



*Liturgy*  
NEWS

# GOD'S BUILDING

VOLUME 52/3 SPRING/SEPTEMBER 2022

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## THE COMMON CUP

In June 2022, the Anglican Archbishop of Perth wrote to parishes. This is what she said: *Recently I wrote of my intention to allow for the reinstatement of the Common Cup sometime this month. Given the rise in COVID cases over the past months, I had thought to revise this. However, after consultation, wide discussion and in the light of high vaccination rates and the State relaxing of COVID regulations I have decided to stay with the intention of allowing the Common Cup to be offered at Holy Communion from 16 June... This is not permission for intinction. Permission for the use of the individual communion cups will also end from that date. Most dioceses around the country have now returned to communion in both kinds. No doubt there will be people who do not yet feel able to share the Common Cup, and will choose to continue receiving in one kind. I know there will be much celebration and relief as we return to the communion practice which speaks so eloquently of our common life in Christ.*

Archbishop Kay Goldsworthy AO

I suspect it will come as a shock to Australian Catholic communities that most Anglican dioceses in the country have already made provision for a return to drinking from the common cup for communion. In the United Kingdom, USA and Canada, Anglican/Episcopal Churches have done the same, some as long ago as mid-2021.

Anglican Churches are setting an example for our Catholic practice. They make a strong argument that communion under one kind only is not fully consistent with the command of the Lord: *Take this bread and eat... Take this cup and drink...* That is why, in celebrating Eucharist over the last couple of years, some Anglican dioceses have granted the concession of using individual cups for communicants or allowing intinction of the host in the consecrated wine, though in general these practices have been strenuously avoided.

However, now that churches are open again and face masks are no longer mandatory, they have wasted no time in restoring the common cup as an integral part of receiving holy communion, even though it remains optional for parishes and individual communicants.

The familiar hygiene requirements are reintroduced (rotating the chalice, wiping the rim inside and out with a clean cloth) along with a few new rules (ministers should sanitise their hands and may wear a mask). Bishops across the USA noted that restoring the common cup in time for Easter would be welcomed with great joy by many, though they did acknowledge that some people understandably would be cautious. Many bishops noted that the main route of transmission of COVID is respiratory rather than gastrointestinal and so considered it safe to reintroduce the common cup. A study from Ottawa stated that the risk of catching COVID is far greater from breathing air exhaled by an infectious person next to you than from sharing a common cup.

*I have long felt, wrote the Anglican bishop of New York, that the passing of the communion cup from person to person is one of the most powerful symbols we have in the Christian Church of our mutual vulnerability, depth of community, and open self-offering one to another.*

So far, I have seen no action anywhere on the part of Catholic Churches. Why are we so timid? Are we not convinced of the power of our sacramental signs? When and who will make the first move?

## MUCH OBLIGED

Instead, many Catholic dioceses in Australia and around the world have been announcing that the Sunday Mass obligation is being reinstated after being suspended during COVID lockdowns. Scotland restored the obligation from the beginning of Lent 2022 and England and Wales reintroduced it from Pentecost 2022. The bishops acknowledge, of course, that those who are impeded by reason of age or ill health are still excused. They further note that the desire to participate in Mass and share holy communion are hallmarks of the Catholic faith. *The Eucharist makes the Church, and the Church makes the Eucharist*, they affirm. The bishops recognise that live-streaming Masses and 'virtual viewing' had pastoral benefits during lockdown (and may continue to be fruitful for the

housebound), but this is inadequate as a form of participation. In the USA and in Canada over the last twelve months, many dioceses have reimposed the obligation, saying that a return to in-person gatherings on Sundays is necessary for continued spiritual nourishment and growth.

Why have we had recourse first to Canon Law and the imposition of 'obligation' rather than address a return to the full sacramental sign of the Eucharist by restoring the common cup?

In Australia, statements reimposing the Sunday obligation were made in Hobart and Sydney towards the end of 2020, in Parramatta at the end of 2021 and in Perth in August 2022. Archbishop Anthony Fisher commented that *we want people to come to Mass out of love more than obedience, but love itself brings responsibilities.*

Perth's archbishop, Timothy Costelloe, withdrew the dispensation from the obligation in the context of a long pastoral letter on the mystery of the Eucharist in the life of the Church (see <https://perthcatholic.org.au>). In this beautiful document, he points out that Christ, our faith, the Church and the sacraments are gifts from God and we are called to receive these gifts with reverence, with gratitude and with enthusiasm and... to cherish... respect and preserve them. He uses the opportunity to initiate a process of renewal in liturgical practice in the archdiocese. He addresses some practical issues (such as his intention to regulate the use of the old Latin Mass for the sake of unity) but he was not bold enough to mention communion from the cup at all.

As life gets back to normal and people return to offices and shops, theatres and stadiums, it is time for them to come back to church as well. The question is how to encourage and support them. It is not clear to me that 'obligation' by itself will work. As Archbishop Costelloe has demonstrated, our focus should be on spiritual renewal and creating opportunities to encounter Christ anew. I would argue that this must include attention to the sacramental signs of breaking the bread and sharing the common cup.



# I HAVE ARDENTLY LONGED...

by Tom Elich

**T**hus says the Lord:  
*I have ardently  
longed to eat this  
Passover with you  
before I suffer (Lk 22:15).*  
This phrase gives Pope Francis the title for his recent letter on the liturgy (*Desiderio Desideravi*) and provides a way into understanding his core message.



Here we have a very different liturgical document from those we have seen over the last several decades which focussed on the rules for a correct liturgy and the elimination of so-called 'liturgical abuses'. Pope Francis moves from disciplinary themes to theological and pastoral insights.

Christ and his desire to be one with us is front and centre. Astonished, we can imagine the words of Christ, the new Adam, as he gazes at the Church: 'Here at last is bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh' (DD 14). Through our baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit, we have become one flesh with Christ. Consequently, *the subject acting in the liturgy is always and only Christ-Church, the mystical Body of Christ* (DD 15).

*The content of the Bread broken is the cross of Jesus* (DD 7). The Last Supper is the ritual anticipation of his death; so our memorial at the table of the Eucharist is a participation in the paschal mystery. We see with the disciples on the way to Emmaus that the breaking of the bread heals the blindness inflicted by the horror of the cross and renders us capable of 'seeing' the risen Lord. This is 'the powerful beauty of the liturgy' – it guarantees for us the possibility of a true encounter with Christ alive (DD 10). This is not just a mental exercise or a search for a 'ritual aesthetic' (DD 22); it is a visceral sacramental reality.

Yes, there is indeed an amazing sense of mystery in the liturgy. Not a reality obscured by clouds of incense or mysterious ritual, but *marvelling at the fact that the salvific plan of God has been revealed in the paschal deed of Jesus and that the power of this paschal deed continues to reach us in the celebration of the 'mysteries', of the sacraments* (DD 25). Wonder, Pope Francis affirms, is an essential part of the liturgical act. In this apostolic letter, he manages to open up a fresh way of appreciating what we do when we celebrate the liturgy.

He is explicitly following up on his restriction of the old Latin rite (*Traditionis custodes*, 2021), but he does so by displaying the beauty, the truth, the saving mystery enshrined in the Church's reformed liturgy. It is a wondrous and attractive reality which draws the whole Church into unity, a unity centred on Christ who desires to eat the Passover with us. The pope moves beyond the empty polemics and tensions over liturgical practice to something more profound, rich and real.

Formation is required for the people of God. This does not mean programs and guidelines; it means discovering how to respond to Christ's desire to be with us. We need sacramental eyes to see what God is doing in our liturgical celebration.

*Wonder is an essential part of the liturgical act because it is the way that those who know they are engaged in the particularity of symbolic gestures look at things. It is the marvelling of those who experience the power of symbol, which does not consist in referring to some abstract concept but rather in containing and expressing in its very concreteness what it signifies. Therefore, the fundamental question is this: how do we recover the capacity to live completely the liturgical action? This was the objective of the Council's reform. The challenge is extremely demanding because modern people – not in all cultures to the same degree – have lost the capacity to engage with symbolic action, which is an essential trait of the liturgical act* (DD 26-27).

A sacramental vision is incarnational. It requires a confidence about creation. We become capable of apprehending symbols when we know that bread, wine, water, oil, ashes, fire, light, colours, bodies, words, sounds, silences, gestures, movement, space, time, all manifest the love of God shown in its fullness in the Cross of Jesus (DD 42). In a sacramental Church, symbol is substance.

Of course, the liturgical rites and prayers need to be followed carefully (DD 23). But this is neither an end in itself nor does it imply a rigorist rubricism (which Pope Francis has often rejected). Belonging to the Church should lead us beyond the externals to 'full, conscious, active participation'. This is a way of approaching the paschal mystery from within the ecclesial communion. *It is the community of Pentecost that is able to break the Bread in the certain knowledge that the Lord is alive, risen from the dead, present with his word, with his gestures, with the offering of his Body and his Blood* (DD 33).

In reflecting on how the liturgy should be celebrated, Pope Francis speaks of the attitudes and behaviours of all the baptised (not just those of the ordained minister). Silence in the liturgy, for example, *is not an inner haven in which to hide oneself in some sort of intimate isolation, as if leaving the ritual form behind as a distraction* (DD 52). It is something much more grand: it is a communal space for the presence and action of the Holy Spirit.

Speaking specifically of the leadership of the priest, the pope takes a strong middle path. He says that the priest's way of presiding shapes the community's liturgical life, sometimes negatively. He lists a range of inadequate presiding 'styles': *rigid austerity or an exasperating creativity, a spiritualising mysticism or a practical functionalism, a rushed briskness or an overemphasised slowness, a sloppy carelessness or an excessive finickiness, a superabundant friendliness or priestly impassibility* (DD 54). *For this service to be well done – indeed, with art! – it is of fundamental importance that the priest have a keen awareness of being, through God's mercy, a particular presence of the risen Lord* (DD 57).

Presiding well is a work of humble service of the beauty and truth of the paschal mystery. It does not require a 'directory', but an encounter with Christ and an engagement with his action in the liturgy.

This Apostolic Letter is excellent. Read it. Pope Francis concludes with spirited recommendations: *Let us abandon our polemics, to listen together to what the Spirit is saying to the Church. Let us safeguard our communion. Let us continue to be astonished at the beauty of the liturgy. The paschal mystery has been given to us. Let us allow ourselves to be embraced by the desire that the Lord continues to have to eat his Passover with us* (DD 65).

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# THE BALANCING ACT OF CATHEDRAL MUSIC

## *Safeguarding Heritage - Promoting Participation*

by Clare Schwantes, Chris Trikilis and  
Anthony Young

**A**N ONGOING CHALLENGE for any cathedral music director is to balance the responsibility of safeguarding and promoting the musical heritage of the Church while simultaneously preserving the right of the assembly to participate in the parts of the Mass that belong to them. In other words, the obligation of sharing the Church's rich musical treasury is held in tension with the need to select a common repertoire that the congregation can sing.

Parish music teams have a shared responsibility in balancing this tension. While music ministers in a local parish may choose a wide range of music to suit their assembly and promote its sung prayer, there is a danger in developing an entirely idiosyncratic repertoire. If no consideration is given to the overall musical needs of the Church, choosing repertoire to celebrate in the cathedral becomes impossible, because people gather there from across the whole diocese. A balance is struck when parishes take responsibility for knowing a common Mass setting and including enough common repertoire for some hymnody to be widely familiar at large diocesan celebrations. This was, in fact, the vision of *Catholic Worship Book II*.

### *Variety of Offerings at Cathedrals*

Often the liturgy of a Catholic cathedral is assessed on the basis of single large solemn events such as the Chrism Mass, or the Solemnity of Mary Mackillop, or its live-streamed liturgies. Yet it is important to remember that these do not represent the full liturgical practice in a cathedral. Many cathedrals offer a wide range of musical styles and modes of participation in any given week. For



example, the Cathedral of St Stephen in Brisbane offers 27 Masses each week, with music included at all Masses on weekends, feast days and special events. Each weekend, there are two solemn Masses with choirs. These tend to have a higher profile and enjoy large live attendances, while at Sunday evening Mass, worshippers would experience music that was more contemplative.

A range of worship styles may be encouraged at parish level, but it does not follow that any of them should be mandated for a cathedral which is a focal point for the whole diocese. It is important that cathedral administrators make provision, in resources and staffing, to ensure that the music ministries at all Sunday Masses provide examples of best practice in a range of approved music, particularly congregational music, while acknowledging local custom. Including different musical styles provides scope for the faithful to attend the Mass that best empowers them to participate. A profound sense of responsibility is clearly felt by directors of music who ask themselves at the final Mass of the weekend, *Has there been something for everyone?*

### **Managing Transience**

A significant consideration for cathedral music is the issue of transience in the congregation. At any given Mass, there are a large number of visitors, with only a small percentage of the assembly made up of regular attendees. To optimise the chances that the congregation will be able to sing the Mass setting, the plain chant is often chosen. This simple setting is provided in the missal and should be known by all. This position is supported by the Australian *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM 41) and many other English-speaking countries, for example Canada (169), and the United States STTL (72-76). The cathedral is the 'people's church', that is, the church belonging to the Catholics of the diocese at large. As the seat of the bishop, the cathedral represents the diocese; for Anzac Day services and the like, it becomes the state church; but it is also an inner-city church and a local parish. Each of these has its own priorities and unique feel. Again, it is a shared responsibility amongst parishes and cathedrals to maintain a core repertoire so that those Catholics who worship at these events can participate. As well, some musical hospitality should be extended to those of other denominations.

An additional challenge is to accommodate the increasing number of Catholics who have migrated to Australia from diverse cultural and liturgical backgrounds. Australian congregations are no longer predominantly Anglo/Irish. The need to accommodate such a diversity of people may result in less innovation and creativity as cathedral music directors aim for repertoire familiar to the widest cross-section of the community. This explains the selective use of Latin, for example, at St Patrick's Cathedral in Parramatta: it is designed to serve the

multicultural nature of the congregation. Diverse groups who have English as a second language will often have a shared familiarity with the sung Latin parts of the Mass. Indeed, this musical strategy is recommended in the United States (STTL 62).

### **Local Tradition and Corporate Memory**

In some cathedrals around the world, pastoral adjustments have been made to respect local traditions, preserve the sacred treasury of church music, and provide an avenue for the cathedral musicians to use their exceptional gifts to support the prayer, praise and congregational song of the community. Many would be familiar with the glorious tradition of organ improvisation at Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris.

A particularly memorable example was Olivier Latry's improvisation on the French national anthem, *La Marseillaise*, during the preparation of the gifts at Sunday Mass in November 2015 in the immediate aftermath of the Paris terrorist attacks. This extraordinary musical moment accompanied the assembly's profound prayers of sorrow and united them in hope. The French organ voluntaries are balanced by common hymnody and congregational support from the choir and often a cantor and *animateur* who lead the congregational singing. Washington's National Cathedral has maintained its local and loved tradition of singing a recessional hymn. The worship booklets note that, while the recessional hymn is not a required element of the liturgy, the assembly is invited to join in and sing the final hymn together. An organ voluntary then follows the hymn.

### **Guardians of Musical Heritage**

Cathedral directors of music are responsible for preserving the musical heritage of the Catholic Church and bringing it to life for an ever-transient congregation. Many pivotal pieces of church music were composed by the most influential and gifted musicians the world has ever known – Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Palestrina, Schubert, Gounod, Beethoven – and so the list goes on. Indeed, these greatest of composers wrote a considerable corpus of work not for the concert stage but for the Mass, with the



specific aim that the *intimate connection between words and rites be apparent in the liturgy* (SC 35).

The treasury of cathedral art and architecture expresses the beauty of the liturgy in an enduring and always visible manner. The treasury of sacred music, however, lies dormant as print on paper; it relies on church musicians to bring it to life and to keep the tradition alive for future generations. The Vatican Council II Constitution on the Liturgy gave unambiguous pride of place to Gregorian chant as being especially suited to the Roman liturgy; it also acknowledged that other kinds of music – particularly polyphony – were by no means excluded (SC 116). Pope Pius XII, who contributed to the building of momentum for the liturgical reform, said in his 1955 encyclical *Musicae Sacrae: Everyone certainly knows that many polyphonic compositions, especially those that date from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, have an artistic purity and richness of melody which render them completely worthy of accompanying and beautifying the Church's sacred rites*. How can provisions like this be reconciled with Vatican Council II's clear emphasis on the assembly's full, conscious, active participation (SC 14)?

### **Active Participation of the Assembly**

This call for active participation of the assembly long predates the Council. In 1903, Pope Pius X commended the active participation of the people in the public and solemn prayer of the Church in *Tra le sollecitudini*. In his encyclical on the sacred liturgy, *Mediator Dei* (1947), Pope Pius XII praised congregational singing of liturgical chant as a means to *foster and promote the people's piety and intimate union with Christ* (MD 106).

Sometimes the Vatican II position on full, conscious, active participation has been interpreted to mean that the assembly must sing whenever possible, and that music which is not sung by the assembly should be excluded from the liturgy. This, however, is not the position of the post-conciliar documents. Indeed, the GIRM clearly identifies parts of the Mass that may be sung by the choir alone, or by a choir/cantor with the people. To appreciate the true spirit and respect the integrity of the conciliar and post-conciliar documents, it is necessary to read them in their entirety and not to quote them selectively. A balanced approach is one which fosters the participation of the people while also safeguarding the treasury of church music. *The treasure of sacred music is to be preserved and fostered with great care. Choirs must be diligently promoted, especially in cathedral churches; but bishops and other pastors of souls must be at pains to ensure that, whenever the sacred action is to be celebrated with song, the whole body of the faithful may be able to contribute that active participation which is rightly theirs* (SC 114).

Some have proposed that there are two forms of active participation: external (singing, responding,

gesturing) and internal (experiencing, engaging, being transformed). Active participation cannot be equated simply with 'doing something' because the community also participates fully and consciously during moments of corporate silence, in being open to God's grace in the liturgical prayers spoken by the priest, or when listening attentively to the proclamation of Scripture. In his *ad limina* address in 1998, Pope John Paul II reminded US bishops that *active participation does not preclude the active passivity of silence, stillness and listening; indeed, it demands it. Worshippers are not passive, for instance, when listening to the readings or the homily, or following the prayers of the celebrant and the chants and music of the liturgy. These are experiences of silence and stillness, but they are in their own way profoundly active*.

Many people would be able to recall memorable experiences of a choral or orchestral performance when they were profoundly moved and deeply engaged, despite not themselves singing aloud or playing an instrument. This internal participation is especially possible in the cathedral context where high calibre musicians minister to the community by providing high quality music. Of course, there must nonetheless be ample opportunity in each Mass for the assembly to lift their voices in unified song. Theologian Karl Barth notes well that congregational singing is not optional but rather essential in the ministry of the Church. *The Christian Church sings. It is not a choral society. Its singing is not a concert. But from inner, material necessity it sings. Singing is the highest form of human expression.... The praise of God which finds its concrete culmination in the singing of the community is one of the indispensable forms of the ministry of the Church* (Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV:3, ch 16, 72:4).

### **Hierarchy of Parts of Mass Rightfully Belonging to the People**

The US bishops' 2007 document, *Sing to the Lord: Music in Catholic Worship*, supplements the conciliar documents. It acknowledges that while singing by the gathered assembly and ministers is imperative at all liturgical celebrations, it is not necessary for the people to sing everything.

The National Centre for Liturgy in Dublin in 2015, published *Singing the Faith: A Guide to Liturgical Music (STF)* which established three categories of varying importance to help identify the sung parts of the Mass that rightfully belong to the people.

- ◆ The parts of primary importance are the sung dialogues between the people and the ministers (e.g. at the Preface), Gospel Acclamation, Sanctus, Acclamation after the Institution Narrative, Great Amen.
- ◆ The second category includes those texts which were written to be sung, namely the Gloria and the Responsorial Psalm.





◆ The third category embraces those parts of the Mass that are desirable to sing, but which are not essential, namely, the Entrance Chant, Kyrie, Response to the Prayer of the Faithful, Song at the Preparation of the Gifts, Agnus Dei, Communion Chant, and, if there is not a period of silence after Holy Communion, a Song of Thanksgiving.

While such guidelines are clear, they are not rigidly applied for all times and places. In practice, a number of factors will determine the musical style of pieces to be sung. Each piece of music should correspond to the spirit of the liturgical action, should promote the participation of all the faithful, and should consider the culture of the people and the abilities of each liturgical assembly. For example, the Irish document notes that *the importance of congregational singing in the acclamations need not exclude some choral elements within the setting. On some occasions, a more elaborate setting of the Sanctus, drawn from the historical repertoire may be suitable; the setting should not however be so long that the relationship between this particular acclamation and the prayer as a whole is no longer perceptible* (STF 14).

Of course, music in any liturgy, whether it is celebrated in a cathedral or in a parish church, should not fill every space. It is imperative that significant periods of silence be intentionally planned within the course of the liturgy. Striking a balance between sound and silence is fundamental in any liturgical celebration.

### *Continuing the Tradition*

Quality church music is important in leading people to an encounter with Christ and needs to be reinvigorated. This highlights the need for a 'succession plan' to train church musicians. Courses should equip them not only with technical instrumental skills, but also with a deep understanding of their role as liturgical ministers, in order that the musical treasury can be carried forward confidently in the hearts, minds and mouths of the gathered assembly. Currently in Australia there is a troubling lack of tertiary degrees in sacred music. There is an urgent need to establish a centre of excellence in this important field.

Of course, there would be limited value in training people for jobs that do not exist. Consequently, it is a matter of serious importance that Australian parishes prioritise the employment of competent musicians in order to promote the sung prayer and participation of the people. Relying on the generosity of willing parishioners to lead congregational worship is not a sustainable model, nor does it recognise the integral importance of this specialised ministry in promoting the art of liturgical celebration for the People of God.

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- Chris Trikili is Director of Music at the Cathedral of St Stephen, Brisbane.
- Anthony Young is a choral conductor, church musician and a member of the National Liturgical Music Council.

# CHILDREN, FAMILIES + LITURGY

by Ann-Maree Nicholls SGS

Today, Catholic schools continue to serve, support and lead the educational mission of the Church. They are conscious that the parish school is for many families their main connection with the Church.

Life in our school communities is based on Catholic values and beliefs about learners and learning. We should not underestimate the Catholic ethos which sets us apart as we strive to develop the whole child in all aspects of their spiritual, academic, social, and emotional development. The school's role in educating children incorporates the religious teaching into the whole curriculum framework. Not least among the school's activities is the way the Catholic charism is recognised and celebrated through ritual and liturgy in a school setting. It is here especially that connections are opened between parish and school.

Parents often enrol their children in a Catholic school wanting for them a similar experience to the one they had growing up. During the initial enrolment interview, they will speak highly of the learning and teaching, the values and morals, they knew within their own parish primary school education. Involvement in the parish is the counterpart of this experience, though this can sometimes be overlooked.

## ***Building Bridges***

Cooperative parish efforts at bridge-building between church and school are simple but effective. A solid and joyous Liturgy of the Word for Children at Sunday Mass shows families that the presence of small children is valued and supported. If this liturgy is well done, children will be asking their parents if they can come... and if the children come, the parents will bring them! The cuppa after Mass had to disappear during the time of Covid restrictions but is now well worth reintroducing. Cake and biscuits, coffee and cordial, are easy enough to organise, but are surprisingly attractive to young people. Something nice to eat after Mass followed by play on the church lawn may be more appealing for children

than an insightful homily; meanwhile their parents are spiritually enriched and they build solid friendships with other parishioners.

In my experience, liturgies in school are life-giving, creative and child-centred moments that engage parents in large numbers. The school can have a big influence in reconnecting parents to their faith through the experience of their child's liturgical and educational journey. When school liturgy is held in the parish church, members of the parish can also be included.

Important days in the SCHOOL CALENDAR can be the occasion for a whole parish celebration that unites church and school, allowing the community to acknowledge and celebrate the place of the school in parish life. Events such as beginning or ending the school year or Catholic Education Week may be celebrated at a regular Sunday Mass. Each Year Level from the school can take a leadership role at a weekday or Sunday Mass during the year. Significant days within the LITURGICAL CYCLE are also opportunities for an invitation to parents to support their children's faith and develop their own faith journey. These could include Ash Wednesday, Easter, ANZAC Day, and the feast day of the school or parish patron saint. Finally, there will be possibilities for communal liturgy to celebrate significant milestones or anniversaries and significant FAMILY EVENTS such as Mother's Day, Father's Day or Grandparent's Day. Parents might even become involved in the regular daily liturgy in the classroom. Many parishes fruitfully schedule a Family Mass each school term.

Children are very capable. From a young age, they can demonstrate leadership in setting up a liturgical space. They can lead prayer for their classmates and other members of the school community with confidence. We must never underestimate the willingness of children to be involved, to be imaginative and to engage others in prayerful liturgical moments. These leadership qualities can be harnessed by the parish. Older children can work with adult leaders, for example, in celebrating the Children's Liturgy of the Word with the little ones on Sundays. Students could be involved in the parish liturgy as music leaders, altar servers, assistant sacristans or ministers of the word.

## ***Celebrating Sacraments***

Faith is first learned and handed on in the family and then it is supported formally by the school. Faith is shared and the sacraments are celebrated by the Christian community of the Church. Sacraments provide unique moments of collaboration between family, school and church.

Preparation for the sacraments (the 'program') is a question that is often raised and discussed within the school enrolment process. Children being enrolled in a Catholic school are usually already baptised.



Most parishes have some kind of baptismal preparation program that tries to establish a new connection to the Church for the families, and to reinforce parents' commitment to bring up their children in the faith community. It would be good if parishes established some follow-up strategies to maintain contact after the baptism of infants.

This would link families more naturally with the parish sacramental program which takes parents on a journey of working with their children during the early years of their schooling. Each parish does this rather differently but, at the end of the day, the focus is on the family (and extended families). The initiative for sacramental preparation should be taken by the parish since it is in the parish liturgy that the sacraments are celebrated. Completing what was begun in Baptism, Confirmation and first Communion are sacraments of initiation into the Church. The school is drawn into the process, supporting it, and providing the underlying catechesis for the sacramental preparation.

There is always great joy and hope evidenced within the sacramental liturgy as the parish community (church and school) acknowledges and blesses each child. Social expectations can help families to engage more fully. No child likes to miss this opportunity or to stand apart from the conversations that take place in the classroom and in the playground. Conversations around what the sacrament means, what Mass I'm booked into, what I'm going to wear, and what will happen in the liturgy, are all consistent topics leading up to Confirmation or Communion. For parents, it is yet another invitation to be with their children, to support them in their faith journey, and to take part in the celebration united with and in the presence of the whole parish community.

### ***Children in the Church***

Children are the greatest gift to parents. They influence their parents' networking and behaviour very considerably. Certainly, this is true of the children's cultural and sporting activities. Naturally enough, the engagement of parents in a school setting varies according to the range of commitments each family has, but overall parents are very willing to be part of the educational journey of their children. This is inclusive of the spiritual, religious and liturgical dimensions of their life in a Catholic school, whether it be participating in liturgy in the classroom, a Mass or other liturgy in the parish church, or liturgical events held within the wider Church community.

Children may therefore hold an important key to liturgical renewal in parishes because, through them and their school life, family faith can be reactivated. Liturgical events, given priority through the school and parish calendar, have great potential. An invitation to parents and grandparents which comes through the child is often given a high priority.

Parents and families want to engage and spend time with their children; they want to connect with the families of their children's friends. Thus, relationships are developed, community is nourished and valued, and the parish liturgy may be revitalised in the context of wider school, parish, and community settings. The relationships formed in primary school are often life-long. So, we need to continue to explore ways to keep the door open and to nourish the faith life of all who seek a Catholic education for their children.

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### ***"My Children Led Me to the Church" Julie Gibbons***

There are many reasons that people become Catholic in adulthood... but for me, it was my children that led me to the Church.

Having enrolled my eldest child in a Catholic primary school, I attended my first Mass in 2015. Instantly, I was inspired. I loved the rituals and symbols of the Mass, even though I didn't know what any of them meant! So I began to read... [Together] we read about the parts of Mass, the important places in the church, and the liturgical seasons and colours.

I began to include religious elements into our Easter and Christmas celebrations, small things at first, like reading the Easter story at bedtime during Holy Week, and including a nativity scene in our Christmas decorations.

The following year, we made the decision to have our three children baptised in our parish. We started to attend Mass outside of our school-supported sessions, participating in Palm Sunday and Ash Wednesday services... On reflection, it seemed that God was steering me on the path to Catholicism all along!

Again, my children gave me the final push towards RCIA. My middle child was to be confirmed and so we had the opportunity to prepare for our sacraments together...

[During the catechumenate] I found that it was okay still to have questions. While my RCIA journey may be complete, my faith journey is just beginning. And that is exciting!

*To read Julie's full testimony, see Christian Initiation Australia Network, Network News, Winter 2022.*

# Sundays and Commemorations

by Elizabeth Harrington

## COMMEMORATIONS

Special commemorations, designated by either the Holy See or the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, are regularly scheduled for celebration on Sundays. Some recent examples include Social Justice Sunday (28 August), Child Protection Sunday (11 September), and World Refugee and Migration Day (25 September). In between we have day of cultural importance: Father's Day on Sunday 4 September.

Further, the United Nations designates many specific days and weeks with particular themes to promote the objectives of the organization: International Day of Non-Violence (2 October) or National Tree Day (first Sunday in August), for example. But it is a very long list and parishes will need to be very selective (see <https://www.un.org/en/observances/international-days-and-weeks>).

In addition, some parishes like to pray for their neighbours of other faiths at times when they are celebrating important festivals. Faith Communities Councils provide calendars of the important dates (see the Victorian calendar at <https://www.faithvictoria.org.au/calendar> and the Queensland calendar at <https://qfcc.org.au/blog/festivals-across-the-faiths-2022/>).

These commemorations are often referred to as Special Sundays, a name which stands in marked contrast to their liturgical designation as Sundays in Ordinary Time (that is, Sundays are counted by ordinal numbers). These Sunday are 'special' not in the sense that they are more important, but in the sense that they propose a specific intention for our prayers.

## SUNDAY

The Church's norms on the liturgical year and calendar begins: *Each week on the day called the Lord's Day the Church commemorates the Lord's resurrection.* This is reiterated in the first paragraph of *Dies Domini*, the 1998 apostolic letter of John Paul II: *Sunday recalls the day of Christ's resurrection. It is Easter which returns week by week, celebrating Christ's victory over sin and death, the fulfilment in him of the first creation and the dawn of the 'new creation'.*

For this reason, every Sunday is indeed 'special' but I fear that in many ways we are straying from these principles regarding Sunday as set out in *Dies Domini*:

- ◆ The Lord's Day is the day *par excellence* when men and women raise their song to God and become the voice of all creation (*Dies* 15).
- ◆ The Sunday Eucharist expresses with greater emphasis its inherent ecclesial dimension and is the paradigm for other eucharistic celebrations (*Dies* 34).
- ◆ Among the many activities of a parish, none is as vital or as community-forming as the Sunday celebrations of the Lord's Day and his Eucharist (*Dies* 35).
- ◆ The truth that the whole community shares in Christ's sacrifice is especially evident in the Sunday gathering, which makes it possible to bring to the altar the week that has passed, with all its human burdens (*Dies* 43).

Many of the themes or intentions that have been allocated to a particular Sunday in the year may well be 'worthy causes'. However, the Church assembles for Eucharist on Sunday to celebrate something much more profound and fundamental – the paschal mystery: the incarnation, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ. Certainly, our Sunday worship cannot be divorced from daily life and the realities of the world. So special days or causes like those named above should find a place in our prayers, but they do not determine the character of the celebration as official feasts and seasons do. Mother's Day or Mission Sunday or Refugee Week, for example, are not on the same level as liturgical feasts such as Pentecost or Christ the King when it comes to their place in the public worship of the Church.

When I was growing up, Sunday was different from every other day of the week. Most people did not work, shops and cinemas were all closed, no sporting events were held. Church was really the only thing that happened, apart from the family roast lunch! However times have changed and it is now much more difficult for Christians to keep Sunday as the Lord's Day. I was startled recently to hear a friend say that she no longer goes to Mass on Sunday as it is too busy, too hard to get a park, and anyway her family sometimes comes to visit. So she goes to a weekday Mass instead. But, I wanted to say, surely Sunday matters because it is Resurrection Day, the day the whole Church gathers to be the Body of Christ! Maybe it is a sign of our consumer society that we want things when and how they suit us to fit in with our lifestyle.

## WHAT SHOULD A PARISH DO?

1. *The first challenge is to know what commemoration to keep.*

A parish liturgy preparation team should first ask which of all these special causes are official Church celebrations. There are twenty Special



Commemorations that have been determined by the Holy See and the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference; they are listed in the back of the official *Ordo*. They can be checked and marked on a calendar and will be the most important for the parish liturgy. The other lists can be perused for days which might have special relevance to the local community.

## 2. The second challenge is to access suitable resources.

Obviously agencies which designate a particular Sunday as their 'special day' see it as a good way to promote their cause. Sometimes this means that parishes are bombarded with brochures, envelopes or collection boxes to put out on pews, posters to display, prepared homilies to deliver, and so forth. At other times, especially when there is no church agency to take ownership of the day, no information or liturgy resources are received by parishes at all. There must be a helpful middle course.

For example, this year, both Bible Sunday and the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly were scheduled for 24 July, the first coming from the ACBC, the second from the Holy See. A week prior, nothing had been sent to parishes about either. An internet search on Bible Sunday only brings up a new Holy See commemoration, Word of God Sunday, held in February each year. The ACBC decided to keep both but offer nothing to explain the purpose of Bible Sunday or to explain how it differs from Word of God Sunday. The Vatican website has a message from Pope Francis for World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly and there is a bit of information on the website of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life but not much else.

This makes it hard for parish liturgy committees who try to do the right thing and raise awareness among parishioners about these issues. In addition, there is the issue of unhelpful resources. Liturgy planners need to be wary when searching the internet for material to incorporate in the liturgy on a designated special day. In my experience, many suggested Prayer of the Faithful petitions are found to be quite unsuitable. Some are far too long (like mini lessons); some are prayers addressed to God instead of an invitation to prayer addressed to the assembly (imperative verbs and the use of 'you' are giveaways!).

## 3. The third challenge is to know how to make good choices.

A particular intention or appeal must never overshadow the character of the Sunday Mass or the Church's liturgical calendar with its cycles of seasons and feasts, prayers and readings. This is a disservice to both the liturgy and the community.

There are many ways in which a special intention can be recognised. It may be mentioned during the Introductory Rites or connected to the homily on the readings; it may be the subject of one or two petitions in the Prayer of the Faithful; there may be an appropriate hymn which links to the commemoration; but to use all of these for a single issue on a particular Sunday would almost certainly be overload. Information about special causes included in bulletin notices, handouts and displays might help free the liturgical celebration itself from the burden of communication.

It is important for the liturgy preparation team to keep the big picture in mind. Take for example,

National Tree Day, established in 1996 for the beginning of August. It has grown into the biggest community tree-planting and nature protection event in Australia (the aim this year was to plant one million new trees). In light of the *Laudato si'* call to care for our common home, it is a very worthy cause. But remember that 1 September is the Holy See World Day of Prayer for Creation which begins a six-week focus on creation. Similarly, there is National Reconciliation Week at the beginning of June with

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday soon to follow early in July.

A general rule is that restraint is best. Certainly most of the United Nations commemorations might suggest a topic for a petition in the Prayer of the Faithful but no more. For days when no liturgy resources have been prepared by a church agency (older persons, creation, Christian unity, etc), help with appropriate prayers and blessings may be found in the *Masses for Various Needs and Occasions* section of the Missal or in the *Book of Blessings*.

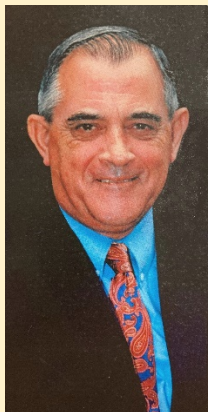
## CONCLUSION

The liturgy cannot carry the whole weight of responsibility for promoting the important issues that special commemorations highlight. Sunday Mass participants cannot be seen as a 'captive audience' for getting a message out! There are other ways of raising awareness about issues such as care for creation or social justice, including using the parish website or setting up groups in the parish to focus on them. While many of these themes or commemorations may well be 'worthy causes', the Church assembles for Eucharist on Sunday to celebrate something much more profound and fundamental, namely the paschal mystery: the incarnation, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ the Lord.

■ Elizabeth Harrington, member of the *Liturgy News* editorial board, was for many years Liturgy Brisbane education officer.



## IN MEMORIAM



**PETER GAGEN** (21 September 1936 – 20 August 2022) was a pioneer. As a Christian Brother in the 1960s, he helped forge new approaches to teaching religion in schools. Returning to Brisbane as a layman in the mid-1970s, he became director of Adult Faith Education. He established the tradition

of Lenten discussion programs for parish groups, notably on Penance, ministry, Eucharist, and evangelisation. Among the first in Australia, he helped establish the *Rite for the Christian Initiation of Adults* in the archdiocese, running endless formation workshops for parishes and producing printed resources. Over twenty years ago, he wrote a booklet entitled *Growing Older Gracefully*, and then demonstrated how it was done.

**HPV (PAUL) RENNER** died on 3 September 2022 at the age of 95. Himself the son of a pastor, he was ordained in the Lutheran Church in 1948. He spent a considerable part of his ministry in Queensland where he became

District President for seven years until his retirement in 1992. He was a significant figure in ecumenical relations and was good friends with Catholic Archbishop Francis Rush and Anglican Archbishop John Grindrod. His ministry always had a particular liturgical focus through his involvement in Lutheran hymnody and the Commission on Worship. He published extensively on liturgy (notably on ritual and pastoral care), helped edit the Australian Hymn Book *Together in Song* and was enthusiastically involved in the Australian Consultation on Liturgy and the Australian Academy of Liturgy.



**REMBERT WEAKLAND** (1927-2022) was a Benedictine monk (abbot primate of the Benedictine Confederation for a decade) who then became Archbishop of Milwaukee for 25 years until his retirement in 2002. He earned a doctorate in music and was a bold promoter of the liturgical reform as well as social justice. At the turn of the century, he undertook a major renovation of his 150-year old cathedral under the guidance of celebrated liturgical consultant Richard Vosko (*above*). His retirement however was overshadowed by the revelation that he had once had a long-term relationship with a man to whom he had made an out-of-court financial settlement to avoid a public lawsuit.

## PLENARY COUNCIL

The decrees which form part of the Acts of the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia held in July 2022 are available on the website <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au>. The Australian bishops will review them at their November meeting this year and consider priorities for implementation before sending them to the Holy See for its *recognitio*. It seems implementation will not begin until 2023 or 2024. Participants generally commented that Council assembly was a time of grace and hope, led by the Holy Spirit.

Liturgical elements are scattered throughout the eight decrees.

- ◆ There is a recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander symbols and rituals which, in a Catholic liturgical context, can enrich our celebrations.
- ◆ There is a request that appropriate rituals and liturgical resources be prepared for the day we call 'Safeguarding Sunday'.
- ◆ There is acknowledgement that we are called to be missionary disciples by our baptism.

- ◆ There is a commitment to implement the diaconate for women if the universal law of the Church be modified to authorise it.
- ◆ There is mention of liturgical elements in the decree on formation and leadership.
- ◆ There is support for synodality and communal decision taking even though liturgy committees are not explicitly mentioned.
- ◆ There is affirmation of God's Creation as our common home, an idea often expressed in our Eucharistic Prayers.

The most frequent references to liturgy however occur in the fifth decree: *Communion in Grace: Sacrament to the World*. It begins with the idea of the Church as a sacrament, a multicultural community which embraces a variety of liturgical and spiritual experiences (including those of the Eastern Rite Catholic Churches). It promotes the full use of the instituted ministries of Lector and Acolyte and calls for the renewal of preaching. Liturgical worship has a pre-eminent role in Church life and its renewal is urged if people are to be nourished at the table of the Lord's word and sacrament. The Council discusses the role of the sacraments of initiation, both for the young and for adults. To support the Eucharist as summit and source, the Australian bishops have requested the 2028 International Eucharistic Congress take place in Australia. The Plenary suggests formation for the sacrament of Penance, including consideration of the communal third form of the rite, and called for a renewed catechesis on marriage. Finally the Council advocates a new translation of the Roman Missal that is both faithful to the original text and sensitive to the call for language that communicates clearly and includes all.

## LITURGY CONSULTORS



Fifteen scholars, mostly teachers of liturgy, have been appointed consultors for the Dicastero for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. They include a woman, Mary Healy, who is a lecturer at the seminary in Detroit and Fr Paul Turner from the cathedral at Kansas City (USA) who is well known to English speakers through his many books.



## JUBILEE 2025



The Holy See has released the official logo for the Jubilee Year, chosen from almost 300 entries from around the world. The people of God, *Pilgrims of Hope*, take up the cross to follow Christ; he is our anchor in the stormy seas of life. The four figures speak of the four corners of the globe and they embrace in mutual solidarity. The colours of the rainbow represent God's steadfast promise to protect us (Gen 9:14), and presumably also symbolise inclusivity in the Church.

In preparation for the Jubilee Year, 2023 will focus on the four Constitutions of Vatican II – the documents on the Church, Divine Revelation, the Liturgy, and the Church in the Modern World. A series of user-friendly resources is being prepared to open up these foundational documents for a new generation of Catholics. Then 2024 will be a year of prayer and spiritual preparation. The Jubilee Year itself is a time of pilgrimage, prayer, repentance and acts of mercy. Jubilee means rest, forgiveness and renewal.

## OLD LATIN MASS RECEDES?

In 2021, Pope Francis wrote to the bishops of the world to affirm that the liturgy reformed by Vatican Council II is the unique expression of worship in the Roman Rite. He urged them to proceed in such a way as to return to this unitary form of celebration. Quietly, slowly but surely, many bishops have been implementing this policy. In July 2022, for example, Cardinal Wilton Gregory of Washington DC named just three churches for the celebration of the old Latin rite. *The intent of these requirements, he said, is to foster and make manifest the unity of this local Church, and provide all*



1926  
2022

## QUEEN ELIZABETH II *Woman of Faith*

*The teachings of Christ have served as my inner light,  
as has the sense of purpose we can find  
in coming together to worship.*

Christmas Message 2020

## OUR COVER

*Catholics in the archdiocese an opportunity to demonstrate acceptance of the teaching of Vatican II and its liturgical books.*

In the UK, however, a member of the Latin Mass Society has boasted that, in the last year, the number of old Latin Masses has increased. He comments that *it is reasonable to conclude that, at least in England and Wales, Traditionis Custodes has failed in its objectives.* Rather it is reasonable to conclude that the leaders of these communities are ignoring the pope and are continuing to promote what is contrary to the unity of the Church. What efforts are they making to reorient their communities to the mainstream Church and its normative worship?

*The Vatican II Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium 6) has a series of evocative images for the baptised People of God which we are illustrating on the 2022 Liturgy News covers. This time, we invite you to reflect on the Church as God's building, made up of living stones set on the foundation of the apostles with Christ as the cornerstone.*

“Often the Church has also been called the building of God (1 Cor 3:9). The Lord compared himself to the stone which the builders rejected, but which was made into the cornerstone (Mt 21:42). On this foundation, the Church is built by the apostles, and from it the Church receives durability and consolidation. As living stones we here on earth are built into it.

*He is the living stone, rejected by people but chosen by God and precious to him. Set yourselves close to him so that you too... may be living stones making a spiritual house (1 Pet 2:4-5).*



## CELEBRATING LITURGY at GOOMPI (Dunwich, Qld)

by Bernice Fischer

*Yura* (greetings)! My name is Bernice Fischer (nee Borey) and I am a First Nations parishioner of Star of the Sea parish, Cleveland, S.E. Queensland, located on *Quandamooka* country, an area which covers parts of the mainland south of the Brisbane River to the Logan River and adjacent islands in Moreton Bay.

The parish has two churches on *Minjerribah* (north Stradbroke Island): St Paul of the Cross at *Goompi* (Dunwich) and St Peter Chanel at *Mulumba* (Point Lookout). Services are held at *Goompi* and, during the Easter and Christmas holidays, at *Mulumba*.

With the coming of the Passionists in 1843, *Goompi* became the first Mission to the Aboriginal people in Australia. To this day we, the *Quandamooka* people, still have a connection with the Passionist Order in Brisbane. We have now become sister parishes with the Passionist Community at the Fort at Oxley.

In September this year, it will be five years since our parishioners on *Minjerribah* began Sunday Liturgy of the Word services with Holy Communion. With the retirement of the parish priest at that time, the parish could only provide Mass on the island on the first and third Sundays of the month.

I recall speaking to my mother, Aunty Rose Borey, and asking her what we could do on the other Sundays. She replies that, in past years when we had no priest, we celebrated the Liturgy of the Word. I asked how we would go about it and she said there were some old liturgy leaflets in the sacristy to use as a guide.

So, following in the footsteps of my Great Aunty Bethel Murray and mother, I took on the role of starting up the Service of the Word with the support of all parishioners and of course the parish priest. I found the leaflets and created a new version.

So back in 2017 we started having lay-led liturgy at both churches. I also created leaders' guides for both churches. Now, with the implementation of the Archdiocesan Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) and depending who leads the liturgy, we commence with a Welcome to Country by a *Quandamooka*

traditional custodian or an Acknowledgement of Country by a non-traditional custodian. I am on the parish RAP committee which also keeps me in the loop with parish happenings.



AICC banner was painted by Victor West in 1986 when the Stradbroke Island Aboriginal & Islander Catholic Council went to Alice Springs for Pope John Paul II's visit. A Passionist priest travelling with the Pope saw the banner and was surprised to see their logo. He was to learn that, 143 years after the first Passionist mission on *Minjerribah*, the connection to the Passionists was still remembered and celebrated.

Parishioners took on ministries as readers, giving communion, cleaners, altar preparation, music. One looks after the music, provides hymn leaflets and does a gospel reflection followed by a *Did you know?* segment. I always ask if someone else wants to lead the Liturgy of the Word. If we are short of our regular readers, I don't hesitate to ask any of our visitors to help out. I enjoy our liturgy as I feel it brings us all closer together in sharing the word of God.

I live on the mainland but I travel home to *Minjerribah* on the ferry every weekend to visit our 93 year old Mum and go with her to church. I will





The plate is used at St Paul of the Cross, *Goompi* (Dunwich). It was painted by Kathryn Jauncey (Mum's great niece) and is used for celebrating First Nations calendar events. The design draws on both Kathryn's Catholic upbringing and her indigenous identity. The spiritual core of the human being is shown in the middle of the design, surrounded by three circles representing both the Trinity (Catholic) and also sea, earth and air (Indigenous). Picking up the importance of water to *Minjerribah*, the wavy lines represent the interconnectedness of things both spiritual and environmental. The horizon shows a meeting of land and air, with the spiritual being firmly 'rooted' in the land. Nature supports our spiritual being.

collect the parish newsletters and Prayer of the Faithful from the parish office. I have become the parish 'go-between' person relaying messages both ways to and from the parish priest and the parish office.

### Our Experience of Liturgy

Naturally, it is important to acknowledge First Nations people on National Apology Day (13 February), National Reconciliation Week (27 May to 3 June), Sorry Day (26 May), NAIDOC (first full week of July) and also to remember the Uluru Statement from the Heart. On Sorry Day we make mention of the native hibiscus which has been nominated by the National Stolen Generations Alliance as the official symbol for Sorry Day. According to the Kimberley Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation, the native hibiscus was adopted because it is found widely across Australia and it is a survivor. It would be good to have more opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to discuss ways in which their culture can be expressed within the liturgy in our archdiocese.

A few little anecdotes. On a couple of occasions during winter, we have been known to hold our Liturgy of the Word outside, so that we can all feel the warmth of the sun. We sit in a circle like a yarning circle where everyone has the feeling that we are together. In much First Nations art, circles depict meetings.

In talking with my mum, she recalled doing liturgy with Aunty Joan Hendriks some years back. Once

former Australian international cricketer, Matthew Hayden who lives on the island, came to the liturgy. After it was over, he came and gave them both a kiss - it made their day!

During one liturgy service, the crows were calling out really loudly. It was so noticeable that I even mentioned it to our parishioners. Little did we know that we were in for a visit from one of our *Quandamooka* clan totems: *Kabool* (Carpet Snake). He came right in through the front door. Well, that ended the liturgical service! Luckily, Wildlife Rescue sent someone to help (he turned out to be our cousin Lloydie) who collected him and took him out to the bush.

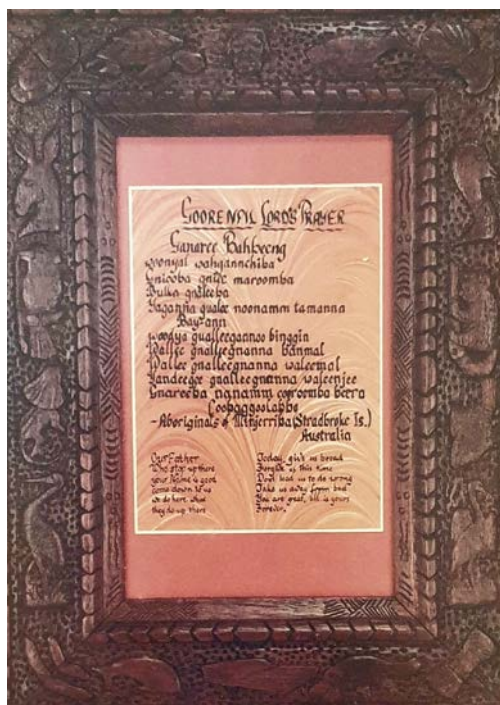
Each Mass and Liturgy of the Word is followed by a cuppa. It is during this time that parishioners and visitors interact. We like to learn where people are from and we get to know them. We bond together in a way that is very beautiful.

If ever you are visiting *Minjerribah*, come and join us either for our Mass at 11am on the first and third Sunday or for our Liturgy of the Word every other Sunday at 9am.

*Yuwayi* and God Bless!

■ Bernice Fischer describes her experience of celebrating liturgy from an Aboriginal perspective.

*Celebrate* artwork was painted by Dunwich State School First Nations students from the 2008 Sacramental Class.



The *Goorenpi* Lord's Prayer was presented by my mother Aunty Rosie Borey to Pope John Paul II on his visit to Alice Springs 1986. The frame was carved by Uncle Reg Knox.

Gordon Jeanes & Bridget Nichols (eds),  
*Lively Oracles of God:  
Perspectives on the Bible and  
Liturgy* (Collegeville, Liturgical Press,  
2022) 262 + xvii pages.

by James Cronin

This volume of essays challenged me in several areas. The first shock came in the contribution of Thomas O'Loughlin, prominent British liturgist, who points out the haphazard way the Christian Bible came into being. *The confused nature of our reception of the Jewish Scriptures ... combined with the messiness of what survived from the writings of first- and second-century Christians as the 'New Testament', mean that the collection of texts now held in unique reverence is also 'as much the product of fallible human minds as of the divine initiative' and the work of the Spirit in guiding the churches* (p. 47). If that is the case, why cannot we add some non-biblical texts into our celebration? Many today want a pop song at their wedding or a poem at a funeral. Are such lyrics any less worthy than St Paul's Ode to Love (1 Cor 13) or any more softly erotic than the hiding dove the Song of Songs (2:14)? The way out of this conundrum is found in acknowledging that there is a rule of faith that governs our use of the Bible itself. Editor Gordon Jeanes puts it like this: *The worshipping practice of the Church cannot be said to provide data or rules about specifics. It is more basic than that. Aiden Kavanagh rightly says that the 'law of belief' shapes the 'law of worship', but the latter constitutes or founds the former* (p. 259).

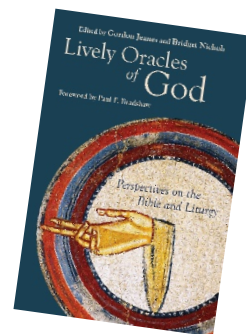
The second shock came through hard-hitting chapters on exclusion – exclusion on grounds including physical handicap, race, and gender. Australian Stephen Burns reports: *At the moment, outside denominationally endorsed resources,*

*much bolder models are also emerging in relation to the blessing of different kinds of queer unions, including those of a polyamorous nature, where declarations of consent, exchange of symbols, and so on are 'repeated as needed'* (p. 246). Now, many of the contributors to this volume are Anglican but, given the depth of scholarship exhibited, I had to ask myself if all mainline denominations would one day rue our lack of attention to such needs and agendas! In the chapter on all who feel marginalized, Léon van Ommen stated: *The examples of people who feel excluded by the worshipping community abound, and often certain characteristics overlap; for example, someone may be black and gay, or disabled and a woman. Why is it that people who are often pushed to the margins by society do not find the Church a more welcoming place, despite the fact that Churches sing that 'All Are Welcome'?* (p. 170-1).

A friend who is a disability pensioner with myriad handicaps often wants to chat to me in a loud voice before Mass begins, and the only place out of the weather is in the main body of the church. I suspect that some may resent this intrusion into their quiet time with the Lord. Let us admit that we have a long way to go in aligning our priorities with those of Jesus whose *life-giving death – a re-imagining of reality – was preceded by his ministry in which he habitually went to those at the margins and restored their dignity, whilst sidelining the religious centre of his day. Jesus redescribed the perception of what centre and margin is according to God's order* (p. 179).

The issues I have raised thus far have to do with the 'world in front of the text', that is, our cultural and current problems as opposed to the cultures and preoccupations presupposed by the biblical authors. Not that the latter are unimportant. It makes a difference, for example, to know that Matthew was writing for a Jewish audience, whilst Luke was more concerned to make the Gospel relevant for Gentiles; and many things fall into place when one knows that Mark's Gospel, with its stark description of the events of Calvary, was aimed at consoling persecuted Christians threatened with a similar fate. But Scripture, proclaimed in the liturgy and broken open by the preacher, needs to speak to the gathered assembly. *Preachers who do not regularly work to incorporate concern with the coronavirus as well as*

*concern for racial justice and healing into their sermons are being irresponsible. I would add, writes John Baldovin, that issues like care for the planet, gender equality, and social justice in general ought regularly to be themes for preaching. To give these matters attention is not to betray the Bible but on the contrary to do...exactly what the Bible itself does: interpret how God is speaking today* (p. 31).



I move on to some other matters that raised my interest.

*Decorated gospel books were being created for liturgical use, perhaps as early as the fourth century*, notes Bridget Nichols (p. 153). Besides the inadequate and antiquated translations we are saddled with in the Catholic Church, we mostly do not have worthy lectionaries or gospel books either. Yet it is negligent not to acknowledge the reality that *tangible materials like Bibles and lectionaries or gospel books have an effect on the gathered assembly* (p. 23).

In our parish we have not had the Liturgy of the Word with Children during the Sunday Mass for several years. Our one talented leader has left the parish, but Ann Loades open new possibilities. *The responsibility for worship is a matter to be shared by all those involved, of whatever age... Not everyone needs to know everything – how could they? But there is much that can be shared and much that can be learned from children themselves* (p. 207). *On enquiry, it may be found that members of a 'geriatric assembly' also need to be honoured, and indeed may welcome some involvement with children in liturgy...* (p. 222).

This volume includes excellent material on many other themes: lament (where the psalms come into their own), funeral rites, the liturgical seasons, biblical (il)literacy, and much else.

Reading this book will both enrich and unbalance you. Give it a go!





Volume 52 Number 3  
SPRING ♦ September 2022

Imprimatur: ✠ Mark Coleridge DD DSS  
*Archbishop of Brisbane*

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ISSN 2653-0090 (Online)

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