

MEDIA RELEASE



Polding Centre
133 Liverpool Street
Sydney NSW 2000

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AUSTRALIA'S OLDEST CHOIR CELEBRATE 200 YEAR ANNIVERSARY WITH PERFORMANCE BEFORE POPE FRANCIS

St Mary's Cathedral Choir – Australia's oldest choir - will join with the world's oldest choir, the Sistine Choir, to sing before Pope Francis in Rome this Sunday, May 20.

The performance at the Papal Mass in St Peter's Basilica on Pentecost Sunday will be televised to millions around the globe.

The 3-week celebratory bicentennial trip has already included a performance at the 12th International Gregorian Festival of Watou, Belgium, and a solemn performance at the Last Post ceremony at the Menin Gate Memorial in Ypres, which is dedicated to the British and Commonwealth soldiers killed during World War I.

St Mary's Cathedral Choir Director of Music, Thomas Wilson, said the opportunity to sing for Pope Francis will be something both he and the choir will never forget.

"It certainly is an honour performing for the Pope and one that I'm sure the boys will remember for the rest of their lives," he said. "It is such a fabulous opportunity being invited to sing with the Sistine Choir at the Papal Mass on Pentecost Sunday.

"And rather wonderful that Australia's oldest musical organisation, and the world's oldest musical organisation, both happen to be Catholic liturgical choirs and have the opportunity to perform together."

St Mary's Cathedral Choir was founded in 1818 by Irish woman Catherine Fitzpatrick who undertook the journey from Ireland to Australia with her young family in order to be near her convict husband. She began training a newly-formed choir of boys - consisting mainly of her own sons - to sing European Sacred Music in the then fledgling colony of New South Wales.

The choir sang for the first Catholic services in the colony, later becoming the choir of the first St Mary's Church, and eventually the choir of St Mary's Cathedral.

Two hundred years later, the Cathedral Choir remains Australia's oldest musical organisation with the choristers taking part in this tour being a mix of 32 scholarship

students from St Mary's Cathedral College, Sydney and 11 adult choristers. The youngest member of the touring choir is aged just eight.

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For further information and full itinerary for foreign correspondents wishing to cover their performances in Europe please contact:

Debbie Cramsie

Archdiocese of Sydney

Phone: (+61) 2 9390 5396

Mobile: (+61) 448 283 955

Email: debbie.cramsie@sdneycatholic.org