.

**This Report intends to paint a picture of St Patricks, its essence,
so that St Patricks can be clearly seen
so as to enable the future to emerge and the Church pilgrimage to continue
in as life giving a way as possible.**

The Report has been put together by Paul Bullen, an independent consultant based on interviews and group discussions with St Patricks parishioners and Team members, parishioner surveys, church records and documents, videos and more from St Patricks.

The Report and the process of gathering information and putting it together is part of the transition process following the announcement in August 2022 of the Australian Marists relinquishing the parish and returning it to the Archdiocese of Sydney.

In essence it is a report by St Patricks of St Patricks.

The pilgrimage continues.



Welcome

We are on the land of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. As a Wiradjuri elder, I acknowledge with respect the traditional owners of this land.

For over 60,000 years, my people have walked gently on this land hunting, gathering, singing and dancing their special ceremonies. Aboriginal people lived in harmony with the environment and all of God's creations reflect on the caring and spiritual connection to mother Earth.

Help us to show by our lives that people of all cultures and religions may live in peace, enriched by our differences and treasuring what we have in common.

We thank elders past and present and we thank our elders whose wisdom guides us through crisis of identity to build a better future for our children and our children's children. As we journey through the process of reconciliation, we celebrate together. So let us walk together in peace and unity sharing of this great land.

God of the holy dreaming, great creative spirit from the dawn of creation. You have given your children the good things of mother earth, you spoke and the gum trees grew in the vast deserts and the dense forest in the cities at the water's edge. Creation sings your song, your presence endures as a rock at the heart of our land. When Jesus hung on the tree, you heard the cries of all your people and became one with your wounded ones, the convicts, the hunted, and the dispossessed. The sunrise of your sun coloured the earth anew and bathed it in glorious hope.

In Jesus, we have reconciled to you, to each other and to your whole creation. Lead us on Great Spirit as we gather at this special place located on land where ancestors of long ago gathered to work, play and praise, enable us to walk together in trust from the hurt of the past.

Thanks be to God and peace be with you all.



Auntie Elsie

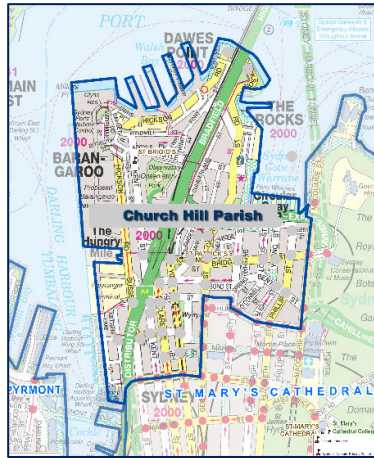
*Welcome to Country
Sesquicentenary Mass
Celebrating 150 years of Marists at St Patricks
16th September 2018*

Introduction

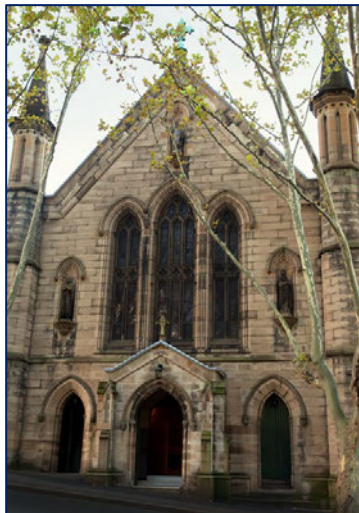


St Patricks

A parish of the Archdiocese of Sydney – with parish boundaries
(10% of those who come to St Patricks live within the parish boundaries).



With two churches:



St Patrick's Church



St Brigid's Church

With two communities, those who associate more closely with:

St Patrick's Church community

St Brigid's Church community.

With a wide variety of activities for parishioners and others

Masses, reconciliation, novenas, eucharistic adoration, Saturday breakfast, choir, Food for Thought, bible study

With people who come from everywhere across Sydney (and beyond).

With unity in diversity – people come from various cultural, ethnic and theological “places” but still participate as one.

St Patricks:

Is not a typical “parish”
 Nor is it a typical “mass and reconciliation centre”
 Nor is it a typical “shrine”.

Parishioners

There are approximately 6,000 people living in private dwellings within the Parish boundaries, of these about 1,100 identify as Catholic and of these about 120 come to St Patricks each week (about 10%).

In 2023 St Patricks has about 1,200 people come each week. Some daily, some weekly, some fortnightly, some monthly and so on, so that over 3 months approximately 3,350 people come to St Patricks. They come from all over Sydney and beyond.

Some of these people identify St Patricks as their:

First parish
 Second parish
 Something else.

Many of these people have a very long association with St Patricks:

18% Less than 2 years 15% 2 to 5 years
 18% 5 to 10 years 17% 10 to 20 years 31% 20+ years

Terminology

In this Report:

St Patricks – all encompassing, everything that is part of St Patricks (including St Patrick’s and St Brigid’s communities)

St Patrick’s Church community – those who associate more closely with St Patrick’s Church

St Brigid’s Church Community – those who associate more closely with St Brigid’s Church

St Patrick’s Parish – the canonical entity of the Parish of the Archdiocese, with parish boundaries.

St Patrick’s Parishioners – everyone who sees themselves as a parishioner of St Patricks (including St Patrick’s and St Brigid’s communities)

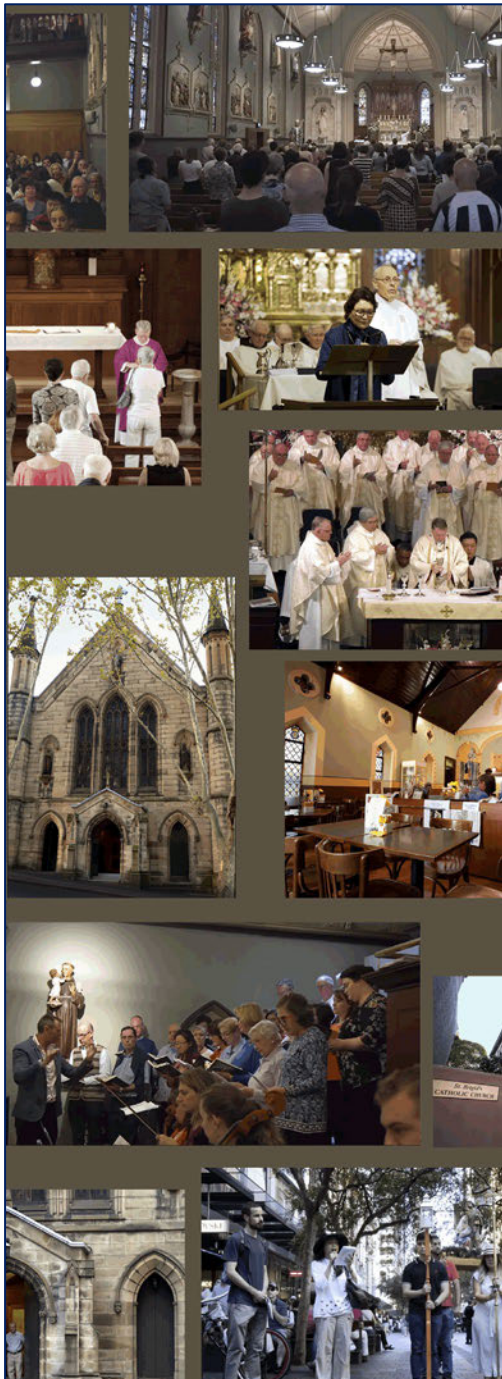
What is St Patricks?

The challenge is to describe what St Patricks is. That is the task of this Report.

As noted above it is not a typical “parish”, nor typical “mass and reconciliation centre”, nor a typical “shrine”. It has elements of all of these things, and much more.

St Patricks is part of the pilgrim Church

In August 2022 the Australian Marists relinquishment of St Patricks back to the Archdiocese was announced by Archbishop Anthony Fisher.



Today's challenge

What will the future bring?

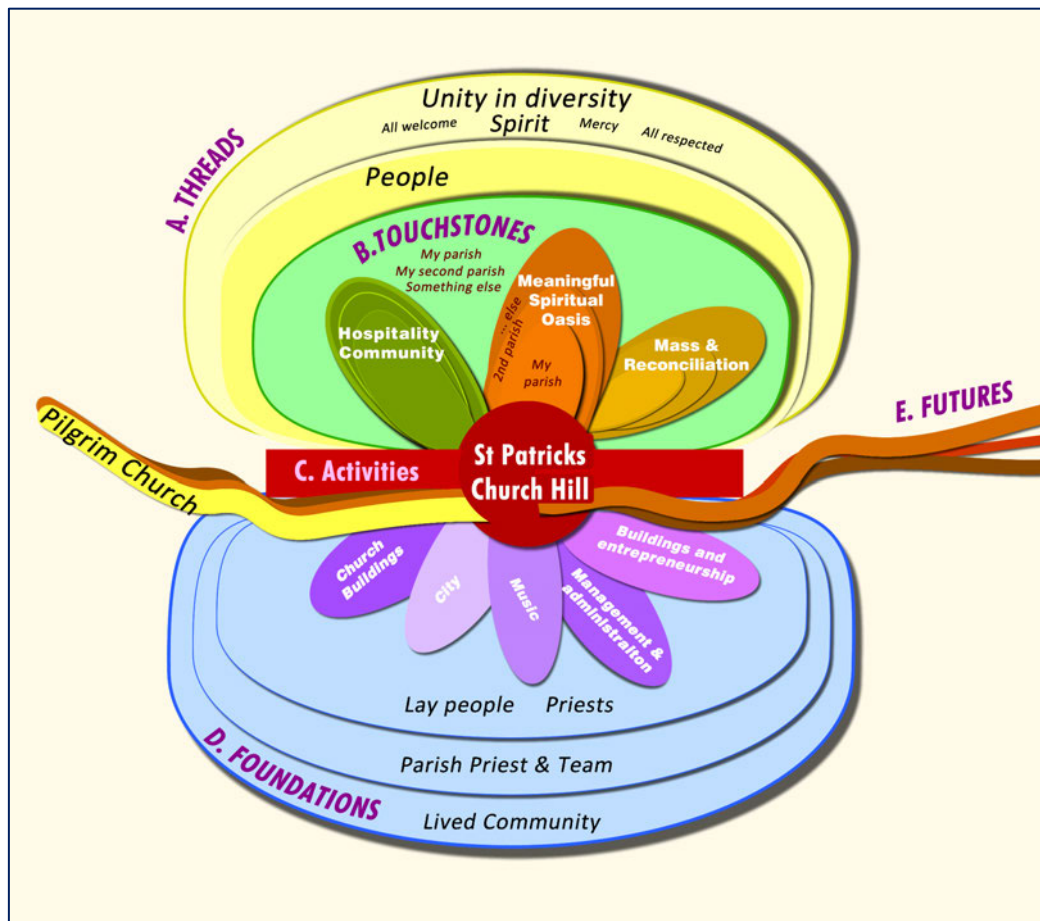
The challenge in 2023 is to see St Patricks clearly so as to enable the future to emerge in as life giving a way as possible.

St Patricks is complex, multi-faceted, with a long history. How to sum it up?

One image for the framework in this report

The image below is an attempt to put all of St Patricks key ingredients into a single image.

This is the framework in this Report.



A. Threads

St Patricks in on a pilgrimage with the roots in Australia starting to emerge in 1817 with Masses celebrated in William Davis' cottage in The Rocks by Fr Jeremiah O'Flynn.

Threads running through St Patricks from then to 2023 are:

Pilgrim Church – St Patricks is part of the pilgrim Church - changing times and transitions - St Patricks has never been static.

Unity in diversity - people come from various cultural, ethic and theological “places” but still participate as one.

Spirit – The spirit of St Patricks – including for example: all welcome, mercy, all respected, deep humanity.

People – The people who come – in 2023 St Patricks has about 1,200 people come each week, given people come more or less frequently, over 3 months approximately 3,350 people come to St Patricks. They come from all over Sydney and beyond.

B. Touchstones

When people at St Patricks are asked: *What's important about St Patricks?* Touchstones emerge.

Touchstones, what's significant and should not be lost include:

Hospitality & Community (all welcome, all respected . . .)

Meaningful spiritual oasis (spiritually life giving. . . deep humanity. . .)

Mass and reconciliation (with mercy)

C. Activities

St Patricks has always included many, many activities:

In 2023 activities include sacramental activities and other activities relevant for the times than can give expression to the "Touchstones".

Activities can be usefully grouped into:

Mass & Reconciliation and other sacramental activities

With St Patricks people (e.g. choir, novenas, eucharistic adoration, bible study, mediation . . .)

With others (Breakfast, Food for thought . . .)

By others (e.g. others using St Patrick's facilities for meeting rooms, etc).



D. Foundations

For St Patricks to have activities, which embody the touchstones and transition with the times there are foundational ingredients which are each essential.

Foundations include:

Lived community – a group of people living in community at the heart of St Patricks (from 1868 to the present, Marist Fathers).

Parish Priest and Team – the team includes the people living in the community and others who work together as a team to bring things about – consistent with the spirit of St Patricks. Collaborative leadership is a key ingredient.

Lay people and priests – priests are needed for the priestly functions, lay people have always been part of making St Patricks happen and they are at the heart of “cradling the faith from 1817 on”.

The Churches – St Patrick’s Church (including the crypt) and St Brigid’s Church buildings. They are each unique and have special character and history and are experienced as something special by those who come.

Being located in the city – the central location in Sydney gives something unique to St Patricks.

Music – including organs and singing has always been part of St Patricks.

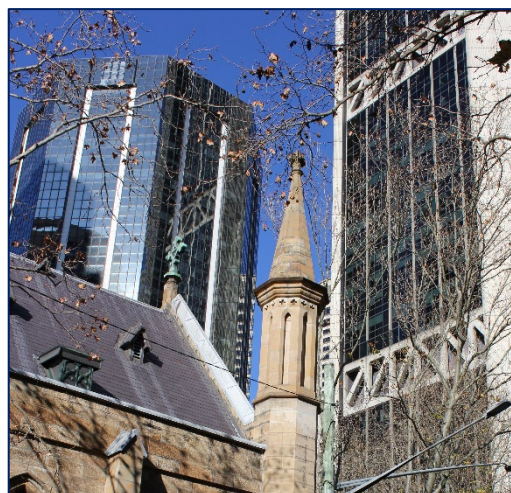
Management and administration - Management and administration has always been part of St Patricks. In the early years it was much smaller than at present.

Buildings and entrepreneurship – Many parishes essentially rely solely on the donations of parishioners. St Patricks’ parishioners donate, both to the Parish and to the Marist community. In addition St Patricks has a strand of entrepreneurship, building and land ownership which in 2023 includes building and car park rental income which makes the parish financially viable.

E. Futures

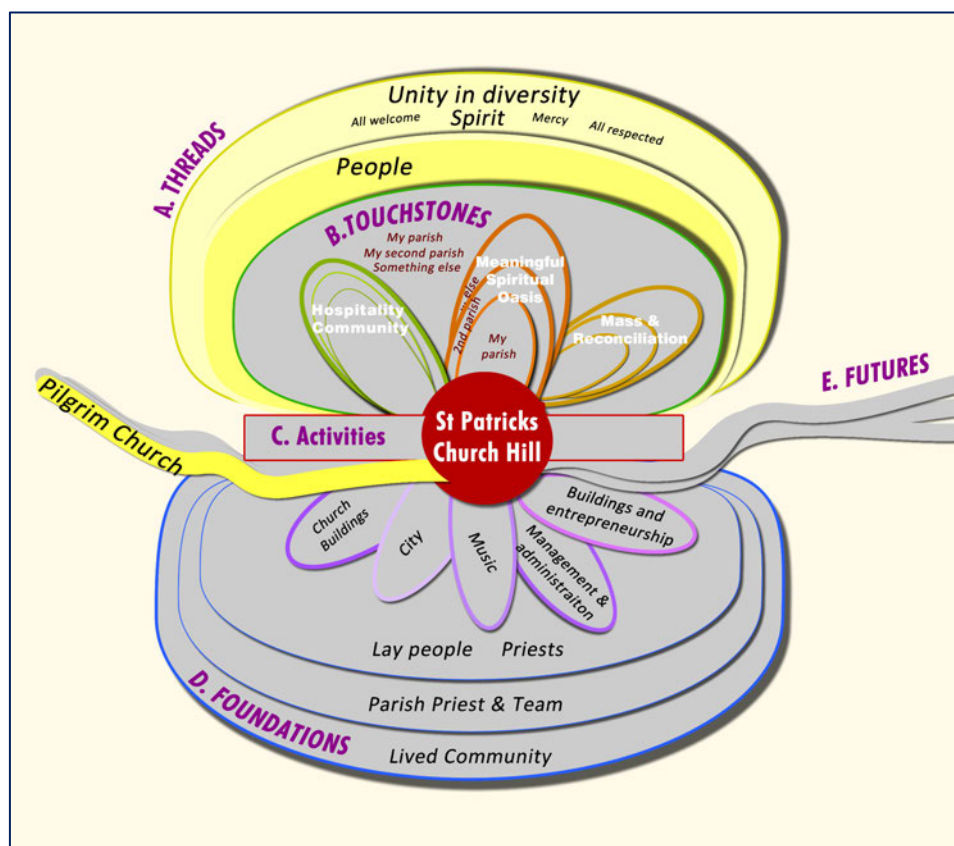
Transitioning

What will the future bring?



A.

Threads



- a) *Pilgrim Church*
 b) *Unity in diversity*
 b) *Spirit – welcome, respect, mercy*
 c) *People*

a) Pilgrim Church

***St Patricks is part of the pilgrim Church,
a journeying people, continually on the move.***

To be a pilgrim Church is to be a journeying people, continually on the move. More than this, it is to be a “home-less” people. . . . The pilgrim travels far from home, facing many dangers, moving without rest.

*This sense of Church as pilgrim is also central to Pope Francis. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, he insists that the Church is “first and foremost a people advancing on its pilgrim way towards God.” In a 2021 address, he says, “When the Church stops, she is no longer Church, but a beautiful pious association which imprisons the Holy Spirit.” Journeying is part of our nature as Christians – Church is not a “what,” it is who we are. We are pilgrim. Being pilgrim means to be not at home; to be vulnerable, but also enriched by the journey.*

Dr Antonia Pizze

2022 Season of Creation | Spring 2022 edition of the Catholic Outlook Magazine.

Pilgrim Church and times of transition

St Patricks as part of the pilgrim Church has been on a journey through many transitions some of which are noted in the Forward. There have been many more social and other changes on that journey:

St Patricks was led by diocesan priests till 1868, by French Marists till 1925, by New Zealand Marists till 1938, then Australian Marists to the present, 2023.

In the 20th Century there were two world wars, the world wide financial depression, and in the Catholic church the Second Vatican Council

In the late 20th and early 21st centuries there was the Sydney Cove Authority and the restoration of the entire St Patrick’s site.

In August 2022 the Australian Marists’ relinquishment of St Patricks back to the Archdiocese was announced by Archbishop Anthony Fisher.

Experiences of transition

While St Patricks has been through many transitions on its pilgrimage, the experience of each transition for those experiencing it is unique.

When the announcement was made in August 2022 of the Australian Marists relinquishing the parish and returning it to the Archdiocese of Sydney there were a wide variety of responses to the transition from parishioners:

- 6% Could see it coming – expected
- 16% Not surprised
- 35% Surprised
- 17% Very surprised
- 27% Shocked.

After seven months (February 2023)

- 42% were experiencing primarily negative emotional responses (e.g. sad, disappointed, concerned, apprehensive);
- 25% were experiencing primarily positive emotional responses (accepting, hopeful, understanding, open to new possibilities);
- 26% were experience a mixture of positive and negative emotions;
- 7% were not emotionally connected with the parish (e.g. visitors from overseas, interstate, etc).

How to be in today's world and into the future?

For St Patricks, as for the Universal Church, the central question is: how to be in today's world and into the future?

For St Patricks future to be enabled to emerge in as life giving a way as possible the Universal Church must deal with its challenges in how to be in today's world and into the future.

That is the question, on the table for synodal discussion. St Patricks is part of the Universal Church.



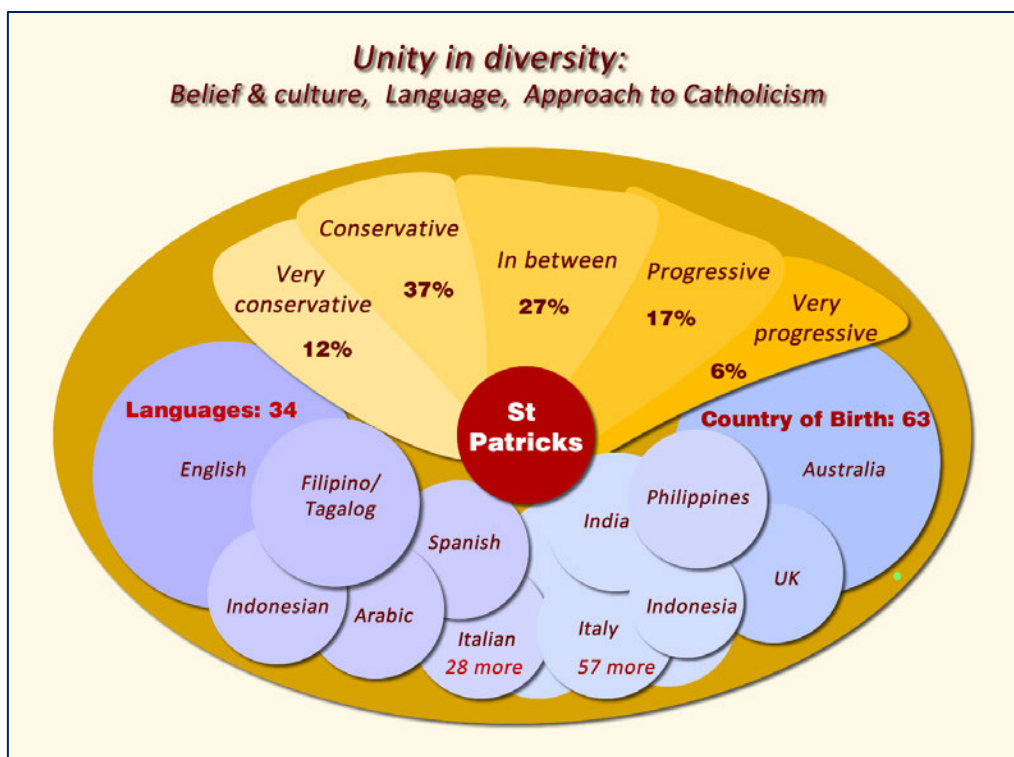
b) Unity in diversity

At St Patricks there is unity in diversity.

People come from various cultural, ethic and theological “places” but still participate as one.

People Coming to St Patricks in February 2023:

- Were born in 63 different countries
- Spoke 34 different languages
- Covered the full spectrum of approaches to Catholicism from very conservative to very progressive.



Embedded in the countries of birth and languages are different cultures and within those different cultures are different cultural experiences and practices of Catholicism.

They are all under one roof at St Patricks. St Patricks is a mini Universal Church.

This is made possible by the spirit in St Patricks described in the next section – welcome, respect, mercy and deep humanity.



In the survey of parishioners people were asked how important various aspects of St Patricks were to them personally (Question 10). The responses are analysed in much more detail in *Section B. Touchstones*, however here it is important to note that there are a diversity of views about what's important – both with one's approach to Catholicism and with one's language and culture. In the survey people rated the following aspects of St Patricks according to:

0 = Not important 1 = A little important 2 = Moderately important 3 = Very important

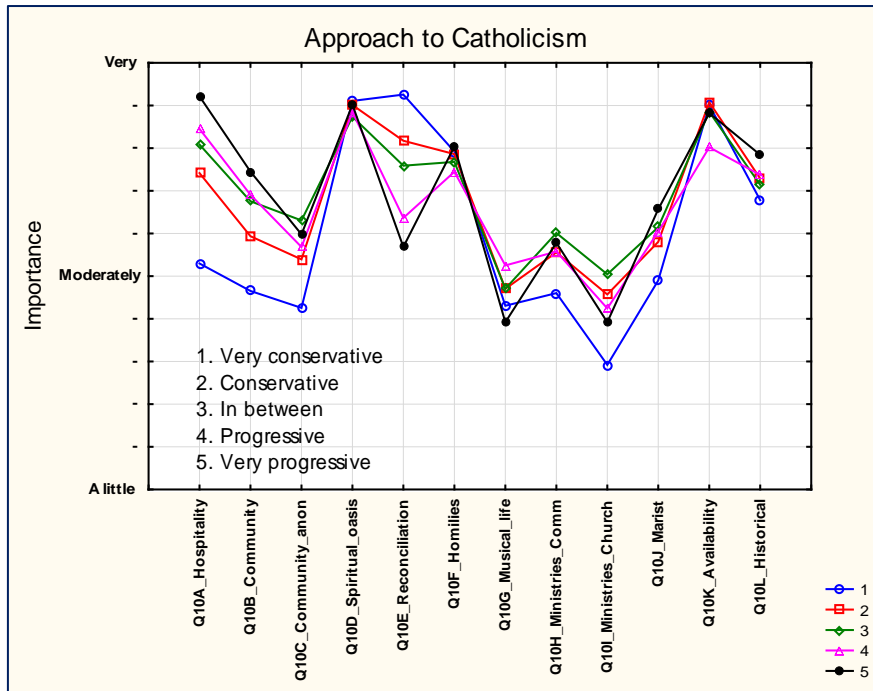
- *A. Hospitality* -everybody is welcome at St Pats, there is great diversity
- *B. Community* -being part of a community
- *C. Community with anonymity* - being part of a community where anonymity is allowed
- *D. Spiritual oasis* -a prayerful place of peace and quiet, oasis in the city
- *E. Reconciliation* -more than a juridical process - mercy
- *F. Homilies* -desire to be “nourished” - well prepared and delivered
- *G. Musical life* – organ, choir, singing, instrumental music
- *H. Ministries opportunities for service to the wider community* -such as breakfasts for the homeless, social committee
- *I. Ministries opportunities for service to the Church* - such as Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist, servers, choir
- *J. The Marist Charism* is the underlying spirit of how things are done
- *K. Availability and convenience* -there are many times for Mass and/or Reconciliation and /or Eucharistic adoration
- *L. The historical significance of the site* – for Australian Catholicism

The charts below show **average** responses for people with different approaches to Catholicism and for people from different language/cultural backgrounds.

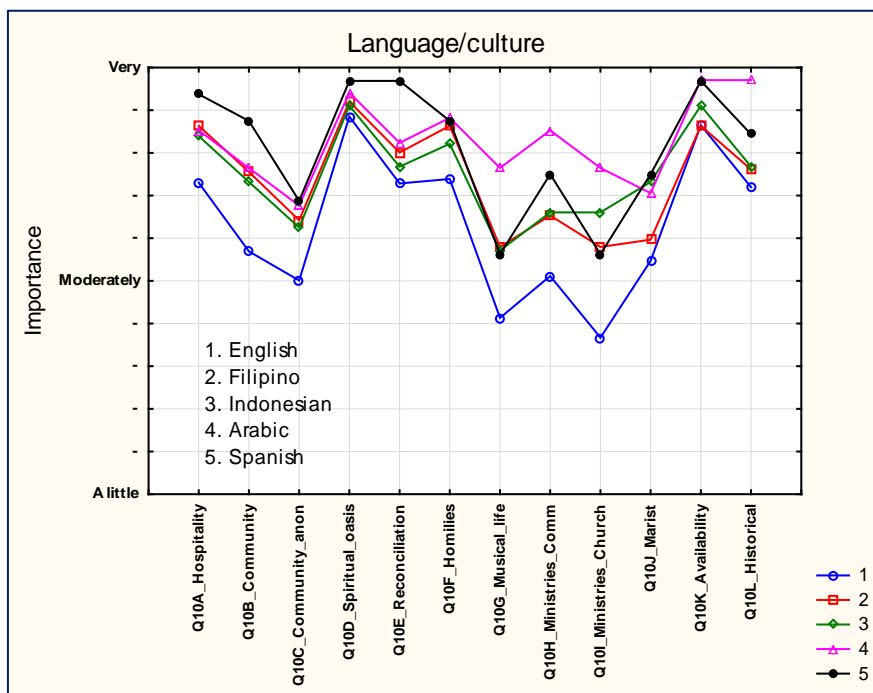
Within each of these groups (theological place and language/culture) where is also considerable diversity – and it is important not to stereotype these groups. Each one is in itself diverse.

Nonetheless the **average** differences between these groups highlight the diversity within St Patricks and also the unity – as everyone comes together at St Patricks.

In the chart below one can see the average relative importance of hospitality and community varies with approach to Catholicism, as does reconciliation and ministries in the church and community.



In the next chart one can see that the average relative importance of hospitality and community, reconciliation, musical life, ministries in the church and community all vary with language/culture.



c) Spirit – welcome, respect, mercy

St Patricks has a spirit. Its hard to find the right words.

Some peopled have summed it up as:

*All welcome,
All respected,
Mercy,
Deep humanity,
Humble.*

Early years

In the early years:

In 1870, Fr Monnier gained reputation for being “gentle and approachable” in the confessional.

In 1898 Fr Le Rennetel was known for his concern for the poor through his personal contact and assistance and in 1898 apparently no-one in the audience scoffed when he made the extraordinary and brave statement that “there was not a poor man or woman in the parish he did not know”.

Neil Vaney, writing about French Marists working in New Zealand in the nineteenth century, states that “one cannot help be struck by two qualities: their broad humanity and their love of learning”. The phrase “broad humanity” seems to sum up well Le Rennetel and the spirit he and his brother priests engendered at St Patricks.

At a meeting of citizens to erect a memorial to Le Rennetel B. R. Wise noted: “He was a man before he was a priest; and while doing his duty as a faithful priest he never forgot his humanity.”

Fr Piquet (at St Patricks for 56 years - **1880 – 1936**) to those who heard him preach, or sought his counsel and encouragement in the confessional, he projected warm humanity, deep sincerity and a special something which people confidently attributed to familiarity



with the ways of God. He was also renowned as a friend of the poor.

Parishioners in 2022

In August and September 2022 there were meetings of parishioners to share reflections on “what’s significant about St Patricks?” Some of the things they said were:

This is so special. It's so special.

It is very difficult to articulate just the uniqueness and the special nature of the community here.

It's just a wonderful place where you feel peace and to be able to come to reconciliation here with such understanding. Its just a lovely place. Lovely.

Rich theological reflection, education, care that has been available here and is available here and the generosity of that and the wisdom of it and the richness of men coming in from other parts of the world who have got different views, but it all blends together.

I come here for reconciliation. The priests here have a special skill with that.

I think that I usually don't expect much from a mass or from a parish. I'm kind of a bit pessimistic on the whole state of the church today. But at St Patricks there's always something that satisfies me. It's a place with humility. It's very peaceful. It feels peaceful and humble and open I guess.

The priest is not talking down and delivering sermons that feel a bit preachy. At St Patricks it's a kind of gentle guidance. You feel like humility also on the other end, right?

Someone divorced, someone doubting their faith. I think that they could come to St. Patricks and find something, some spiritual food or nutrient.

St Patricks isn't my parish church, but it's a family church for generations. But I just find the priests, I feel very comfortable. I could talk to any of the priests here with a problem. They've been fantastic with things like when my mother died. And again with the sermons, I consider and really want to hear what's coming out.



When you asked about what it brings, the phrase that came to me is it's sort of like an outpouring of care.

There's a sense of love here. God's here. I really feel that there's a sense of love in freedom, that sort of spiritual freedom to be who you're, you can drop pretences and be who you are.

And the diversity of people is what appealed to me enormously.

And there are gays and there are everything. And we've got people who are staying the other extreme. We've got really very hip minded, forward oriented people, and there is that sense of care and love and community. It's an extraordinary church. I think it's just a blessing to the whole city.

All this beautiful spirituality, but at the same time, kind of really grounded, sensible, real. There's a lot of common sense.

The Spirit in and through activities

The spirit is kept alive in and through activities. *Attachment 1 Activities with St Patricks' Spirit* provides some examples. Some short extracts:

Reconciliation

I perceive our core business as reconciliation. And at the heart of that is the sacrament of reconciliation, but it's not the whole of it. It's about promoting reconciliation wherever we can, however we can. And by reconciliation, I mean people are learning to live with themselves, well, happily. People learning to live with one another, well, happily. People's relationship with God and with the environment.

Team member

The founder of the Marists kept repeating that phrase, "We need to be instruments of divine mercy." I think that's really powerful. The other powerful thing that our founder said is, "If I can't save them within the law, I'll save them outside of it." So not to be hung up on the details of law, rather how relationship runs. It's a refuge for people who find it hard to fit into their regular parish.

Team member

Homilies

I needed something meaningful and meaty, and I couldn't find it at any other parish. I find it difficult to find the words to explain why, but it's just something very unique about St Patricks.

Parishioner

Breakfast

What I felt all the time was that we wanted to treat them really as guests, so therefore we weren't just going to hand them things. We were going to get a table, as you can see, have tablecloths on them, sit them down, be able to chat to them.

Team member

We gain a lot more than we give. It's definitely not a one-way street. It's definitely a two-way street. Just to listen to the stories of these men, just to see that we've learned so much from them and the resilience of them.

Parishioner

Ongoing education and formation

It was people from every walk of life. There were people not necessarily Catholic. We could have been sitting in a university, it wasn't particularly to do with St. Patricks. It was just about living and life and exactly that, how do you find spirituality in your life? Just to go a little bit further, and really meaty questions.

Parishioner

Through time

I can remember being shocked years ago after saying, "Oh well... Oh, you come to St Patricks but you live over at Pymble". "Oh yes. And yes, our grandparents, they came to St. Patricks," and then their families always come.

Team Member

d) People

Everybody is welcome and respected at St Parick's and everybody comes – the rich, the poor. . . the workers, the unemployed, the homeless . . . the young, the old . . . the Irish, the French, the Chinese, the Indonesians. . . conservatives, progressive – the universal Church.

In February 2023 there was a survey of all those coming to mass and activities. The data from those surveys - 862 completed surveys with a response rate of 70% combined with St Patricks census data has been used to create the profile of people in this section.

People attending mass

In one week in February 2023 1,200 people attended masses. Some come daily, some weekly, some fortnightly, some monthly and so on so that over 3 months approximately 3,350 people come to St Patricks. They come from all over Sydney and beyond.

The people coming see St Patricks variously as:

My Parish (33%)

My Second Parish (45%)

Something else? (22%).

The following tables provide an overview of “One Week” and Over Three Months”

ONE WEEK Frequency of Mass by How St Patricks is perceived						
	Daily	Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly	Less Frequently	Total
My Parish	62	286	17	15	20	399
My Second Parish	92	237	41	70	98	538
Something else?	28	62	14	31	129	263
Total	182	584	71	116	246	1,200

THREE MONTHS Frequency of Mass by How St Patricks is perceived						
	Daily	Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly	Less Frequently*	Total
My Parish	62	286	34	60	160	602
My Second Parish	92	237	82	280	784	1,475
Something else?	28	62	28	124	1032	1,274
Total	182	585	144	464	1,976	3,351

* conservative estimate based on bi-monthly attendance (if less frequently estimates of number of people will be higher).

Generally speaking people attending St Patricks are broadly a similar demographic to the Sydney wide population except that those over 15 years of are much more likely to have a degree (67% at St Patricks compared with Sydney 37%) and there are a higher proportion of retirees at St Patricks.

36 of 3,350 St Patricks people



Demographic profile

A brief demographic profile
with comparisons to the population of Sydney (where applicable):

2023 Parishioner Survey (representing 1,200 people attending a week)

Age

Age group	St Patricks	Sydney
<18	14%	24%
18 – 25	5%	7%
25 – 40	17%	23%
40 – 60	29%	27%
60-75	26%	14%
75+	11%	7%

Gender

Gender	St Patricks	Sydney
Female	54%	51%
Male	46%	49%

Living arrangements

Living arrangements	St Patricks	Sydney
By yourself (alone)	32%	NA
With a partner (2 of you)	24%	NA
With a family	37%	NA
Other	7%	NA

Language spoken at home

Language	St Patricks	Sydney
English	62%	57%
English and/or another language	38%	42%

2016 NCLS Survey (15 years +)

Marital Status

Status	St Patricks	Sydney
Never married	37%	36%
Married	47%	48%
In a de facto relationship	3%)
Separated or divorced	7%	3%
Widowed	6%	5%

Highest Educational Qualification

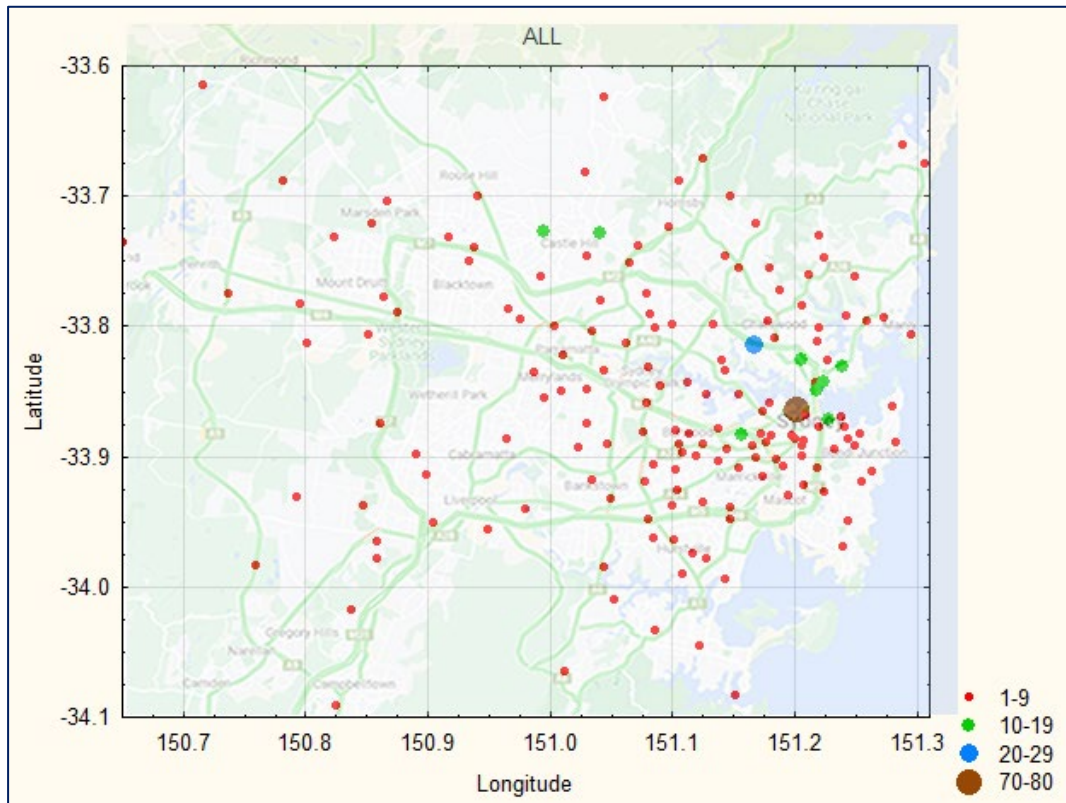
Qualification	St Patricks	Sydney
Primary/second school	17%	37%
Trade certificate, dipl or assoc diploma	16%	25%
University degree	67%	37%

Employment status

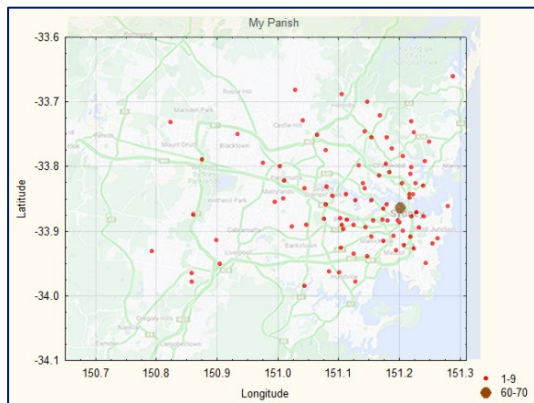
Status	St Patricks	Sydney
Employed	62%	82%
Full-time home duties/ family responsibilities	4%	NA
Retired	26%	NA
Not in workforce	8%	NA

People come from everywhere across Sydney

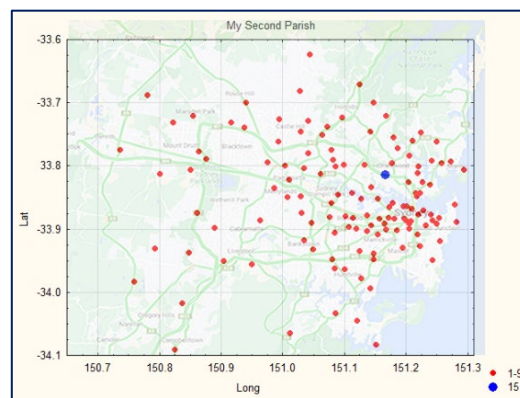
The following charts map people's home suburbs for those coming from greater Sydney (95%).



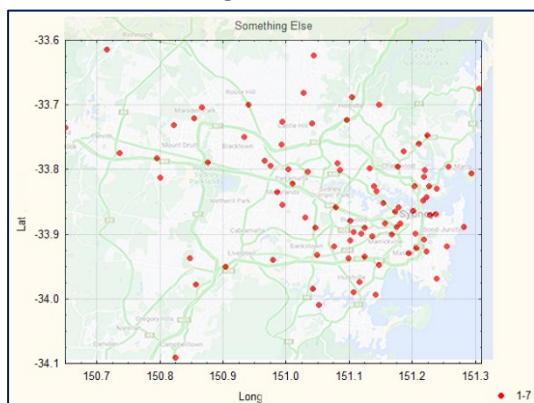
My Parish 33%



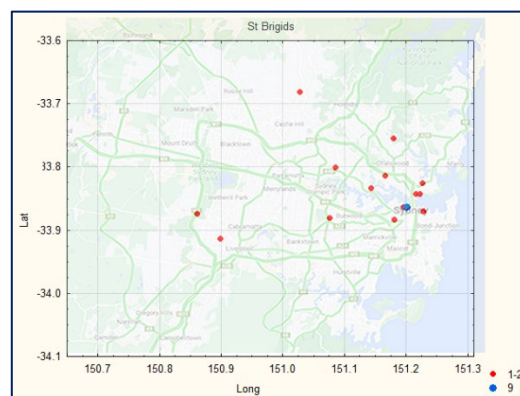
My Second Parish 45%



Something else 22%



St Brigids 5%



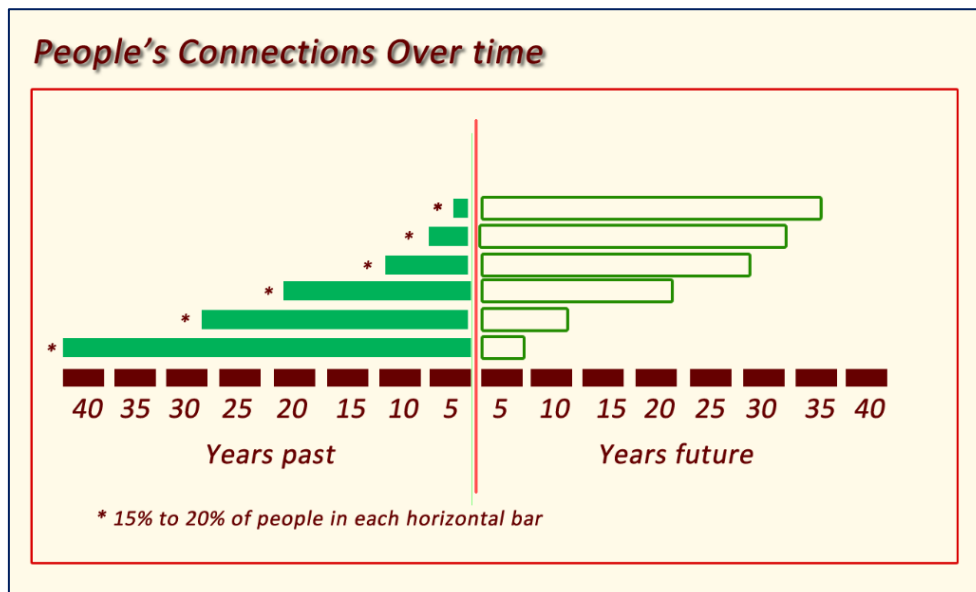
Long term connection

People develop long term connections with St Patricks. In February 2023 of the 1,200 people coming to St Patricks. The length of time they had been associated with St Patricks was:

Less than 2 years	15-20%
2 to 5 years	15-20%
5 to 10 years	15-20%
10 to 20 years	15-20%
20 to 30 years	15-20%
30 to 40+ years	15-20%

This is represented in the chart below .

The left hand side of the chart shows the proportion of people and how long they have been coming. The right hand side of the chart is what the future could look like if the trends continue as they have been.



Isn't that a wonderful thing in this day and age to have that sense of, when I come to St. Patrick's, I remember coming in with my grandmother. I come in with my parents, I come in with my family and why do they want to continue to come in? Those are happy memories. But we who are currently here continue to give them that sense of joy.

Team Member

Something else

As noted above, the people coming see St Patricks variously as:

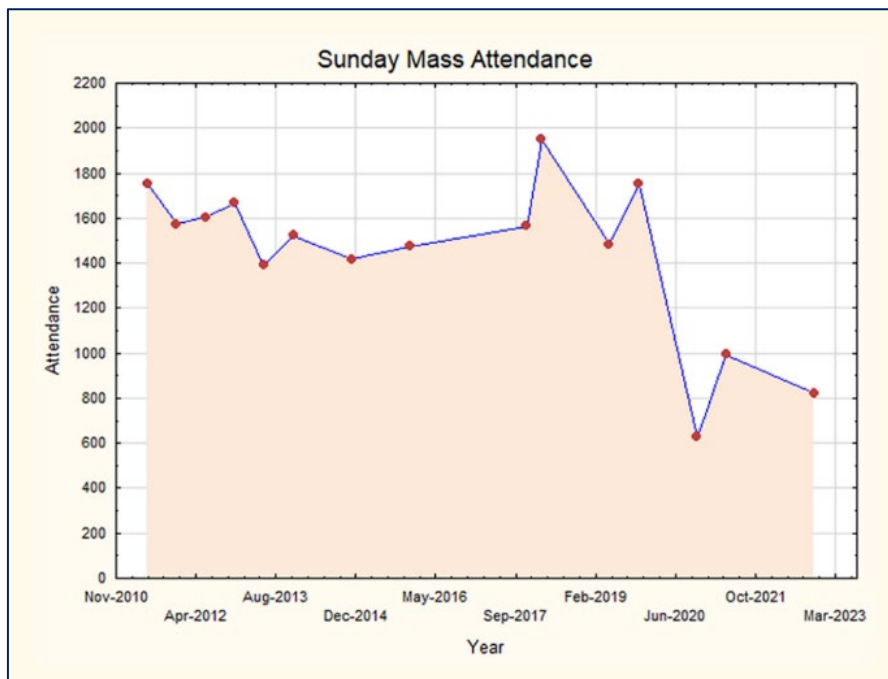
- My Parish (33%)
- My Second Parish (45%)
- Something else? (22%)

Some of peoples' descriptions of the "something else" included:

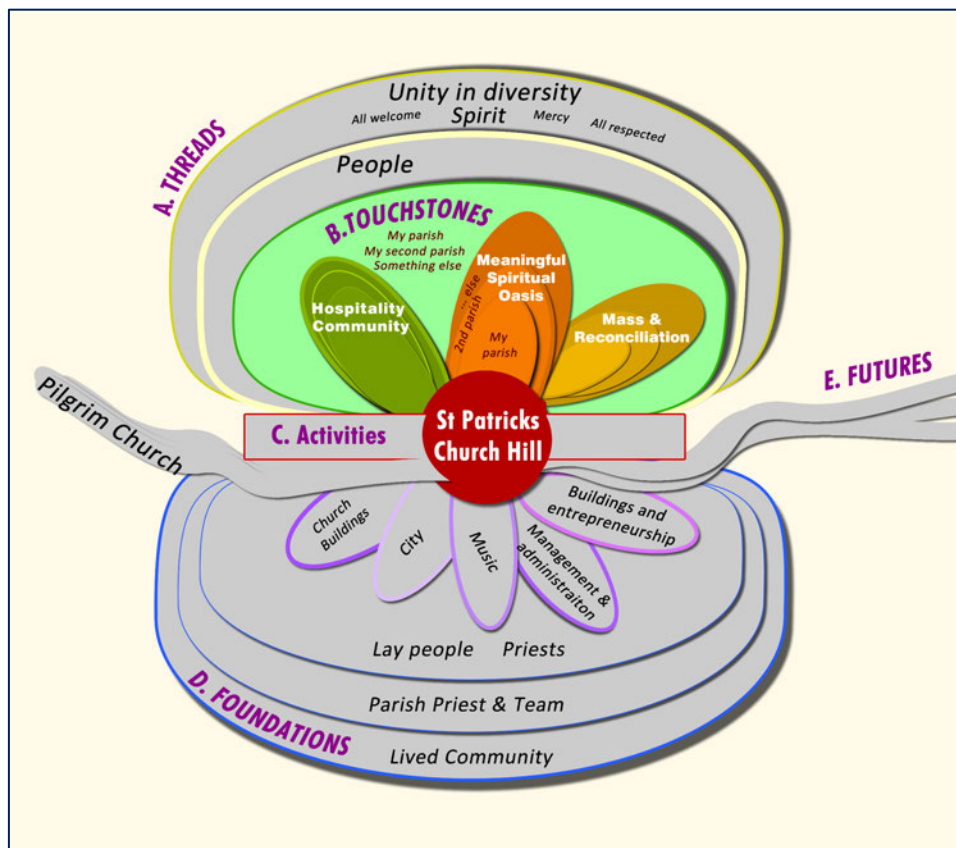
- A bustling city parish with excellent sacramental schedule
- A place where I can find mass
- A special family place
- A spiritual haven
- A visiting parish
- Church when in Sydney
- My home
- My home, my family
- My spiritual home
- My Third parish
- My Occasional parish
- Place of workshop, prayer
- Regular confession home
- Spiritual haven
- The parish I attend as a teenager until my 40s
- Third parish
- Place where I volunteer
- Work day parish

Attendance over time

In the 2010s there were about 1,600 people coming to Sunday mass each week. COVID had a big impact on that. There are now 800 to 900 attending **Sunday** mass each week



B. Touchstones



- a) Hospitality & Community,*
b) Meaningful spiritual oasis,
c) Mass and Reconciliation

Introduction

To discover the touchstones and document them has been a process of interviews, group reflections, surveys, historical research, reviewing St Patrick's videos and more.

The following shows some of the survey data from the February 2023 parishioners survey that helped inform the process.

In 2022 people coming to St Patricks were asked in interviews and group reflections "what's important about St Patricks". Their answers were then included in the survey in February 2023.

The Question in the survey was:

The following are some of the things people in the parish have identified as being important about the parish. How important are they TO YOU PERSONALLY?

0 = Not important 1 = A little important 2 = Moderately important 3 = Very important

The responses were:

How important are these TO YOU PERSONALLY?				
Hospitality -everybody is welcome at St Pats, there is great diversity	7% ○0	6% ○1	17% ○2	70% ○3
Community -being part of a community	8% ○0	12% ○1	26% ○2	53% ○3
Community with anonymity - being part of a community where anonymity is allowed	14% ○0	13% ○1	26% ○2	48% ○3
Spiritual oasis -a prayerful place of peace and quiet, oasis in the city	4% ○0	2% ○1	8% ○2	85% ○3
Reconciliation -more than a juridical process - mercy	9% ○0	6% ○1	13% ○2	72% ○3
Homilies -desire to be "nourished" - well prepared and delivered	7% ○0	4% ○1	21% ○2	68% ○3
Musical life – organ, choir, singing, instrumental music	15% ○0	16% ○1	33% ○2	36% ○3
Ministries opportunities for service to the wider community -such as breakfasts for the homeless, social committee	14% ○0	12% ○1	26% ○2	48% ○3
Ministries opportunities for service to the Church - such as Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist, servers, choir	18% ○0	18% ○1	25% ○2	37% ○3
The Marist Charism is the underlying spirit of how things are done	12% ○0	12% ○1	26% ○2	49% ○3
Availability and convenience -there are many times for Mass and/or Reconciliation and /or Eucharistic adoration	4% ○0	2% ○1	10% ○2	83% ○3
The historical significance of the site – for Australian Catholicism	8% ○0	8% ○1	18% ○2	66% ○3

People were then asked:

For YOU PERSONALLY what are the THREE most important things about St Patricks?

There responses were: (On average 23% would be expected for each item by chance)

- 21% Hospitality)
- 20% Community) 55%
- 14% Community with anonymity)
- 57% Spiritual oasis
- 51% Reconciliation - Mercy
- 28% Homilies – nourishing
- 7% Musical life
- 5% Ministries opportunities - wider community
- 4% Ministries opportunities - Church
- 14% Marist Charism as underlying spirit
- 56% Availability and convenience of masses etc
- 18% The historical significance of the site
- 4% Other - what?

It would be wrong to interpret the two tables above as some things are more important than others, or only those with the highest levels of importance are worth keeping.

It is essential to note:

- a) that all of these things are aspects of the one holistic St Patricks.
- b) That that everyone who comes experiences all of them, in some way.

At the same time there are patterns of responses across all the questions in each people’s survey that allow one to see nuances in what’s more/less important for people.

When the survey responses were analysed based on **the patterns of responses across each person’s answers** in broad terms in the patterns and the clusters of people three touchstones emerged:

- Community/hospitality**
- Meaningful spiritual oasis**
- Mass and reconciliation.**

The touchstones are not totally separate from one another. They are like three emphases, some people give more emphasis to one rather than another, but everyone experiences all three to some degree.

Attending mass one can experience mass and hospitality and community and meaningful spiritual oasis.

For some people attending mass is most important. For others what’s most important about attending mass is a “meaningful spiritual oasis” and for others what’s most important is “hospitality and community.”.

The following quotations capture the spirit of each of these touchstones:

a) Hospitality and community

St Patricks is a place:

Of hospitality and welcoming for all

Of fellowship and community spirit

Where everyone is respected.

*Where people feel part of a community even
though they may not know everyone.*

*Where people can experience being part of a community
through doing activities together.*

*Where the community can outreach to others in the wider community –
especially the marginalised.*



People coming to St Patricks have said:

And the diversity of people is what appealed to me enormously. Because before I became a Catholic, I've attended the city church, but it was very white Anglo Saxon and proper and pretty privileged. And yet it's just a stone throw from here. And you come in here and it's a very polygot sort of thing. And as a single person in a parish, I often felt one of the suburban parishes is surrounded by people who've got kids galore and they're

all focused on kids. And that's fine, but if you're not part of a family set, there's not much going. Whereas here, there are families and they're single. There is everyone.

One of my best friends here is gay and atheist, but he has become increasingly interested and actually engaging a lot with the gospel as well. I feel like I could bring him to St. Patricks and he wouldn't feel weird and traumatised by the experience. And that wouldn't be the same in most of the churches that you can find.

What I love about St. Patrick's. It's not a particular parish with a particular ethnic group and a particular socioeconomic environment and so forth. James Joyce is often quoted. "Catholicism, here comes everybody." Yes. That's St Patricks .

I like the intimacy of St. Pats and the historical nature of it. And I also liked the greater diversity of people that are here as well.

I think it's pretty intangible, but it's just something that you sense when I come here and I always have even as a child. As a child and a teenager I didn't feel that in other churches But it kept me here and it's been basically all my life really.

St Brigids: It's a wonderful church, it's a wonderful community. The priests, the whole feeling is very welcoming, very spiritual. St. Brigid's being such a small, little intimate community, it's run perfectly. The priests naturally are very accommodating. It's a very intimate and very peaceful environment.

b) Meaningful spiritual oasis

St Patricks is a holy, sacred place, a place:

Of meaning

Of spirituality

Of prayer, contemplation, comfort and refuge

Where homilies touch me

Where the church building itself helps me experience God in my life

That offers spiritual health and well-being

Where there is a deep spirit of love, mercy, welcoming and celebration of conscience

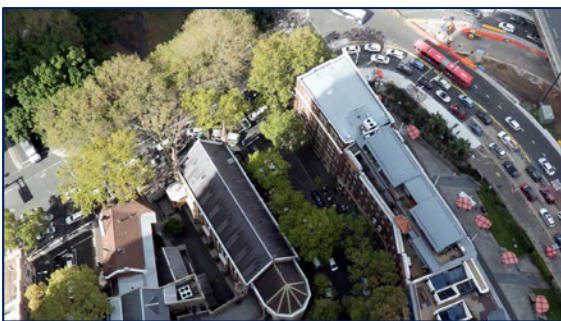
People coming to St Patricks have said:

But then you hear words and it just encapsulates something that you might be experiencing. And it's a very poignant moment. It's more poignant even than hearing a priest say something in a sermon or saying a prayer that you think is disappearing in the ether and is anyone listening? But the words just sort of can cut right to your situation and you think, oh, this might be a moment of grace. I better grab this.

I think I started coming when I was a non-Catholic and working in the city. And I think a lot of the things that people have said, it really resonated with me. The reason I came into the church was for the stillness and the sense of prayerfulness, and yet there'd be people running in and out of the church, nonstop movement. And yet a hundred or more, there's this enormous stillness.

During the week, but underneath there is this sense of deep, deep stillness. And I don't know, perhaps it's associated with the ministry of reconciliation or whatever, but all the generations that have prayed here and sacrificed for the church, whatever. But you really feel that God is in this place and I'm a single person and I have attended Catholic churches in parishes.

I appreciate the humility and all the intellectual input. Usually it's one or the other. In another parish if you've got some smart priest saying something about the etymology of some word, it's usually paired with a bit of arrogance . . . the intellectual stimulus for me is something that I value a lot as well. So if I can have both of them – humility and intellectual input.



c) Mass and reconciliation



St Patricks is a place where:

**Mass and reconciliation are available
At convenient times**

**Reconciliation is a life giving experience –
mercy, peace and wise words**

Homilies touch me

People coming to St Patricks have said:

it's really flexible in that sense. Anytime you can drop in and there'll be something here and that's good.

I've been coming to St. Pat's for decades. But in many ways it's my second parish. I come here for the sacraments and for mass and I feel very comfortable in that. I wouldn't say that it's regular. I also do go to my own parish based place except for reconciliation, I come here for reconciliation. But the priests here have a special skill with that. Dunno what it is. Can't put a finger on it. But they have a special skill in that area. And I'd say in regard to the mass, the sermons that you get here are also very special.

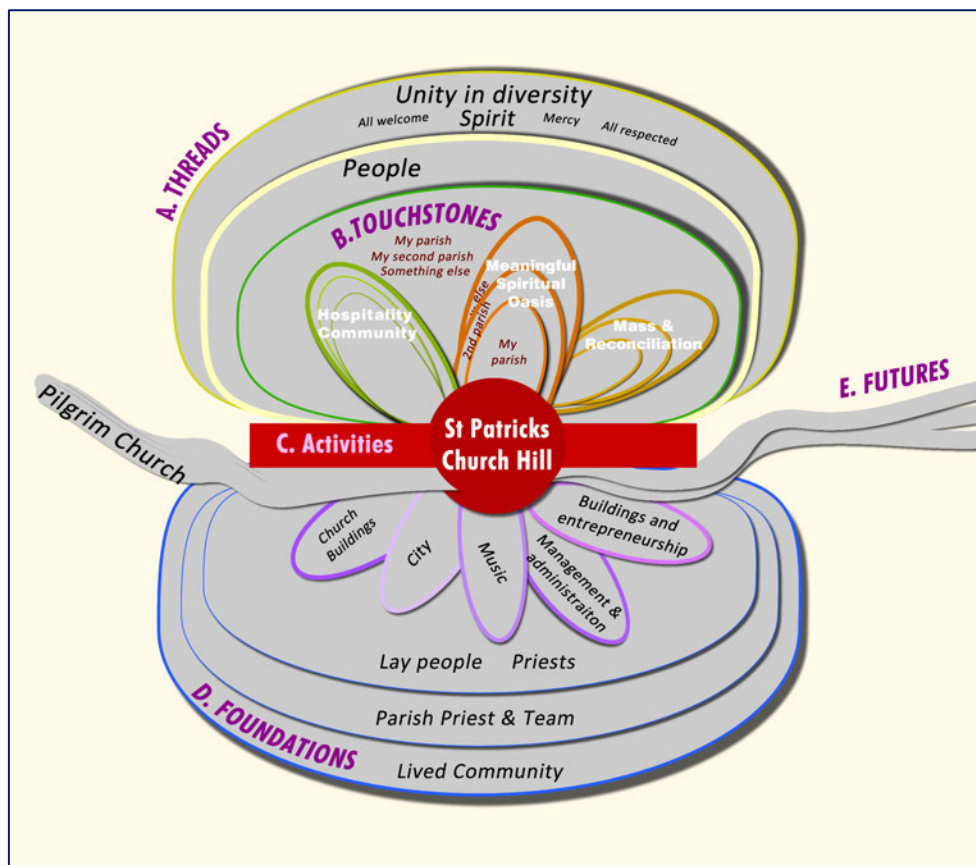
I've probably come to St. Pat's for reconciliation. I've done it for years. I feel comfortable with reconciliation here. I really do make this point - the homilies are important because they bring the message Christ to us in the present time and we connected. If they're being delivered in a boring, tedious way, you drift off. And I become a bit impatient and things pop into my mind. When's it going to finish? That never happens here. Never

I said that in many parts of the Sydney diocese, the quality of the priests, which leads to the quality of the programmes, the homilies, the thinking is very, very, very

poor egocentric and ill educated priests. Which is why I think a lot of people coming from all over the Sydney come here.

The other thing is I wouldn't want to give the impression that I'm not connected with my parish. I'm very connected to my parish. I've been on parish council. I run confirmation preparation programmes and those sorts of things. So I've done all those sorts of things. But there is something special about St. Pat's. As I said, the reconciliation and coming to mass here, there's something about it. The sermons and those sorts of things can cause me to maintain my connection with St Patricks because it delivers something to me, spiritually. Yes.

C. Activities



- a) *Activities*
- b) *Volunteers*

a) Activities

St Patricks has many activities with many people.

I look at the notice board and I think, "Well, there's something for everybody here." If you are looking for something, I think you'd find it if you made an effort. And there's the coffee shop and there's always relevant reading material. There's novena on the Wednesday. There's the films, There's the youth Parishioner

St Patricks has always included many, many activities. In the 1890s activities included, for example:

- Mass and reconciliation
- Music, orchestra, choir and solo performances
- Apostleship of prayer
- Christian Doctrine Confraternity
- Children of Mary
- St Vincent de Paul Society
- Yong Men's Association

In 2023 activities include sacramental activities and other activities relevant for the times than can give expression to the "Touchstones".

Activities can be usefully grouped into:

Mass & Reconciliation and other sacramental activities

With St Patricks people (e.g. choir, novenas, eucharistic adoration, bible study, meditation . . .)

With others (Breakfast, adult education and formation, . . .)

By others (e.g. others using St Patrick's facilities for meeting rooms, etc)

From the February 2023 Survey this is how people described their involvement in activities at St Patricks:

February 2023 – People's involvement with St Patricks

Mass

5% Daily 49% Weekly 6% Fortnightly
10% Monthly 21% Less frequently

Reconciliation

36% None 30% Regularly 34% Occasionally

Eucharist adoration

49% None 20% Regularly 32% Occasionally

Do you visit the Church for prayer/reflection at other times?

36% No 44% Occasionally 13% Regularly 7% Most weeks

Are you involved in other ways

20% Yes 80% No

i.e. about 240 people are involved in other ways each week.

Activities - September 2023

Sacramental

Mass Program

MONDAY - FRIDAY: 8.00am, 10.30am, 12.00noon & 5.30pm.

*Church open from 7.30am - 6pm

SATURDAY: 8.00am, 12.00 noon Vigil Mass at 6.00pm.

*Church open from 7.30am - 6.45pm

SUNDAY: 8.00am, 9.00am, 10.00am, 11.00am, 12 noon, 3.00pm, 4.00pm, 6.00pm

*Church open from 7.45am - 6.45pm

St. Brigid's, Millers Point: 9.00am Mass

PUBLIC HOLIDAY: 8.00 am, 12 noon, 5.30 pm

*Church open from 7.30am - 6.00pm

Reconciliation Program

MONDAY - THURSDAY 7.30-7.55 am; 10.00am -11.00am; 12.00 noon -1.00pm,5.00 - 6.00pm

FRIDAY 7.30am -7.55am;10.00am -1.00pm; 5.00pm - 6.00pm

SATURDAY: 7.30am - 7.55am; 10.30am - 12.30pm; 5.30pm - 5.55pm

SUNDAY: 7.45am - 8.30am; 8.45 am -12.45 pm; 2.45 pm - 4.45 pm; 5.30 pm - 5.55 pm.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS: 7.30am - 7.55am; 11.30 am - 11.55am; 5.00pm - 6.00 pm

Anointing of the Sick

Second Thursday of the month 10.30am

Baptisms

Baptisms are celebrated at St. Patrick's Church on Sundays at 1:15pm.

Marriages

Saturday weddings at Saint Patrick's may be arranged to commence at 9:30 am 2:00pm or 4:00pm. No Sunday weddings are held at St Patricks.

Weddings at St Brigid's can be organised through the Parish Office

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)

The parish regularly runs an RCIA program offering people an opportunity to prepare to be received into the Catholic church or to recommit themselves after a period of absence from the church.

The RCIA meets regularly on Wednesday evenings from 6:00pm to 7:00pm.

Prayer

Novena

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Wednesdays 12.30pm

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament

After morning masses

Rosary Group

Thursdays 12.30pm

Christian Meditation Group

Tuesdays 12.15pm

Choir

St. Patrick's Choir sings at the 12:00 noon Mass each Sunday and on special occasions. The Choir is also available for hire for funerals or other special occasions at St Patricks.

Community groups & enrichment opportunities

Breakfast for Homeless

Saturdays & Sundays

Legion of Mary

Wednesday 6.15pm

St Patrick's Sunday School

1st Sunday of the month

World Apostolate of Fatima

Meeting every first Saturday of each month at St Patrick's Crypt from 12.30 pm.

Bible Study

Sunday 2.00 pm

The Call to Be

Wednesdays 10.00 am

ALPHA

Annually over 10 weeks

CCR

2nd Friday – 12:20pm

Shops & tours

Coffee Shop

Open Tuesday - Friday 11.00 am - 2.00 pm Sunday 10.00 am - 2.00 pm

Piety Store and Book Store

In the William Davis Courtyard every Sunday from 10 am

St Patrick's Church Historical Tours

Twice a month St Patrick's Courtyard Coffee Shop provides a guided tour of the St Patrick's site, where this rich history is outlined in association with the various heritage buildings

Others using the St Patrick's spaces

Other groups use the St Patrick's spaces. For example the

Australian Catholic Church Historical Society SLAA Group Mondays 6.00 pm

Men Alive - Wednesday

EA Group - Thursdays 6.0 pm

SA Group - Fridays 6.00 pm

b) Volunteers

Volunteers are an essential part of nearly everything that happens at St Patricks.

Volunteers include:

- Saturday morning breakfast
- Sunday morning breakfast
- Café
- Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist
- Readers
- Collectors & counters
- Servers
- Choir
- Parish Safeguarding Support Officer
- The Call to Be – Adult Ed
- Spiritual Direction

In the survey in February 2023 people were asked:

Are you involved in other ways

20% Yes 80% No

If yes, about how many hours per week in recent months. Hours per week.

90% between 1 & 5 hours 32% 1 hour 29% 2 hours

This suggests that about 240 people are involved in other ways. Some of which is volunteering.

Survey of volunteers

In November 2022 there was a survey of volunteers. 84 people completed the Volunteers and Supporters survey. The amount of time they spent on volunteer work was:

One quarter of volunteers - less than 2 hours per week

Half of volunteers : 2 to 4 hours per week

One quarter of volunteers: 5 to 10 hours per week

There are about 120 + volunteers (not counting all the Readers and Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist).

So these 84 survey responses (70%) give a sense of volunteering in St Patricks.



Profile of volunteers & supporters**(84 people who completed the volunteers survey (70%) November 2023)****1. How long have you had an association with St Patricks?**

Less than 2 years	0	<i>Numbers: raw numbers not percentages</i>
2 to 5 years	5	
5 to 10 years	14	
10 to 20 years	13	
20+ years	52	
Total	84	

2. What has been your sacramental involvement with St Patricks this year (2022)

Mass – regularly	43
Mass - occasionally	22
Reconciliation – regularly	13
Reconciliation – occasionally	22
Eucharistic Adoration – regularly	10
Eucharistic Adoration – occasionally	17

3. What has been your volunteering/supporter involvement with St Patricks this year (Tick all that are relevant).

Saturday morning breakfast for homeless	10
Sunday morning breakfast for homeless	1
Cafe	5
Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist	19
Readers	19
Collectors & collections	14
Servers	6
Choir	15
The Call to Be - Adult Ed	3
Meditation /Rosary / Bible study Group(s)	5
Other groups	10
Financial supporter	14
Committees (e.g. Finance)	1
Other	8

5. Do you consider St Patricks to be:

My Parish	43
My Second Parish	28
Something else?	13
Total	84

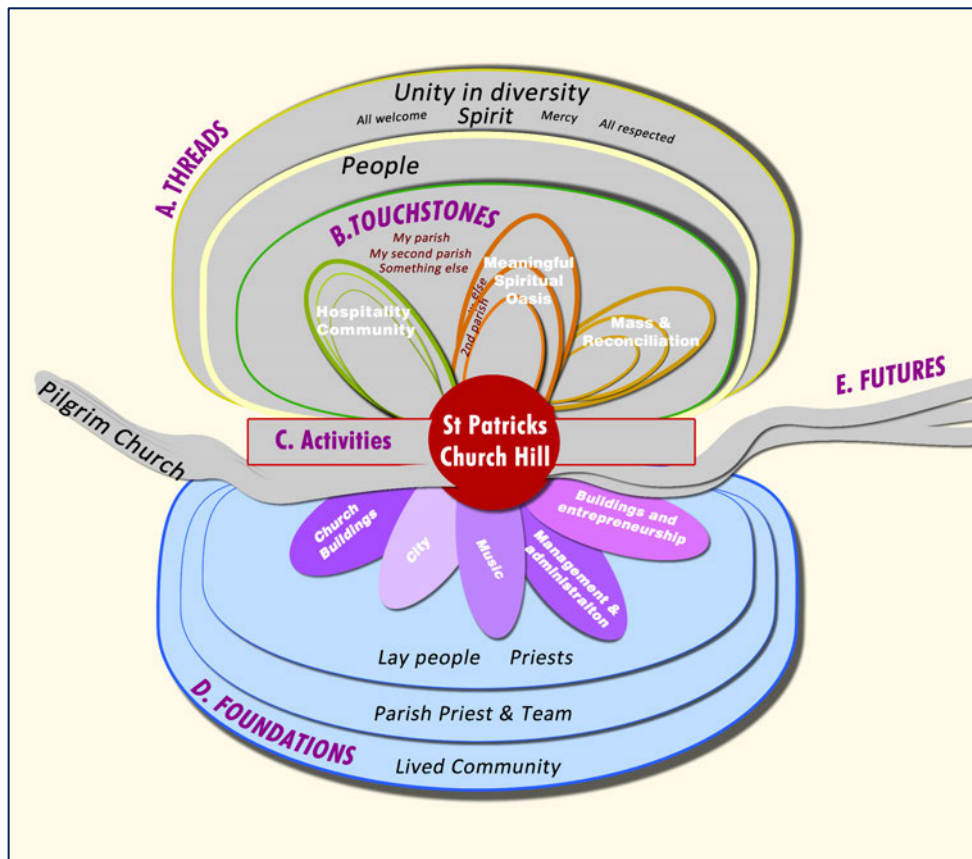
14. You age?

<18	0
18 – 25	2
25 – 40	3
40 - 60	19
60 – 75	33
75+	19
Total	76

15. Your gender?

Female	47
Male	28
Total	75

D. Foundations



- a) Lived community, b) Parish Priest & Team,
 c) Lay people & priests,
 d) The Churches, e) Being located in the city,
 f) Music,
 g) Management and administration,
 h) Buildings and entrepreneurship*

For St Patricks to have activities, which embody the touchstones and transition with the times there are eight essential foundations:

a) Lived community

Lived community – a group of people living in community at the heart of St Patricks (Marist Fathers from 1840 to the present).

The community is not just a convenient place for multiple priests to live near the church.

The community is the heart of St Patricks. For St Patricks to maintain its spirit it is essential for a lived community to be at its heart. Without a lived community management and co-ordination may trump heart and spirit.

The centrality of lived community suggests that in the transition process people might come and join the community, live in the community as part of the transition process as the community itself evolves and emerges with those who are yet to become responsible for St Patricks.

b) Parish Priest and Team

A Team collaboratively led by the Parish Priest – a team which includes the people living in the community and others who work together as a team to bring things about – consistent with the spirit of St Patricks.

Some organisations run with a ‘co-ordinator’ co-ordinating all the pieces. Others have a “manager” who manages. Some organisations run with teams at the centre of making things happen. One doesn’t co-ordinate a football team. The team works as a team. So with St Patricks. The team – which includes the lived community and others – is the way that the spirit is maintained through everything that’s done.

As with lived community above, this suggests that in the transition process people might come and join the Team and be part of the Team as the transition process evolves.

The role of the Parish Priest includes:

- Collaboratively leading the Team (grounded with the principle of subsidiarity)

- Being a pastor

- Being a parish administrator for the Archdiocese.

St Patricks does not have a Parish Council. The Team effectively takes on the role of what one would expect a Parish Council to do in a typical parish.

The Team has an annual Team meeting at the beginning of the year with the community, priests and staff. There are weekly team meetings through the year.

c) Lay people and priests

Priests are needed for the priestly functions; lay people have always been part of making St Patricks happen and they are at the heart of “cradling the faith from 1817 on”.

While sufficient numbers of priests are required, any priests will not do. They have to be priests who can also live the spirit of St Patricks, make everyone feel welcome, respect everyone, give homilies that touch people and don’t preach down to them, who minister reconciliation with that special something that brings people to reconciliation at St Patricks.

And the same goes for lay people on the team and lay people organising activities. They all need part of that special something that is St Patricks.

d) The Churches

The Churches – St Patrick’s Church (including the crypt) and St Brigid’s Church buildings. They are each unique and have special character and history and are experienced as something special by those who come.

e) Being located in the city

Being located in the city – the central location in Sydney gives something unique to St Patricks. It is not just about having city workers nearby, though that is one part. It is also being centrally located for the many who are not working in the city, yet come from far and wide across Sydney to St Patricks. It’s also what creates, with the church itself, a focal point for visitors from NSW, interstate and overseas.

f) Music

Music – including organs and singing has always been part of St Patricks:

In 1895 Rennetel’s final major financial undertaking was the provision of a new organ for the church, described as “the largest church organ in the colony”

In the 1900s and 1910s music continued to play an important part in the devotional life of St Patricks. The choir had about 40 masses in its repertoire and there was often elaborate orchestral backing and solo renditions sometimes by professionals.

In 1999 a decision was taken to replace the 1895 organ. The new organ was installed in 2003.

The current choir is a continuation of the singing that began with the opening of St Patricks in 1844.

The music adds an important dimension to St Patricks which needs to be maintained for St Patricks to keep its character and spirit.

g) Management and administration

Management and administration has always been part of St Patricks. In the early years it was much smaller than at present. In more recent years its larger, more complex, more sophisticated particularly since the major refurbishments of St Patrick’s and St Brigid’s between 1999 and 2004 and associated commercial developments – and also developments in technology, compliance and plant and equipment.

Staff

Staff – some 4 to 5 days per week*, some part-time, some on sessional or contract include:

- Business Manager*
- Café Manager
- Maintenance Manager*
- Safeguarding Officer
- Sacristan*
- Parish Secretary*
- Pastoral Associate*
- Cook for the Marist Community*
- IT
- Choir Master, Organist, Cantor
- Cleaners

St Patricks would not function without these staff working in management, administration and other support roles.

To ensure continuity for the sound running of the St Patricks, these roles and staff should have continuance of their positions guaranteed during the transition period after the relinquishment has occurred.

Finances

In essence there are collections and rental income from properties. It is the rental income from properties that makes St Patricks different from so many other parishes. The properties are a legacy from the past and that legacy needs to be unwaveringly tied to the future of St Patricks. The rental income from properties enables so much more to happen at St Patricks than would otherwise be possible.

Collections

Sunday First Collection: Support of the Marist Community at St Patricks

Sunday Second Collection: General Parish Expenses and Maintenance.

Wednesdays: Mid-Week Collection: General Parish Expenses and Maintenance.

Donations & bequests

Regular monthly donors and one off donations

Bequests to the Parish from estates

Rental income

Rental income from the Old Presbytery, the Quadrant Building, some floors of the Parish Building and the office space above St Brigid's.

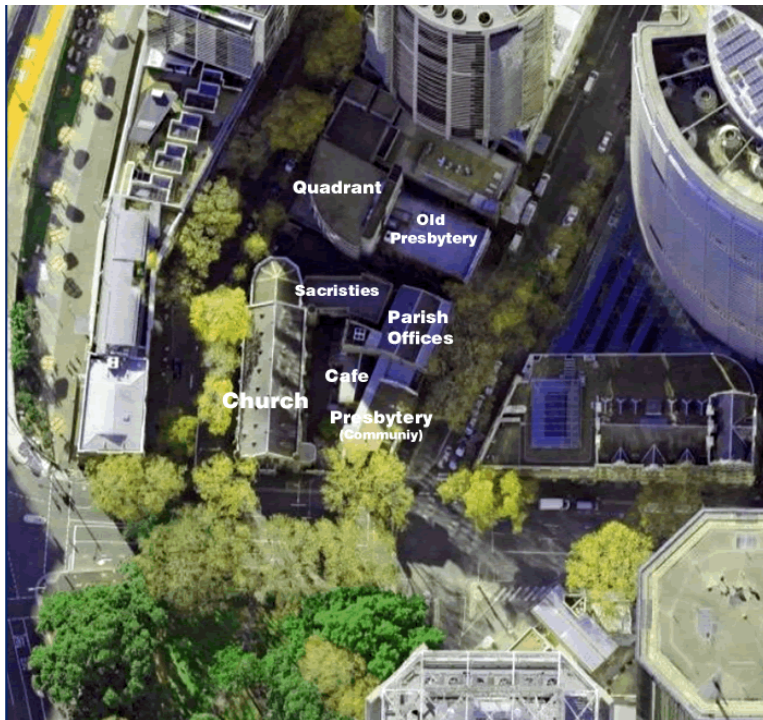
h) Buildings and entrepreneurship

St Patricks has always had a strand of entrepreneurship almost from the day the Church foundation stone was laid in 1840.

That entrepreneurship has built a legacy, as noted above. The spirit of entrepreneurship and the use of the buildings to generate income of St Patricks needs to continue into the future. Future generations need a legacy from current generations as the current generation has its legacy from past generations.

Following the renovations and a change in the Church Hill Parish business model after 2004, St Patrick's became the prototype for how parishes in Sydney could become self-sustaining and less reliant on the variances of collections and donations. By the use of the buildings on the site suitable for commercial leasing, the Parish can provide its community outreach, sacramental and pastoral programme whilst professionally maintaining its precious and much loved heritage buildings. For this model to continue the buildings and income from renting the buildings needs to stay with St Patrick's after the relinquishment by the Marists.

St Patrick's site



Church



Cafe

St Patrick's Aerial



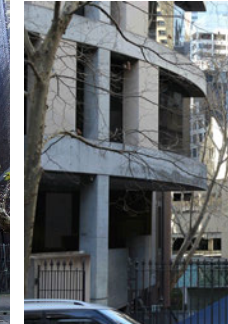
Presbytery (community)



Parish Offices

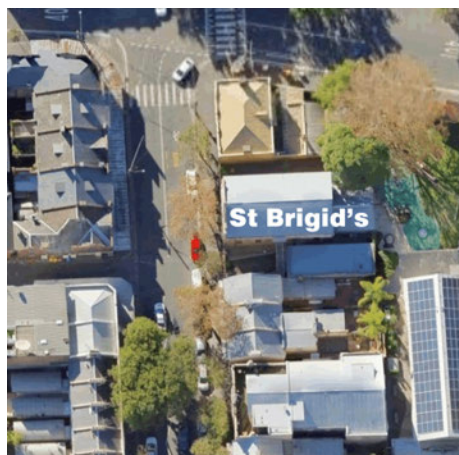


Old Presbytery



Quadrant

St Brigid's site



Foundations & looking to the future

These Foundations are all essential for St Patricks to have activities, which embody the touchstones and transition with the times.

Take any one away and some key part of St Patricks will be missing.

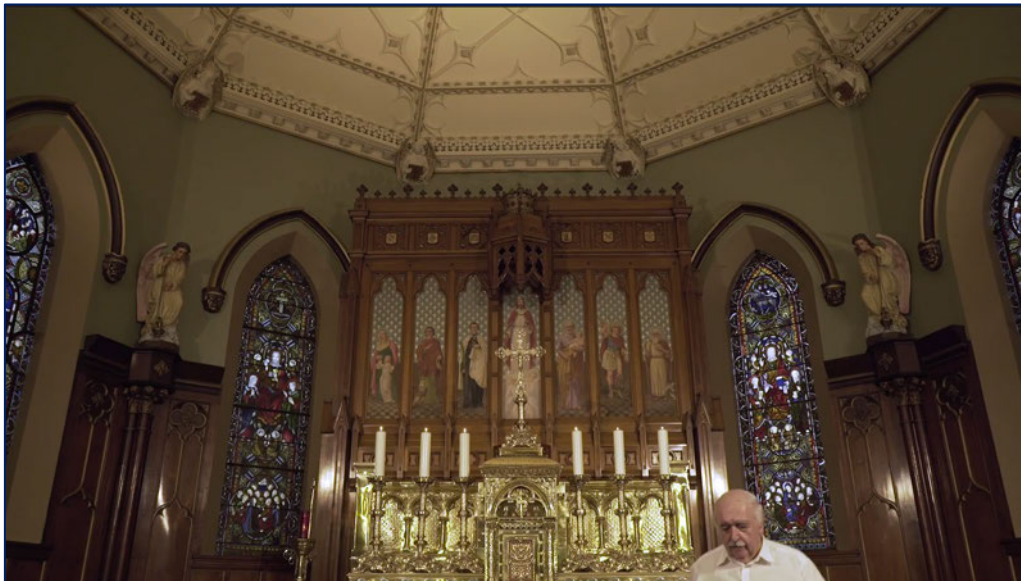
If a lived community is not at the heart, there is a risk and likelihood that St Patricks will become transactional rather than a place of deep humanity.

If a Team is not here the spirit will not permeate all the activities. Teamwork is required, not just coordination.

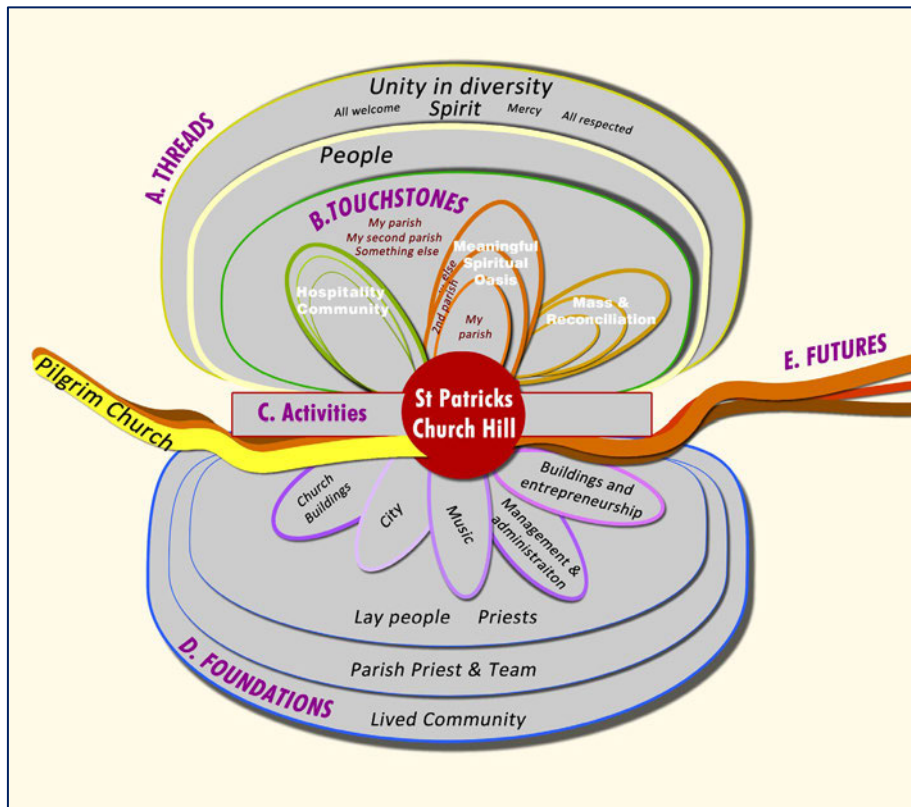
If there are not enough priests the priestly ministry will not happen. If there are not lay people involved its likely to become clericalized.

If the management, administration or entrepreneurship fails, St Patricks will fail.

And so on, for each Foundation. They are all essential.



E. Futures



- a) *Transitioning*
- b) *Futures*

a) Transitioning

In August 2022 the Australian Marists relinquishment of St Patricks back to the Archdiocese of Sydney by the end of 2025 was announced by Archbishop Anthony Fisher.

The Parish Team established a transition process that included a process group – to facilitate the transition process. The process group in turn has organised:

Discussion groups in the weeks following the announcement for those who come to St. Patrick's to reflect on how they were/are feeling, what's significant about St Patricks and what shouldn't be lost.

Interviews with the Team and parishioners about what's significant about St Patricks and what shouldn't be lost.

A survey of volunteers in November 2022 to create a picture of volunteering at St Patricks.

A survey of those attending St Patricks and St Brigids in February 2023 to create a picture of who comes.

All of this, combined with other past work such as St Patrick's written history, the review of the Parish in 2018, the making of the videos about St Patricks in the past five years has combined to help paint the picture of St Patricks in the present.

In the parishioners survey in 2023 people were asked if they would like to be part of discussions in the parish later in the year about the church, the parish and its future. There responses were:

17% Yes, 36% Maybe and 46% No.

Of those who responded "Yes" and "Maybe", 40% wanted "Face to Face" and 60% "On-line". What most needed discussion? **To ensure that St Patricks can continue and how this can be done.**



b) Futures?

So what of the future?

In a narrow sense the transition – starting with relinquishment by the Marist Fathers - has come about because the Marist Fathers are diminishing – getting older, reducing in numbers, not having a suitable person to fill the role of parish Priest at St Patricks.

In a narrow sense the future is in the hands of others: The Sydney Archdiocese (that will make key decisions about the future) and those who might express an interest in continuing the work of St Patricks.

In seeing this it is essential to understand that the essence of this transition and its challenge is NOT about the Marist Fathers diminishing – getting older, reducing in numbers and it is NOT about the Sydney Archdiocese and the decisions it will make.

These are NOT the issues and challenges. These are simply signs of.

The challenge of the Universal Church: How to be in today's world and into the future?

For St Patrick's future to be enabled to emerge in as life giving a way as possible the Universal Church much deal with its challenges in how to be in today's world and into the future.

*St Patricks is part of the Universal Church.
That's what needs discussion.*



Attachments



1. *The Pilgrim Church*
2. *Activities with St Patricks' Spirit - examples*
3. *Buildings*
4. *Maps*
5. *Videos*

1. The Pilgrim Church

To be a pilgrim Church is to be a journeying people, continually on the move. More than this, it is to be a “home-less” people. The pilgrim travels far from home, facing many dangers, moving without rest.

St Patricks is part of the pilgrim Church.

1.1 What does it mean to call the Church “pilgrim”?

Dr Antonia Pizzev has written an article in *2022 Season of Creation | Spring 2022 edition of the Catholic Outlook Magazine* which provides a useful overview of understanding the church as pilgrim Church, and therefore St Patricks as pilgrim Church.

1.2 Time line

A time line of key events in the life of St Patricks.

Events and dates are taken from *The Harmonising Influence of Religion. St Patricks Church Hill, 1840 to the Present.* Peter Mc Murrich sm. 2011. 2017

1.3 Eucharistic bicentenary [Video link](#) (1-21 mins)

2018 there was a Eucharistic Bicentenary mass.

This section includes extracts from the opening by Fr Michael Whelan, Parish Priest and the Homily by Archbishop Anthony Fisher.

It includes some of this history from 1818 to 2018.

1.4 Marist 150 Years [Video link](#) (21-35 mins)

In 2018 there was also a celebration of 150 years of Marists at St Patricks.

This section includes extracts from the opening by Fr Michael Whelan, Parish Priest and the Homily by Archbishop Anthony Fisher.

1.5 Marist relinquishment [Video link](#) (35-49 mins)

In 2022 there was a mass where the relinquishment of St Patricks was announced.

This section includes extracts from the opening by Archbishop Anthony Fisher and the a statement from Fr Anthony Corcoran, Provincial of the Australian Province of the Marists.

1.1 What does it mean to call the Church “pilgrim”?

Dr Antonia Pizzey

2022 Season of Creation | Spring 2022 edition of the Catholic Outlook Magazine.

To be a pilgrim Church is to be a journeying people, continually on the move. More than this, it is to be a “home-less” people. . . . The pilgrim travels far from home, facing many dangers, moving without rest.

This sense of Church as pilgrim is also central to Pope Francis. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, he insists that the Church is “first and foremost a people advancing on its pilgrim way towards God.” In a 2021 address, he says, “When the Church stops, she is no longer Church, but a beautiful pious association which imprisons the Holy Spirit.” Journeying is part of our nature as Christians – Church is not a “what,” it is who we are. We are pilgrim. Being pilgrim means to be not at home; to be vulnerable, but also enriched by the journey.

Pilgrim Church is not meant to be an individualistic image; pilgrims travel together. In Christian thinking, we travel with the entire communion of saints. This sense of “journeying together” is being evoked by Pope Francis’ concept of synodality. The Preparatory Document for the 2023 Synod states: “Our ‘journeying together’ is, in fact, what most effectively enacts and manifests the nature of the Church as the pilgrim and missionary People of God.” To be pilgrim is to be synodal.

Aside from this, the Church as pilgrim highlights two key dimensions of being Church. Firstly, it refers to the living Church in history, the Church here and now. The Church is not a great ark sailing untouched and impervious over the choppy and dangerous waters of history. Instead, the Church is a pilgrim people, living in and with the world. This understanding is reflected by the opening lines of Vatican II’s *Gaudium et Spes*:

“The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.”

As pilgrim, the Church journeys within history, not outside of it. This Pilgrim Church must be humble, open to recognising the Spirit at work in other cultures and languages, not just reinforcing the status quo. Walking a pilgrim path is one of hardship and struggle – but also of rebirth through conversion. So, the image of “pilgrim” reflects the historical nature of the Church.

Secondly, the Church as pilgrim highlights the connection between Church and Kingdom. The Church is not moving purposelessly, like a mouse running on a wheel, going nowhere. The Church is journeying always towards the Kingdom of God. This is what brings hope to the sometimes dark and suffering journey of the pilgrim people. There is a destination, a home where we belong, and that destination is with God.

Understanding the Church as pilgrim reminds us of a certain “now-but-not-yet” that is part of being Church. As *Gaudium et Spes* states, in article 48, “The Church...will attain its full perfection only in the glory of heaven.” As such, the Church is called always to conversion and repentance. Repentance is a key part of being pilgrim, along with the humility to recognise that we are not yet what the Spirit calls us to be. . . .

For now, we are a wandering people; but we are walking homeward. Under the circumstances, what else can we be but a pilgrim Church?

1.2 Time line

Years	Leadership	Comments	Events
1817- 1818	Visiting priest	Fr Jeremiah O'Flynn ministered in the vicinity	
1818-1820	Lay people	The lay faithful kept the faith alive	
1820 - 1840	Diocesan priests	Frs Joseph Thierry and Philip Conolly	1835 Small school and chapel for Catholic Community built – St Brigid's (St Briget's)
1840-1861		Various priests (mass centre). First resident priest in 1850s	1840 Foundation stone for St Patricks was blessed on land donated by William Davis 1844 St Patrick's Officially opened
1861-1868		Archdeacon McEncroe	1865 Mother Ignatius (Elizabeth McQuoin) RSM and two other Sisters of Mercy arrived at St Patricks
1868 - 1926	French Marists	Joseph Monnier – first French Marist parish priest	1872 Br Ludovic FMS and three other Marist Brothers opened their school in Harrington Street 1881 First St Vincent de Paul Meeting with Charles O'Neill 1880s St Mary of the Cross established Providence Houses 1892 – Sisters of Mercy Community at Harrington Streed established 1914 – 1918 First Word War
1926 - 1938	New Zealand Marists	Daniel Hurley – first Marist Fathers NZ Province parish priest	
1939 - 2025	Australian Marists	Daniel Hurley - first Marist Fathers Australian Province parish priest	1929 – 1945 Second world War 1945 - Aquinas Academy established 1962 – 1965 Second Vatican Council 1970 to 1999 Sydney Cove Authority 1990 – St Patrick's girls secondary school closed. 1997 – Beginning of St Patricks restoration project 1998 - Sisters of Mercy vacate Community Building (the end of 133 years in St Patricks parish) 2007 – 2009 Global financial crisis 2018 – Eucharistic Bicentenary mass 2018 – 150 years of Marists at St Patricks 2022 – Relinquishment announcement
2026	To emerge		

1.3 Eucharistic bicentenary

Today, we who are gathered in this church represent the Catholic community two centuries on from the one depicted so beautifully in Paul Newton's painting, Catholic community circa 1818, the lay faithful are the centre of this celebration. We may be separated in time from those lay people who kept the eucharistic faith alive against the odds, but we are totally at one with them in their faith.



On behalf of the St. Patrick's Parish where the blessed sacrament was reserved 200 years ago, I welcome you all.

Fr Michael Whelan Parish Priest

Two centuries ago this month, the blessed sacrament was reserved on or near this site. Two decades later, St. Patrick's Chapel was erected here. It was the dying wish of the great pioneer priest, Archdeacon John McEnroe that the parish here be given to the care of the French missionary fathers. At his funeral as parish priest in 1868, the Marists were offered the parish and accepted it and they've been here and are still here 150 years on, still rendering extraordinary service. Devotion to the blessed sacrament continues here in the umpteen masses and many hours of adoration

every week, as well as 50 and more hours of confessions heard for the people of Sin City.

In 1818 it fell to the laity to keep daily vigil before it, recite the rosary, teach catechism there to their children and pray Sunday vespers. They dreamed of the day when they would be free to have both priests and sacraments in this country. Some months later, the chaplain of a visiting French naval ship consumed the sacrament and celebrated mass afresh for the locals. And some months after that, Australia's first official Catholic chaplains, John Joseph Thierry and Philip Connolly arrived. The petition Flynn had carried back to London, had in fact worked. Macquarie and the civic authorities here thereafter had to reconcile themselves to the enduring presence of Catholics and their priests.

So it is that Polding described this site as a place where our religion was cradled and concealed its mysteries worshipped. You might even say that the church in Australia was born here as the laity raised an irrepressible cry for the sacraments. Priests were soon guaranteed and Catholics began to assume their rightful place in this multi-religious and sometimes irreligious society.

The story has many parallels with the birth of the church, we retell each Easter tide. Colonial Catholics often met in secret for fear of persecution as the first Christians did. But they conducted their ministry of word, sacrament and service as did those earliest Christians in our first reading today, ready to lay down their lives out of love as Jesus commanded in our gospel. The Catholic community of the Rocks and beyond was marked not by anger or hatred, but a quiet determined devotion. Over the subsequent 200 years, the faithful in Australia have braved many challenges and overcome grave adversity. . . .

Archbishop Anthony Fisher

1.4 Marist 150 years

I welcome you all here to St. Patrick's and on behalf of the St. Patrick's community, Archbishop Anthony Fisher, our shepherd, we celebrate in so many ways today. The first celebration is to remember the great man who was not canonically, but actually the first parish priest here, Archdeacon Mc Encroe, who asked the Archbishop on his deathbed to appoint the Marist here. Here I see Archdeacon Mc Encroe, as in a way beginning Mary's work. For that is what it is our charism to do. Mary rejoice with us and celebrate this 150 years with a great sense of hope and a great sense of joy for those who have gone before us and those who come after us.

Fr Michael Whelan Parish Priest



I welcome you all to celebrate the Sesquicentenary of four significant events. First, as Father Michael's just reminded us the death of Archdeacon John McEnroe parish priest of St. Patrick's in the Rocks. Secondly, the offer by Archbishop Polding to the Society of Mary to take over the care of this parish. Third, the decision of the Marist Fathers to accept this charge and fourthly, the welcome and collaboration that the congregants then and ever since have given to that leadership and service from the Marists.

In the early decades, it was mostly French priests serving mostly Irish congregants in a church and colony led mostly by Englishman, a first experiment then in that multiculturalism for which the church in Sydney and Australia would one day be famous in the century and a half since 1868. The Marists and this beautiful shrine have been renowned throughout our city for the extraordinary level of worship and pastoral care, including frequent masses and confessions as well as adult faith education and discussions through the Aquinas Academy and other outreach. . . .

True faith then is not a peg on which to hang our own opinions or paradigms or by which to explain away our bad behaviour. It must be transformative and lived uniting the inner and outer person unifying the material and the spiritual in me. . . .

. . . but I dare say the Marists were from the beginning, men who strove for that unity between the inner man and the outer, the spiritual and the material, the leader and the follower to which we are called in today's readings and which is exemplified most perfectly of all in their patron, Mary, our mother in living, praying, reflecting together in relative harmony as a community. . .

Archbishop Anthony Fisher

1.5 Marist relinquishment

Yet we remember that there was a time before the Marists when laypeople kept the church alive in the absence of priests and demonstrated a love for Christ in the Eucharist that has marked this place ever since. We recall that their irrepressible cry for the sacraments brought priests to the colony and allowed Catholics to assume their rightful place in a multi-religious if sometimes irreligious society.

We rejoice that it was here, that a diocesan priest, Archdeacon John McEnroe erected the church and built up the parish before it passed into the care of the Marists. The Marists built on that great foundation and we have celebrated their extraordinary contribution and will yet do so again, but soon it will be for others to carry this work forward. The question for us now in the face of change is will we be distracted by memories or anxieties or will we remain focused on Christ who is the gate, the door to abundant life here and in eternity. . . **Archbishop Anthony Fisher**



The Marist Fathers in Australia have 51 members. Half of us are 75 or over the age when bishops have to put in their resignation. In 2025 of the 15 men available full-time or part-time active service, only nine will be under 75. The Marists have been constrained in our work, in our responsibilities by our rapid diminishment over these years and the most challenging issue is to find able and willing leaders for

ministries and administration. So in 2025 there will be nine who might be available for full or part-time service here at St. Patrick's, but that's a different question from who would be have the skills, the experience, the reasonable youthfulness to be able to take on the leadership of the parish. St. Patrick's has been our Australian flagship.

The Marist Fathers are very proud of St. Patricks and most of us have had some period or time serving here. Our story has been a good story. It's been a successful story. It has its ups and downs, but it's been a great story, a great relationship with the archdiocese and with the people of the parish and for all those people that have come through the doors of St. Patricks over those years, all those workers in the city and all those visitors who your meet in many places and they say, "Ah, yes, St. Patricks, we went there when we were visiting Sydney". Nothing in the story is lost. Everything that happens to us through the providence of God forms a great story of faith and hope and love and may continue in this place. That's why these few years of transition will be an important one as we together with the people of God and with the Archbishop and his authorities to work out how best to proceed.

Fr Anthony Corcoran, Provincial Australian Province Marist Fathers

2. Activities with St Patricks' Spirit - examples

There are many, many activities at St Patricks.
 The spirit of St Patricks is embedded in the activities.
 The activities embody the spirit.

The following are examples of some activities that try and put words to the embodied spirit.

They are extracts of parishioners and team members reflections.

2.1 Reconciliation

Parishioners and Team members reflections

2.2 Homilies

Parishioners and Team members reflections

2.3 Novenas

Novena – extract from a video of a novena. [Video link](#)

2.4 Breakfast

Extracts from “Breakfast” Video [Video link](#)

2.5 Food for thought

Extracts from “Food for Thought” Video [Video link](#)

Food for Thought has been one of the many ongoing education and formation activities run at St Patricks. While this specific activity is not longer running, it like may others (e.g. the Aquinas Academy) have changed over time to reflect the spirit of the ongoing education and formation.

2.6 Passing on the flame

Extracts from “Passing on the Flame” video [Video link](#)

2.7 Ongoing education and formation

Parishioners and Team members reflections

2.1 Reconciliation

Our core business is reconciliation

I perceive our core business as reconciliation. And at the heart of that is the sacrament of reconciliation, but it's not the whole of it. It's about promoting reconciliation wherever we can, however we can. And by reconciliation, I mean people are learning to live with themselves, well, happily. People learning to live with one another, well, happily. People's relationship with God and with the environment.

St Patricks is a place of welcome, a place of non-judgement, a place of reconciliation. A place where if people feel offside for whatever reason, you'll get a hearing and it's not a judgement.

Team member

What's special about reconciliation at St Patricks

Acceptance. Coming to reconciliation we have people of all different persuasions of life, we have priests, we have religious, and they feel comfortable to talk about their struggles. And it's because there isn't going to be a judgement. There isn't going to be, "I saved this penance for this outrageous sinner." You're going to get the same penance because the bottom line is God loves you. So you go out there and thank God in your own words, you thank God for God's mercy and forgiveness.

I think people don't feel rushed. I think people feel heard. If you are coming to celebrate the sacrament, it's because the sacrament is important to you.

I think people are getting what they've often gotten: A sense of they were heard, they were accepted for their bad choices and maybe even helped to rethink about how to do better, how to make some better choices. That's the pastoral issue, compassion. I think that's what makes it different.

Team member



If I have to talk to people about what I do there, I'm not here to judge sinfulness. I'm here to give them the words of forgiveness and to try and encourage them in their relationship with God.

And particularly in some areas of sinfulness, there are still some people, even some priests, being brought up in a very rigid way I think is unreasonable. I would even go as far as to say wrong. So people come here knowing that whatever they say is going to be accepted and they're always going to receive forgiveness.

Team member

2.2 Homilies

What do you think a homily is? When you're thinking about writing one, what's the process? What makes a good one and what makes a bad one?

A homily is a discovery rather than a creation. I take the text and I'm thinking, "there's a homily here somewhere, and I've got to find it." So I meditate on it.

After the first reading of the text, I may read it, reread it, reread it. And I think the only things that I can say about this has been said a thousand times before, so there's nothing grabbing me. So I'll set it aside, come back to it maybe later that day or the following day. When I'm walking, my mind and imagination often are at work and things come to me. It's a bit tormenting because sometimes it takes hours for something to emerge, and I refuse to force anything.

Always something emerges. The way it generally emerges is I get an angle as the journos say, there's something comes up - the theme here is this. And then I just sit down and I start writing. And in the writing, which is a messy business, the discovery happens. And I find that I might write a whole paragraph and I say, no, that's not what I want to do. So I delete it and then go back and try again. And when I'm writing, I think, look. I may remember something from a novel. Writing a homily is a discovery process, and it's quite painful actually, because I'm not in control. So now the whole point of it, at the risk of sounding pious, is to let Jesus appear in the whole thing. It's fairly simple, really. But the doing of it is very complex.

I've got a lot of my homilies that go back years, and I cringe when I read them. I think a bit glib, too theoretical, too dependent on the information of scholars and not interpersonal enough, not connecting with the depths in myself, which allows the possibility of connecting with the depths of the people.

I'm hoping that the people who hear the homily connect, not with me, but with Jesus, that this prompts them to imagine, to think differently and to embark on a reflection in the presence of Christ.

There's something about the depth of the personal experience and reflection on life experience, which is the key.

And crucial to this whole process is a certain vulnerability, precisely because I'm not in control.

Team member

I needed something meaningful and meaty

I needed something meaningful and meaty, and I couldn't find it at any other parish. I find it difficult to find the words to explain why, but it's just something very unique about St Patricks.

Meaningful, genuine sermons and they weren't droning on. And even though the priests were older, they were really relevant, fresh and current. They have a real vibrance and freshness and relevance to them. A real cross-section between intellectual stuff and spiritual stuff. So I really valued that. I valued that because it wasn't like, let's hold hands, let's love Jesus.

There's a real relevance. I've been involved in the Catholic community ever since I can remember but I've never felt the sort of spark St Patricks has in another parish.

St Patricks is not trying to force anything. It's not trying to be anything. It's just a place of acceptance and true spirituality, like digging deep, digging deep, who am I? The false self, the ego, compassion, doubt, these big questions, its not just obsessed with morality.

Parishioners



We don't preach for very long.

We don't preach for very long. We're all a bit different. And well, I hope mine is basically good news because that's what I always preach about the gospel, the Godspell. I try and learn something from that. I look ahead and I read the commentaries and I think go, that's what this means. I'll just share this with the people and I share it with people who are not the brightest. I suppose that's one of the discoveries for me too. I'm not the brightest. I'm here with people who are far smarter than I am, and that's the area that I work at.

Team member

Homily

We might have imagined that the older we got, the easier it would become to love other people, and to be tolerant and understanding and kind.

And for some of us all those things might be the reality, and we're blessed in feeling very much at peace with God and with the world around us.

But for others of us, the opposite may be the case, and we might be feeling a bit like the Easter candles that burnt themselves out. Still trying hard to shine brightly, but anxious that it seems to be getting more and more difficult to do that, and worried that we might be burning out.

In one way, I think, I felt closer to God in Grade 6 than I do now. Certainly I think I found it easier to pray back then. Everything seemed so straight-forward and simple.

And yet there's a sense in which a child's faith, while good and beautiful, is also sheltered and untested. Yet to come to terms with the ambiguities and contradictions, the struggles and disillusionments, the pain and suffering, which are realities in every human life.

The Easter season is a special time for hearing again the joyful proclamation, "Jesus is risen", and for again positively affirming our faith and rededicating ourselves to our Christian calling.

For affirming again in our lives the priority of love and forgiveness and openness and generosity and magnanimity. And the optimism and hope that is ours through Jesus' victory over death.

And without laying a guilt trip on ourselves, to nevertheless recognise how important it is to many others that we continue to burn with the light of faith and hope and love. The French writer Francois Muriac once expressed that very powerfully. He said: "When love diminishes in you, it diminishes in a great many people who depend on you. And the day when you no longer burn with love, many others will die of the cold".

Team Member

2.3 Novenas



Welcome to this novena to our Lady of perpetual help

Welcome to this special novena to our Lady of perpetual help from St. Patrick's Church in Sydney. Let us begin. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. The grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Let us honour Mary in our prayer. Hail, holy queen, mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope. To you do we cry. . . .

Let us draw to mind the many ways in which we have been blessed through Mary's powerful intercession for the many graces and gifts we have received. Let us give thanks in a moment of personal silent prayer. We live in troubled times with lots of uncertainty and

fear. It's at times like this that we can rely on Mary's powerful intercession. She is our mother of perpetual health. So let us call to mind what it is that troubles us most at the present and in silent prayer that discuss Mary to intercede for us. . . .

The gospel reading that we have chosen for today is appropriately the story of Christmas from the Gospel of St. Luke Chapter two.

If you have connections with any school age young people, you may get invited to many nativity performances. Some are very amateurish, but when they're done by kids, they delight us and they help us to think and to pray our gratitude to God for what the story tells.

When you get the opportunity to pray at a crib, I invite you to try to enter into the various people and animals and see what the nativity meant for them, for the cow and for the wise men from the East. Above all, when you put yourself in Mary's place, what does all this mean to you? Mary, the one who showed so much love and courage when you said yes to God's invitation just nine months previously. What's going on in your heart at this moment?

The crib, the nativity scene is very simple. It's somewhere Mary feels very much at home. The shepherds, as we heard in the gospel, they're the lowest class in the society of the time. How do you identify with them and Joseph? How troubled has he been and how supportive has he been of you?

The nativity is a time for you to contemplate and to pray.

I ask you now to take our Novena books and we'll pray for the prayers for our families.

Mary, mother of God's people to you we entrust the welfare of our families. Inspire our married couples to love each other faithfully. Inspire our parents to be good examples of Christian life. Inspire our single people to know God's special plan in their lives. Inspire our youth to experience the confidence God has in them. Obtain the grace of healing for all divided and broken families. May we all find joy and fulfilment in our faith and respond to the Lord with generosity and sacrifice. . . .

Team Member

2.4 Breakfast



In the pre-dawn darkness of an October Saturday, most of Sydney's population still sleeps, but this location in the CBD is a hive of activity. Under the inspired leadership of Sister Fidelis, a band of volunteers prepares breakfast for up to 70 guests. Its Genesis goes back to 2015.

“I was walking over to St. Brigids and I saw all these men and women under the bridge, homeless people, so I thought, look, we are going to do something. The van wouldn't come down here. So I thought, well, I'll bite the bullet and start the breakfast.”

“We started off fairly small, although we had about maybe 50 people, I think to start with, but of course it has grown now. We sometimes have a hundred, we cater for 70 every week, but we could have up to a hundred and it's just grown bigger, brighter, and better. We started off with baked beans and toast and sausages, but as you can see from all the volunteers, they've all brought their own dishes and now it's just fantastic breakfast. The guys call it the King's Breakfast.”

Some volunteers are inner city locals. Others come from further afield. Marist fathers from the community lend a hand too, both on the barbecue and in the kitchen.

“So I got involved with the church and found out about the breakfast and have been coming every morning and little by little, there's always something to do and I've met many of the guests and become friendly.”

“What I felt all the time was that we wanted to treat them really as guests, so therefore we weren't just going to hand them things. We were going to get a table, as you can see, have tablecloths on them, sit them down, be able to chat to them. “

Support for the enterprise comes from the Catholic Education Office and a number of Catholic schools that hold collection drives for donations. Some schools roster students to help out. It's not only food on offer. Clothes and toiletries are available too, and socks are always in demand. Especially prized are swags donated by the Knights of Malta and the Canterbury Leagues Club. They're both practical and a great comfort, especially in the winter time.

Guests start arriving from 5:30 for yoghurt and cereal. What follows is something of a banquet. It's thumbs up from regular guest.

“I come here every Saturday. It's absolutely the best breakfast in Sydney. I had a friend running a five star hotel's kitchen down the road and I posted a photo of breakfast on social media. He looked at it and he said, good god, that's better than we have. He came up here the next Saturday and he said, yep, poo. They charge \$65 a plate down there.”

“Well, I've heard about the breakfast but this is the first time I have experienced the businesses. If you look around here, a lot of these men and women know each other. They come here for community. It's not just about the eating part of it, but they want to come to a place where they feel safe and they've got community and they feel loved. They feel embraced. “

“I just feel like I've done something really, really good for someone, something very basic, something taken for granted normally, but they really appreciate.”

“The call to hospitality is a long held Christian tradition. It is a call to love and to be loved. It is a call to communion and breakfast at St. Pat's is rewarding for all, The sense of community. It really is. I've met some wonderful people and just feel welcome. It's very welcoming feeling. I think that the guests give us as much as we give to them. I just think it's very mutual for everybody. “

“We gain a lot more than we give. It's definitely not a one-way street. It's definitely a two-way street. Just to listen to the stories of these men, just to see that we've learned so much from them and the resilience of them.”

2.5 Food for Thought



Welcome to St. Patrick's for one of our Food for Thought lectures

So good afternoon. Welcome to St. Patrick's this afternoon for one of our Food for Thought lectures. We are really pleased today to be able to begin with Dr. Annemarie Hosey, Dr. Annemarie practises here in the parish. She has a masters in palliative care aged care, and she's a registered nurse. She's an associate professor in palliative care and nursing at the University of Notre Dame and the St. Vincent's Health Network, Sydney.

So good afternoon everyone. It's really good to be here and especially to be here in person together. **I'm going to talk today on Christian Love with respect to the area of my work, which has been for many years for older people who are approaching the end of life.**

I'm going to try and merge my understanding of end of life care that I learned about through my work, through reading and writing in the fields of palliative care, aged care and the Catholic faith and through lots of prayer. . . . So my prayer is that the talk integrates both reason and faith.

And I wanted to use the words at St. Paul that we may have the power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge. So you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

I'm really hoping to inspire faith, hope, joy, and possibly even excitement about the end of life. And I really believe that's possible.

I thought it was straightforward to define **old age**, but it's actually different around the world. . . .

There's some psychosocial theories about the human development. And I think this is interesting picture and what it's saying is old age is about ego and integrity. . . . But if we're thinking about human development in Christian terms, I think this is an incomplete picture. . .

There is some wonderful scripture on old age and basically it's a time of glory and there's a time of wisdom. And we were just talking, Mary was saying about grandchildren, so grandchildren are the crown of the age and the glory of children is their parents. . . .

Frailty is a term we use a lot in medical terms, but it's actually not definitively defined, but it is of great interest in medicine because it's recognised that as it's an age related syndrome where people become, have diminished strength, diminished endurance and reduced physiological function. And that can increase the person's vulnerability

So in lay terms, **dying** is to do with connected with or at the time of death. . . . But dying can also be meant to understand time from which you may get a diagnosis of a life-threatening illness and you understand that death is likely at some point, but Christians also understand dying to be a lifelong task of dying to oneself so that we can live in Jesus Christ and then for others. And that's something happens throughout baptism as a sacramental type of dying so that we can live in Jesus Christ.

Palliative care . . . an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing the problems associated with life-threatening illness through the prevention and relief of suffering by

means of early identification and impeccable assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, physical, psychosocial and spiritual. So it's a holistic approach to care. . .

And so what's **death**? In a medical definition, it's a cessation of all vital functions of the body. . . But we also know it is the separation of the soul from the body. It's the end of our earthly life and it's the beginning of our new life.

This is my last definition. This is the best one and the hardest one to, well, it's actually not definition I'm describing the qualities of **Christian Love** or really Christian Love as modelled on Jesus Christ. And I just put down all the words I could think of about what Christian Love is and it's immense.

So it's divine loving in human form. It's Trinitarian. It's about mutual giving and receiving is selfless, sacrificial, saving. It wills the good of the other. It's pure. It's fruitful. It's tangible. We know it when it's present, but it's also immeasurable. It's hard sometimes, not always, but often hard. But it's made easy in Jesus Christ. It's the deepest meaning of our lives who lives within us is the gift of the Holy Spirit. It's the greatest theological virtue. It's never wasted and it's eternal.

And most of all the Christian Love at this time is about growing closer to God as we prepare to meet him face to face. And I kept thinking of this term, God's waiting room, which I think often is used to refer to nursing homes. And I think when we hear that term it's sort of a negative thing.

And then I thought, well really, it'd be amazing to be in God's waiting room if you are wanting to see him.

And I think how are we thinking about places like nursing homes, how we are thinking about the end stage of our life? This is actually really important that we really go quite deeply and think, what is my views on this? What is my attitude to older people, people who are dying my own, the prospect of my own dying? Do we think about it with fear or do we think about it with trust in God? And if we feel fear, what are we frightened of? And that's something I just wanted to give to people to reflect on because the reason it's important is because the way we feel about these times and about people in these circumstances will affect the way we are towards them. And I think the kingdom of God begins within us and we can't give peace about dying to others unless we have it within ourselves. And the church encourages us. This is from the catechism again to prepare for the hour of our death, the litany of the saints and in the rosary and the Hail Mary, and to entrust ourselves to St. Joseph who is a patron of a happy death.

2.6 Passing on the flame



Nine days before Christmas, a group of believers gathers on the full court of St. Mary's Cathedral. They're about to undertake a procession to St. Patrick's Church Hill, the second oldest Catholic church in Australia. It's a pilgrimage of sorts.

The essence is really to spread the message, to get the Christmas message out there into the world. A lot of people are preoccupied and we are all very busy, but to get the true Christmas message to the general public in a beautiful way.

We celebrate the incarnation God amongst us, fleshed in Jesus, the child is born. So if you have the booklets, let us look at the opening prayers, "In the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.. . "

There will be three stops along the way for words, readings and song. It's an experience some participants find deeply affecting.

When you're moving in a procession, you sort of have the opportunity just to glance out on the faces of people or strangers. It's an engagement with everybody because the message we carry isn't our own. It's a universal gift.

The walk was first held in 2013 and since then has become an annual event.

The main reason why we started this actually was because Pope Francis kept asking for people to go out into the city, not to expect the people to come into us all the time. We should go out, and this we thought was a kind of a gentle way to go out into the city because people enjoy Christmas and they love singing carols.

I think it's a really unique way to take our faith out onto the streets and show people that there is joy and life within the church.

I think he sees the opportunity of preaching on a street, like to reach out to people who probably are not involved in church every day. So I think it's his life of his way of serving God in a different way, not just going to church on Sundays and not just being like probably scheduled Christian.

Christian life has never lived in isolation or on your own. It's lived in community. That journey happens in the context of friendship. So it's about friendship.

It's quite remarkable to walk through the streets singing and have people watching the looks on their faces, and you get the sense that they're very respectful. Actually, there was no sign of any kind of mockery or disrespect. It was quite wonderful, really.

It's been humbling and heartening at the same time, seeing all the people along the way. And some people actually join in with us. So I like to think that we inspired some people with the word as well

as we preach along the street and as we sing and we bring joy to people. I see some people smiling at us and making sign of the cross as well.

I thought it was really special to bring some joy into the streets and to have the statue of the Holy Family leading us. So bringing Christ right into the centre of Christmas.

The notion of pilgrimage is embedded in religious tradition, though today's walk is a miniature version, it speaks to the same spiritual yearning, one that is a core value for these St. Patrick's parishioners.

2.7 Ongoing formation and education



I've done a couple of courses.

I really, really enjoyed it. To stay back for two hours after work on a weeknight, I wondered how it was going to go. I thought, "We'll see how we go with this." It was four consecutive Wednesday nights earlier in the year, and it was the first part of the spirituality course with Marie. And I was just fascinated. It was just fabulous. I really loved it.

It was people from every walk of life. There were people not necessarily Catholic. We could have been sitting in a university, it wasn't particularly to do with St. Patrick's. It was just about living and life and exactly that, how do you find spirituality in your life? Just to go a little bit further, and really meaty questions of reading of life and sort of hypotheticals, those sort of questions. Moral compass questions that are not really... Ethics, I guess, too.

Listeners, good listeners. They weren't there to speak particularly. They wanted robust discussion, but in a very peaceful way. It's a long time since I've been in a room full of strangers and felt comfortable. There was, as I say, robust discussion, but not difficult discussion. People were listening with respect. But I think people were not afraid to speak up and say, "Oh, I totally disagree with that or..." And we were talking about the refugee situation, we were talking about those sort of big issues, big ticket numbers.

It's very much social justice too. If you wanted to contribute, you could. But if you were happy to just sit there too, you didn't feel like, "Oh, I should or..." I think everybody in that room, and there would've been over 20 of us. everybody, I think, felt comfortable in being there. In fact, everybody came back. I don't think I've noticed anybody dropped out over the four weeks.

Parishioner

And the greatest joy up there are the people that come through the doors because they're learning, they're questioning, they're wanting not just information but formation.

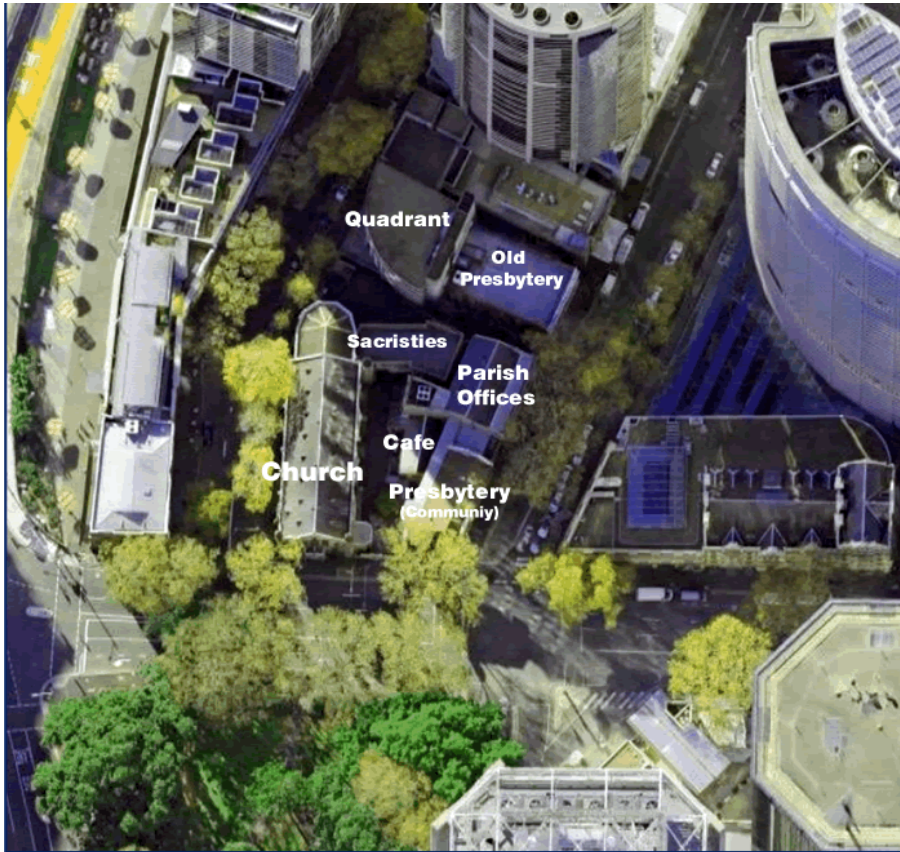
I think the consciousness has to extend beyond Catholic to all different denominations. So some of the courses, well courses do attract other Christian searchers apart from the Catholic scene. We've also invited different members of different congregations like the Buddhists.

And I suppose we do a lot of reflective work to bring people to the truth of who they are. And I love doing that sort of thing. Not in a way of being sweet and sentimental, but what is in fact happening? Where's God working in your life? Do you really believe that anyway? What's the point of the faith if you don't take it seriously? What's your experience of life?

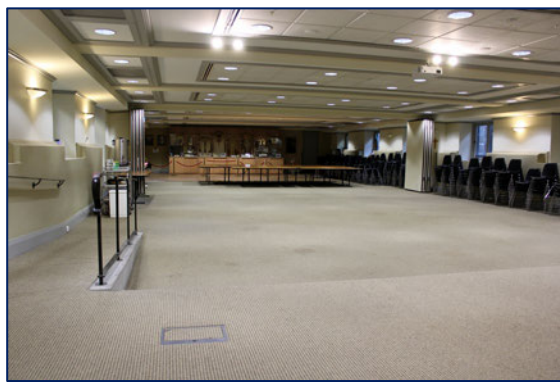
Team member

3. Buildings

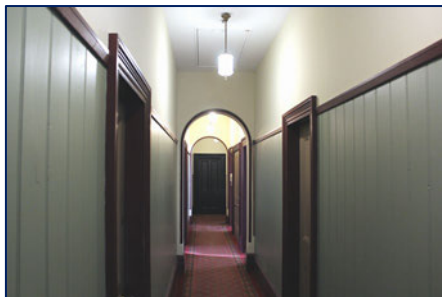
3.1 St Patrick's site



3.2 St Patrick's Church (including Sacristies & Crypt)

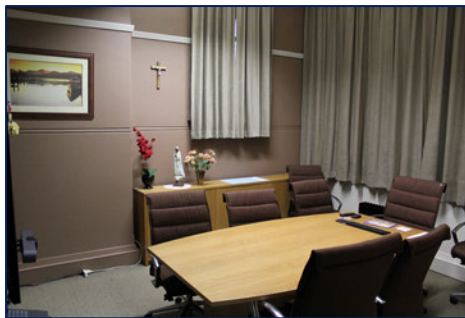


3.3 Presbytery (Community)



The presbytery includes parlours, kitchen and dining room, community rooms, bedrooms, laundry etc.

3.4 Parish Offices

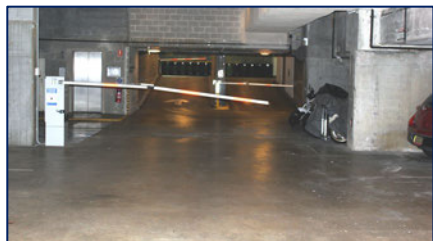


*The bottom two floors include parish offices and meeting rooms.
The top two floors are rental spaces.*

3.5 Café & Courtyard



3.6 Old Presbytery & Quadrant Building (commercial rentals)



Old Presbytery – 3 story – commercial rental space

Quadrant building – 6 story office space and car parks - commercial rental space

Owned by the Archdioceses – and ministered by the parish.

Rents come to the parish.

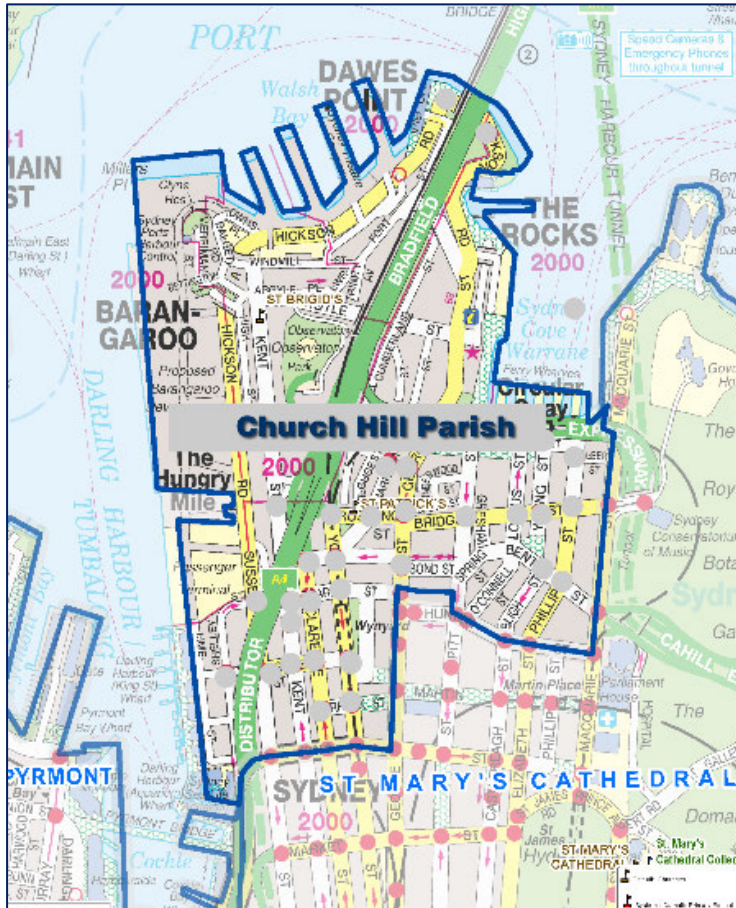
3.7 St Brigid's Church



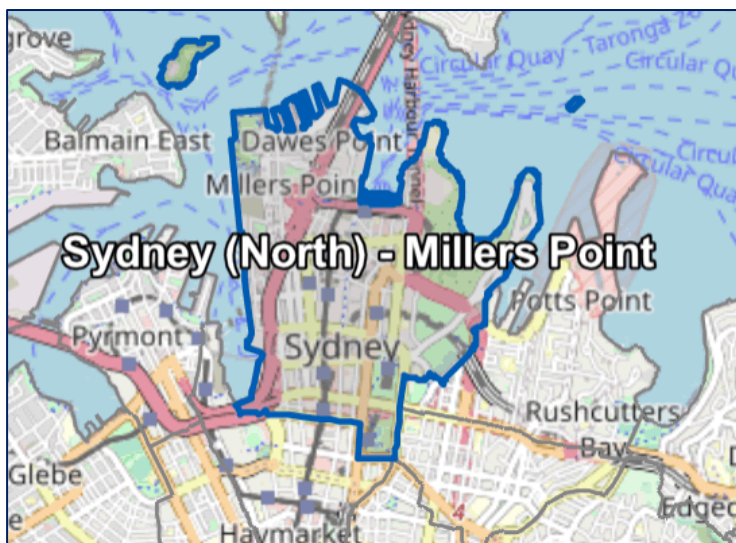
The first floor, above the ground floor church, is rental space.

4. Maps

4.1 Church Hill Parish Boundaries



4.2 Sydney (North) – Millers Point - ABS Boundaries



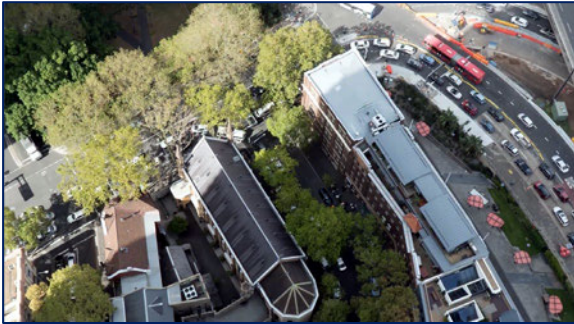
Population **Sydney North (Millers Point)** 2021 Census: 8,000 (1,456 Catholics)

Note: Church Hill Parish is significantly smaller than *Sydney North (Millers Point)*

An estimate for the population for the Parish boundary is approximately 6,000 (1,100 Catholics).

5. Videos

5.1. Spiritual Oasis (4 mins) [Video link](#)



5.2. The Beginnings (21 mins) [Video link](#)



5.3. Our Community (26 mins) [Video link](#)



5.4. Passing the Flame (11 mins) [Video link](#)



5.5. Breakfast at St Patricks (9 mins) [Video link](#)



5.6. Choir & music (16 mins) [Video link](#)



5.7. Centenaries and relinquishment (49 mins) [Video link](#)

