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Liturgy

N E W S



- EDITOR: PRAISE GOD, SUN + MOON
- OUR COVER: CAMINO
- SCHOOLS: ONLINE RESOURCES
- THE LITURGICAL ASSEMBLY AND ITS SPACES: SOCIETAS LITURGICA 2025
- INITIATING ADULTS OUTSIDE THE EASTER VIGIL
- PILGRIMS OF THE EUCHARIST: TOWARDS 2028
- AUSTRALIA: SAY THAT AGAIN, PLEASE!
- BOOKS: LAY EUCHARISTIC PREACHING
- AND ALL THE LATEST **LITURGY NEWS**

PRAISE GOD, SUN AND MOON

(Ps 148:3)

In the summer of 1225, Francis of Assisi wrote a poem in the Umbrian dialect – among the oldest poems written in a modern vernacular. *The Canticle of Brother Sun* is not just beautiful poetry, it is a profound prayer of praise of the Creator. All things – sun, moon and stars, wind and water, and even sickness and death – sing praise just by being what God created them to do. Human beings are included, those who grant pardon, who endure in peace. The words were written by a human being (holy Francis), but they articulate the wordless praise offered by everything that has come from the hand of God.

In May 2015, Pope Francis took Francis' *Canticle* as his starting point for a Christian reflection on ecology: *Laudato si': On Care for our Common Home*. He set out how the Gospel of Creation is not only about preserving the environment but ensuring respect and justice for all, especially those who are left on the margins and excluded from full participation in God's creation.

This year, 800 years since *Canticle* and 10 years since *Laudato si'*, the Holy See has provided us with liturgical texts for a Mass for the Care of Creation. It is recommended for use on 1 September, a day which is shaping up to be a new addition to the liturgical calendar honouring God the Creator. The idea for this feast originated in Eastern Churches and has already been widely adopted in other Western denominations. Adding a day to the General Roman Calendar takes a bit more time. Note that, while we have been celebrating creation as a prayer intention for some years, a solemn feast is new and shifts the focus. Most of our

liturgical feasts celebrate the mystery of redemption; we do not have a feast to rejoice in the work of God as Creator. So it is deeper than praying about the earth and climate change, recycling and the environment.

This opens up two different approaches to our liturgical understanding of creation. The first is what we might call a *stewardship model*. This is the most familiar and perhaps the easiest. It puts the emphasis on the first part of Pope Francis' subtitle: 'On Care For...' The fourth Eucharistic Prayer refers to Genesis and God's creation of the human being, *entrusting the whole world to their care, so that in serving... the Creator, they might have dominion over all creatures*. The word *dominion* is not *domination* but does mean rule or authority. It is softened a little from God's injunction in Genesis, *Be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle, all the wild animals and all the creatures* (Gen 1:26). It has been suggested that this mindset has led to exploitation of the world's resources. At least the word *stewardship* normally contains some idea of responsibility.

This dimension is important because the equitable distribution of the riches of creation is a matter of justice. An integral ecology looks to supporting the marginalised today but also to providing a good earth for future generations. Our ecological conversion calls us to respect and protect God's handiwork and to fight consumerism, deforestation and pollution. It gives us a huge range of activities to tackle in parish and other groups from controlling our plastic waste to planting trees. This is a significant theme in our new liturgical texts for the Care of Creation: *grant, we pray, that docile to the life-giving breath of your Spirit, we may lovingly care for the work of your hands*.

However, there is a second approach to creation which we also need to explore. It may be called a *kinship model*. It recognises that human beings are also God's creatures. Rather than setting ourselves 'over' creation as its caretakers, we begin to see that we are part of creation and all God's creatures are our brothers and sisters. It is true that human beings are unique in their language and their ability to think and reason, remember and plan. But all parts of creation are interdependent. Human beings receive as much as we give, for we depend on the

rest of creation – for air to breathe, food for nourishment, provisions for clothing and shelter. Non-human creatures care for us as we care for them, and so we strive to live together in harmony and respect.

This approach puts the emphasis on the second part of Pope Francis' subtitle '...our Common Home'. It also makes us appreciate the radical insight of St Francis' *Canticle*. His vision recognised the Sun and Moon, Water and Fire, Earth and Death as our brothers and sisters. Each in its own way expresses the praise of the Creator for they have been wondrously made. We see the same approach in many of the psalms, for example, Ps 148: *Praise God, sea creatures and all ocean depths, fire and hail, snow and mist, stormy winds... mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars, beasts both wild and tame, reptiles and birds on the wing, kings of the earth and all peoples... Let them praise the name of the Lord*.

It is also found in our liturgical texts. At the end of the Preface of the fourth Eucharistic Prayer, as we praise God with the angels and saints, we say, *we too confess your name in exultation, giving voice to every creature under heaven*. Later, as we look forward to entering our heavenly inheritance, we say, *there, with the whole of creation, freed from the corruption of sin and death, may we glorify you...* The third Eucharistic Prayer expresses the same thought: *You are indeed Holy, O Lord, and all you have created rightly gives you praise*. This approach is not entirely absent from the new Mass texts for the Care of Creation. The Prayer after Communion reads, *as we await the new heavens and the new earth, we may learn to live in harmony with all creatures*.

The new Mass for the Care of Creation is only a start. We really need a Preface as well, and we need to get on board with other Churches in establishing a Solemn Feast of the Creator God. Then our Eucharist can truly be the song of thanks and praise of all creation, offered on the altar of the world, joining heaven and earth, and embracing and penetrating all creation.



THE CANTICLE OF BROTHER SUN

ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI - 1225

Most high, all powerful, all good Lord!
All praise is yours, all glory, all honour and all blessing.
To you, alone, Most High, do they belong.
No mortal lips are worthy to pronounce your name.

All praise be yours, my Lord, through all your creatures,
especially through my lord Brother Sun, who brings the day,
and you give light through him.
How beautiful he is, and radiant in all his splendour!
Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.

All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Moon and Stars;
in the heavens you have made them bright,
precious and beautiful.

All praise be yours, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air,
and clouds and storms, and all the weather,
through which you give your creatures sustenance.

All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Water,
so useful, and humble, and precious, and pure.

All praise be yours, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
through whom you brighten the night.
How beautiful he is, cheerful, and powerful and strong.

All praise be yours, my Lord, through our Sister Earth,
our Mother who feeds us and rules us,
and produces various fruits with coloured flowers and herbs.

All praise be yours, my Lord,
through those who forgive for love of you;
through those who endure sickness and trial.
Happy those who endure in peace:
by you, Most High, they will be crowned.

All praise be yours, my Lord, through our Sister Death,
from whose embrace no person can escape.
(Woe to those who die in mortal sin!)
Happy those she finds doing your will.
The second death can do no harm to them.

Praise and bless my Lord, and give thanks,
and serve him with great humility.





OUR COVER: CAMINO LARGE + SMALL

The greatest pilgrimage in Europe is the Camino converging on Santiago de Compostela in the north of Spain. In the Middle Ages, pilgrimage trails came from every part of Europe and today it remains an enormously popular exercise. However, not everyone can spend a month or more walking in Europe. The Spanish name 'Camino' is given to a number of pilgrimage possibilities in Australia.

Our cover photo shows a group walking the *Camino Domini* in rural Victoria. It goes from Lyonville to Trentham. It is a 9 km walk, in an area about 100 km north-west of Melbourne. Recognising the loss in rural towns in Victoria with a decline in farming, timber and mining, it was billed as a 'pilgrimage from loss to hope'. The pilgrimage itself builds community. More than 50 people joined the pilgrimage on 12 July 2025.

(Photo: courtesy Melbourne Catholic www.melbournecatholic.org. Used with permission).

In Western Australia, there is the *Camino Salvado*, named in honour of the Spanish monk who founded the Benedictine Abbey at New Norcia in 1846. It follows his journey into the desert. Twice a year, pilgrims walk from Perth suburb, Subiaco, to New Norcia over seven days, covering up to 25 km per day. Back-up vehicles carry luggage and supplies, and meals and accommodation are included. The pilgrimage encourages a spirit of adventure and acceptance, an openness to others and a recognition of blessings received.



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If possibilities such as these seem rather daunting, it is also possible to undertake a Jubilee pilgrimage in miniature. Some churches and other places have constructed a *labyrinth*. Walking a labyrinth is a silent meditation exercise in which breathing and movement focus one's attention on God. It is an ancient prayer-in-action – many medieval cathedrals incorporated a labyrinth on the floor, the one at Chartres being very well known. The 'pilgrim' moves to the centre and back out again, physically, mentally and spiritually. It is an exercise in mindfulness and integration. One author described it as *a metaphor for the spiritual journey and a powerful tool for transformation... it quiets the mind and opens the soul, evoking a feeling of wholeness*.

(Photo: Labyrinth at Santa Teresa Retreat Centre, Ormiston, Qld.)



ONLINE RESOURCES:

The Wisdom of Using Reputable Sites for Teaching Religion

by Elizabeth Fort

The internet has become an invaluable tool in primary and secondary school education, with the potential to transform traditional teaching and learning methods into dynamic, interactive experiences.

With access to a vast array of digital resources, students can explore topics through videos, online Scriptural resources, virtual satellite exposure to different places of religious significance and collaborative platforms that cater to diverse learning styles and ages. Teachers desire that their students benefit from the use of online tools as these have the potential to enable engaging learning environments. As digital tools become increasingly available, integrating internet-based learning may assist in fostering curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking.

This is where difficulties may arise for teachers of religion. How can they ensure that their sources are authentic and grounded in Church teaching? With care for their students at the forefront of planning, choosing appropriately can be a challenge given the vast array of religious sites available. This article aims to guide teachers to sites that are valid, useful, engaging and appropriate for their learners. The internet, of course, is one resource among many. Teachers should continue to use hands-on materials such as puppets, Scripture plays, books, play corners (for example, with dolls that may be 'baptised').

Scripture

One topic of particular concern for teachers that is often raised is the use of cartoons or videos to retell Scripture stories. Finding appropriate sources that have suitable text and images can be difficult. A good source that assists in developing an awareness of the 'World of the Text' is [Free Bible Images](#). Clicking on the Character/Jesus tab and then the 'photos only' link on the side of the main page will reveal many [Gospel stories](#) in photo form.

For example, with young students, a beautiful story to introduce Jesus is the story of the boy Jesus travelling with his family to celebrate Passover in Jerusalem and becoming separated from Mary and Joseph, within all the hectic chaos of the city. This [photo resource](#) also comes in [video form](#) and shows the method of travel, the dress of the time, the temple and temple priests and, towards the end, home life similar to what Jesus would have experienced. What a beautiful introduction to Jesus and his family, without the distortion of a cartoon. The images can also be downloaded and used for a retell/photo sort/story map.

When reading other stories, there are photo and cartoon options to suit a variety of age levels. The story of [Moses](#) is one such example. Some stories contain [other resources](#) when you click on their link and these can include little booklets so that students can read and retell the story. Search the Character Tab for a Bible story that you need to tell.

For older students, particularly secondary, the cartoon-style series in [The Bible Project](#) offers useful background information for

students as well as retelling Scripture stories and stories of [the Prophets](#). Always watch these first to check for suitability with regard to student understanding and explicit connection to the curriculum you are using.

There is another treasure trove of resources on the Free Bible Images site and some are well hidden. Under the Theme tab is [Life in Bible Times](#) which explores first century life in Palestine very well, in photos, and you can download the Story Planner script for each PowerPoint/photo so that all the information you need is in the one place. The first image in this resource shows [housing](#) in first century Palestine. [These images](#) of houses, from another site, are also very detailed. In the 'T' for Temple tab are a variety of images and films of the [Second Temple in Jerusalem](#) and maps of the city of Jerusalem in Jesus' time. These are suitable for primary and secondary students as they explore the Temple and Temple life. Older students may like to view a [live stream of the Western Wall](#) in Jerusalem to see the only surviving part of the outer wall (part of the larger retaining wall that surrounded the Temple Mount).

Additional Bible Maps for children can be found in [simple form](#) and [more complex ways](#).

A different resource for re-telling Bible stories is the series by Catholic Education in the Diocese of Wollongong called PraySchool. The list of [topics is here](#). These videos are most suitable for Prep and Year One students and the Easter Story is one topic that is explored sensitively.

Liturgy

[Together at One Altar](#) is an excellent site developed to assist students in their formation, focusing on the Eucharist and full, conscious and active participation in this celebration. There is a wealth of information on this site that covers many topics studied in Religious Education classrooms. At the top of the page, teachers are able to click on their year level for more targeted teaching. The site is divided into four broad pages – Explore, Craft, Receive, Live. The site is grounded in an inquiry-based approach and has a focus question in each field. There is a diverse and rich media bank embedded in the site and reflection and discussion questions are accessible, as well as further sites to explore topics in detail.

Scriptural, historical and theological foundations of the Eucharist are found on the [Explore page](#) and these are very suitable for secondary students as they include elements in the history of the Church, including the early Church, Council of Trent and the Church in the Middle Ages through to Vatican II.

On the Craft page, young students can click on images that [show features of different churches](#) and other settings for Mass so that they can identify what is similar and what differs in different church/cathedral/classroom/chapel/other environments. Schools may not be attached to a parish church and so online images are particularly useful. When exploring the people of a church community, there are simple titles and images to click on that describe [roles people](#) can perform and [liturgical ministries](#) are also explored. There is a video that explains the [clothing of the priest](#) as he prepares to celebrate Mass. [Prayerful gestures and actions taken by people](#) during Mass are available in simple photos.

An [overview of the Mass](#), found on the Receive page is particularly useful for upper primary and lower secondary students.

Aspects of social justice, including [care for creation and living the Gospel](#) are all explored on the Live page. If teaching about Catholic social teaching or Mary MacKillop, searching here will bring fruitful resources. There are further additional resources for Catholic perspectives on [The Common Good](#) and [Human Dignity](#), found on the Caritas website. [Catholic Social Teachings](#) are also well explored on the Caritas site, with many posters, videos and teaching ideas to explain these for different year levels.

Online liturgical calendars are always useful for work on the Liturgical Year and this site on [Liturgy Brisbane's webpage has several calendars](#). The Liturgical Year is also found in pictorial form on [Together at One Altar](#).

When teaching about the Sacraments of Initiation, a useful and comprehensive site is [Flame of Faith](#), containing videos of these sacraments, clear images of the symbols pertaining to each along with simple descriptions of these.

Other RE Topics

Teaching about the Incarnation? [This resource](#) is a downloadable PowerPoint with accompanying images and text from St Mary's Press.

[Twenty-Five of the Best! | REsource](#) is a wonderful collection of short biographies of Australians whose lives reflect the action of the Holy Spirit. This is very suitable for upper primary students.

When studying Jewish celebrations, [My Jewish Learning](#) is an authentic site for information. There is also very useful information about [Jewish prayer](#).

Use Bible Gateway as a resource for studying Scripture stories in the curriculum. A Catholic text is the [New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition](#) but you can also differentiate for learners with the use of [the CEV](#) which is the version used for the Children's Lectionary, with simpler language. To promote critical literacy, why not try the New American Bible Revised Edition for its excellent study notes in the Footnotes section. [A side by side comparison](#) of all three texts is possible by clicking on the add parallel link (two pages side by side icon) and selecting from the drop-down menu. This facilitates discussion about the meaning of certain words in the text.

Michael Fallon MSC has compiled an online resource of commentaries on the [New Testament](#) and the [Old Testament](#). [Archbishop Mark Coleridge's Podcast Series](#) also holds detailed background information for teachers in 20-30 minute podcasts, covering a variety of scripture stories, including the parables and characters of the Bible. These sites are invaluable for research before teaching.

In conclusion, the integration of online learning into the teaching of religion offers educators a useful platform to engage students in meaningful exploration of Scripture, Faith, Sacraments, History of the Church and more. By leveraging authentic sites, teachers can enrich students' understanding and foster deeper connections to the subject matter. These tools not only enhance engagement but also support critical thinking and personal reflection, making Religious Education more interactive and giving it greater impact for students.

■ Elizabeth Fort has had huge experience with religious education at both diocesan and classroom levels.



THE LITURGICAL ASSEMBLY AND ITS SPACES

REFLECTIONS ON *SOCIETAS LITURGICA* 2025

by Clare Schwantes

Every two years, an international and ecumenical community of theologians, liturgists and pastoral practitioners who form *Societas Liturgica* gather to share research, present new insights and engage in dialogue at the forefront of liturgical studies. Founded in 1967, the organisation exists to encourage research in worship and allied fields, to consider the pastoral consequences of that research, to facilitate the exchange of knowledge across cultures, to deepen mutual understanding of diverse traditions and to make clear the continuing relevance of liturgy in the contemporary world.

In July 2025, members of *Societas Liturgica* assembled at the Institut Catholique de Paris for a congress supported by five Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant theological faculties: Facultés Loyola Paris, Institut de Théologie Orthodoxe of Saint Serge, Collège des Bernardins, Institut Protestant de Théologie, and the Institut Catholique de Paris.

The historic setting in the heart of the French capital provided a fitting context for the congress focus, “The Liturgical Assembly and its Spaces”. Gothic cathedrals, nineteenth-century basilicas and modern

chapels were tacit conversation partners while participants asked how architecture, embodiment and communal life shape Christian prayer.

An ecumenical liturgy in the newly restored Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Paris set the tone for the days that followed and was itself an exercise in liturgical hermeneutics. Presided over by the Archbishop of Paris along with Orthodox and Protestant leaders, the service was a striking expression of *Societas*’ longstanding commitment to Christian unity.

Hundreds of papers were delivered across the days of the congress. Conversations spanned a range of disciplines including history, theology, anthropology, neuroscience, architecture and ritual studies, yet converged on a series of shared convictions: liturgy is embodied, it always takes place somewhere and that “somewhere” unavoidably shapes prayer. The congress was a sustained meditation on how places are never merely containers for rites but living environments of encounter in which rites are enacted, bodies are formed and communities learn to become themselves.

Several voices helped explore these concepts. The French architect Jean-Marie Duthilleul returned to first principles by reading space theologically. Reflecting on Genesis, he described space as God's gift for relationship - between people, with creation and with God. He noted that liturgy begins not with words but with the composition of space, just as Jesus prepared the Upper Room, arranged the assembly and, in doing so, created the conditions for communion. Yet, Duthilleul observed, many of our church buildings betray this purpose. Inherited architectural designs too often fracture rather than unite as seen in the segregated spaces reserved for clergy in medieval churches, the tabernacle-centred orientation of the Tridentine period, or the 'theatre' arrangement that continues to characterise many contemporary church buildings. His appeal was for a new freedom of imagination, a willingness in each community to invent anew how altar, ambo, presider and people might be positioned to achieve a space that facilitates the unity of the gathered Body of Christ.

A complementary perspective came from Brazil, where Luiz Coelho re-imagined the concept of equitable urban living conditions known as the 'right to the city', as a metaphor for the 'right to the city of God'. Drawing on urban sociology, he traced how cities are organised by privilege and exclusion, how access to public space is determined by wealth, class and power. Too often, he suggested, these same divisions are replicated in liturgical space. Elevated sanctuaries, hierarchical seating, hidden fonts and distant ambos symbolically segregate rather than integrate. Yet if the Eucharist is nothing less than citizenship in the city of God where all are equal heirs, liturgical architecture must testify to that radical equality: the altar as table of welcome, aisles as common paths of pilgrimage, the font as the reminder of common identity placed where all can see. Sacred art and architecture, he insisted, should arise from local communities and represent their cultures, so that the heavenly Jerusalem is glimpsed in every liturgical gathering.

From the African continent came another powerful voice. Richard Tambwe, writing from the Democratic Republic of Congo, insisted that the human body is the hinge between worship and liturgical space. Liturgy is not an intellectual activity but an embodied, affective reality. Architecture that ignores gesture, song and movement risks alienating the very people it seeks to serve. He critiqued the coloniality that has left many African churches reproducing European

models, detached from African memory and cultural rhythms. Instead, he advocated for spaces that grow organically from local traditions, where the assembly can express itself fully in sound, movement and dance. Liturgical space, he suggested, must become a 'space of the heart', where beauty, proximity and solidarity foster unity. Collaboration between theologians and architects is vital here: without it, buildings risk becoming sterile containers rather than spaces that embody the received practice of the community and therefore enable grace-filled encounter.

Other contributions weaved anthropology, neuroscience and pastoral theology into the architectural discussion. Austrian scholar, Dorothea

Haspelmath-Finatti, explored the neuroscience of procession, noting that walking and singing together unconsciously synchronises bodies, in breath, step and pulse, to create prosocial bonds. She reminded delegates of the power and the possible danger of such synchrony, recalling its manipulative misuse in totalitarian regimes. Yet she also highlighted its potential for healing and reconciliation when



movement, music and architecture converge to inscribe communal memory in the body.

Dorianne Buttigieg from Malta used pastoral theology to present sacred space as an active agent of care. For her, churches are not lifeless structures but environments that can heal when they allow lament, embody hospitality and draw the community into conversation with God. The placement of altar, ambo and font along a central axis, the use of stone and water as tangible signs, and the embrace of lament as a mode of prayer all become ways in which architecture fosters both renewal and justice.

James Starke from the USA situated these insights within Pope Francis's call to synodality. He argued that synodal space is not determined by style but by relationship. In its broader sense, place evokes belonging, identity and culture; it is never static. In an era of migration and digital communication, place is porous and dynamic, so worship spaces must balance historical rootedness with flexibility. Starke repeatedly emphasised the human person as symbol, constituted by body and soul which are distinct yet inseparable. He then extended the analogy to worship spaces which must express interior life through exterior form. He urged communities to discern relationships before drafting plans: how will elders and young adults, long-established families and new migrants, those living with disability and

those who assist them, actually encounter one another here? Renewing space begins not with style sheets but with careful attention to the daily realities of the faithful.

Also from the US, Paul Turner's precise reading of the rubrics reminded delegates that visibility is the Church's most consistent architectural principle. From Palm Sunday to the Chrism Mass, from the lighting of the Easter fire to the location of the font, the ritual books presume that the faithful can see what is done and assemble where it is done. Turner warned that the common practice of distributing communion from the tabernacle creates pastoral confusion. Many come to believe the tabernacle is the source of communion, rather than recognising the Eucharist as the sacrifice offered and received by the assembled Church. Here the arrangement of space and the choreography of ministers become catechesis, shaping belief through the very actions of the liturgy.

Polish scholar, Slawomir Jeziorski, invited reflection on the act of entering. To cross the threshold of a church is never merely functional; it is a rite of passage which marks a transition from the profane into the sacred, from the mundane to the transcendent. Baptismal identity is renewed at the door by dipping fingers into water and making the Sign of the Cross, silence becomes a ritual action, and the assembly itself is created by the simple act of entering the liturgical space together.

Together, these voices painted a complex and compelling picture of the ways in which liturgical space is interwoven with anthropology, theology, sociology and pastoral practice. Whether in the symbolic arrangements of the Upper Room, the urban metaphors of modern cities, the rhythms of African dance, or neuroscientific insights into synchrony, the same truth emerged: space matters. It is not simply a setting but a dynamic force at work, shaping the way we encounter God and one another.

The rhythm of worship anchored each day of the congress. Liturgies were celebrated in some of Paris' most evocative churches—the Reformed Temple near the Luxembourg Gardens, the Jesuit church of Saint-Ignace, the Orthodox church of Sainte-Geneviève et Sainte-Parascève and the parish church of Saint-Eustache, where delegates gathered to celebrate the Congress Mass. Each space, with its own memory and music, offered a lived commentary on the theme, reminding participants that cathedra, ambo and altar are not abstractions but meeting places where God gathers people together.

Discussions continued over meals and in less formal settings where participants reflected on the practical demands of ministry and the ways in which liturgy can respond to social fracture and grief. Together, these moments revealed that liturgical reflection comes alive when it draws from the lived faith of communities, ensuring that scholarship serves the Church's worship rather than existing in isolation.

As these strands were woven together, a set of questions presented themselves for local discernment. What do our worship spaces say about who we are and who we are becoming? Do they embody communion or reinforce hierarchy? Can they hold lament and healing alongside praise and joy? Do they arise from the cultural memory of our

people, or do they import models foreign to local experience? Do they make the actions of the liturgy visible and thereby invite genuine participation? How might digital and hybrid spaces be engaged without disembodimenting the assembly? How are ministers being formed to attend not only to texts, but to the affective and symbolic dimensions of ritual action?

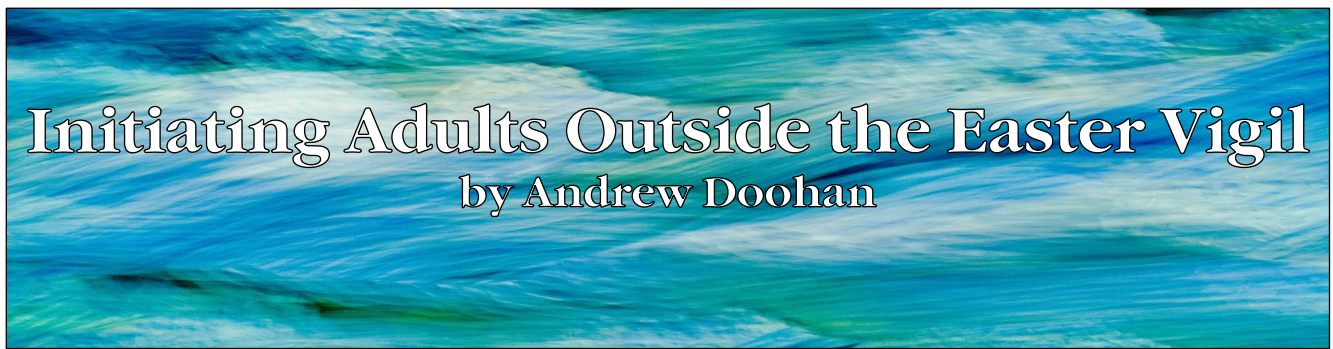
Preparations have already begun for the next congress. In a decisive move to broaden participation, the 2027 meeting is planned for Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, at the *Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro* (UERJ). Historically, *Societas Liturgica* congresses have largely taken place in the northern

hemisphere, making attendance difficult for many scholars and practitioners from Latin America, Africa and other regions. Rio offers both accessibility and affordability, along with a strong academic partner in UERJ, a public university known for its inclusive ethos and pioneering affirmative action strategies. Significantly, UERJ has recently launched a multidisciplinary program in Liturgy and the Arts, making it an ideal host for a global gathering of liturgical scholars. The proposed theme, "From Inculturation to Decoloniality: Liturgy in a World in Conflict", promises to extend the conversations of Paris into new terrain, foregrounding voices that have too often been marginalised. Scheduled for 26-30 July 2027, the Rio congress will be a significant milestone in the journey of *Societas*, prompting a more global and inclusive dialogue on the future of Christian worship.

■ Dr Clare Schwantes is Director of Liturgy Brisbane and chairs the National Liturgical Council.

Images: The restored Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris





Initiating Adults Outside the Easter Vigil

by Andrew Doohan

The flame of the Paschal Candle flickers in the slight breeze, casting its glow against the walls of the church. The sweet scent of Sacred Chrism wafts through the assembled people, while the Baptismal Font settles once again into stillness. The newly initiated member of the Body of Christ that is the Church, arrayed in the brilliant whiteness of their baptismal robe, takes their place of pre-eminence among the assembly as they prepare to exercise the baptismal priesthood for the first time during the Prayer of the Faithful.

It is a scene, an experience, that many people would be familiar with having attended the celebration of the Easter Vigil. Such moments are wonderfully powerful, not just for the newly initiated but for the entire community of faith. Such moments witness the culmination of a journey of discovery and discernment and the beginning of a new life in God within a community of faith.

While Christian initiation is usually and normatively associated with the annual celebration of Easter, and the Easter Vigil in particular, the scene described above, however, did not take place during the celebration of the Easter Vigil in March or April, but during a Saturday evening Mass sometime in September.

The reason for celebrating someone's initiation in September could be for something as practical as an illness 'disrupting' their preparation for initiation. Perhaps a family will be moving interstate over the Christmas holidays. Or it could be that the person initiated on that September evening was not yet ready for the Easter Vigil this year, but their readiness was discerned in the intervening time. In such circumstances do we really need to wait until the arrival of the next Easter Vigil, some five or six months away?

Whatever the reason, however, the celebration of Christian initiation on that September evening is entirely in keeping with what the Church teaches. The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)* identifies the connection with Easter as the 'general rule' (RCIA 17) while still acknowledging that *for pastoral needs of a more serious nature... it is lawful to arrange the schedule for the entire rite of initiation differently*. These details are then articulated in RCIA 26-30.

Before we look at the details of that brief section of the RCIA and what it means for the celebration of Christian initiation, a couple of observations about Christian initiation in general are worth noting.

Firstly, the RCIA's normative pattern, where the Easter Vigil is the culmination of the journey of Christian initiation, is applicable only to those who are not yet baptised. By its very nature, the RCIA has been created for the unbaptised.

The rite of Christian initiation presented here is designed for adults who, after hearing the mystery of Christ proclaimed, consciously and freely seek the living God and enter the way of faith and conversion as the Holy Spirit opens their hearts. By God's help they will be strengthened spiritually during their preparation and at the proper time will receive the sacraments fruitfully (RCIA 1).

What is missing from this paragraph? There is no mention of people who, having already been baptised in another Christian tradition, seek to enter into full communion with the Catholic Church! Such people, whose baptism we must acknowledge and honour, *do not* participate in the RCIA, since the RCIA is for those who are not yet baptised. The reception of those who are already baptised takes place whenever they are ready and is not linked to the Easter Vigil. The section in our current Australian edition of the RCIA on the reception of baptised Christians into full communion is a local addition to the book. So too is the plan in the appendix which integrates them into the celebration of the Easter Vigil. It is true that many parishes have these two groups journeying together, but the practice is worth a critical re-examination. Those already baptised have a different starting point and the pattern of their movement to communion should be *seen* to be different. *Vive la différence!*

Secondly, the journey of Christian initiation is never the same for every person who responds to God's call. For some it may unfold across years; for others, it may be more immediate. For some it could be triggered by momentous life-changing events; for others, it may be a slow, gradual realisation of it simply being 'right'. This variety requires of the Church a preparedness to walk with the seeker (see RCIA 9) and let the journey for each person unfold at the right time and proper pace for them.

It should be obvious then that a 'one size fits all' model based on 'beginning' in September and 'finishing' at Easter is not the most appropriate means by which the Church fulfills its responsibilities to seekers. This is especially the case if the model used is based solely on mid-week classroom gatherings where seekers are taught things. What if, instead, communities of faith were ready to welcome seekers when they emerge, and invite them into the life of the faith community to begin a journey by living as Christians live, similar to the way apprentices become masters of their trade by living and working in their trade?

Such an 'apprenticeship' model opens the door to embracing the RCIA's vision of a 'year-round' catechumenate. This in turn shifts the focus of catechesis and preparation away from the classroom and back to the liturgical year (see RCIA 75.1). The model encourages the flexibility found in RCIA 26-30. It is immensely helpful in permitting Christian initiation to take place when seekers are ready, rather than when we might think it 'should' take place. It opens up possibilities beyond initiating only at the Easter Vigil. And the RCIA's a year-round approach is a better response to the Great Commission found in Matthew 28:19-20.

Outside the Usual Times

In light of these considerations, what does Christian initiation 'Outside the Usual Times' look like? While there are certainly adjustments required, the overarching principle applicable to celebrating Christian initiation at another time of the year is ensuring *the structure of the entire rite, with its properly spaced intervals, remains the same* (RCIA 26).

This reference to the 'entire rite' means ensuring that there is a liturgical acknowledgement of a person's entry into the Order of Catechumens, that there is a Rite of Election celebrated about six weeks before the celebration of baptism-confirmation-communion, that the scrutinies and presentations which usually take place during Lent (the traditional 'period of purification and enlightenment') are still celebrated, and that the sacraments of initiation are celebrated on a Sunday.

There are those who might argue that, since Christian initiation is not being celebrated at Easter, there is no need to keep to all the steps outlined in the RCIA. Yet the RCIA itself makes it clear that this is not the case. Indeed, the RCIA highlights the necessity of the various steps because the journey to Christian initiation, and thus the journey of the initiation process is as important as the destination, *regardless* of when the celebration of the sacraments takes place.

The beauty and power of the ritual elements and occasions that constitute the 'entire rite' need to be experienced not only by the catechumen but also the entire community. There is something powerful about the greeting of the soon-to-be catechumen at the door of the church building where, in answer to the question put to them, *What do you ask of God's Church?*, we hear the answer, *Faith*. Equally, the subsequent signing

of the person with the cross, which mirrors a similar action during the baptism of children, needs to be not only felt by the one being signed but also witnessed by those in whose name it is done.

The writing of a name in the Book of the Elect, the three scrutinies that follow for the Elect, along with the accompanying prayers for a deeper conversion, and the presentation of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer – not on paper but by being spoken by the Church and heard by the Elect – all highlight in ritual the reality of the seeker becoming more closely connected to the Church to which they will be forever joined following their initiation. The texts of the scrutinies are tightly linked to the gospel reading of the Lenten Sunday and so will need careful adaptation. The exorcism texts given as ritual resources for the period of the catechumenate might be of assistance here (RCIA 94).

Each of these ritual moments is vitally important to the journey that will reach its culmination at the baptismal font and its waters. They are important whether they take place during the Season of Lent, as is the 'general rule', or at another point in the liturgical year. When celebrated well these moments provide meaning for both the Elect and the community of faith of which the Elect will become integral members.

Shifting the 'entire rite' to another point in the liturgical year is no easy task and needs careful scheduling. It is important to ensure that the celebration of the rite of election and thus the scrutinies do not fall on a solemnity of the liturgical year (see RCIA 29, 30 respectively). The other consideration that requires attention is the timespan of the journey, with the normative approach taking twelve months – a liturgical year. Care should also be taken to ensure that a similar span of time is kept when initiating outside the usual times. With those requirements observed, any suitable date is possible for the celebration of Christian initiation.

While Christian initiation will always be intimately associated with the celebration of Easter and the Easter Vigil, the Church is also attentive to the needs of those who, having heard God's call on their lives, seek to become part of the Body of Christ through baptism. Their journey of faith, inspired by the promptings of the Holy Spirit, cannot become so tied to a single event on the calendar that God's work in them is frustrated by the Church's hesitancy to initiate them when they are ready simply because the calendar does not 'work'.

Thankfully, the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* itself provides the means by which the journey of faith of a seeker unfolds not according to the calendar but rather according to God's plan. The rite itself says, *nothing can be determined a priori* (RCIA 76).

■ Rev Andrew Doohan, priest of the diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, is on the executive of the Christian Initiation Australia Network and has Masters degrees in theology and liturgy.

Pilgrims of the EUCHARIST: Towards 2028

by Most Rev Anthony Ireland



SYDNEY has been selected to be the host of the 54th International Eucharistic Congress (IEC). To be held in 2028, it will be 100 years since the city hosted a Congress and 55 years since the last time Australia hosted an IEC which was in Melbourne in 1973. The stunning photos of that event which can be seen in the Catholic Leadership Centre in East Melbourne forecast the magnitude of the Congress to come in Sydney.

The liturgical book *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist outside Mass* gives particular attention to, and directions for, the International Eucharistic Congress describing it as *a 'station' to which the particular community invites ... the entire world, that they may understand more deeply some aspect of the mystery of the Eucharist and worship it publicly in the bond of love and unity* (HCWE 109).

The section on eucharistic congresses gives clear direction that formation is a key component in the preparation for, and celebration of, the International Eucharistic Congress. An IEC must seek the guidance of experts in theological, biblical, liturgical and pastoral studies. The Congress is to promote a thorough catechesis on the Eucharist, active participation in the sacred liturgy, attentive communal listening to the word of God and the promotion of social outreach 'following the example of the primitive Christian community' to the poor, needy and disenfranchised (HCWE 111).

With these elements in mind, how might the Church in Australia prepare to welcome the Universal Church to our mother Church of Sydney for the International Eucharistic Congress 2028?

The Eucharist has always been at the heart of Catholic life. Vatican II captured this with luminous simplicity when it affirmed that the eucharistic sacrifice is *the source and summit of the Christian life* (*Lumen Gentium* 11). Yet in 2025, as we look ahead to the 2028 International Eucharistic Congress, we must ask whether we truly live from this source and rise to this summit. Pope John Paul II expressed the matter clearly in *Ecclesia in Oceania: The Eucharist completes Christian initiation* (EO 40). Baptism and Confirmation are celebrated once, and they leave an indelible mark; but the Eucharist is our daily 'yes' to Christ. It is the food that sustains us until our final breath, until we join 'all the saints in the heavenly kingdom' and meet the Lord face to face.



Most Rev Anthony J Ireland was ordained bishop in 2021 and installed as Archbishop of Hobart on 12 August 2025. With a doctorate in theology, he taught moral theology at Melbourne's Catholic Theological College for 20 years and has been involved in seminary education at Corpus Christi College in various roles. This text is

drawn from his presentation to the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference at their meeting in May 2025.

St Augustine, with his characteristic clarity, urged his people to *recognise in the bread what hung on the cross, and in the cup what flowed from his side* (Sermon 228B). This is not poetry or metaphor but truth. In the Eucharist, Jesus crucified and risen is truly present. Pope Benedict XVI insisted that Word and Eucharist are inseparably bound. *The word of God sacramentally takes flesh in the event of the Eucharist* (*Verbum Domini* 55). Pope Francis deepens this teaching in *Desiderio Desideravi*, wherein he reminds us that before we ever choose the Eucharist, *we have already been desired by Christ* (DD 6). Every celebration of the Eucharist, he says, is *the way Jesus satisfies his thirst for us* (DD 11). For Francis, a vague remembrance of the Last Supper will never suffice. We must be drawn into it with full awareness, heart and reverence. The Eucharist is not a teaching to be learned so much as a mystery to be encountered.

The Eucharist is not only about Jesus. It is Jesus, his body, his blood, his soul and divinity, indeed his presence among us. Augustine exhorted the newly baptised, *In order not to be scattered and separated, eat what binds you together; in order not to seem cheap in your own estimation, drink the price that was paid for you* (Sermon 228B). Here is the place where the sacrifice of Calvary is made present. In the ordination rite of priests, the bishop places the paten and chalice into the newly anointed hands with the words, *Imitate what you handle and conform your life to the mystery of the Lord's cross* (RO 163). To stand at the altar is to stand at Calvary. Pope Francis insists that the Eucharist *heals us from the blindness inflicted by the horror of the cross and renders us capable of seeing the Risen One* (DD 7). Without the Eucharist, our sight of the Resurrection is blurred. To preside at the Eucharist, he later says, is to be *plunged into the furnace of God's love* (DD 57). It is not routine. It is fire.

The saints teach us this truth not only with their words but with their lives. St Thomas Aquinas is remembered as the master theologian, whose works were acclaimed by the Fathers of Vatican II (*Optatam Totius* 16). Yet his theology was steeped in tears of love for the Eucharist. His confreres and townsfolk in Naples often saw him weeping at Mass, his devotion overwhelming his intellect. In the *Summa Theologica*, reflecting on the Last Supper, St Thomas wrote of the institution of the Eucharist as the words of a dying friend. *Because last words, chiefly such as are spoken by departing friends, are committed most deeply to memory; ... affection for friends is more enkindled and the things which affect us are impressed the deepest in the soul* (III ST Q 73, a.5). In the Eucharist, then, we receive not only the Lord's body, we receive his final testament of love.

That love, however, asks for our response. Pope Francis reminds us that *every reception of communion was already desired by him in the Last Supper* (DD 6). Do we desire him back? Earlier generations of Catholics knew the answer instinctively. First Friday devotions to the Sacred Heart reminded people that the Eucharist was not a reward for the perfect but nourishment for the hungry and the hopeful. In his final encyclical *Dilexit Nos*, Francis recalled how this devotion restored confidence in God's mercy (DN 84). He also noted that *love pauses, contemplates mystery, and enjoys it in silence* (DN 57). This is the invitation of eucharistic adoration, to return love with love, to let affection meet affection, and to linger in Christ's gaze. The tears of Aquinas were not abstract. They were affective, born of love.

If we truly receive the Body of Christ, then we must become the Body of Christ. The Eucharist is not an end point; it is the fuel of mission. Francis teaches that *a celebration that does not evangelise is not authentic, just as a proclamation that does not lead*

to an encounter with the risen Lord in the celebration is not authentic" (DD 37). In *Evangelii Gaudium*, he insists that the Eucharist strengthens us for daily witness (EG 174) and warns us not to mistake prayer for withdrawal (EG 262). The Eucharist always sends us out.

The witness of Cardinal Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan, who endured thirteen years of imprisonment, offers a striking testimony. He celebrated the Eucharist in secret, sometimes with just a few drops of wine and a crumb of bread. He wrote that, *if you wonder by what means you can most please God, the answer is: celebrate the Eucharist. There is no prayer, no meeting, no ceremony that is comparable to the prayer and sacrifice of our Lord on the cross* (*The Road of Hope* 349). For him, the Eucharist was both life and mission. As he said: *Holy people are those who continue to live the eucharistic celebration throughout the day* (350).

FORMATION - The program already exists... it has its centre in Christ himself, who is to be known, loved and imitated.

As we look towards the 2028 International Eucharistic Congress, we must resist the temptation to treat it as merely a spectacle. It cannot be reduced to either ritual splendour or a logistical exercise. It must be a eucharistic conversion, a rediscovery of love. St John Paul II, in *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, declared: *The program already exists... it has its centre in Christ himself, who is to be known, loved and imitated* (EE 60). The path to renewal, he insisted, *passes through the Eucharist*.

The Church is a pilgrim people, and the Eucharist is our sustenance for the journey. John Paul II was the 'pilgrim of the world', proclaiming divine mercy in his encyclical *Dives in Misericordia*. Benedict XVI was the luminous teacher, who gave us a theology of hope in *Spe Salvi*. Pope Francis was the 'animator of the faith', breathing life into doctrine and summoning us to walk as 'pilgrims of hope'. If John Paul II proclaimed and Benedict taught, Francis animated. He took mercy and called a Jubilee of Mercy. He took hope and called a Jubilee of Hope.

And what greater hope do we have than the Eucharist itself? It is the abiding presence of Christ who makes good on his promise. *Ecce ego vobiscum sum omnibus diebus—Behold, I am with you always* (Mt 28:20).

If we are to prepare well for 2028, it is not only logistics that must be ready, but hearts. We are invited to fall in love again with the Lord in the Eucharist: to recognise in the bread what hung on the cross, to eat what binds us together, to drink the price that was paid, and to live that mystery in mission, mercy and joy. Only then will we be, in truth, pilgrims of the Eucharist.

SYRO-MALABAR RESOLUTION

On 19 August 2025, at the bi-annual Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church, an official agreement was accepted which has ended a scandalous long-running liturgical dispute. Simmering for over fifty years, the dispute erupted in 2021 when the priests and people of the largest diocese (Emakulam-Angamaly) challenged a Synod decree mandating a uniform way of celebrating Eucharist. The decree meant that the priest could face the people for the Liturgy of the Word but would have to turn around to face the altar for the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The archdiocese of Emakulam-Angamaly insisted on their 'traditional' practice of facing the people throughout.



The agreement now adopted for the archdiocese allows the traditional Mass to continue provided that one Mass in each church is celebrated according to the official Synodal pattern each Sunday and holy day.

The conflict over the last four years has involved large demonstrations and sometimes the use of force involving the police. This means that impending court cases will keep the cathedral and a handful of churches closed for the celebration of the Eucharist (Mass has not been celebrated in the cathedral for three years). It is expected that these legal cases will soon be withdrawn. Most of the Syro-Malabar bishops appreciated the move from authoritarian enforcement to dialogue and discussion. The Holy See also responded by withdrawing its Pontifical Delegate appointed to administer the diocese.

The Syro-Malabar Catholic Church is an Eastern rite Church in full communion with the Roman Catholic Church.

ST JOHN the BAPTIST

In Goa, the former Portuguese colony on India's west coast, one of the important festivals celebrates Sao Joao (St John the Baptist). It is sometimes difficult to draw the borders between religious feast, cultural festival and commercialised tourism. Occurring on 24 June, it corresponds to the beginning of the monsoon season when water, flowers and plants are abundant. Here cultural and religious motifs mix.

Young men wear a floral wreath called a *Kopel*. After Mass they leap into local wells, streams and ponds to remember St John who leapt in his mother's womb at the Visitation. Groups go through the village streets singing traditional songs. It is also a celebration of thanksgiving for newly-weds and recently born infants. This involves sharing food and baskets of fruit.



Problems arise when participants consume too much of the local alcoholic drink, and the festival degenerates into revelry and party events with screens and loud music, often hosted by resort hotels. Churches are trying to hold the line by emphasising the feast and the prayers within the traditional cultural context. The festival of Sao Joao in Goa highlights a worldwide challenge when large-scale tourism destroys the very experience visitors have come to enjoy. This is the topic for a conference *Questioning Tourism* (17-20 September 2025) organised by the Catholic University of Indonesia and the Initiative for the Study of Asian Catholics (www.isac-research.org/tourism2025).

IN MEMORIAM



Bishop Peter ELLIOTT (1943-2025) became an auxiliary bishop in Melbourne in 2007. His father was an Anglican priest and Peter

was received into the Catholic Church as a student in Oxford. He earned a doctorate in theology, writing on the sacramentality of marriage. For a decade he served in Rome on the Pontifical Council for the Family. He wrote several books on liturgy with a rubrical bent, notably *Ceremonies of the Modern Roman Rite* (1995) and was subsequently involved in preparing the liturgical books for the 'Anglican' Ordinariates. As a bishop in Australia, he was involved in the liturgical commission and council.



Rev Canon Donald GRAY, a prominent member of the Church of England, died on 4 July 2025 at the age of 94.

He was chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons and also to Queen Elizabeth. Appointed to the Liturgical Commission in 1968, he grew in his knowledge of liturgy and his involvement in liturgical reform. He was one of the architects of the *Alternative Service Book* (1980). He was a member of the Joint Liturgical Group, he founded the Society for Liturgical Study, and he was chair of Societas Liturgica. Later, as canon of Westminster, he helped reform the Abbey's liturgical arrangements and wrote a book on the coronation service.

MASS FOR CREATION

The official texts for prayers and readings have been issued in Latin. Pope Leo XIV celebrated the Mass for the first time on 9 July 2025 and it is proposed for use in the 'season of creation' 2025. The Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments has also issued provisional translations in modern languages for interim use until official translations are prepared by bishops' conferences and formally approved. They will be added to the Masses for Various Needs and Occasions in the *Roman Missal*.

POPE LEO ON MUSIC

Marking the 500th anniversary of the birthday of Palestrina, Pope Leo spoke about the spiritual and liturgical significance of his music as a timeless expression of prayer and unity.

His compositions, solemn and austere, inspired by Gregorian chant, the Pope said, fuse music and liturgy in a way that elevates the soul and gives voice to the mystery of the divine. Polyphony is not merely a musical technique; it is a form imbued with theological meaning. It takes the sacred text and 'clothes it with fitting melody' so that it may better reach the understanding of the faithful... Multiple voices, each with its own melodic path, join together in harmonic interplay. Sometimes they clash, sometimes they resolve, but always in pursuit of unity... This dynamic unity in diversity, he concluded, is a metaphor for our shared journey of faith under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

AUTHOR OF THE YEAR



Those looking to study the Catholic liturgical books would do well to explore the publications of Rev Dr Paul Turner, pastor of the cathedral in Kansas City, Missouri. He has covered a huge range of topics, many of the books receiving awards from the USA Catholic Media Association. This year he has been named their Author of the Year. Congratulations, Paul. His website is extraordinarily rich. You can check out his publications, explore his cycles of homilies and read his liturgical blog at <https://PaulTurner.org>.

LATIN LOBBYING

At this point, Pope Leo XIV has not made any move on the use of the 'traditional' Latin Mass. The percentage of Catholics who are committed to the old form of the Mass is very small but they have been very vocal. Lobbying began even before Leo was elected and some have used fake news stories to promote their cause. At their best these people are sincere Catholics who seek a liturgy that is sacred, serious and solemn.



LECTIONARY

A new edition of the Lectionary for Mass is being prepared for Australia, Ireland and New Zealand. It will use the Revised New Jerusalem translation and will therefore keep some continuity with our current Jerusalem Lectionary. The Joint Lectionary Project Commission comprising the liturgy bishops from the three countries met in Ireland 24-25 July 2025 along with the liturgy secretaries from each country.

Back row: Anthony Doran (Aust); Neil Xavier O'Donoghue (Ireland); Bishop Stephen Lowe (NZ); Front: Trevor Murray (NZ); Bishop Francis Duffy (Ireland); Archbishop Patrick O'Regan (Aust); with project director, Martin Foster.

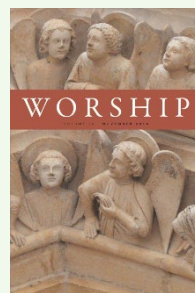
Good progress has already been made. The draft of Volume 1 for Sundays and Solemnities is complete. Over 2025, it has been sent in segments to the bishops of the three countries, comments have been received, and the texts have been adapted accordingly. Work is now beginning on volumes 2 and 3 for weekdays where the same procedure will be followed. It is planned that a draft will be ready by Easter next year. Then volume 4 (Ritual Masses, etc) will be on the agenda and it is hoped to complete the draft by the end of 2026. After the final canonical vote of the three conferences, it will be sent to Rome. Once it has been given the *recognitio* of the Holy See, it can proceed to publication.

The printed volumes will therefore not appear for several years but, at last, we are underway.

Pope Benedict XVI liberalised the use of the old Latin Mass to try to draw traditionalist Catholics into the mainstream of Church life. Pope Francis judged that it was being used as a tool of opposition and division and he severely restricted its use. He said he had consulted bishops around the world and there was consensus. Now, in July, an American journalist leaked Vatican documents which purport to show that most bishops were in favour of the status quo and feared that restrictions would do more harm than good. It is difficult to evaluate these reports.

Pope Leo will know the situation. He is fiercely committed to promoting unity and reconciliation. So, will he hold the line on restricting the traditional Latin Mass and continue the policy of Pope Francis? Will he revert to the more liberal provisions of Pope Benedict? Or will he try to shape a flexible policy which devolves responsibility to the pastoral judgement of individual bishops and local Churches?

WORSHIP



The most important liturgy periodical in the English-speaking world, *Worship*, is to cease publication in October 2026, the 100th anniversary of its foundation.

First published at St John's Abbey, Collegeville, as *Orate Fratres*, it was founded by liturgical pioneer Virgil Michel OSB. The Liturgical Press was established at the same time. They have drawn the English-language Churches into the Liturgical Movement which was already important in Europe and which led to the reforms of Vatican II. The final issues will assess where the liturgical renewal is up to and where it is going. This will involve a review and commemoration of 20th century achievements.

TRICKY ISSUES WITH PAYMENT

In Australia, it is customary to make a gift to the Church/priest for funerals and weddings, and to offer a stipend for a special Mass praying for someone who has died. These stipends are not payment for the Church's sacrament, but a voluntary donation. In terms of Church income, they are 'an extra'.



This is a greater struggle in the Philippines where there is a system of fixed payments for various services.

Recently one bishop – Patrick Parcon of Talibon Diocese – spoke in his homily of witnessing a funeral where the coffin was simply being blessed. When he asked the widow why there was no funeral Mass, she replied, *we don't have money to pay for the Mass!* The bishop commented on how sad this was: *The poor cannot wait. Placing price tags on sacraments should not be the reason to deprive any single soul of a sacrament.*

It is unjust when the poor are unable to access the blessings and sacraments of the Church they belong to. Some do not get married for lack of money to pay the Church. The Church appears to be on the side of the rich, for they can organise fine and exclusive liturgies with multiple priests – money is no object. There have been attempts over decades to abolish the system of payments, but it persists in many places. Not only is it fixed in the minds of many Catholics, but it is also integral to the financial sustainability of many parishes.

Removing a system that disadvantages the poor will mean, for some, losing income and giving up privileges. It is therefore not only a spiritual matter, but one that requires institutional reform and a new approach to governance and stewardship of church resources.

CATECHUMENATE FOLLOW THROUGH

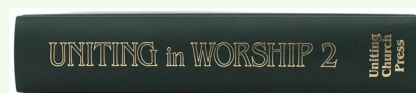
In recent years, France has seen a strong growth in the number of adults being initiated into the Church. This year, 2025, was a record with 10,384 newly baptised adults plus a further 7,400 adolescents. The adults come from every age group, with a strong representation of 18–25 year olds.

This has generated a significant pastoral response across the country, making the integration of the neophytes into the life of the Church a pastoral priority. It is in response to a commonly heard remark, 'after three years, we don't see them anymore'. Part of the reason for this might be mobility – especially among the younger age groups – which makes it difficult to keep contact.

Dioceses are now asking how the Church cares for the neophytes and what initiatives they can take to support them. How can they reinforce the communal roots and fellowship which the newly baptised began to experience in their catechumenate? The individual spiritual needs to be linked with a broader experience of the Christian community.

Some places are organising community activities – biblical study, events or pilgrimages, forms of ministry to the sick, learning groups – in which neophytes participate with other members of the Church. Other places try to invite them to family meals in the parish. Some dioceses (for example, Lyon and Evreux) have formed '*fraternités catéchuménales*', hybrid groups of 8 or 10 people comprising catechumens, the newly baptised, and Christians of long standing. Some parishes have seven or eight of these groups. It is hoped that such groups will in turn transform parish life, setting out new initiatives for engagement, witness, prayer and care for one another.

UNITING IN WORSHIP II



This year marks the 20th anniversary of the publication of *Uniting in Worship II*. The Uniting Church in Australia was formed in 1977 through a union of Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches. A Commission on Liturgy was appointed and in 1988 the first liturgical book, *Uniting in Worship*, was published.

After a quarter of a century of worship experience, an update and an enrichment of the liturgical resources was undertaken. *Uniting in Worship II* is the fruit of this work realised under the leadership of Paul Walton who chaired the National Working Group on Worship. It added resources for a catechumenate, additional texts for Sunday worship, liturgical services for Lent

and Easter as well as other pastoral rites. The published book was supplemented with electronic resources.

It is a wonderful educational resource if used well. Often it is, especially for Sunday and sacraments. Sometimes and in some places, the book is set aside and the worship and the liturgical music seem impoverished. This therefore is an anniversary worth noting in order to reinforce the best liturgical traditions of the Uniting Church in Australia.

MODERN MARTYRS

On 14 September, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, Pope Leo took part in an ecumenical liturgy at St Paul's Basilica in Rome. It was to remember and honour all those who have died as martyrs in the 21st Century; these martyrs have served as an expression of unity among the Christian Churches who are united in the blood of martyrs. All gave witness to Christ who passed through pain and death to glory.

Contemporary Christian martyrs include members of churches bombed by terrorists in parts of Africa, those killed in Asia (notably the victims of the 2019 cathedral bombing in Sri Lanka), others who are caught up in spheres of war and violence. In presenting the event, the secretary for Rome's Commission of New Martyrs – Witnesses of the Faith explained: *Being side by side [with other Christians] while the martyrs speak of their life through their death is a great encouragement towards unity – among ourselves and within the whole human family we long for in love.*

CATHOLIC FUNERAL MASS

On 16 September, for the first time in 400 years, the British monarch has taken part officially in a Catholic Mass celebrated in Great Britain. King Charles III and other



members of the royal family attended the funeral in Westminster Cathedral of Katherine, Duchess of Kent, who died at the age of 92 (*above, visiting a hospital in Australia in 1988*). She married Queen Elizabeth's cousin in 1961 and, after consulting the Queen, was received into the Catholic Church in 1994, the first senior royal to do so for two centuries. Katherine Kent, as she called herself, was well known for her extensive hands-on charity work.

SAY THAT AGAIN, PLEASE!

by Elizabeth Harrington

NOTICES SEEN IN PARISH BULLETINS

**EUCCHARISTIC MINISTERS
ROSTERED FOR TODAY:**
Elizabeth Brown, Michael Byrne,
Mary Smith.
Please come forward and stand
on the altar during the Sign of
Peace.

**THE HYMNS FOR MASS
THIS WEEKEND**
Entrance: Yahweh, I know
you are near by Dan Schutte
Gifts: Holy Is Your Name by
David Haas
Communion: Panis Angelicus
by Cesar Franck
Recessional: Gather Us In by
Marty Haugen

**CHILDREN PREPARING
FOR THEIR
FIRST EUCHARIST**

LET ME REPHRASE THAT...

The role of a lay ministers during the Communion Rite is to serve the assembly by distributing the consecrated elements, so they are Ministers of Communion, never 'eucharistic ministers'. As the one who presides at the Eucharist, the priest is the only Minister of Eucharist or eucharistic minister.

Technically, these lay ministers are called Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. They are *extra-ordinary* because the clergy are the *ordinary* ministers. The connotation of 'extraordinary' in English however makes this name unhelpful. They are best called LAY MINISTERS OF COMMUNION.

Ministers stand on the sanctuary. The *altar* is the table of the Lord at the centre of the thanksgiving that is accomplished through the Eucharist (GIRM 296). The *sanctuary* is the place where the altar stands, where the Word of God is proclaimed, and the various ministers exercise their functions (GIRM 295).

Entrance: In June 2008, the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments sent a letter to bishops conferences saying that the divine name, signified by YHWH in Hebrew, should never be pronounced. When proclaiming the sacred text in the Jewish synagogue, it is always read as 'The Lord'. This should be followed in the Catholic Church. In fact, this hymn is simply called *You are Near* and now begins 'O Lord, I know you are near'.

Gifts: Many Catholic dioceses and institutions have removed from use hymns by David Haas because of sexual misconduct allegations against him. His music has been removed from subscription services and recent hymnal editions.)

Communion: The theological content of this hymn is quite good: The Eucharist is a wondrous gift – Christ gives himself to feed the poor and lowly. But how many people would be able to join in this hymn in Latin? Singing during communion 'expresses the spiritual union of the communicants by means of the unity of their voices, to show gladness of heart, and to being out more clearly the 'communitarian' character of the communion procession' (GIRM 86).

Recessional: This is clearly appropriate for a gathering/entrance hymn but not as a recessional/sending out hymn.

The children would no doubt have been present for celebrations of the Eucharist in the past. What they are preparing for is to receive Holy Communion for the first time. It should always be called FIRST COMMUNION.



THIS WEEK'S EVENTS

Requiem Mass for the repose of the soul of Margaret Jones will be held on Wednesday at 11 am.

Parish School Opening Mass on Thursday at 9 am.

At this Mass, the new student leaders will carry in the school and house banners during the Procession of Gifts and place them in front of the altar.

MASS SCHEDULE:

Lay-led Mass	Tuesday 7 am
Vigil Mass	Saturday 6 pm
Sunday Mass	8 am and 11 am

Wednesday's event will be a FUNERAL MASS.

The word *Requiem* is a left-over from the days when the liturgy was in Latin. The entrance antiphon for the funeral Mass used to begin *Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine* (Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord). This has not been the case for 55 years and the name is not used in the *Order of Christian Funerals*.

The proposal for the school opening Mass is not appropriate.

The purpose of this part of the Mass is to prepare the altar for the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Bread and wine are brought forward for the forthcoming offering. It is also a time for bringing money and gifts for the support of the poor and the work of the Church.

Symbols of identity such as banners might have a place in the Entrance Procession which helps establish the worshipping community. They do not belong at this point in the liturgy.

Lay-led Mass is a nonsense. Only a priest presides at a Mass. A lay minister may lead a Liturgy of the Word and, if sufficient hosts are reserved in the tabernacle, may add a Communion Rite.

The structure of a Liturgy of the Word with Communion may appear to be very much like the first part of the Mass: introductory rites are followed by a Liturgy of the Word, as a rule, using the readings of the day from the Lectionary for Mass. Then, if communion is to be distributed, it follows the Lord's Prayer and sign of peace. A prayer and blessings conclude the celebration.

The rest of the notice should be arranged as follows:
SUNDAY MASSES: Saturday 6pm; Sunday 8am and 11 am.

The parish Mass on a Saturday evening is a Sunday Mass. The term 'Vigil' refers to a Mass for *the day before*. This occurs in the liturgical books on feasts such as Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and the Assumption. But these prayers and readings are not used to celebrate the feast itself but to prepare for it beforehand.

Parish newsletters and notice boards must locate the Saturday evening Mass under the heading of 'Sunday' and the name 'vigil' should be avoided.

■ Elizabeth Harrington has been a high school teacher and parish pastoral associate, and was for many years education officer with Liturgy Brisbane.

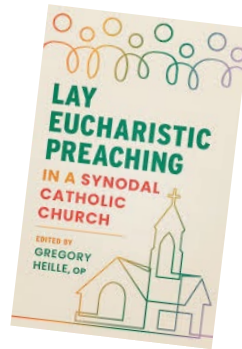
Gregory Heille (ed), *Lay Eucharistic Preaching in a Synodal Catholic Church*
(Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2025) 241 pp

by James Cronin

A couple of dozen preachers and theologians from around the world met in St Louis in 2024 to try to provide a synodal roadmap for eucharistic preaching that responds to the signs of the times. Convened by the Dominican Preaching Network, the meeting produced the challenging proposals and papers published in this book.

Vatican II and its theology of the Church, inspired by Yves Congar, provide the background for this volume: *all the baptised members of the Body of Christ are the protagonists or subjects of the eucharistic action* (p. 193). One of the main contributors pushes this to its logical conclusion: *What if... one was to begin with the unity of the whole baptismal community? ...Congar concluded that the decisive pair for a theology of ministry was not 'clergy-laity' but 'ministries-community'* (p. 48). Seeing what gifts are out there untapped and unappreciated, and how much this deprives and harms our fellow Catholics, this book argues that *the case for lay eucharistic preaching would still stand even if the ranks of the ordained included women and men, married, single, and professed* (p. 38). Or, as another contributor baldly states: *I believe it is a sin to offer such poor nourishment when a much richer offering may be possible by admitting to the preaching ministry laity with the vocation and formation to preach* (p. 195).

On a more practical level, we know that some priests are not good preachers, the more so when required to address congregations of mixed ages and cultures. I sometimes wonder if those with an Asian cultural background are hankering for even longer and more instructional



sermons. In Germany (where lay preaching at Mass was once approved – and is still practised in many dioceses) *most of*

the people attending a Eucharist enjoy homilies from different preachers. They are grateful for the diverse insights into the Gospel. The perspectives of various preachers support the listening people in coming into contact with the Good News and make it easier to make correlations with life (p. 172). I remember hearing the priest at Mass telling farmers they could pray while driving the tractor – and then hearing a farmer comment that that priest did not understand farming! One contributor says that *while many priests in intercultural ministries go to heroic lengths to gain skills to communicate with and offer pastoral care in their parishioners' languages, only the rare priest can attain the ability to overcome entirely the language and cultural barriers they face* (p. 195).

Beginning in the heady days of the 1960s, some of us imagined we had left behind a clericalised Church. One writer I imbibed in my seminary days eulogised the ordained priest as the 'relational man par excellence' but maybe we were still saying, albeit in a softer way, that we clerics were better and smarter than others. Pope Francis' idea about having 'the smell of the sheep' might be better. Linking preaching to synodality, the author of a major essay here states: *too many people experience the eucharistic liturgy as the ritual maintenance of clericalism... While lay preaching, including liturgical preaching, is permitted outside of the eucharistic celebration, within the liturgy – which we insist constitutes the source and summit of the Church's liturgical life – the right to speak frankly, publicly, and in one's own words is reserved to the clergy alone* (p. 105).

What distinguishes the homily from other preaching anyway? Apparently, there is not a lot of good theology about this obvious question! Could the homily be more properly compared to the

communion rite (involving all the baptised) rather than the Eucharistic Prayer (which is a presider's text)? The ordained minister proclaims the Gospel which is the high point in the Liturgy of the Word (GIRM 60); then the preaching is a sharing of insight with all. *During the homily, the Word of God proclaimed in the assembly is 'broken open'... The homily, understood in the ritual context of the liturgy, is not fundamentally a priestly or presidential action – it is a ritual act of communion. As such, a concern for the ritual and ministerial continuity between the two tables suggests that the minister of the Word of God may suitably be drawn from both the lay and ordained members of the assembly* (p. 97).

'Suitably trained' and 'adequately formed' – these are the requisites for a successful preacher. Obviously preaching demands a basic understanding of Scripture, the liturgy and its seasons, the theology of the gathered Church. But we should avoid insisting on theology degrees before lay people can preach. They will speak from their mature faith and life experience. The preacher builds bridges between the Scripture proclaimed and the lives people lead.

Pope Francis pushed the envelope regarding lay ministry in many ways, not least in opening the instituted ministries of Lector and Acolyte to women and then instituting the formal ministry of Catechist. This book proposes also an instituted ministry of Lay Preacher. Such ministries are a concrete expression of synodality. This is how it works: *We listened together for the Holy Spirit before anyone spoke... Every person in the room spoke from their own experience, knowledge, social location and insight... We asked the Holy Spirit to sow wisdom among us and to tend us, body, soul, and spirit, each of us individually and all of us together* (p. 187).

This book raises vital questions for the Church of the third millennium. The restriction of lay preaching at the Eucharist is currently enshrined in Canon Law. To address this requires courageous innovation. *The Synod on Synodality is a sign of courage in today's Church – courage to face our weaknesses, to seek solutions, and to innovate when necessary. The proposal that properly trained and officially authorised lay preachers be permitted to preach at the Eucharist is just such a courageous innovation. The most common phrase in the Bible is 'Do not be afraid'* (p. 165).



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CONTACT



GPO Box 282, Brisbane Australia 4001
orders@liturgybrisbane.net.au
www.liturgybrisbane.net.au