



**SUMMER/
DECEMBER 2025
VOLUME 55/4**

Liturgy

N E W S



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PRIORITISING BAPTISM

I don't like talking about 'The Laity' and try to avoid it when I can. The term implies its counterpart, 'The Clergy'. Talking about the clergy and the laity creates a separation among the baptised who make up the Body of Christ. A priest's ordination does not override his baptism; it adds a new dimension to it. All who are baptised are one in Christ – there is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female (Gal 3:28).

In the last few years, we've been reflecting on the idea of SYNODALITY. The fundamental theological insight underlying it is our common baptism. This sacrament unites us to Christ and makes us part of the Body of Christ, the Church. Synodality starts here and recognises that, as a consequence, all the baptised share in the mission of Christ to announce the kingdom of God. Hence, we need to listen to one another and be open to the work of the Spirit. We need to respond to one another and work together collaboratively to proclaim the gospel.

Pope Leo, in his recent interviews with Elise Allen, said: *Synodality is a way of describing how we can come together and be a community and seek communion as a Church, so that it's a Church whose primary focus is not on an institutional hierarchy, but rather on a sense of we together, our Church...*

Critics of synodality are afraid that it will lead to populist or democratic heresies and that it will undermine the structures of authority and governance in the Church. These critics forget that

all leadership in the Church is centred on service, after the model of Christ who came to serve, not to be served. They underestimate the power of the process of discernment in the Spirit in which the truth is revealed.

It is the LITURGY which provides the best model for a synodal Church. 'Who celebrates the liturgy?', asks the Catholic Catechism. Christ does, it answers, the whole Christ (*Christus totus*), that is, the entire body of the baptised (CCC 1136, 1140). This is the meaning of Vatican Council II's emphasis on *full, conscious, active participation* in the liturgy (SC 14). Note that this comes about as the right and duty of all the baptised. All – laity and clergy alike – participate in what Christ is doing. Sometimes this is misunderstood. People think that they are participating in what the priest is doing. Rather, all the baptised are the 'doers' of the liturgical action.

What then is the role of the ordained minister in the liturgy? He presides. By ordination, he is given the role and responsibility of speaking on behalf of all and drawing everyone into sacramental action. This was spelled out very clearly by Pope Francis in *Desiderio Desideravi* (2022).

♦ What is the content of the liturgy? Christ's action in his death and resurrection. *The content of the bread broken is the cross of Jesus, his sacrifice of obedience out of love for the Father* (DD 7).

♦ Who celebrates the liturgy? The whole body of the baptised. *The subject acting in the liturgy is always and only Christ-Church, the mystical Body of Christ* (DD 15; also 19 and 36).

♦ What then does the priest do? He is the presider within the Body of Christ. *The priest lives his characteristic participation in the celebration [of Eucharist] in virtue of the gift received in the sacrament of Holy Orders, and this is expressed precisely in presiding... this is a consequence of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit received in ordination...* (DD 65)

We can see here how the liturgy provides a model for the way parish and diocesan life unfolds in a synodal manner. All the baptised listen to one another and discern the movement of the Spirit. Parish Pastoral Councils, Finance Councils, Sacramental Programs, all operate collaboratively – with the priest presiding, that is, facilitating everyone's contribution, reconciling, and articulating a common vision on behalf of all. This is a far cry from the old rhetoric which said that parish groups are 'merely consultative' with the priest able to ignore the recommendations at will.

The baptismal context allows us to make sense of lay leadership. We have instituted ministries of acolyte, lector and catechist. Lay people can lead the Sunday Liturgy of the Word and preach where it is necessary or advantageous. *The laity may be allowed to preach in a church or oratory if in certain circumstances it is necessary or in particular cases it would be advantageous* (CCL 766). Here we have a broad vision of collaboration among all the baptised.

Dividing the Body of Christ into clergy and laity is not the only way in which our 'one baptism' is compromised. There are also important ECUMENICAL dimensions to prioritising baptism and affirming the unity of all the baptised in Christ.

There was a time when we spoke collectively of 'non-Catholics'. This is most unhelpful because it divides those who have been baptised into *us* and *them*. The baptised who are not *us* are lumped together with people who follow another religion or no religion at all. In fact, Catholics share a close and intimate relationship with members of the Anglican and Uniting Churches, Lutherans and Pentecostals, and all the baptised because in fact we are all one in Christ. Certainly, there is a variety of Christian traditions but the baptismal unity we share is much more significant than anything that makes us different.

It is a serious offence therefore when parishes establish a process for the Christian initiation of adults and, with scarcely any differentiation, put together in one and the same category both those who are already baptised in Christ and also those who come from another religion or who have no religion. The journey for those who are coming to Christ must follow a very different trajectory from those who are already claimed for Christ and who wish to move from one tradition to another. The rite of reception into full communion for someone who is already baptised is utterly simple: they affirm that they share our faith in Christ, and they are then confirmed and admitted to the table of the Eucharist. That's it.

If we look at the original Latin version of the *Rite for the Christian Initiation of Adults* (what we call the *editio typica*), it does not deal at all with the reception into full communion of those baptised in other Churches. There are only two pages of pastoral notes relating to those who were baptised Catholics in infancy but who have neither been catechised or received the sacraments. The rite acknowledges that their catechetical formation might take some time and be akin to what is required of catechumens. But the rationale of their journey is different. This would also be the case for those already baptised in another Christian tradition.

By comparison with initiating catechumens, receiving baptised Christians into full communion is a small step. Many of them may know Christ and the gospel; many will share our faith in the Eucharist and the encounter with Christ that it offers. Prioritising our baptism reactivates our yearning for intercommunion. It stands at the nexus of ecclesial and sacramental unity.



Bringing Children to Encounter Christ through their First Holy Communion.

by Stanley Orji

Recently, young people in our parish celebrated their personal incorporation into Christ by receiving their First Holy Communion. The children exuded a great sense of joy before a delighted and supportive parish community. With a sense of wonder, they expressed a faith beyond the words and symbols. They understood in their own way that they received Christ himself in the sacrament of his body and blood. The congregation also celebrated this joyful proclamation of the presence of Christ, the one who desires to dwell in the heart of every child, man and woman, so that they in turn may dwell in the Lord.

In one of his pieces collected in *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith* (2002), Joseph Ratzinger remarked that *the Eucharist is the fulfilment of the promise of Jesus* [who said] *'When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all to myself'* (Jn 12:32). Lifted up both on the cross and in the resurrection, Christ invites us to new life and transformation. The intimate relationship with Jesus in his eucharistic body is a life-changing and life-giving encounter.

It was refreshing to hear one of the mothers of our communicants reflecting afterwards: *For us as parents, Michael's participation in the preparation for Eucharist and his reception of communion was very important as an essential step in his spiritual journey and connection with Jesus. His first communion has created a sense of belonging to the community; he feels a fuller connection now that he is able to receive the Eucharist with the community at Mass.* Her words remind us of our own personal encounter with Jesus through our own communion. We see its implication for our faith journey in general.

The intimacy of the relation of the individual communicant to Jesus might sometimes suggest a purely individualistic and private faith. Yes, faith is personal, but it is also communal. Pope John Paul II explained it in a 2004 Apostolic Letter: *this closeness which comes about in the 'eucharistic communion' cannot be adequately understood or fully experienced apart from the 'ecclesial communion'... The Church is the Body of Christ: we walk 'with Christ' to the extent that we are in relationship 'with his body'. Christ provided for the creation and growth of this unity by the outpouring of his Holy Spirit. And he himself constantly builds it up by his eucharistic presence. It is the one eucharistic bread which makes us one body* (*Mane Nobiscum Domine* 20). Authentic eucharistic faith and closeness to Jesus simply mean becoming an active member of his body, the Church.

Young Michael has always enjoyed being part of our parish celebrations. At our regular celebration of the Eucharist on the Lord's Day, he delights in volunteering to participate actively in the sacred liturgy. He welcomes people at the door or brings forward the gifts or even reads at Mass, as well as sharing active listening and silence. By so doing, he fulfills his baptismal priesthood. Such an active faith, begun at home and nurtured in the school and parish community, became an essential part of his preparation for First Holy Communion. Immersing children in the life and faith of the family, school and parish is one of the best ways to prepare them to receive First Holy Communion.

Leading children to encounter Christ in Communion begins at home.

The family is, so to speak, the domestic Church. In it, parents should, by their word and example, be the first preachers of the faith to their children (LG 11).

This statement from the Vatican Council II document on the Church has been restated frequently in the last six decades. Pope Francis, for example, uses the insight in *Amoris Laetitia* (2016). *One of the fundamental challenges facing families today is undoubtedly that of raising children, made all the more difficult and complex by today's cultural reality and the powerful influence of the media. The Church assumes a valuable role in supporting families, starting with Christian initiation, through welcoming communities* (84). The pope goes on to point out that formation is not only a 'serious duty' but also a 'primary right' of parents.

The family has always been the first point of reference and the place of first introduction to the liturgical life. Ideally parents bring children to Mass from an early age, and they are prepared to participate in liturgy. Thus, the faith formation of children for their First Holy Communion is a process that begins at birth and acquires greater significance and focus at their baptism and confirmation. Growth in faith, of course, is a life-long process that continues well beyond sacramental years. The mutual collaboration between the family and the Church is directed not only at the children but also towards the parents. The key is the formation of the parish community.

The vitality of parish life and the integrity of parish celebrations directly influence formation in the family. A parish that encourages the participation of children gives birth to a parish atmosphere where faith grows. Such parishes, with the help of parents and sacramental coordinators, prepare children not just to receive individual sacraments, but for a life-long formation of deep encounter with Jesus and the Church.

Parish life is the context for Sacramental Preparation

The ideal to aim for is that the journey of candidates for First Holy Communion will have already begun through belonging and participation at home, at school and in the parish. The formal process of sacramental preparation might include an invitation, information night, enrolment, regular weekly catechesis, Mass attendance, perhaps a retreat or activity day, and a practice session. Practising with the children by letting them rehearse the gestures and taste unconsecrated hosts and wine ensures that they are familiar with the experience before the celebration.

These activities in the weeks and months before First Holy Communion offer an opportunity to make



connections. The primary link is with the life of the parish. Ongoing active participation of children in the life of the parish is more important than the activities of the few months of preparation just before first communion. Based on this understanding and model, it becomes unnecessary to place burdens on the family during the time of preparation for the sacrament.

Children love processions and often enjoy carrying the cross, lectionary and candles, bread and wine. They can be invited to assist as altar servers. Perhaps they can join a children's choir and help with hospitality at the end of the Sunday Mass. Encouraging children to participate in these simple but meaningful ways is an important means by which parishes begin the process of facilitating an encounter with Christ during their preparation for First Holy Communion and beyond. So, parishes would be preparing children to receive communion even years before they reach the age of reason. In fact, offering these forms of engagement for the children might serve to draw back into regular Sunday worship families who have taken a certain distance from the parish.

Leading children to a Christ-encounter can also happen through school visits and children's liturgy. At every Mass where children are present, the priest may speak to them directly, keep the liturgy simple,

and use a brief interactive yet meaningful homily that is directed to them in language they can understand. The *Directory for Masses with Children* (1973) offers extensive help on these aspects of parish liturgy.

Helping families understand the Eucharist

The Church, in Christ, is a sacrament, that is, a sign and instrument both of communion with God and of the unity of the whole human race (LG 1).

Vatican Council II, again in its document on the Church, spoke of the Church as the Body of Christ, called to continue the mission of Christ to preach the Good News, to teach and explain what we believe, to celebrate the sacraments, to embrace the infirm and those who suffer, to recognise Christ in the poor and those on the margins (LG 8). Christian initiation – baptism, confirmation and communion – engages the follower of Christ in his mission. The renewed encounter with Christ at Sunday Mass strengthens and empowers parishioners for this task.

Parish Sunday celebrations of the Eucharist are for everyone. Children and their families are not spectators at Sunday Mass. With their acute sense of belonging, children understand clearly when they have been excluded. Hence, pastors, liturgy organisers and parishioners have the obligation to prepare the celebration of the Lord's mystery in a way that promotes a sense of belonging and inclusion for everyone and the full active participation of both children and adults.

Like Christ himself, the Church must continue to welcome children and invite them to participate fully each time we gather to encounter the eucharistic Lord. It can be very concrete and practical. Before the Mass begins, the parish may invite children and their families to help in setting up the worship space with the liturgical books. Next the altar and credence table can be set with plates, cups, bread, wine, water, purifiers, bowls and cross. Gradually, familiarity with externals leads to a greater understanding. Guiding children and their families from the 'table of the word' to the 'table of the Eucharist' opens up new perspectives on scripture and sacrament, story and supper, and each mutually illumines the other.

The first-century home of Jesus in Nazareth is a model of family life, symbols, prayer and encountering God. Jesus learnt to say the *Shema* and prayer before meals with his family. No doubt he helped in preparing the meal, baking and breaking the bread. At table, he learned traditional prayers, rituals and symbols that would later play significant roles in his adult life and ministry.

Today, children in Australia enjoy special occasions like big family meals, birthdays, anniversaries, Christmas, Easter. They celebrate with happiness, thanksgiving and gratitude. They learn from home to express these emotions with gestures and actions like jumping, smiling, clapping, laughing, singing. Children are at home with symbolic expressions of helping, sharing food, pouring drinks, giving gifts, eating, drinking, and cleaning dishes. Parents and parishes can direct these learnings to the rituals and symbols of the sacred liturgy.

Conclusion

Scripture scholar, Martin Kaller, famously wrote that the Gospel of Mark is really a passion narrative with a long-introduction. His words suggest that we view all of the New Testament through the lens of the Paschal Mystery. Jesus' Last Supper, the passion of the cross, and the glory of the resurrection is the central mystery of Christ in which he 'draws all people to himself'.

As Pope Benedict XVI wrote in *Deus Caritas Est* (2005): *Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.* In the Eucharist, first communicants, their parents and family, indeed the whole parish encounter Christ in the saving mystery of his death and resurrection. Joined to Christ and caught up his mission, our life opens to a new horizon of love, justice and harmony in the world.

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SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION in Kingaroy/Nanango Parishes

We invite interested parents of eligible children to a parent information night. There they can meet other participating families, the sacramental co-ordinator and the parish priest. We speak about Eucharist and explain the entire process. At 'Sign-On Sunday', children commit to prepare for the sacrament in front of the parish community. Each child hands their name card to a parishioner asking for their prayers in the coming weeks.

Families help their child make their way through the activity books. The sacramental co-ordinator and the priest offer support after weekend Masses.

A week before First Holy Communion, the children attend a practice session. We begin with a shared meal and talk about the Last Supper. Then everyone is able to practise receiving Holy Communion with unconsecrated hosts and wine. Families watch the *Flame of Faith* video together with their children, a day or so before the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

After the First Holy Communion Mass, all the parish celebrates together with the children over a special morning tea.

This special occasion does not finish on the day itself. In the subsequent weeks, the parish priest makes special mention of the children who are invited to participate at Mass, with actions such as bring up the gifts. The children feel increasingly aware of their membership in a loving Eucharistic faith-community.

It is a special time for the children, the families and the whole parish community.



“At our school, liturgy is part of who we are: it defines our culture and expresses our faith; it grows out of our life as Christian community.”

by Gerry Crooks,
listening to high school students.

I wonder how many schools have students who could, so succinctly, articulate the significance of liturgical celebration as we read in the above quotation – and, yes, this was a true statement from a student at one of the schools who were part of the interview process for this article.

Catholic secondary schools invest time, energy and commitment to make sure their students are exposed to good liturgical experiences. I have to say that the experience of meeting adolescents and discussing with them the significance of liturgy in their school and how they saw themselves in relation to it was most remarkable. Listening to them raised many questions. What is at the heart of the Catholic secondary school? What is the purpose of liturgy at school? What do we hope will be its impact and its ongoing relevance in the lives of young people? Or are we just doing liturgy because that is what a Catholic school is expected to do?

Before we launch into preparing and celebrating a mandatory ‘Whole-School Mass’ or the ‘Graduation Mass’, or the ‘College Feast Day Mass’ or even the weekly ‘Class Mass in the school chapel’, we need to ask why we are doing liturgy and what does it really mean.

Sometimes, preparing and celebrating liturgy involves much effort (and stress) only to find that student engagement has been less than positive and perhaps produced reactionary consequences. We have all experienced that! On the other hand, there are schools where the liturgy somehow seems to emerge out of the life

of the school itself; in other words, it is a natural part of student experience and is accepted and valued as such.

I took part in a number of group sessions across several Catholic secondary schools where students – both male and female in Years 8 to 11 – were asked to reflect on their experience of liturgy in their school. The issues which arose were as diverse as they were challenging, but the comments they offered centred, unequivocally, on their experience of community. Their sense of feeling valued, respected and heard within the life of the school was the basis of their faith response.



The significance of community

Students expressed positive feelings and experiences of ‘buddy masses’, where they were invited by their junior buddy to attend a class or year-level Mass. Whole-school and once-a-year Masses were also identified as times of engagement. We connect through community, they said, the community of the school. Perhaps for many of them, this is the only experience of Church or formal religion they ever have. Do we need to honour this and, if so, how? It was acknowledged by all the students in the various discussion sessions (and I emphasise *all*) that community was of the essence. Prayer and liturgical expression were reflections of the uniqueness of that particular school community. Each community is different.

Young people crave connection. Liturgy that is done in a way that expresses the life and needs of the young person in relation to their group and their community has the further potential to connect the individual to their God.

Liturgical options

How does a school weigh up the liturgical options in deciding what is important and appropriate for their community? Some students asked whether a whole-school Mass is always the most appropriate liturgical experience for these students of this age-group (as a ‘beginning-of-year’ event, for example). Some felt there was much more connection with ‘special liturgies’ such as Anzac Day, the patronal feast-days, or memorials for a student or staff member who died suddenly.

Yet students from one school where Mass was the single most regular liturgical

engagement were adamant that they themselves felt it was a good expression of their identity. They talked about student involvement in the preparation. They proudly spoke of this as a reflection of who they were. There was a sense of ownership. They spoke of the commitment that was generated by that ownership – the choir, altar serving, band, readers, lay communion ministers.

So let’s look further into how liturgy ‘works’ for these young people.

Music

In one of the schools where choral music was a valued tradition, students said that the music at the liturgy was left to the choir and orchestra. Music in this respect, while beautifully sung, tended to be a concert. The language of the hymns, said one student, didn’t really relate to their life as 17-year-olds. There was a frank discussion about the emotional connection (or disconnection) between the music and religious experience.

In this conversation, the style of music and its language were important considerations. Are schools simply replicating what is expected? Pentecostal-style music arguably speaks to young people. Here is a challenge for both Catholic schools and composers. Can they find music and text that are as emotionally charged as that which we find in Pentecostal-style works?

Further, much children's music, liturgical or otherwise, has been directed to primary school and seems trite both textually and musically for adolescents. But a faith of scripture and tradition is at the heart of the Church. Have Catholic composers lost an opportunity to engage with older kids? How can our liturgical music speak to young people of the depth of their faith?

Students from another school had an entirely different experience. Almost all the kids know all the hymns they use; the band and the choir 'lead' the singing; their college student leaders are all members of the choir and there was a sense that they really loved this aspect of leadership; the chants and psalms are rehearsed regularly across the entire school (yes, the entire school!) and led by student cantors; and (would you believe it?) their sporting teams have even been heard chanting these before they charge out onto the field in mortal combat! I am not making this up. I heard the students say these things and I heard it from staff.

Liturgy and Real Life

Most young people felt that it was important for the school to have religious/liturgical experiences that touched the lives of students. Secondary schools consistently deal with where adolescents are on the turbulent journey of self-discovery, where they fit into their community, what religion means for them and what the future holds for them, to say nothing of the impact of social media on their lives.

Some appreciated that there was a morning Mass in the school chapel. They enjoyed the intimacy of this experience because it was their own personal decision to be there. It was not forced upon them. It was a way of kicking off the day. I think we often overlook the internalising that some young people need.

Students in all discussion groups valued the opportunity to pray together – not necessarily in a formal liturgical sense – but in smaller subsets such as homeroom or House groups. The importance of

intercessory prayer was high on this agenda. Praying for each other is a way of dealing with the daily challenges of school life or that result from behaviours or circumstances.

All in this together

Apart from one school, the general consensus among students indicated a lack of student involvement or engagement in preparing the liturgy, including selecting readings, music and ministers. Some spoke of their disillusionment when they were not involved in the reasoning behind a particular liturgy, the story behind it, a lack of preparation for the event itself and the fact that students were called upon to fulfil roles which had already been structured and scripted. Young people yearned for the possibility of working in collaboration with teachers preparing and celebrating the liturgy. They believed they had much to offer in establishing how liturgy reflected their school community, its life and values.

At one school in particular, students spoke easily of their identity and their mission, expressed powerfully in the maxim, '*faith in action*'. Here, the liturgy seemed to be an integral part of the story of the school. One young person who was in his first year at the school commented that, when he arrived, he was enveloped by this spirit which seemed to be part of the everyday life of the school. He felt he could just embrace it. He became part of the altar-serving team as his expression of this commitment. This was not an isolated example by any means!

Inclusivity

Another major issue that students raised was the importance of respecting religious diversity in the Catholic school while ensuring that the 'Catholic essence' of the school is not compromised.

One group from a broadly diverse student body was actually high in their praise of how the Catholic nature and ethos of their school shaped involvement, inclusion and community. Students in this particular group comprised Catholic, Pentecostal, Mormon and Muslim! It was strongly affirmed that all these students were fiercely loyal to the school itself.

Several students, including those from denominations other than Catholic, spoke of the respect afforded them by fellow students. The diversity was not an issue when it came to involvement in and contribution to Masses. All were valued

members of the school community and honoured as such in its worship.

Conclusion

It is important to listen to young people. From the secondary students comments summarised here, we have seen that, for liturgy to work, it must be a participatory 'school community' experience that leads everyone to a deep encounter with the Divine.

Crucial to the meaningfulness of liturgy for students is that it should reflect the life of the school and be a natural outgrowth of that life rather than be an imposition. Thus, liturgy has the potential to provide that essential connection between the lived experience of the student, the school, and the God who dwells within it.

Liturgy cannot just be the responsibility of a select few in the school. We are talking about whole-school involvement, *full, conscious and active participation*. Every staff member, just like every student – whether Catholic or not – must commit themselves to this. It is a cop-out for a teacher in whatever academic department to abrogate responsibility for the spiritual life of the school to others. Likewise, every student and family accepted into the school have voluntarily surrendered themselves to the story, the ethos, the praxis and life that defines the school.

Liturgy can be embedded into the life of the school and can also be an out-growth of it. Liturgy can be a school's communal response to the sacred through prayer, thanksgiving, praise, remembrance and celebration. Yet conversely, in other situations, it may be doomed if it is yet another imposed piece of holy window-dressing. It might be impressive in the school's marketing blurb but inauthentic in its meaning and practice in respect to the Catholicity of the school. So, let us re-look at what we do, why we do it and how we do it.

Young people are our future. And liturgy for them can be both an outward and inward expression of the life of their community whether school or parish. It has the potential to speak to each person in a way that we, teachers in association with students, need to identify with and articulate.

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WITNESSES OF THE LIVING HOPE

A Reflection on Volunteering in Jubilee 2025



by Pius Chan



In this Jubilee Year, we are invited to become 'Pilgrims of Hope', to seek the signs of hope in our time, and to spread it to all those who are anxiously seeking it. It was proclaimed by Pope Francis in *Spes Non Confundit* (SNC)

on the feast of the Ascension 2024. Then, last Christmas, the pope opened the Holy Door of St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican, extending to everyone an invitation for 'an intense experience of the love of God' (SNC 6). It has been my privilege to participate in this Holy Year, not only as a visitor but also as a volunteer, serving and welcoming pilgrims who have come to Rome from all over the world.

Looking back over a year ago, when I was planning my graduation trip, I came across a recruiting advertisement for volunteers. Something within me stirred. I felt a strong impulse to make my trip more meaningful, to transform my simple holiday into a pilgrimage, and to do something for God. Setting out on a journey, focusing on faith and contemplation, a pilgrimage should not be considered merely religious-themed tourism. Pilgrims from all around the world come to Rome to seek an encounter with God. By offering my service and visiting the sacred place, I wish to strengthen my faith and to gain some experience of our universal Church. After seeking advice from my parish priest and his recommendation to the Dicastery, I applied for the service in January and October.

To be a witness to what the Holy Year represents

Volunteering in the Jubilee is far more than assisting with logistics or providing information to the visitors. It is meant to be part of the Jubilee Year. When I first arrived in Rome for the briefing session, the first guideline given to us was: *The volunteer, who chooses to serve for the Jubilee 2025, commits to the success of the event, but even more so strives to be a witness to what the Holy Year represents.*

To witness has been the core element throughout our journey. Being at the front line inside the basilica and the square of St Peter, we extended our hospitality to pilgrims from every corner of the world.

Pilgrims of all ages came from every walk of life. We welcomed groups of teenagers led by their schools, who approached the Holy Door with energy and enthusiasm. They entered cheerfully, often vlogging with their smartphones, but truly enjoying the beauty of their first Jubilee.

We also met religious sisters and brothers who crossed the Holy Door with deep reverence in their different traditions. They walked slowly and prayerfully. As they passed through the door, some recited the Litany of the Saints, while others sang hymns of praise, filling the basilica with a solemn yet profound atmosphere.

We have also received the elderly pilgrims who, despite their limited mobility, still desired to complete the journey with faith. Many chose to climb the steps on their own, wanting to enter the Holy Door by their own strength, just as Pope Francis who sat in a wheelchair did when he opened the Holy Door in person. Their perseverance was a powerful testament to their faith.

As a volunteer, I have witnessed that the Jubilee Year and the Holy Door have become a tangible sign of hope, gathering all generations into one. Despite any difference in their age and vocation, the same Holy Spirit had moved these people to encounter God's mercy through the ritual of walking through the door. The youth, with their passion and energy, embarked on the journey with their mates. The elderly, with the support and accompaniment of family and community, came in with trust and love in God. In SNC 12 and 14, Pope Francis acknowledges that the young are sometimes disappointed, their dreams frustrated, and the elderly feel lonely or abandoned. Hope should be present to young and old. A companion in their pilgrimage is a sign of hope for them. It is the image of the Church that we are a community journeying together, united and sustained by one faith and one hope, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it (Heb 13:2).

The Holy Door is not opened only to Catholic pilgrims, but also to visitors who are not Christians. Many of them do not fully understand what the Holy Door represents, but they approach it with curiosity. Their openness reminded us that the Jubilee is not only an event for the faithful but also a time of blessing for those who do not yet believe in Jesus Christ. It allows all people to come to know God.

It was very common for us who served inside the basilica to be approached with questions such as: 'What is the Jubilee?' 'Why is that door so crowded?' 'Is that guy speaking on the stage (the ambo) the pope?' What began as simple inquiries, sometimes quite funny, often became meaningful opportunities to share our faith. Many visitors expressed genuine appreciation for our sincere explanations, and whenever we were able to present the faith clearly and gently, it became a deeply fulfilling moment for us as well. We had engaged in quiet evangelisation.

There was one encounter in my service that left a particularly deep and lasting impression. One early morning at the security gate, I met a family who had travelled a long distance to visit St Peter's Basilica. When they discovered that the basilica was temporarily closed, they were very disappointed and visibly upset. They were ready to leave, complaining that they seemed to have lost the day. We gently encouraged them to stay a little longer, explaining that a papal Mass would soon begin and they were welcome to attend. They hesitated at first, explaining they were not Catholic and were unfamiliar with the worship liturgy, but finally they decided to stay to experience the atmosphere of the Mass.

Later that day, they returned to us with visible joy, sharing that they had participated in the first Mass they had ever attended, and the experience was far more profound than they expected. They enjoyed

the music. They said it was a blessing for them to see the pope in person and, after the Mass, to walk through the Holy Door which only opens every 25 years. The day did not go as planned, but it was even better. Their frustration had turned into joy, and what began as a mistake in planning, through a small gesture of patience and invitation by us, became an encounter with beauty through the Church's liturgy.

In these moments, our service moved beyond simple hospitality and became a quiet yet powerful proclamation of the Gospel. While we understood that, on duty, we represented the Dicastery, we were even more aware that we were also offering a living witness to our non-religious brothers and sisters. Through our presence, our attentiveness, and the answers we offered, we became signs of faith not only for pilgrims but also for those encountering our Church for the first time. Our work of welcoming others was never just a task; it was an offering to God. Whenever our patience and care opened a path for someone to meet Christ, we recognised it as a blessing, one that renewed our commitment to serve with love and humility.

Christian life is a journey calling for moments of greater intensity to encourage and sustain hope as the constant companion that guides our steps towards the goal of our encounter with the Lord Jesus (SNC 5).

Hope is the anchor. The experience of serving in Rome has allowed me to witness how the Jubilee rekindles the living hope in people from around the world. Such a witness does not remain in Rome, but extends to our own local communities, reinforcing the ministries of our parishes here in Brisbane.

In our local Church in Australia, we also encounter rich and diverse generations and cultures. Each Sunday, elderly parishioners arrive faithfully, some walking slowly or with difficulty, yet determined to be present in the house of God. They might be living alone, but the Church community assure them they are not abandoned. Their perseverance speaks to a hope deeply rooted in decades of trust and prayer.

Our communities include those who are baptised but who come to Mass only at Easter or Christmas, and who may not yet know their faith well. They, too, are part of the pilgrim People of God. Perhaps their journey has become quiet, uncertain, dormant. This year's Jubilee may be God's gentle invitation to them, a call to rediscover faith, to return to community, and to experience the hope that springs from encountering Christ.

Are we there for them to welcome and to witness? The community itself is a sign of hope, and we can make it visible and alive... in the warm welcome offered to newcomers, in the care shown to the vulnerable, and in the simple but meaningful gestures of hospitality that remind people they are loved. Just as I witnessed in Rome, the smallest



actions can become moments of evangelisation, whether a greeting, a smile, a willingness to listen. These gestures may be the first steps that draw someone back to the Church, or even toward their first true encounter with the Lord.

The Jubilee calls each of us to be Pilgrims of Hope and to participate actively in this mission. Through service, prayer or daily acts of charity, we are invited to accompany those who are searching, to draw near to those who feel distant, and to support those who carry heavy burdens. We are the instruments of God's mercy bringing hope and salvation to those who seek it.

May this Jubilee Year renew in us a deeper awareness of our vocation as the Church, journeying together toward Christ, and helping one another discover the hope that leads us ever closer to him.

Blessed be God for ever!

■ Pius Chan has just completed an arts degree at the University of Queensland with majors in Italian and Peace and Conflict Studies. He is active in ministry at St Pius Church, Salisbury.

OUR COVER

The 2025 Jubilee Year *Pilgrims of Hope* concludes at the end of the Christmas season with the feast of the Epiphany of the Lord (in Rome, 6 January 2026). During the year, many people have been undertaking the spiritual exercise of journeying in hope.

We conclude our cover series with an amazing pilgrimage held at Eastertime, this year for the third time. It has been organised by the Emmanuel City Mission (ECM), a drop-in centre for the homeless in South Brisbane which is also the Sunday worship centre for the Emmanuel community. The pilgrimage covers 300 kilometres over seven days and ends at the First Nations community at Cherbourg. Several times a day, the hikers cross live to the screen at the drop-in centre to ensure that visitors at the ECM are on the journey with them and that their needs and intentions are carried with them. The pilgrimage is a commitment to walking alongside the homeless embodying compassion, resilience and community, while especially honouring First Nations communities.

Our cover photos come from the 2024 pilgrimage. The first shows Roby Curtis ECM director with Bishop Tim Norton, now bishop of Broome; the other shows a lunch break with one of the support vehicles. Each evening, they would bunk down at the town campgrounds and share a meal at the pub with supporters and members of the local parish. A core group completed the entire journey, while many others joined in for part of the way.

Roby Curtis, noted the blisters, shin splints, soggy shoes, sore knees... but gave thanks for the incredible journeys in which the pilgrims shared their vulnerability, laughed, cried and prayed continuously. One day, *a man named Mark lined up for breakky with the pilgrims. Mark was with his little pet dog and he exclaimed to the group that ECM helped him many years ago when he was in Brisbane, homeless... Mark was not an isolated incident: we met others along our way who also testified to having been supported by ECM, one whose life is turned around and is now working in one of the towns in which we stayed. This was such a rich pilgrimage blessing for the team...* Embracing the highs and lows, all was done in a spirit of prayer and reverence for the visitors who walk in the front door of ECM each day. Pilgrimage is walking with purpose.



POPE LEO ON LITURGICAL SINGING



At the end of November, the Jubilee of Choirs and Choral Groups was held in Rome. Pope Leo spoke of the importance and beauty of singing at Mass.

For the people of God, song expresses invocation and praise. It is the 'new song' that the Risen Christ raises to the Father, in which all the baptised participate as one body animated by the new life of the Spirit. In Christ, we become singers of grace, children of the Church who discover in the Risen One the cause of our praise. Liturgical music thus becomes a precious instrument through which we carry out our service of praise to God and express the joy of new life in Christ...

Being part of a choir means advancing together, therefore, taking our brothers and sisters by the hand and helping them to walk with us. It means singing the praises of God together, consoling our brothers and sisters in their suffering, exhorting them when they seem to give in to fatigue and encouraging them when difficulties seem to prevail. Singing reminds us that we are a Church on a journey, an authentic synodal reality capable of sharing with everyone the vocation to praise and joy on this pilgrimage of love and hope...

You belong to choirs that carry out their ministry primarily in liturgical settings.

Yours is a true ministry that requires preparation, commitment, mutual understanding and, above all, a deep spiritual life, so that when you sing, you both pray and help everyone else to pray. This ministry requires discipline and a spirit of service, especially when preparing for a solemn liturgy or an important event in your communities. The choir is a small family of individuals united by their love of music and the service they offer. However, remember that the community is your larger family. You are not on stage, but rather a part of that community, endeavouring to help it grow in unity by inspiring and engaging its members...

Strive, therefore, to make your choirs ever harmonious and beautiful, and a brighter image of the Church praising her Lord. Study the Magisterium carefully. The conciliar documents set out the norms for carrying out your service in the best possible way. Above all, dedicate yourselves to facilitating the participation of the people of God, without giving in to the temptation of ostentation, which prevents the entire liturgical assembly from actively participating in the singing. In this, be an eloquent sign of the Church's prayer, expressing its love for God through the beauty of music. Take care that your spiritual life is always worthy of the service you perform, so that your ministry may authentically express the grace of the liturgy.

POLYGAMY

Some African bishops at the 2024 Synod raised polygamy as an issue for which they needed to develop pastoral strategies – how to receive a person in a polygamous marriage into the catechumenate, for example. In the West too, various forms of non-monogamous unions are being seen more frequently.

In response to these concerns, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith has prepared a 50-page document *In Praise of Monogamy* (21 November 2025). It does not appear to offer concrete help in dealing with cases of polygamy in Africa. Nor does it draw on the liturgical traditions of marriage in the Church. It is an extended biblical and historical account of the unitive dimension of marriage.

TRIDENTINE MASS

On 13 November, the apostolic nuncio to Great Britain told the bishops of England and Wales that Pope Leo had said to him that he would not reverse the restrictions on the Tridentine Mass implemented by Pope Francis in 2021. But he did indicate that the pope would grant a two-year dispensation to bishops who asked for it. This would enable the old Latin Mass to be celebrated in a parish church as an interim arrangement.

LITURGICAL FORMATION

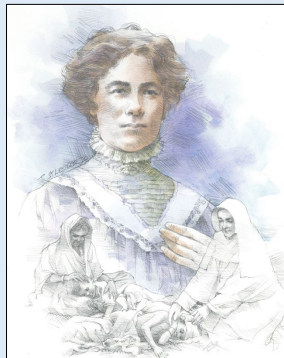
On 1 October 2025, Cardinal Arthur Roche, Prefect of the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, addressed the annual meeting of the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions in USA. He drew extensively on Romano Guardini and especially his famous lament that we *must become once again capable of symbols*. An understanding of the world of symbols, engaging seriously with sacramentality, is crucial to our *full, conscious and active participation* in the liturgy. The cardinal clarified that liturgical participation is not just external (postures and gestures, responses and singing); nor is it just internal (a prayerful focus on the meaning of the liturgical action). It is both.

The cardinal noted that Guardini avoids a simplistic and reductive either/or choice between internal and external participation. He quoted Guardini writing on liturgical formation in 1923 when he argued *for two layers of meaning: from the inside to the outside and from the outside to the inside. It signifies the internal in the external and allows the internal to be read externally. This means that the internal is given by the external and the ... internal is received by the external. It is a symbolic relation in a twofold direction: revealing and recognising, giving and receiving*. Through symbol, sacramental liturgy and active participation engage us both with interiority on the one hand and embodiment on the other.



SAINTHOOD

Celebrating our golden anniversary, the covers of *Liturgy News* 2020 featured the journey to sainthood of four local heroes.



Volume 50/1 featured Mary Glowrey, a Melbourne doctor who became a religious sister in India caring for the poor. In November 2025, Pope Leo recognised her 'heroic virtues' and declared her 'Venerable'. The next step in the process will be her beatification. Before this can take place, a miracle attributed to her intercession needs to be approved.

Volume 50/2 celebrated Blessed Peter To Rot, Papua New Guinea catechist who was martyred during World War II. On 19 October, he was canonised in Rome, PNG's first saint. His feast day is 7 July.

Volume 50/4 told the story of Eileen O'Connor, co-founder of the Brown Nurses (Our Lady's Nurses for the Poor). The Archdiocese of Sydney began the process of documenting her life and collecting testimonies in 2020. Now the diocesan phase is complete and the collected documentation has been presented to Rome so that they can weigh up the merits of the cause. If it is accepted, she too will be declared 'Venerable'.

SYNOD LITURGY GROUP

On 7 July 2025, the Synod Secretariat released a progress report *Pathways for the Implementation Phase of the Synod*. Part of the process was to set up ten study groups to provide in-depth reflection on more complex questions raised by the Synod consultations. The *Pathways* document revealed that Pope Leo had set up two additional study groups, one of which is 'The Liturgy in a Synodal Perspective'.

Sixteen experts – lay and ordained, women and men – have been nominated to the group. They come from Italy (4), Canada (3), France (2), the USA (2), as well as one

each from Germany, Hungary, Senegal, Mexico and South Korea.

The kinds of issues which the group will take up include:

- ♦ How will a synodal understanding of the Church affect the way we live, experience and understand the liturgy, especially the celebration of the Eucharist? How does the liturgy shape and support a synodal Church?
- ♦ How can we acknowledge the dignity and responsibility of the baptised and foster their active participation more fully in the liturgy?
- ♦ How can we promote the recognition of women, including their presence in our liturgical lectionaries?
- ♦ How can a synodal perspective help us rethink liturgical preaching and its effectiveness?
- ♦ How might synodality encourage a healthy decentralisation of liturgical authority and greater liturgical inculturation?
- ♦ How can people be led to 'live completely the liturgical action' as the summit and source of synodality?

Coordination of the study group is entrusted to the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. Contributions to the reflection of the study group may be made to the General Secretariat of the Synod at synodus@synod.va.

LITURGY COMMITTEES

Pope Leo lamented the disappearance of liturgy committees in many parishes. He invited those that do exist to work in synergy with the diocesan liturgy commission and in agreement with the parish priest to make the liturgy attractive and fruitful to participants. The committee's goal, he said, is to avoid either leaving everything to the parish priest or having just a few who look after singing, proclaiming the word, and decorating the church. *The experience of a group that is concerned with the preparation of the liturgy, even a small but well-motivated one, is a sign of a community that cares for its celebrations, prepares them, and lives them to the full.* Formation, both liturgical and biblical, is necessary to achieve a dignified liturgy, attentive to diverse sensibilities and sober in its solemnity. The pope was speaking to liturgical leaders on 17 November 2025.

WOMEN DEACONS

The Commission studying the admission of women to the diaconate has released a report showing what it called *an intense dialectic* between two opposing theological orientations. One maintains that the ordination of a deacon is for ministry and not priesthood. The other insists that the diaconate is the third decree within the unity of the sacrament of Holy Orders. The first is open to women being deacons; the second is not.

There are thus significant and complex questions about the nature of the diaconate and a lack of sufficient consensus. It is not a definitive decision but, for the present, it is a 'no' to the ordination of women deacons.



Historical studies recognised that at different places and times, women were named as deacons or deaconesses but the Commission could not find evidence that this was intended as a simple female equivalent of the male diaconate. Arguments were heard that acknowledged the equal status and dignity of men and women: *There is no longer... male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus* (Gal 3:28). Still the following proposition split the Commission members in half: *The masculinity of Christ, and therefore the masculinity of those who receive Holy Orders, is not accidental but is an integral part of sacramental identity...*

The Commission was unanimously in favour of expanding new ministries which would recognise women's ministry in the Church and their co-responsibility in decision-making and leadership. Curiously therefore the problem that emerges is less to do with the place of women in the Church than the nature of the diaconate itself. How is it related to priesthood? What kinds of ministry and mission are essential to the diaconate? The Commission chair pointed out that *in many dioceses of the world there is no ministry of diaconate, and in entire continents this sacramental institution is almost absent. Where it is active, the activities of deacons often coincide with the roles proper to lay ministries or ministries in the liturgy, raising questions in the People of God about the specific meaning of their ordination.*



ECUMENISM AND LITURGY

King Charles III and Pope Leo XIV created history on 23 October. While there have been many meetings over recent decades between the pope and the monarch who is head of the Church of England, now for the first time in 500 years they celebrated liturgy together. The senior Anglican archbishop, Stephen Cottrell of York, also took part in the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours in the Sistine Chapel. It was the centrepiece of the official royal visit to the Vatican.

The liturgy began with a hymn of St Ambrose in an English translation by John Henry Newman. Psalms followed in Latin and English, with the chant led by the choirs of the Sistine Chapel and the Chapel Royal. A reading from Paul's letter to the Romans opened up the theme of the care of creation, a subject dear to the king's heart and central to *Laudato Si'*.

King Charles and Queen Camilla were seated to the right at the front of the chapel, with Pope Leo and the Archbishop of York in the centre. *Photo Heute.at*

NICAEA. Pope Leo also took part in celebrating the common Christian faith expressed in the Nicene Creed by travelling to Türkiye for the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea. He participated in prayer with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and released an Apostolic Letter for the occasion entitled *In Unitate Fidei*.

In it, the pope acknowledges both the creed's role in articulating the faith into which we are baptised and also its place in the Sunday liturgy as a sign of unity and our common hope in the midst of a divided world. He noted in particular how the

creed incorporates simple language from the bible and the liturgy, language familiar to people: *God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God*. After a fine analysis of the words of the creed, he challenges us to reflect on the way our faith shapes our liturgical prayer and our life. Have we taken it to heart?

The letter concludes by rejoicing in the ecumenical convergence achieved by our common baptism and the profession of the creed. *[The creed] offers us a model of true unity in legitimate diversity. Unity in the Trinity, Trinity in Unity, because unity without multiplicity is tyranny, multiplicity without unity is fragmentation... We must therefore leave behind theological controversies that have lost their raison d'être in order to develop a common understanding and even more, a common prayer to the Holy Spirit, so that he may gather us all together in one faith and one love.*

By the long and sometimes difficult journey of mutual listening and acceptance, the restoration of unity becomes possible. It does not make us poorer; on the contrary, it enriches us.

LECTIONARY REPORT

Together with a draft of Volume One for Sundays, a progress report on the new Lectionary translation has been presented to the bishops conferences of Australia, Ireland and New Zealand. The three conferences chose to use the Revised New Jerusalem Bible (RNJB) translation, giving a continuity with the Jerusalem Bible which we have used for fifty years. The RNJB enshrines three principles:

- ♦ formal equivalence (taking account of every word in the original Hebrew or Greek);
- ♦ inclusive language (showing that the message is addressed to men and women equally);
- ♦ proclamation (recognising that the text is read aloud at liturgy and received aurally).

Since late 2024, bishops and their advisors have been receiving a section of texts every fortnight. Their comments are reviewed by a working group of liturgy and scripture scholars from the three countries.

The Lectionary will be presented in four volumes: Sundays, two for weekdays and saints, and a final volume for ritual and other Masses. The four volumes should be ready for the conferences to approve early in 2027. The whole will then need to be reviewed and confirmed by the Holy See. Once this is finalised, it will take about 18 months for publication.

The report makes some suggestions for the best way to prepare for the new Lectionary over the next few years. Start to use the RNJB for private or group reading and study. Revisit and explore the riches of the Introduction to the Lectionary. Make use of the Sunday of the Word of God (5th Sunday in Ordinary Time) and other occasions to highlight the importance of the Scriptures. Renew the parish celebration of the liturgy of the word, for example, helping to form excellent readers for the liturgy. Look ahead and budget for the purchase of the new books.

CONGRATULATIONS



The Centre for Liturgy has celebrated its

tenth birthday. The national centre is endorsed by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and based at the Australian Catholic University. It provides teaching and formation in liturgy, sacraments and the liturgical arts. It is staffed by Professor Clare V Johnson (director), Dr Paul Taylor (assistant director), Cathy Murrowood (education officer) and Maryanne Hemsley (coordinator). It not only supports parishes and dioceses with workshops but also collaborates with the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy at ACU to provide units for more formal qualifications in liturgy and sacraments.

EUCCHARISTIC CONGRESS

The 54th International Eucharistic Congress will be held in Sydney in 2028. It will be a week of liturgy and catechesis, cultural celebration and witness centred on Eucharist. The theme chosen by Pope Leo has just been announced: *This is My Body, Given for You*.

In this gospel phrase which we speak in every Eucharistic Prayer, Christ transforms a meal into a mystery. His body is given for us on the cross. Thus, the Lord's Supper becomes for us an entry into the whole Paschal Mystery of Jesus' death and resurrection. Christ is the celebrant of the liturgy; that is, Eucharist is the action of the Body of Christ, the Church. All the baptised, by their full, conscious, active participation, are transformed with the risen Christ and empowered for mission.

The theme implies that we who are part of the Body of Christ are called to give ourselves for others as Christ did.

ALTAR WINE

The wine for the celebration of the Eucharist must be from the fruit of the vine, natural and unadulterated, that is, without the admixture of extraneous substances (GIRM 322). In Australia, that means that any wine – red or white – may be used in the liturgy. But this is not necessarily the case everywhere.



The bishops of Kenya have begun importing their own special altar wine from South Africa. It will be labelled with the emblem of the bishops' conference and it can only be sold to priests or those with official authority to purchase it on behalf of a parish. Previously, while altar wine was marked with a cross, it was produced by a commercial entity, partially government owned, and had begun to be sold in supermarkets and other places. It had become impossible to verify the contents of these bottles. One Catholic commented that he had heard the altar wine was being sold in nearby bars but he didn't want to believe it!

ROLE OF MARY

A Catholic understanding of the Virgin Mary is based on the Church's liturgical feasts and the evidence in the New Testament. They point to her primary role as mother of the Christ, and consequently, as mother of believers.



Painting by Pesellino 1450s

Litanies and popular devotions have many poetic titles for Mary. However titles become problematic when they insert Mary into the redeeming work of Christ who is sole mediator and saviour. The title 'co-redemptrix' has been rejected by the Vatican's Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith and they expressed grave reservations about calling her 'mediatrix of all graces'. This latter should be avoided because it can so easily compromise the centrality of Christ as unique saviour and mediator. Requests to make these titles part of the Church's Marian dogma are therefore firmly refused. They do not express in an appropriate way either Mary's cooperation in God's salvific plan for humanity or her intercession on our behalf.

These decisions were fully explained and promulgated by the Dicastery on 4 November 2025 in a document *Mater Populi Fidelis*, a doctrinal note on some Marian titles regarding Mary's cooperation in the work of salvation.

The titles 'co-redemptrix' and 'mediatrix' have surfaced periodically in popular devotions and apparitions and have sometimes been promoted by Marian groups. They have even been used on occasion by recent popes. However Vatican Council II refrained from using these titles for dogmatic, pastoral and ecumenical reasons. They were opposed by Cardinal Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI. Mary's maternal assistance to Christian people is always subordinate to the work of Christ's unique and inclusive mediation.

Mary, the first disciple, is Mother. On the Cross, Christ entrusts us to Mary, and so he brought us to her because he did not want us to journey without a mother... Our Mother Mary always wants to walk at our side, to remain close to us, to help us with her intercession and her love. She is the Mother of the Faithful People of God... (76).

PILGRIMS OF HOPE

A very successful biennial national conference was held in Adelaide this year. It is jointly organised by the Australian Pastoral Musicians Network and the National Liturgical Council. Conference convenor and chair of the APMN, Michael Mangan, summarised the event as follows.

Almost 400 pastoral musicians, composers, liturgists and educators shared a transformational three days at the national music and liturgy conference held at the Hilton Adelaide from 1 – 3 October. The event offered a smorgasbord of experiences and formation opportunities featuring five keynotes, six mini-keynotes, over 50 diverse workshop presentations. As always, one of the key strengths of the gathering was the opportunity to meet and network with others from throughout Australia and beyond.

Keynote speakers Rita Ferrone, Fr Ricky Manalo and Fr Richard Leonard set the tone for the conference with their inspiring, insightful and sometimes challenging presentations. Backing them up were the speakers for our popular innovation of mini-keynotes. This enabled delegates to hear from local liturgy and music luminaries, Clare Schwantes, Fiona Dyball, Anthony Young, Gen Bryant, Ann-Marce O'Beirne and Elizabeth Young in 30-minute presentations.

Delegates worshiped together at the conference Mass in St Francis Xavier's Cathedral presided over by Adelaide Archbishop Pat O'Regan who chairs the Bishops Commission for Liturgy. Evening Prayer was celebrated and each conference day began with a variety of prayer experiences. A wide range of musical styles in the five liturgy and prayer celebrations across the three days drew enthusiastic participation from the attendees.

Sometimes I'm a 'grumpy gran', but mostly I'm a happy grey nomad. It is a wonderful life, wandering around our great country, marvelling at God's creation and meeting people along the way. I thank God that I am able to do it. Right now, I have my computer set up on a table on the grass at a caravan park in South Australia. I'm enjoying the feel of the sun and the breeze, and the sound of the magpies.



GRUMPY GRAN IN A VAN?

A grey nomad's view of travelling to Mass

by Mary-Anne Johnson

In my travels around Australia, I try to keep my Sunday Mass observance. On Sundays I seek out a local Catholic church for my spiritual food. I guess I see churches as filling stations for the soul, a bit like the service stations and cafes that provide energy for my van and my body.

After missing Masses some Sundays and having a variety of experiences in different parishes, I reckon I could be a consultant to parishes on what to do and what not to do when welcoming a stranger in your midst.

My oft-dishevelled appearance after I climb out of the van – frequently without the benefit of a shower or hot water, let alone an iron – must test the tolerance and Christian kindness of many country souls in their Catholic churches. But as Jesus says in Luke 6:31: *Treat others as you would like people to treat you.* The Israelites were also enjoined to care for not just for their neighbours, but also for strangers: *Love the stranger then, for you were once strangers in Egypt* (Deut 10:19).

I have a few ideas that might improve the welcome that strangers such as myself experience. We need ask ourselves how we are helping outsiders to participate fully in the Sunday Eucharist. Perhaps you are happy with your parish in this regard, but please try to look through the eye of an outsider who is visiting for the first time. I know I will be checking out my own parish when I return to see how we measure up!

First suggestion. Promote your services and Mass times widely. Do you have a web presence that is up to date and easy to search for? I have been caught turning up to the church at the wrong time even though I had checked online. Have you thought of adding Mass information to local tourist brochures, noticeboards or websites? Does the Visitor Information Centre have your details? You are providing a service to travellers, so it is most helpful to put information where we will see it.

Second suggestion.

Good signage is welcoming. Make sure visitors can find your church. Is there a pointer on the street corner? Is it easy to see where the entrance is? Are the toilets open and clearly signed? GPS and Google help find you, but they're not foolproof and usually do not go into the detail of where the facilities are. An old out-of-date sign is useless if Mass times have changed. I once

travelled 40 km to the church to find I had the time wrong. There was nothing to inform me of any neighbouring churches I could try instead. Putting this information on the noticeboard would be useful. If your diocese has an app or website to help people find Mass times, provide a QR code or web address on signs and newsletters.

Third suggestion. Greet people when they arrive. Make sure they have a newsletter and hymn book if relevant. I like to sing and it's frustrating if I have to hunt up a hymnbook once Mass has started. Do you have an information leaflet about your parish? Do visitors need to know any particular procedures for receiving holy communion? Providing information such as this eases any anxiety about how to act in an unfamiliar environment.

Fourth suggestion. How is your accessibility for elderly and people with disabilities? Do you have a clear sound system? Is text on overhead screens clear and large enough to see everywhere in the church? Of course, this will benefit regulars too, not just visitors.

And lastly... please invite us for a cuppa if you have one. We would love it! The hospitality of a cuppa and the opportunity to meet the locals can be a real gift to those who are travelling. Just remember to make it clear where the cuppa is. In one church I visited, morning tea was in a building away from the church, but I wasn't sure where it was. Grumpy gran roamed around the grounds until she found it; but once there, the happy grey nomad was treated to one of the best spreads ever!

To all those who have made a point of welcoming us, including us in the liturgy and making us feel at home, I say a sincere THANK YOU.

■ Mary-Anne Johnson is a parishioner at St John the Baptist church, Glenorchy, Tasmania.



Paul Turner,
*Be Renewed. A Guide to the
Sacrament of Reconciliation*

(Liturgical Press, 2023) 137 pages

by James Cronin

This book is a storehouse of fine information, not least because Paul Turner taps into the history of the rites of penance and the process of formulating the present rite which was undertaken after Vatican Council II. We discover the treasures of scholarship, research, and original thinking that went into the pre-planning of this ordo. So, for example, Chapter 7 contains nine forms of the examination of conscience intended for communal liturgy. They contain parts for the priest or reader, and prayerful responses by the assembly. These were the work of the original drafting group but ultimately were not adopted for the published ritual of 1975. It is good to see this rich material hidden for fifty years. Witness these gems:

- ♦ *Let parents seek pardon from children, for every imprudent order, undue soft-heartedness, meagreness of time reserved for them, and applying truly excessive severity. And let children seek pardon of their parents for disobedience, and for lack of love and gratitude* (p. 124).
- ♦ *It is inexcusable if anyone ... remains silent out of fear, shyness, or pride, when they ought to profess the truth* (p. 127).
- ♦ *O Lord, we bring the guilt of all the world before you. Often we do not want to be made conscious of this, but we confess to you today that we share the guilt for the misery of humanity. We have not used all the possibilities to hinder the guilt of others. We also bring this outside guilt before you. For it is not right that we stand apart from the guilt of others* (p. 132).

The chapters follow the sections of the ritual book – reconciling individual penitents, reconciling several penitents with individual confession and absolution, several penitents with general absolution, and penitential celebrations. The chapters offer many brilliant new insights by revisiting the work of the post-Vatican II revision groups. (Australian readers however should not be distracted by talk of a new translation for this applies only to the USA.)

Saint John Henry Newman famously said: ‘To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.’ This sacrament is about conversion and change. Turner quotes the draft of a conclusion considered by the working group on the rite which describes the change that should flow from the sacrament. *The penitent, rejoicing in having received the forgiveness of sins, continues his/her conversion by a life of penitence in which is expressed the need for continual conversion, so that the Christian life may more and more be awash in the love of God, because ‘love covers a multitude of sins’ 1 Pt 4:8* (p. 71). The ‘penance’ given by the priest is a sign of the on-going change. Turner wisely comments, *The penance is not a commensurate sentence. It is not a punishment equal to the crime* (p. 39).

After fifty years, we still have a lot to learn from the Rite of Penance. Turner notes: *At their first meeting, the revisers...recommended, as far as possible, that the penitent and priest begin with some words of prayer: a brief psalm, the Lord’s Prayer, or a few verses from a gospel, followed by a time of silence* (p. 28). How has this worked out in practice? Over a dozen options for this use of Scripture occur in the published rite, but *not many penitents and confessors seem aware of it or choose to use it* (p. 31). In practice, the priest can hardly manage to get out the words ‘*May God, who has enlightened every heart, help you to know your sins and to trust in his mercy*’ before the penitent rushes in with ‘*Bless me, father...*’ and pours out their list! Later in the encounter the priest can try to make amends by recalling words from the Gospel of the day or season.

The second rite is attractive because it places individual confession and absolution in the context of a communal liturgy of the word. The post-conciliar drafts voiced great expectations for it. The homily, for example, was meant to recall *the infinite mercy of God, which is greater than human iniquities; the necessary interior repentance by which people are sincerely disposed to repair the damages of sin; the social nature of grace and sin, in which all are one in executing good or ill as they act as members of one body; and the need of one’s own reparation, which derives power from the reparation of Christ, and which demands above all, besides works of repentance, the exercise of true charity towards God and neighbour* (p. 81). However, there are drawbacks. *What some people experience at a communal penance service is a communal waiting service* (p. 91). They get restless while others are confessing their sins.

Those revising the sacramental rites half a century ago imagined that the third rite with general confession and general absolution would see regular use. After publication of the *Rite of Penance* and some years of use, this form was restricted by the Holy See. Turner examines some scenarios in which its use might be possible.

Chapter 6 outlines several examples of Penitential Celebrations, services which zero in on conversion of life but which are not actually the sacrament of penance. Again this chapter contains some very interesting original material designed for young people. These penitential celebrations are something pastors and religious educators could profitably add to their repertoire, especially if they have access to the words and wisdom of this little book.

Paul Turner has provided thoughtful and fulsome commentary on the rites variously called confession, penance, and reconciliation. *Metanoia* (conversion of heart) is the central task of God’s grace in our lives. The vital experience of spiritual direction has to meld with the communal celebration of Penance so that the sacrament can thrive again. Reading this book has made me long for this to happen.



Volume 55 Number 4
SUMMER ♦ December 2025

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ISSN 2653-0090 (Online)

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