



Malvern, Malvern East and Glen Iris Family of Parishes

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7th November 2025

Dear parishioners,

We write this letter to accompany the letter from the Archbishop, announcing the beginning of an Oratory Project in our family of parishes.

We are grateful to the Archbishop for discerning this with us over the last three years. His wisdom, fatherly guidance and prayer have been a source of inspiration and support as we have sought to understand God's will in placing this desire in each of our hearts.

We are grateful for the formation and guidance we have received from members of Oratories in other parts of the world, including those at the Confederation of the Oratory in Rome.

Each Oratory develops its unique character and apostolate according to its local circumstances. What has developed at St Roch's over nine years, and is developing at Holy Eucharist, St Mary's and St Joseph's, is an apostolate that has inspired us to found an Oratory here. Many seek confession and spiritual direction on a regular basis, with youth and families being particularly drawn to this. We have a hospital, nursing homes and schools in which we accompany people in the faith. We hope that the Oratory will grow as it serves this apostolate and remain stable here for the faithful for years to come.

Many of you have commented positively on the difference you have noticed here when we have all been resident in the parishes together over the last few years. We find the fruit of the apostolate is so much richer when we are all working together. By living in community, we also encourage each other to strive for holiness.

We are excited about beginning what we hope will become a stable community of priests and seminarians in our family of parishes. We look forward to accompanying you and your families for years to come, modelling ourselves as much as we are able, and by the grace of God, on the example of St Philip Neri.

Who is St Philip Neri?

St Philip lived in 16th Century Rome, initially as a layman looking after the sick and forming young people in the faith. During this period, he embraced a life of poverty and simplicity, and spent many hours of his day in prayer. At the age of 29, while praying in the catacombs,

he felt the Holy Spirit enter his heart physically, enlarging it and exuding heat for the remainder of his life.

On fire with the love of God, he eventually accepted ordination to the priesthood and began a zealous ministry for souls. He made himself available for confession and spiritual direction for young people at all hours of the day and night, especially in the early days of their conversions.

He was known throughout Rome for his cheerfulness and humility. He was determined to teach the faithful how to engage in mental prayer. He and his brothers visited the sick in Rome's hospitals, looked after poor pilgrims and taught the faithful. He was anxious about his young people falling into sin and organised wholesome activities to help them avoid the occasions of sin.

"They can split wood on my back, as long as they don't sin."

St Philip Neri

He wasn't initially intending to found a community, but young men gathered around him who were inspired by his priestly life and wanted to share in it. The congregation he founded became known as the Oratory, and other oratories have been founded throughout the world since St Philip's time. The Oratory was introduced into the English-speaking world by St John Henry Newman in the Nineteenth Century.

We look forward to sharing more with you of the life of St Philip in the months ahead.

Where will the community live?

Eventually the Oratory community will reside at the St Joseph's presbytery. Initially we will reside at the St Roch's presbytery as we make necessary repairs and renovations to the St Joseph's presbytery.

How will this change pastoral ministry in our family of parishes?

Nothing will change in the short-term with regard to the two priests appointed as Parish Priest and Assistant Priest. Each of us will continue doing the work that we have been. The only short-term change will be that the two seminarians will be assisting more fully with the pastoral ministry of the priests, living an intentional life based on the charism of St Philip Neri.

What about Fr Tom?

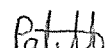
Fr Tom continues as Assistant Priest for our family of parishes, but will not be joining the Oratory community. He will continue to reside at St Mary's and the excellent relationship that exists between he and the Oratory community members will continue. Fr Tom has been very supportive of this development.

What about the parish staff and office?

There will be no change to the parish office arrangements or parish staffing as a result of the Oratory Project beginning.

We welcome questions and discussion about St Philip and the Oratory; and we ask for your prayers as we take this step to living in community.

God Bless,

  
Fr Michael Gallacher, Anthony Wright, Patrick Harris

St Philip Neri, pray for us.