

## MIRACLES AT WINGELLO

On the evening of Saturday, 4<sup>th</sup> January, 2020, bushfires swept from the south into the New South Wales village of Wingello in the tablelands south of Sydney. The members of the NSW Rural Fire Service had their hands full. To get a feel for the vehemence of the conditions it will pay the reader to take a quick look at the video 'Fire at Hillys 2' on Youtube at the following link—<https://youtu.be/i70UjtPYSII>

Friends of mine in the village, Michael and Helen Brearley, had to abandon their home to God and the fires at the height of the blaze. The house had been blessed and at Mass the previous day at nearby Pauline Monastery, Penrose Park, Michael had committed his home to the Holy Name of Jesus (Memorial 3<sup>rd</sup> January in the *Ordinary rite*). Late in the night an RFS officer told him with tears in his eyes that there had been a fireball in the front yard, that conditions had been just too dangerous and they had had to pull back. The house had been lost. But when they returned to the village at first light Michael was, as he said, “gob-smacked to find the house still standing; everything around it was destroyed but the house was still there”.



While the fire has destroyed the vine on the front verandah it has not touched the house structure.

Their shed at the rear of the house constructed of steel and corrugated iron and all its contents, including a camping trailer, were completely destroyed. To accomplish such damage the temperature of the fire must have approached 1000° C.



Yet the house, constructed of wood and clad in weatherboards, standing just fifty feet away was untouched!



Such was the heat of the fire and the damage it occasioned to the grounds it has taken two weeks for services, power and water, to be restored. The photos shown here were taken on Friday, 18<sup>th</sup> January.

Some twelve homes were lost in the Wingello fire. The atheistically inclined among the members of the RFS were not alone in remarking how every one of the homes in the village owned by Christians or Catholics had survived. The Brearleys' home was not the only one that escaped; just the most spectacular in demonstrating the benefits of belief and trust in God.

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On the feast of the Epiphany the previous year Michael Brearley, as the head of the home, had performed the ceremony of blessing the house invoking the traditional names given the three kings who attended on the Christ Child, Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar, and marking the lintel over the front door with chalk especially blessed for the task, with the formula "20 + C + M + B + 19". He remarked that they had not yet renewed it for 2020.

It had not mattered. Clearly the Epiphany blessing has a year long guarantee!

Michael Baker

January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020 — *St Agnes*