



. . . parables show the seams and edges of the myths we fashion.



Parables show the fault lines beneath the comfortable surfaces of the worlds we build for ourselves.

Parables are agents of change and sometimes disruption.

- Sunday preaching 17th Sunday Ordinary Time by Anne Koester -

Sunday greetings to the members of the Boonah Catholic community and beyond on the 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

1. **LITURGY BRISBANE** provides the Sunday Readings for home reflection. Click on the link below for today's texts.

The first link contains the Sunday readings with associated commentaries and prayers. It is suggested that families gather to read the Scriptures aloud together:

<https://litedliturgybrisbane.weebly.com/sunday-readings-at-home.html/>

The second resource is designed for families with young children. An extract from the Sunday gospel is provided, along with several reflection questions, a family activity and a worksheet for children:

<https://litedliturgybrisbane.weebly.com/family-prayer-week-by-week.html/>



2. **REFLECTIONS ON THE SUNDAY WORD.** We share two reflections on the Sunday scriptures our church selects for this Sunday.

The first Sunday preaching is offered by Anne Koester who is with Georgetown University, Washington, DC, where she has been an adjunct instructor with the Theology Department since 2003. She also oversees the RCIA process and is co-facilitator of the "Women Who Stayed" initiative at Holy Trinity Catholic Church in DC.

I had the joy of meeting and speaking with Anne in US Summer 2001 when I was studying liturgy at Notre Dame University, Indiana, USA. At that time, Anne was a staff member of the ND Center for Pastoral Liturgy.

A former trial lawyer, Anne studied theology, with a concentration in liturgy at St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota. She has worked at the Notre Dame Center for Pastoral Liturgy and the Georgetown Center for Liturgy. From 2004-2007, Anne served on the U.S. Catholic Bishops' Committee on Women in the Church and Society. She is a member of the North American Academy of Liturgy and its Christian Initiation Seminar group.



<https://www.catholicwomenpreach.org/preaching/07262020>

The second reflection on the readings for today is offered by Laurie Woods, an Aussie scripture scholar:

There is a wisdom motif running through today's readings. The first reading describes King Solomon's request for the wisdom to govern wisely and the gospel extract is from Matthew's chapter of parables, which contain wisdom for those who take the trouble to consider carefully the message of riddles and parables. Through the whole of his gospel Matthew presents Jesus as Wisdom incarnate. Everything Jesus says and does is Wisdom in action.

1 Kings 3:5. 7-12. The two books of Kings offer us a coherent but very selective history of Israel from the death of David (c. 970 B.C.) to the release of King Jehoiachin from prison in Babylon (c. 560 B.C.). The original work underwent editing, with additions and deletions, probably in the time of Hezekiah (c. 700) and again during the Babylonian exile (c. 550 B.C.).

While Solomon is set up in today's reading as a good man with noble aspirations, there is a hint in the verse before this passage that Solomon would fall from grace. His infidelity occurred when he sacrificed to false gods and allowed the worship of other deities in the land of Israel. Nevertheless, Solomon goes down in Israelite history as the patriarch of wisdom.

Psalms 118/119 The irony of this psalm following the reading about Solomon is that the psalmist declares uncompromising loyalty to the directions and expectations of God. The psalm is a poem of commitment to keeping the obligations and commandments that are expressions of a loving

relationship with God. It was his worship of other deities that led Solomon to stray from his commitment to God.

Romans 8:28-30. In these few verses from Romans 8 Paul is affirming that committed Christians who respond to the divine call to discipleship become images of Jesus Christ. When we live out the values and priorities of Jesus, we are in the process of growing to wholeness. Paul is saying that God works things out for good in the lives of committed disciples of the Son, not that they will be spared hardships and suffering, but that all will be well for them in the end.

Matthew 13:44-52. Today's gospel reading contains three familiar parables, which, like many of the parables of Jesus, have been domesticated and moderated by centuries of Christian interpretation. The parable of the pearl and the treasure in the field seem to be similar at first sight and yet they are designed to disturb us in different ways.

The treasure in the field is found by someone quite by accident but the finder recognises its value and goes all out and virtually bankrupts himself to buy the field. But he is not telling anyone why he would go to such lengths to buy a plot of ground. If, as Jesus says, the kingdom of heaven can be compared to this treasure, then what is it? What is it in our life and experience that will enable us to be part of the community of God? Is there a treasure that I am not recognising or a priority I have not set as a goal to strive for with all my energy – a treasure that will enhance my

relationship with God through becoming what I can be?

Many of us have been trained or brainwashed to think of the kingdom of heaven as 'heaven', an afterlife thing, when Jesus is pretty clear that it is a here-and-now thing. Our life in the community of God is not a coming attraction; it is screening now in full colour. So, do I have my priorities arranged so that I can be fully part of it? Am I waiting for something to happen or am I getting on with the business of my spiritual growth to wholeness?

What are we doing in our spiritual life that will give us life to the full?

The merchant in the next parable has set his sights on fine pearls. He is on a quest and is quite clear about his priorities and his goal. But the lights go on and the band plays when he hits the jackpot. His quest is ended, but instead of fine pearls he recognises his treasure in one single pearl and liquidates all he has to buy it.

Imagine a man in prison who is asked what is the treasure he would dedicate himself to own. Would we be surprised if he said 'freedom'? And we would understand that to get that treasure he would do his best to qualify for an early parole? His every thought and action would be dedicated to gaining the treasure. Jesus is asking us, 'What are you doing in your spiritual life, in the attitudes that govern your behaviour and your relationships, that will give you possession of life to the full in the community of God?'

Notice these are not primarily parables about church or giving all our possessions to the poor or about sacrifice. They are about priorities; they are about not being distracted from our pursuit of the treasure by material possessions; they are about steering clear of an environment that chokes us with poor values, self-centred priorities and a desire to please people of dubious character.

We could well ask what the two fortune finders will do with their treasure, and if we raise that question, we will have missed the point of each parable, which challenges us to define what is of supreme value in our life's journey. When we establish our treasure, we will not use it for other ends, we will unpretentiously live up to it.

A little by-the-way: what if we had a Rip van Winkle sleep for a few years and woke up to a church that was not crippled by left-brain thinking; where control was not a feature and privilege did not exist? What if women and men had equal roles in administration and ministry, and authentic synodality, marked by consultation and genuine listening, was a normal and well-tried *modus operandi*? What if transparency and accountability were management strategies in place of obfuscation, stage-management and inertia? What if there was a genuine and observable return to the values and spiritual dream of Jesus? And, almost out of left field, what if we woke up to a church that was fully committed to

protecting our environment in tune with the attitudes and principles put forward by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'*. Surely that would be a treasure hidden in a field. Surely that would be a realisation of the community of God in our world.

We need to approach parables with imagination

The parables of Jesus do not so much have meaning as they challenge us to make meaning that relates to our lives. When Jesus said, 'Those who have ears to hear with, let them hear,' he was daring us to take from the story what we can. Pious platitudes like, be humble, be thankful and generous, pray earnestly, practise love, are not the way forward. Remember, these are parables not allegories in which we have to work out how A stands for X, and B stands for Y. No! they deserve to be seriously and imaginatively pondered. Consider that the parables came from the imagination of Jesus, so, we need to read or hear them with imagination. Every parable contains a mixture of detail along with 'big picture' scope. The pennies will drop only for those who are open to the unpredictable moves of the Spirit.

Jesus concludes with a wisdom statement to the effect that true understanding leads us to appreciate value in new things and old. Blind progressives may not see the good that lies in the old, and may be convinced that only a clean sweep will bring about

worthwhile change. Hardened conservatives may not see that growth necessarily involves change. True wisdom can discern reality and appreciate authentic value where it exists. Choosing the best of new things and old with careful discernment makes for a balanced and harmonious outcome.

It is curious to see how the opponents of Pope Francis and his efforts to spark needed change in the church do not seem to fully understand that he is not advocating novelty or change for the sake of change. In fact, he is calling us all to old values that are straightforward and authentic, the values of Jesus no less. These are enduring values based on profound respect for relationships – our relationship with God, our fellow humans, a healthy relationship with self, and a great reverence for our natural environment. Getting back to origins means superannuating practices, trends and even theologies that have contributed to abuses and a culture of certainty and authoritarianism that are not in harmony with Jesus' challenging reversal of values.

Imagination is more important than knowledge. Albert Einstein

If there had been three wise women who went to Bethlehem, they would have asked for directions, arrived on time, helped deliver the baby, cleaned the stable, made a meal and brought along some practical gifts.

3. We pray with and for those who are sick in our parish and beyond: all across the globe infected with COVID-19; former pastor of Boonah parish Fr. Ellis Clifford, Chris Healy, Bill Castley, Paul White, Thyrlene Devin, Bridget Muller, Liliana Toohill, Libby Shields, Jonathon Hancock, Marko Babic, Dermot Peters, Max Gardiner, Nicole Wimmer, Bernice Lippiatt, Pat Toohill, Trish Merlehan, Suzy Collyer, Clare Conway and Pat Shannon.

Jesus had compassion on them . . .

4. For those of us unable to gather for Sunday eucharist today, you may wish to prayerfully watch live-recordings of communities celebrating eucharist especially in our Cathedral of St. Stephen, Brisbane. This link takes you to the live-streaming page:

<https://www.cathedralofststephen.org.au/mass-times.html>

Live-streamed daily eucharist continues at Lavender Bay, Sydney . . . prayerful and uplifting. Start time is 0730 Mon-Fri:

<https://www.northsydneycatholics.com/spirituality/liturgy/mass-on-demand>

5. *Boonah Parish happenings . . .*

We have now gathered on three consecutive weekends for Sunday Mass. I thank all who have gathered for their goodness and friendliness. It has been like a family reunion!

Fiona Hogeveen, Anne Artesi, Clare Brandon and David Judge have led us in many different ways. I acknowledge their leadership as well as their responsiveness to parishioners needing assistance to register/sign-in for Sunday eucharist.

We have over 85 parishioners who successfully navigate the booking system week by week.

If you are having technical issues with our booking system make contact with the parish early in the week. Several of our team are able to help you!

The booking system stays in place as we abide by the COVID Safe Industry Plan. The plan also applies to the maximum numbers at our two churches where we are currently celebrating eucharist – up to 50 people at both churches.

The church building must be cleaned according to specific rules before **and** after eucharist. I thank the cleaning teams who take this on. I ask parishioners to remember that the cleaning has to be done after eucharist ends so please be mindful of this necessary task.

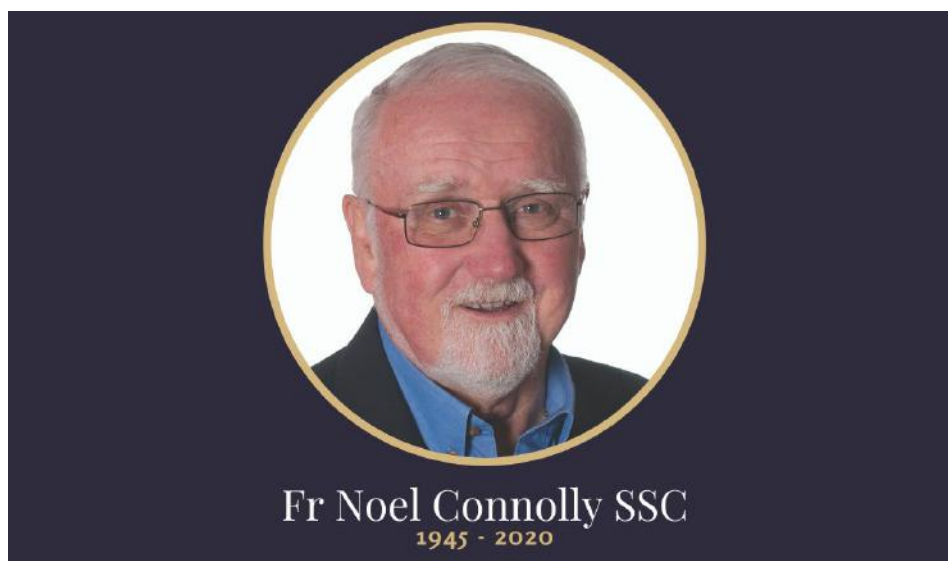
Last Sunday I was away on a week of R & R. On our behalf, I thank Fr. Joe Duffy for being with us last Sunday and for presiding at our three Sunday Masses. All things being equal, I hope that Fr. Joe may accept future invitations to be with us when needed.

We celebrated the rite of Marriage between Candice Lines and Tom Williams at Yooroomba Lavender Farm and Winery on Friday 24 July. It was a great celebration. They are Brisbane people who asked how they might go about celebrating Catholic marriage at this local venue. I was glad to be able to preside at their marriage. The chapel is in a spectacular location and the views are amazing – even in the rain!

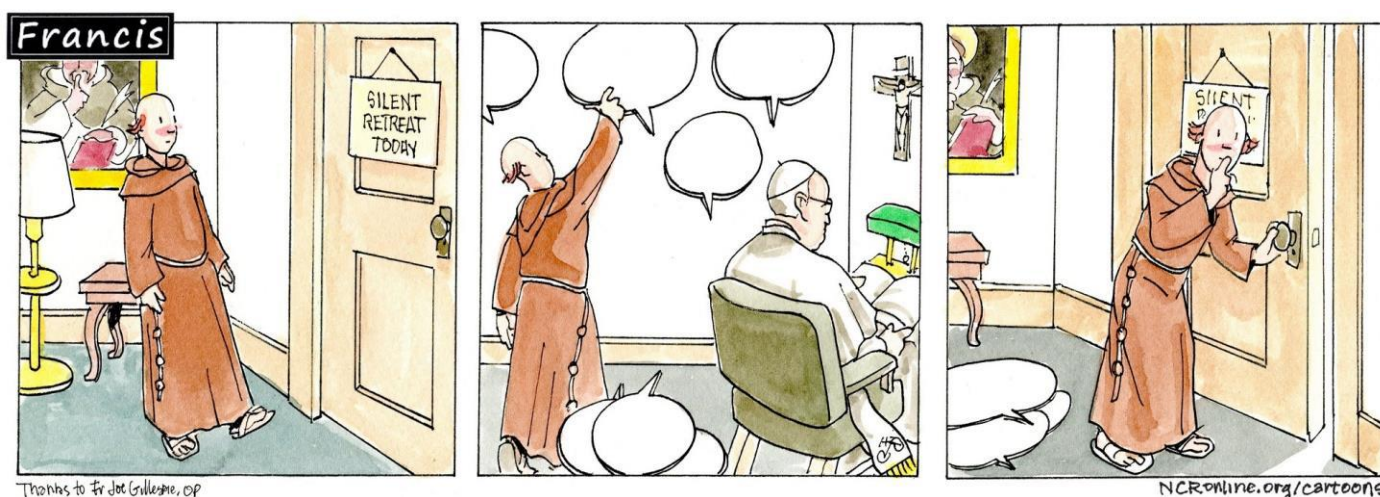
6. Australian Columban Fr Noel Connolly passed away peacefully on 6th June. When I ministered in Mackay for two years, I also served as Port Chaplain with Apostleship of the Sea. This was a very important work. I had the pleasure of being part of a national conference and Noel Connolly was part of the process. Noel was born in Gympie and so a Queenslander. A Columban website posted this tribute: *Noel loved the world and loved people. He believed in the bounty of the blessings received from investing in the truth and above all, he loved God, the trace of whose finger in the arena of human affairs he spent a lifetime discerning.*

You may enjoy the four-minute memorial for Noel and draw inspiration for your following of Christ:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUASqng4Kw8&feature=youtu.be>



7. FRANCIS, THE COMIC STRIP by Pat Marrin.



21st July 2020

8. **THE CATHOLIC LEADER** digital edition is still being delivered free to your inbox every Thursday morning while the pandemic is still raging. Sign up on <https://bit.ly/2ShdcSZ>. The editor and his team hopes this offer gives us all a sense of connection, inspiration and renewal in the faith, at a time when living the faith has changed.

9. Since we began our parish digital bulletin (before the Three Days of Easter), we have been providing access to the Sunday readings which have been made possible by our own Liturgy Brisbane (LB).

LB recently emailed all parishes:

"We have an added bonus for you this week – free access to the latest edition of *Liturgy News*!

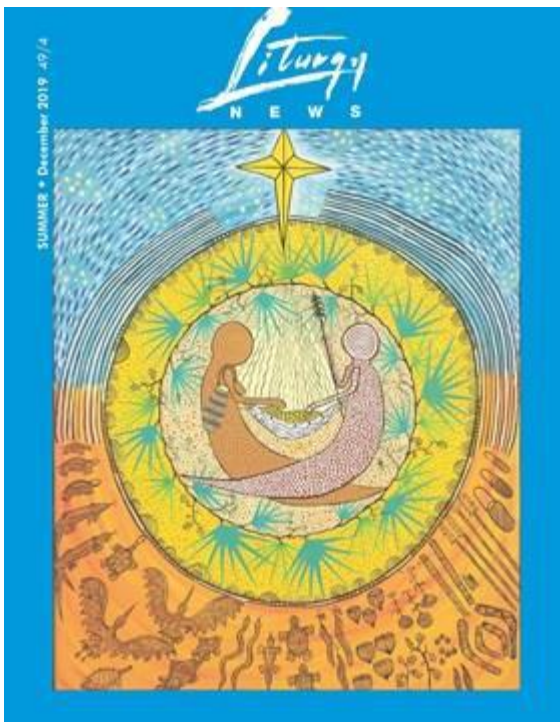
[Click here](#) to view the Winter 2020 issue of *Liturgy News*.

Liturgy News is a quarterly magazine from Liturgy Brisbane. Each issue features commentary and insight from Australia's leading liturgists and is written for parishes, schools, experts and novices. This sixteen-page journal, printed in colour, is sent to subscribers at the end of each quarter."

If you can't open above, click on this link:

<https://www.liturgybrisbane.net.au/liturgybrisbane/LiturgyNews/Liturgy-News-Winter-2020-A0px1ju7h8s/>

This is the fiftieth year of publication! ENJOY! You may like what you read. [Click here](#) to subscribe and receive future issues of *Liturgy News*. These are two favourite recent covers of LN:



11. One of our Friends of Boonah parish has highly recommended a podcast series by Archbishop Mark Coleridge. It is on St. Paul. Further information is given: *As we enter a change of era it is opportune to reflect on St Paul's role during a previous change of era and reflect on learnings that may help the church blaze a trail into new territory.* Thanks Archbishop ColerIDGE!

<https://brisbanecatholic.org.au/articles/podcast-series-on-st-paul-the-birth-of-the-church-why-the-loser-won/>

12. FRANCIS, THE COMIC STRIP by Pat Marrin.



23rd July 2020

13. John Lewis, the great civil rights hero who died on Friday, said last month near where Donald Trump and William Barr, the attorney general, had set federal police in riot gear and wielding tear gas on peaceful protesters, "Mr President, the American people ... have a right to protest. You cannot stop the people with all of the forces that you may have at your command."

The Guardian Australia 20 July



Forces of Nature by Emma Varga.

14. The Congregation for the Clergy has released a new document on parishes. I found this helpful article on the document. Perhaps our Parish Pastoral Council will look at these points at our August meeting.

Denver Newsroom, Jul 20, 2020. (CNA).- The Congregation for Clergy on Monday [published new guidelines for the world's parishes](#), which aim to encourage parishes to think of themselves as missionary communities of evangelization.

The guidelines do not publish new norms or policies for parish life, but they do encourage Catholics to think prayerfully about what their parishes are, and what they're for.

Here are a few themes and takeaways:

The parish is mission.

The guidelines offer parishes "a call to go out of themselves, offering instruments for reform, even structural, in a spirit of communion and collaboration, of encounter and closeness, of mercy and solicitude for the proclamation of the Gospel."

"Since its inception, the Parish is envisioned as a response to a precise pastoral need, namely that of bringing the Gospel to the People through the proclamation of the faith and the celebration of the Sacraments," the document says.

To meet its mission, "a renewed vitality is required that favours the rediscovery of the vocation of the baptised as a disciple of Jesus Christ and a missionary of the Gospel." Especially in parts of the world where many people do not know or practice the faith, the document encourages parishes to discern how to think of themselves as missionary communities, and how to focus on proclaiming the Gospel to all who will hear.

The Eucharist and the poor should be central to parish life.

"The celebration of the Eucharistic mystery is 'the source and summit of the whole Christian life' and accordingly, the essential moment for building up the Parish community," the guidelines instruct.

The Mass should be the centre of parish life, the document says, and the place from which the parish receives its mission. In the Mass, the parish "welcomes the living presence of the Crucified and Risen Lord, receiving the announcement of the entire mystery of salvation."

And, the document says, the poor should be invited to the heart of parish life.

"A 'sanctuary' open to all, the Parish, called to reach out to everyone, without exception, should remember that the poor and excluded must always have a privileged place in the heart of the Church," the document says.

"The Parish community evangelizes and is evangelized by the poor, discovering anew the call to preach the Word in all settings, whilst recalling the 'supreme law' of charity, by which we shall all be judged."

Territoriality matters, but can't be a limit.

Most parishes are defined by territory. With few exceptions, a parish is, properly speaking, the communion of the baptized within the limits of a certain territory, which is defined by the bishop. In the West, that concept has mostly been forgotten, Catholics tend to go to Mass at the parish where they feel most welcomed or fed, and despite encouragement from some bishops, many Sunday Massgoers don't know about parish boundaries.

The Congregation for Clergy's guidelines recognize that reality. "Increased mobility and the digital culture have expanded the confines of existence," the guidelines state, "people are less associated today with a definite and immutable geographical context, and "digital culture has inevitably altered the concept of space, together with people's language and behaviour, especially in younger generations."

But the document insists that territoriality matters. That "interpersonal relationships risk being dissolved into a virtual world without any commitment or responsibility towards one's neighbour."

The parish is not a self-selected or self-defined community, but a set of people with obligations to each other, and the guidelines warn against losing that sense.

Because the parish is intended to encourage in neighbours a sense of Christian responsibility for one another, the document is clear that parishes building plans for evangelization and missionary work must take into account "those who actually live within the territory. Every plan must be situated within the lived experience of a community and implanted in it without causing harm, with a necessary phase of prior consultation, and of progressive implementation and verification."

Still, the guidelines say, a parish's mission doesn't end at its territorial boundaries. In light of a changing world, "any pastoral action that is limited to the territory of the Parish is outdated."

In short, the guidelines urge Catholics to think of their parishes as a community, with obligations of neighbours to one another, who share a mission to proclaim the Gospel, together, beyond the limits of their own community.

Structures are for mission, but bureaucracy kills.

The guidelines emphasize that while the parish needs policies, programs, and structures to fulfil its mission, it must “avoid the risk of falling into an excessive and bureaucratic organisation of events and an offering of services that do not express the dynamic of evangelization.”

To overcome a tendency towards bureaucratization and formalization of the Church’s sacramental and catechetical life “conversion of structures, which the Church must undertake, requires a significant change in mentality and an interior renewal, especially among those entrusted with the responsibility of pastoral leadership.”

The guidelines also urge dioceses to consider developing new structures and roles that can coordinate activity between parishes, especially those in close geographic proximity to each other.

Responsibility for the parish mission belongs to everyone, but each has a role to play.

The document emphasizes the co-responsibility of clergy, religious, and laity for the mission of the parish in the world. But the document also emphasizes that each person work for the Kingdom in the role to which he is called by baptism and vocation.

The guidelines emphasize that the parish pastor is entrusted with the full “care of souls” in the parish, a role unique to priests.

The document acknowledges a canonical provision that allows lay people to be entrusted with pastoral care in a parish because of a shortage of priests, but emphasizes that such a situation should be rare, and “a temporary and not a permanent measure,” that can only be used when there is a true lack of priests.

“We are dealing here with an extraordinary form of entrusting pastoral care, due to the impossibility of appointing a Parish Priest or a Parish Administrator, which is not to be confused with the ordinary active cooperation of the lay faithful in assuming their responsibilities.”

“Furthermore, it would be preferable to appoint one or more deacons over consecrated men and women or laypersons for directing this kind of pastoral care,” the guidelines suggest.

The document takes care to urge against the “clericalization of the laity” so frequently warned about

by Pope Francis, in which laity are urged to take up roles more typically occupied by priests.

At the same, the document says that laity are called to give their lives to the mission of the Gospel and the work of the Church.



Laity are called “to make a generous commitment to the service of the mission of evangelisation, first of all through the general witness of their daily lives, lived in conformity with the Gospel, in whatever environment they are in and at every level of responsibility; in a particular way, they are called to place themselves at the service of the Parish community.”

The guidelines also encourage a vision of deacons as ministers of service, rather than as assistants to parish priests, and of religious men and women as contributors to the evangelizing mission of a parish through the witness of their religious consecration.

“Outgoing dynamism.”

The guidelines conclude with a call for “outgoing dynamism” that directs parishes toward an evangelizing mission, the task of the entire People of God, that walks through history as the “family of God” and that, in the synergy of its diverse members, labours for the growth of the entire ecclesial body.

It urges that “the Parish might rediscover itself as a fundamental place of evangelical proclamation, of the celebration of the Eucharist, a place of fraternity and charity, from which Christian witness can shine for the world.”

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/vatican-issues-new-guidelines-for-catholic-parishes-5-things-you-need-to-know-70410>

John

pastor, Boonah Catholic community