



# Liturgy

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## POPE FRANCIS

Jorge Mario Bergoglio  
1936-2025

*Easter spurs us to action, to run like Mary Magdalene and the disciples. It invites us to have eyes that can 'see beyond', to perceive Jesus, the one who lives, as the God who reveals himself and makes himself present even today, who speaks to us, goes before us, surprises us. Like Mary Magdalene, every day we can experience losing the Lord, but every day we can also run to look for him again, with the certainty that he will allow himself to be found and will fill us with the light of his resurrection.*

*Brothers and sisters, this is the greatest hope of our life: we can live this poor, fragile and wounded existence clinging to Christ, because he has conquered death, he conquers our darkness and he will conquer the shadows of the world, to make us live with him in joy, forever. This is the goal towards which we press on, as the Apostle Paul said, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead. Like Mary Magdalene, Peter and John, we hasten to meet Christ.*

Easter Sunday 2025 was Pope Francis' last day on earth. These words are from his Easter homily (read for him by one of the cardinals). They offer us an extraordinary last testimony to his prophetic twelve years as Bishop of Rome. He appeared on the balcony at midday, someone read his *Urbi et Orbi* peace message for him and, with great effort, he himself pronounced his final blessing. Then he moved through the crowds gathered in St Peter's Square for one last time.

Right from the beginning, Francis astounded the Church by his own simplicity of life and by shifting the focus to the peripheries. Just a fortnight after his election, he celebrated the Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper, not in the splendour of St Peter's, but at a prison, washing the feet of prisoners – men and women, Christian, Muslim and atheist. On his last Holy Thursday, three days before his death, he once again spent time meeting with prisoners. Throughout his ministry, he recognised that, while no one is perfect, all are embraced by God's mercy. Whatever a person's situation, our task is not to judge or lay down the rules but to accompany them. Eucharistic communion, for him, was not a reward



for the perfect but medicine for the sick. I see the Church, he said, as a field hospital after battle.

Much of Pope Francis' leadership was not directly concerned with liturgy. He attempted to reform Church structures at the Vatican, he advocated care for the earth as our common home, acted in favour of refugees and the homeless. In recent years, he developed the idea of synodality. This picks up his criticism of rigid clericalism and promotes instead a genuine discernment and collaboration among all the baptised, clerical and lay. Over the twelve years of his pontificate, there were many liturgical elements – adding saints to the Roman calendar who express new models of sanctity, expanding instituted ministries to include women and adding the ministry of catechist, establishing Sunday of the Word of God, trying to keep official liturgies simple, and so forth.

Francis' first major intervention in the field of liturgy came with his apostolic letter *Magnum Principium* (2017). Here he affirmed the 'great principle' of Vatican II that the liturgy should be comprehensible to people, notably by the use of the vernacular. This task was originally given to local bishops conferences and now Francis returned it to them. It was a significant move to decentralise control away from the Roman Curia. He effectively negated both the literalist translation principles and the approvals process enshrined in *Liturgiam Authenticam* (2001). The new liturgical priority was to facilitate an encounter with the living Christ which happens best in the context of one's own culture. *Magnum Principium* was followed in 2019 by the Synod of Bishops on the Amazon which put the new approach into practice. Despite criticism that he was embracing pagan worship, Francis gave strong support to Indigenous spirituality and liturgical inculturation, he embraced diversity and popular piety, and he opened the way for the development of an Amazonian Rite.



Pope Francis created a storm of outrage on the part of some with his document *Traditionis Custodes* (2021). This restricted the use of the traditional Latin Mass. The background story is important here. When the reformed Mass was introduced after Vatican II, the previous Missal was abrogated but pastoral allowances were made for older priests who might have trouble with it. These concessions were formally established and then broadened by Pope John Paul II. Soon Latin Mass groups began to see this liturgy as something to be promoted and it came to enshrine a conservative stance on a range of Catholic issues. Pope Benedict XVI, keen to bring about unity in the Church and especially to reconcile the schismatic Society of Pius X (*Lefebvrists*), established the traditional Latin Mass as an 'extraordinary form' of the Roman Rite and removed any restrictions on its use. In actual fact, this move only empowered these groups to greater and more militant opposition to the reforms of Vatican Council II. Pope Francis commented: *The opportunity offered... was exploited to widen the gaps, reinforce divergences, and encourage disagreements that injure the Church, block her path, and expose her to the perils of division.* He therefore decreed that the current liturgical books are 'the unique expression of the *lex orandi* of the Roman Rite' and set strict boundaries around the use of the 'old Mass'.

Francis followed up with an apostolic letter *Desiderio desideravi* (2022) which addressed the criticism that the current vernacular liturgy had lost a 'sense of the sacred'. Arguing that 'mystery' is not a reality obscured by clouds of incense or mysterious ritual, he showed that true wonder in the liturgy means *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). This was a new approach to liturgy, no longer simply restating the rules for a 'correct' liturgy, but promoting a more expressive *ars celebrandi*.

Pope Francis was refreshing in returning the Church to the visionary reforms of Vatican Council II. This was seen especially in his advocacy for the poor and marginalised, but it was also powerfully present in his liturgical interventions. Needless to say, some of these liturgical questions remain hot issues in the Church. They remain on the table for his successor to deal with.



## POPE LEO XIV

Robert Francis Prevost

Elected 8 May 2025

*What I am for you terrifies me,  
what I am with you consoles me.  
For you I am a bishop,  
with you I am a Christian.  
The first is a duty,  
the second is a grace.* (Augustine, sermon 340).

Augustinian Pope Leo XIV cited this famous quote in his opening remarks after his election. It references the fundamental baptismal solidarity of every Christian person, irrespective of rank. He had begun with the biblical and liturgical greeting: *Peace be with you!* Referring to Pope Francis, he affirmed that God loves us all, unconditionally. United by our common baptism into Christ, we *move forward without fear, together, hand in hand with God and with one another.* He spoke about building bridges through dialogue and encounter. As bishop of Rome, he chose to speak in Italian, except for a greeting to his former diocese in Peru in Spanish. He affirmed that we want to be a forward-moving

synodal Church, seeking peace, love and a closeness to those who are suffering. Clearly, Pope Leo sought to establish a strong continuity with the papacy of Francis.

In the weeks since his election, the background of Pope Leo XIV has been well explored in the media. A native of Chicago USA, he has spent almost all his adult life in Peru and Rome. After ordination as an Augustinian and obtaining a doctorate in Canon Law, he went to Peru as a missionary from the mid-1980s until the late 1990s. After a few years as Augustinian provincial in Chicago, he spent twelve years as Prior General of the Augustinians, based in Rome but visiting communities around the world. In 2014, he was appointed bishop of Chiclayo in the north of Peru and became a Peruvian citizen. In 2023, he was appointed prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops and was nominated as a cardinal.

Despite his origins in Chicago, Pope Leo is independent of the polarisation of the Church in the USA but comes to us, like Pope Francis, from the peripheries of the global south. He was a missionary in Peru when communist guerillas were waging civil war (which in 1991 claimed the life of Australian martyr Sr Irene McCormack RSJ). He was a voice for democracy and justice; he stood with the poor and disenfranchised. As a bishop, his pastoral care broadened when Peru received 1.5 million refugees from Venezuela. His diocese was not far from the Peruvian Amazon rainforest, and he took part in the 2019 Amazon synod.

Pope Leo XIV's motto refers to our unity in Christ: *In Illo uno unum*: 'In the One, [we are] one'. Peacemaking, unity and building bridges will be a priority for the new pope. He spoke strongly of this at his inaugural Mass: *Brothers and sisters, I would like that our first great desire be for a united Church, a sign of unity and communion, which becomes a leaven for a reconciled world. In this our time, we still see too much discord, too many wounds caused by hatred, violence, prejudice, the fear of difference, and an economic paradigm that exploits the Earth's resources and marginalises the poorest. For our part, we want to be a small leaven of unity, communion and fraternity within the world.* Peacemaking is directed therefore both within the Church and outwards to the world around us. But he is seeking a unity that is not uniformity, *that unity which does not cancel out differences but values the personal history of each person and the social and religious culture of every people.* All of this augurs well for the approaches to localisation and the inculturation of the liturgy which Francis has been establishing. Addressing an assembly of Eastern patriarchs and bishops at the Jubilee of the Eastern Churches, Leo embraced and rejoiced in a diversity

of liturgical rites: *the renewal of the Church... through fidelity lived out in a plurality of forms.*

He is a strong advocate of synodality and its processes of discernment rather than debate. This may well suit his character and style which is where he is very different from Pope Francis. Leo is clear, calm and measured. He will probably stick to script (Francis would sometimes set aside his text and speak off the cuff). Leo is a humble man, reserved and understated, who thinks before he acts and listens before he speaks. He has shown himself to be a steady administrator and has already spoken affirmatively to the employees of the Vatican and the Roman curia. He will need to continue to reform the organisation, cutting costs and making it more transparent and more missionary, but will likely try to do this by lessening tensions and working together more closely with curia staff.

An example of the strong continuity yet difference of style between Pope Leo and Pope Francis may be seen in a homily he gave at the ordination of new priests. Francis may well have warned against 'clericalism'. Pope Leo spoke as follows: *The depth, greatness and even duration of the divine joy that we now share are directly proportional to the bonds that exist and will deepen between you who are being ordained and the people from which you come, of which you remain a part and to which you are sent... Like Jesus, you meet people of flesh and blood whom the Father places on your path. Consecrate yourselves to them – without separating yourselves from them, without isolating yourselves, without making the gift you have received a kind of privilege.*

How will all these aspects play out as he deals with issues in the Church? He has spoken of God's inclusive love, but how will he deal with the place of the divorced and remarried in the Church or the possibilities for participation by gay Catholics? How will he deal with the polarisation in the American Church? Perhaps he will come with a new understanding of American culture. Finally what strategy will he adopt to foster harmony and concord with the groups who advocate the traditional Latin Mass? What will it mean to build bridges in this context?

For the present we wait. We trust that the Holy Spirit who has guided the Church to choose Robert Prevost as the pope will now inspire and guide him in his leadership of service, for the good of the Church and the world. We pray for him. Indeed, every time we celebrate Eucharist, we intercede for him and ask that God will be with him.





# PILGRIMAGE



The schoolhouse (*below*), and an interpretive centre and a (1924) church, together constitute an important place of pilgrimage and reflection. There is a challenging twelve-day walking pilgrimage in the countryside called the AUSSIE CAMINO which begins in Portland and ends in Penola. The 250 km track traverses cliff tops and beaches and follows goat trails, farm tracks and disused railway lines.

ADELAIDE has a number of pilgrimage possibilities too. In the suburb of Kensington is the first mother house of the Sisters of Saint Joseph. In Franklin Street was a convent and school, still housing the chapel where Mary MacKillop was excommunicated. There are shrines at the cathedral.

## OUR COVER

Pilgrimage is a spiritual journey linked to physical places. To mark our Jubilee Year, what pilgrimage are you undertaking, individually or with a group or community? It can be small scale or a major trip. In Australia, one of the core pilgrimage themes would, no doubt, be related in some way to St Mary MacKillop. The possibilities are endless.

SYDNEY provides an obvious destination. At Mary MacKillop Place, Mount Street, North Sydney, there is not only Alma Cottage where St Mary lived and the museum exploring her life, but also the chapel. It is here that pilgrims can pray at the tomb of Mary MacKillop.

There are a number of pilgrimage sites one can visit in MELBOURNE. The house where St Mary was born is close to the ACU Melbourne Campus at Fitzroy. The university has a beautiful MacKillop statue, courtyard and chapel. Nearby is St Patrick's Cathedral with another beautiful MacKillop statue, and across the road is the Heritage Centre with a museum. In the centre of the city is St Francis Church where Mary was baptised.

Between Melbourne and Adelaide, pilgrims will find a number of destinations. PORTLAND was a place where the MacKillop family lived and where Mary taught before she established the sisters. To the north is HAMILTON where her father is buried. Just across the South Australian border is PENOLA. This is where Mary and the first Sisters of Saint Joseph opened their first school in a converted stable. A year later in 1867, a stone schoolhouse was opened.

There is an official pilgrimage, *In the Footsteps of Mary MacKillop*, led and run by the sisters. It is organised with transport, meals and prayer over twelve days. It begins in Melbourne and ends in Sydney with Penola and Adelaide in between.



There are many other places of pilgrimage related to Mary MacKillop around Australia. BRISBANE has created its diocesan patronal shrine in the first St Stephen's cathedral; opened in 1850, the oldest church in Queensland, it is a place where St Mary worshipped. And who has ever heard of NUMRUKAH? It is a parish in the Diocese of Sandhurst where, at the end of 2024, the Mary MacKillop Indigenous Garden and History Trail were set up. It honours the legacy of Mary MacKillop who founded the school in 1890 (the first in Victoria) and the contribution of the Josephites over 130 years. The garden path meanders among Indigenous plants and features a series of panels (one for each decade) telling the Josephite story.

For the Jubilee Year, can you become a Pilgrim of Hope and devise a pilgrimage in your area with a St Mary MacKillop focus?

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# SYMBOL

by Frank O'Loughlin

In his remarkable Apostolic Letter *Desiderio desideravi*, Pope Francis suggests that we need to become capable of understanding and using symbols. He sees this lack not just as a liturgical issue but a contemporary human problem (DD 44). This highlighting of symbol carries forward and develops the liturgical principles set out in the document of the Second Vatican Council on the liturgy. Pope Francis' document urges strongly that those principles be taken up and put into practice fully and resolutely.

The work of Vatican II was a watershed in the history of the Church. The renewal flowing from it has been fertilising the life of the Church ever since. The progress of the liturgical renewal could be compared to the falling of dominoes as the consequences of the new yet ancient Vatican II principles have become apparent. The understanding of symbol is one of the things which has emerged in the course of this development within the Catholic tradition.

Looking back to the Fathers of the Church to whom we owe a great deal of our understanding of the liturgy, we can see a deep sense of the symbolic at work (even if their understanding of it was cast in a Platonic mentality which was the mindset of their times). And of course our sense of the symbolic needs to be connatural to our own times.

## 'Mere' Symbol

Those of us who can remember the times preceding Vatican II will remember that we often used the term 'mere symbol'. This term was especially in play in the so often acrimonious discussions between Catholics and Protestants regarding the Eucharist. It was a time when Catholics and Protestants tended to do their theology in opposition to each other and that style of theology acted as a set of blinkers on both sides in the conflict. That time has passed.

More recent historical and theological work has enabled us to look again at symbol and to see in it nothing that is 'mere', but rather, something which is crucial to our understanding of anything human and, consequently, crucial to our understanding of the Christian faith. A thorough understanding of symbol as we understand it today can be found in the works of Louis-Marie Chauvet (*Symbol and Sacrament*, 1995, and *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body*, 2001).

## Symbol

At the heart of understanding symbol is the reality that we human beings are symbolic in our own very selves – the point made by Pope Francis in *Desiderio desideravi*. So let us have a look at our own symbolic selves. We cannot get at our own person in itself; nor can we isolate it to any part of our body or get it out and show it to someone else! Our person, our identity, is not something we can separate within our self; it pervades us making us who we are.

So, my body is mine; it is mine because it is inhabited by me, by my person. We can say that my hand is mine, my head is mine, my heart is mine; but none of them *is* me; they are indeed mine but are not me. Each of them conveys me and presents me in its own particular way, but my actual self is much less identifiable or isolatable.

Now is it not true that the only way in which we can communicate with each other is through words and actions? It is *only* through words and actions that we can make contact with another; it is the only way that we can know someone else and that another person can know us. When we speak to each other, words carry us to each other. They are signs which are laden with our very self. So also it is with our actions. They carry us to each other; they are laden with our very selves. In receiving the words and actions of



another person, we begin to know them, we begin to have real contact with them. We begin to put together a perception and an understanding of that person. At times, we can also sense that a person is not really communicating themselves to us – they seem to be avoiding doing so.

This is what we mean when we say that we are, of our very nature, symbolic. We communicate ourselves not directly, so to speak, but in and through words and actions. And we receive one another through words and actions. Normally, we don't advert to the fact that we communicate in this way but that is just what we do! It is what we have done from our earliest days. It is natural for us. To be symbolic is of our nature.

### *Extending our Symbolic Nature*

What we do with words and actions, we extend further in symbolic actions and rituals in which we involve significant objects. We symbolically charge those objects, making them a means of communicating ourselves. We can see this happening in something as simple as gift giving. When we give a gift, we enter into the life of the person to whom we give the gift. We enter into that person's life in and through the gift – we even have a certain presence in that person's life in their appreciation and use of that gift. The gift is a symbolic form of our presence in their life.

Similarly, we can see symbolism at work in national celebrations, in which we use such things as anthems and flags to give expression to our national identity. Like our own selves, national identity is something subtle which cannot be given direct expression and so we give it expression through objects such as flags and anthems with which we share an identity. National identity needs objects through which it can express itself. We find such symbolic celebrations among all peoples. Everyone uses appropriate objects as a means of expressing their social, cultural and national identity – as in the ritual of a football match!

### *Liturgy is Symbolic*

Catholic liturgy is the work of a group of human beings expressing their identity symbolically as a communion with Christ. It is symbolic in all dimensions. It takes up and redirects the symbolic usages or rituals which are part of human life. At its highpoint, the liturgical action of the Eucharist is based on the New Testament accounts of what Jesus did and said at the Last Supper; his actions are intrinsically related to his death on the cross the following day and to the other face of that death, his resurrection.

In and through the words and actions of the Eucharist which are done in accord with Jesus' call to 'Do this in memory of me', the presence of the risen Lord is given to his people in order that they may be drawn into his death and resurrection, and so

become his body. It is through those words and actions done in his memory that the Lord gives himself now. In receiving those words and actions, his disciples today are enabled to come to the conviction of his presence among them. Like the beloved disciple in John 21:7-8, they are enabled to say, *It is the Lord*.

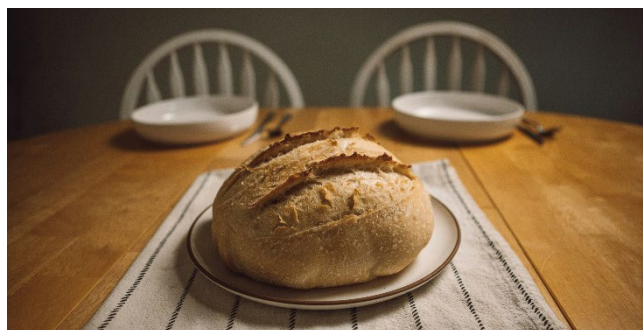
So, to talk about the eucharistic presence itself, we have a model in the description we have given of the human person as symbolic. Just as we communicate ourselves through our words and actions, so the actions and words of the Eucharist are the means by which Christ now communicates himself to his people, his Church.

### *Liturgical Symbols*

The liturgy, we said, is symbolic in all its dimensions.

The Liturgy of the Word is symbolic. It is about our listening to the Scriptures in such a way that we allow a transfer to occur between what is proclaimed in the text and our own selves. We listen to the word proclaimed in order that that word of God may pass over into us in our different contexts and circumstances. In and through the text, the word of God speaks to us now.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist is symbolic even in the basic human things which are used in its celebration. Their significance is taken up into the liturgy itself. The liturgy as a whole is carried out by using things which are a part of our everyday world and which already have a depth of symbolism built into them.



We bring bread and wine, water, oil, human hands, and many other elements into the liturgy. These are all part of the created world and make up so much of the substance and texture of human life. We take light, fire, voice, colour, sound, music, gesture and bring them into the liturgy. Here their meaning goes beyond themselves to speak of the things that the eye cannot see nor the ear hear. We bring these things into the liturgy, and they come with their own inherent symbolic meaning.

As an illustration, let us just consider one of these things: bread. Bread is so basic that it is often used to stand in for all food. Bread/food carries deep meaning within human life. Every time we eat, we acknowledge that we cannot give ourselves life, we cannot give ourselves existence; we have to receive life, receive our continuing existence. Every time we



eat, we acknowledge that we are dependent on something outside of ourselves to keep us alive. We may not be aware of this every time we sit down to eat, but nonetheless it remains true, and it remains true for every human being whatever their attitude to life's

meaning. We are dependent on 'something' outside of ourselves to remain alive.

In the celebration of the Eucharist, we are explicitly called to take up this awareness and direct it to God. We do this as we bring bread (and wine) to the table of the Lord acknowledging that it is indeed from God that we receive our life. Over that bread, the priest says as he takes it: *Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the bread we offer you: fruit of the earth and work of human hands, it will become for us the bread of life.* We bring this bread in order that it may become the authentic bread of the Eucharist by which we begin to share a life over which death has no power (see Jn 6:55). We acknowledge that the giver of life has not finished with life-giving.

This example illustrates what Pope Francis says about our need to become capable of symbols. Even at the everyday human level, we have lost the sense of the symbolic meaning of bread. This human incapacity leads on to a lack of understanding in celebrating the Preparation of the Gifts. Our appreciation of that core part of the Eucharist (the action of 'taking') is compromised by our lack of awareness of the human reality of the bread that we present and of what it is destined to become in the celebration.

### *Symbolic Action*

Every action of the people, every action of the priest, every action of other ministers is symbolic. In this regard, we carry a burden with us from the past. In the recent centuries and perhaps still, priests have been formed to think that what mattered most was the correct carrying out of the rubrics of the liturgy. They were so thoroughly imbued with this attitude that it became part of the Catholic mindset, not only among priests but among all the people. It was taken for granted. It was thought – at least by some – that if the liturgy was not performed with rubrical exactitude, the presence of Christ in the Eucharist might not come about. This was a particular problem for anyone prone to scrupulosity.

There are fundamental principles grounding the liturgy which determine the nature of the Eucharist itself. The rubrics need to be interpreted in terms of those fundamental principles. So, for instance, the structure of Christ's actions in the New Testament –

*take, bless, break, give* – shape the very nature of the Eucharist. Similarly, the pattern of praying in the Eucharistic Prayer arises out of a long tradition going back into biblical prayer.

An exaggerated concern for rubrical exactitude loses all sense that we are celebrating symbolically, that is, that our whole celebration takes place by means of signs. As the Missal states: *Since, however, the celebration of the Eucharist, like the entire liturgy, is carried out by means of perceptible signs by which faith is nourished, strengthened and expressed, the greatest care is to be taken that those forms and elements proposed by the Church are chosen and arranged which (given the circumstances of persons and places) more effectively foster active and full participation, and more aptly respond to the spiritual needs of the faithful* (GIRM 20).

The celebration of the liturgy asks us to be aware that all we do and say, all that we draw into the liturgy, are part of a symbolic celebration. They all point beyond themselves to that which the eye cannot see nor the ear hear. These things are chosen because there is something about them which enables us to use them as signs, something about them which enables them to take us beyond themselves to a new reality.

### *The Whole Liturgical Celebration is Symbolic*

Thus, the church building is not just there for practical purposes, but is the symbolic setting for the gathering of the People of God. The altar, the ambo, the priest's chair all refer beyond themselves to the ways in which Christ makes himself present in the midst of his people in the liturgy. The vessels, the vestments, the candle stands, the tabernacle, the sacred images are all taken up into the symbolic atmosphere within which the liturgy is celebrated.

The issue of the symbolic nature of the liturgy is not about creating a rarefied atmosphere but about the very essence of what we are doing and saying. The symbolic nature of the liturgy profoundly links the liturgy to everyday life in its use of everyday things and their meaning. To be fruitful in these new times of ours, the liturgy has to be able to speak to people, to touch their hearts and lives. As Pope Francis makes so clear in *Desiderio desideravi*, just doing what we have always done will no longer suffice. This is true of the liturgy as it is true in the general life of the Church.

So, when we worship together, we have to proclaim Christ and his gospel not just in words but using the meaning and beauty of our world in a symbolic opening to the Lord which the liturgy seeks to celebrate.

■ Dr Frank O'Loughlin, long-time parish priest of Sandringham in Melbourne, is a well-known and respected author and teacher in liturgy and sacramental theology.





Image: Tim Martorana TMP media

# UNDERSTANDING OUR OBLIGATIONS *on Sunday*

by Gerard Moore

**GIRLS PLAY SOCCER ON SUNDAY.** This sentence opens up more than its five-word text. Given the need for grounds, volunteers, coaches and officials who attend to boys on Saturday, girls' soccer falls to the Sunday, and the morning of Sunday to be precise. We want our girls to play, it is a family event, it is a community gathering, it has some tribal aspects. And it swallows the whole morning before the lunch rituals commence.

How do our Sundays unfold? They can be a bit busy. Families disperse across the sportsphere, driving to different grounds, picking up other players and settling in for the game, all the while building values of commitment, collaboration, punctuality, discipline, health and fun. These are highly prized values, and the sport wrests youngsters away from iPhones and the like, well, for a while at least.

The shops are open. Sunday is a working day for so many. Interestingly, penalty rates and higher pay are an acknowledgement that there remains something special about this day. But we embrace this availability. We shop, visit the hardware sausage sizzle, converge on the restaurants, settle in at the

club. We visit art galleries, attend the footy, have swimming lessons, get a haircut. All these activities rely on workers to serve, owners to open their businesses, and transport infrastructures to be available. *This is us!* Over any number of Sundays we will have members of our family circle at work, at play, completing shifts at the local shops, out socialising, visiting family, or enjoying bowls at the pokie-free club.

Farmers – whether dairy, livestock, crops, fruits or vegetables – know about this, and factor the Sunday work into their lives and planning. Hospitals and health services similarly. Factories and mines with continuous production regimens rely upon Sunday work. FIFO workers add another dimension to how a young family uses its precious time together.

We also have our own dispositions for Sunday time. Some simply have to take extra shifts to repay the mortgage. Others tidy up their weekday work online (*guess whether there is some Sunday writing in this piece!*). We can relax with online games, pay per view TV, streaming services, our online news channels, a bit of gambling, even Mass through the

internet. Teachers and personnel seeking advancement will carve out of Sunday some time for assignments, reading, learning. They will be juggling this with family commitments and pressing tasks of lesson preparation and grading.

Cultural factors also play a part. Multicultural Australia, city and regional alike, offers its own appreciation of Sunday. It can be a dedicated family day and/or church day. It is not a religious day in Islam, which works with Friday as a day dedicated to prayers at the mosque. There are family celebrations and obligations and ethnic community festivals and occasions to honour.

Sunday is not disconnected from the remainder of the week: it is a time for clothes washing, school uniform prepping, some vacuuming, a bit of gardening, cooking for weekday meals, some fun baking for daily lunches and treats. There is a subtle change in this connection however. Christians see it as the first day of the week and create their calendar pages accordingly. Other calendars mark it as the last day and start their week on a Monday. Check your Microsoft program against your Columban calendar!



### *Personal Time*

Sunday retains its sense of our dedicated personal time rather than time belonging to our jobs and professions. Our Sunday is a complexity of social, personal, financial and leisure activities, expectations and imperatives. Within these we make choices.

Why describe our Sunday in these terms, as a day dedicated to us within which there is an array of choices? The intention here is to move away from a dynamic of 'it used to be different' and 'what has been lost'; instead we embrace the reality that we live in the current social structure and can only speak credibly into it if we appreciate it for what it is. Sunday has shifted, and the historian in us whispers 'perhaps it was ever thus'. More importantly we have shifted: we are in this circumstance and it forms us while we take up its advantages.

For the question of Sunday itself, the past is seen as having little to offer us. Our participation in the

'eRevolution' has placed us in a different orbit. I give a hint of tradition history below, but the question of Sunday operates beyond a quantum leap from two decades past. Yes, this is confusing. Theologically and liturgically, we have approached participation in the Sunday Mass from the history of the liturgy, the canonical directives and the range of practices. These do not have the traction they once had or, to be more precise, these do not have the traction that we once gave them.

The pandemic has played a part in this loosening of traction. It disrupted a vast array of communal activities and understandings. The imposed inability to meet physically did not weaken our desire for community and connection, but it did weaken the sinews of the social bodies and community structures that depended upon it. There has been a diminishment of club memberships, university student associations, face-to-face learning and teaching practices, and community landcare groups. The Covid 19 isolation meant that the regular onflow of new members into groups and the consequent emerging leaders was plugged. While many groups drifted online, others withered.

For Catholics, the Sunday Mass was moved online. A range of effects followed. There was a choice as to which church provided the best online Mass, with options available from anywhere in the world. It is not clear how nimble the clergy were in adapting for their now shuttered communities. The bonds of physical gathering were loosened, and the spell of weekly observance broken. Catholics found that they could maintain a sense of faith while being less tethered to the Eucharist of the Lord's Day. Sunday Mass could now be thought of as a 'desirable' quality rather than an 'essential' one.

### *Sunday Mass*

Who then are we, the Sunday Mass goes both regular and irregular? What are the shifts within us? A wise liturgy teacher of mine once said to me 'never ask the people what they think about worship because they might tell you!' It was jest and irony combined. We do not have much of a benchmark as to why Catholics went to Sunday Mass in such numbers, but we do know that the world in which we now live is different.

In the Sunday community will be parishioners who seek to worship: it is in their bones. Some seek silence and something of a refuge for an hour. They are not indifferent to the call for liturgical participation, but life requires a moment of respite and regular rhythm, and this can be found at the liturgy. Others find themselves at Mass alone. Their children have left home, their spouse may have left the marriage or died, and in this circumstance they come. Many will have an awkward presence, with children who are no longer practising, a gay child, children in irregular relationships, a difficult



marriage, all of which are situations not well catered for in their memories of Church pastoral practice. Some are there but are not so sure they are welcome, whether divorced and remarried, in a long-term de facto relationship or gender diverse. Race and culture too can play a part, though this seems to be less so. As always, the weather is a factor in weekly Mass attendance!

In effect while the compulsion to attend the Sunday liturgy remains in Catholic DNA it is not a dominant gene. It is no longer the case that this obligation can paper over the above fragilities in our church attendance. Nor can this gene be activated when our concept of the Church and parish has changed. Many of our buildings are edifices of Catholicity, built to furnish us with a Sunday Mass that proclaimed Catholic solidarity and identity. It is not always clear whether the buildings or the Sunday liturgy celebrated within have been recalibrated to serve as 'field hospitals' following Pope Francis. Nor is it to be taken as a given that the Sunday liturgy actually strengthened the faith and resolve of Catholics who were on front line duty in the 'field hospitals' of the Church.

### *Where are we?*

Time for a recap. We are different and live successfully enough in a changed society. We are amongst that change; we are part of that change. From a more internal perspective, our Church has changed, and in particular the place of regular Sunday attendance. This is related to a more fragile community with different forms of belonging.

What then do we value about the Sunday Mass? Given the trajectory of this article we will make our approach from the other side of the question. What is it that would facilitate a choice to attend every Sunday? The normal positives remain in place: community in Christ, Eucharist, the word, the above-mentioned time of repose and spiritual calm, the endorsement of the sacramentality of our lives and of time, and passing on the faith to the next generation.

However, other voices in the discussion have a new weight in our minds and hearts. Why would I return to weekly Sunday Mass if I have managed the last few years without it? Within this question any sense of Sunday obligation chafes. There are also the values of the Church community I am attending. Why be present at a liturgy in which my gay son or daughter is disparaged? Can I feel complacent when the preaching is routinely poor and infantilising? What is the value of participating in a service where the music is of no particular quality or engagement or spirit? Do I want to be present in a parish where the priest has divided the congregation and denigrated the contribution of the laity? Why why why do we still hear that it is women who are the problem? You are well aware that this list could be longer. The point is not to engage in a debate of ecclesial failings,



but rather see that these now have a stronger influence on the choices we can make, and that each of them enshrines the challenge of authentic values, indeed Christ-centred values. The sense of Sunday obligation no longer countenances poor experience, exclusion and inept leadership.

This is not the place for a review of the history of 'Sunday' and its changing face across the centuries and cultures. Recommended reading would be *The Peculiar Life of Sundays* by Stephen Miller (Harvard University Press, 2008).

Our task has been to outline the shift in how we envision the day we call 'Sunday', and to set in context the current reluctance of practising, faithful Catholics to re-embrace the obligation to attend Mass each Sunday. The problem can only be fruitfully discussed by understanding the shift in that was underway pre-Covid but emerged more completely post-Covid. The pandemic-enforced break in our cultural and communal habits weakened many cultural institutions. It also left us reflecting on our values and priorities. The Sunday Mass obligation has not lost out to external secular forces, but jostles in our consciousness as a value amongst others. How it regains a higher place in our hierarchy of what is important is for another discussion. The question will rub against the changes in our community, changes that bring us many goods and reinforce our Christ-like values.

After all, girls play soccer on Sundays, and who could deny the revolutionary change those five words have brought.

■ Professor Gerard Moore is Principal and CEO of the BBI Australian Institute of Theological Education.

## NEW LITURGY SECRETARY

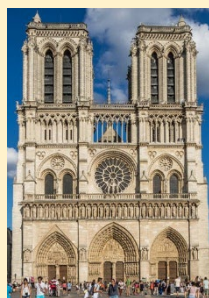


After an unexplained delay of several months, we are pleased to congratulate publicly the new Executive Secretary for Liturgy in Australia. Melbourne priest Fr Anthony Doran has been appointed by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference to work with the Bishops' Commission for Liturgy (BCL). The role involves coordinating the work of the advisory Councils: the National Liturgical Council, the National Liturgical Architecture and Art Council, and the National Liturgical Music Council.

*[Anthony] has a unique set of qualities that qualify him for this role: a lived faith; a deep understanding and love for the liturgy; a knowledge of its history and theology; and his many years of experience as a pastor,* said Archbishop Patrick O'Regan who chairs the BCL. Over recent years, in addition to his pastoral responsibilities, he has written articles on liturgy and taken part in liturgy associations/conferences, both national and international.

One major project which will take up much time and energy over the next few years is the production of a new Lectionary for Mass. This is a joint project of Australia, New Zealand and Ireland. The four-volume book using the Revised New Jerusalem translation is expected to be ready by 2029. The conferences of bishops are already reviewing parts of the first volume for Sundays.

## SOCIETAS LITURGICA PARIS



SOCIETAS  
2025  
LITURGICA

With the reopening of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, the ecumenical Societas Liturgica will hold its 2025 congress there from 28 July to 1 August. International keynote speakers and members of Societas who are participating will explore the topic *Liturgical Space and the Liturgical Assembly*. The conference and its worship will take place across several venues and churches in the centre of the city. The conference includes the possibility of an in-depth tour of Notre Dame. For information and registration, see <https://www.societas-liturgica.org/>. Detailed information is available in the latest newsletter on the site.

## BAPTISM BOOM

A record number of adults and adolescents were baptised in France at Easter this year. Of the 17,800 catechumens, the largest segment were young adults. This represents a 45% increase over the 2024 numbers. The interest in the Church is attributed to social media and Catholic influencers.

Belgium also reported a doubling of numbers for adult baptism in 2025. Here the number of infant baptisms continued to decline (by about 6% per annum), suggesting that perhaps more children are being left to make their own decision when they are old enough.

A similar phenomenon has been seen in the United Kingdom and Austria.

## AFRAID OF MASS

In its immigration enforcement actions, the Trump administration in the USA is moving to detain people at their workplace or at other public gatherings. The Diocese of Nashville, Tennessee, has told people that the Sunday obligation does not apply if they are afraid of being detained while at Mass. Attendance at Spanish-language Masses has been lower because of what is said to be 'unusually heavy police activity in the areas around our parishes'. Bishop Mark Seitz from Texas who chairs the US Bishops' committee on migration said: *To state it clearly, the actions which I have described to close the border to the vulnerable, to deprive hundreds of thousands of persons of legal status, to broaden the state of exception and to deny due process, and to move in the direction of mass deportations, are all morally indefensible from a Catholic perspective.*

The Church has a mandate to preach the Gospel and speak out against mass deportations and other inhumane treatment of migrants, Seitz said. Policing churches, schools, community centres and hospitals is especially symbolic, because it is *meant to deliver a message that even bedrock principles and norms that ensure the integrity of the polity, including deference to the sacred, the education of children and the pursuit of health, will be sacrificed to the politics of immigration.* Seitz asked every diocese to put together a plan to ensure that immigrants understand their rights and have access to legal services to protect them from deportation.

For the last four years, *Liturgy News* has been set up electronically and sent free of charge to anyone who would like to receive it. Some people have asked if they can contribute to the cost. This would be most welcome as we are a not-for-profit self-funding agency of the Archdiocese of Brisbane.

Click here to make a donation:

**YES, I WOULD LIKE TO DONATE!**



## BLESSING GIVES STRENGTH TO LOVE

In April 2025, the German Bishops Conference has released pastoral guidelines on imparting blessings to couples in irregular situations. The blessings are intended for couples who do not wish to enter into a Church sacramental marriage or who are not eligible for one.

The bishops write: *The Church wishes to proclaim in word and deed the message of the God-given dignity of every person. This message guides her in her dealings with people and their partnerships. That is why it recognises and offers support to couples who are united in love, who treat each other with full respect and dignity and who are prepared to live their sexuality in mindfulness for themselves, for each other and in social responsibility in the long term.*

The Church in Germany has been dealing with the issue of blessings for couples for some time. Couples who are not married in church, or divorced and remarried couples, as well as couples of all sexual orientations and gender identities are naturally part of our society. Quite a few of these couples would like a blessing for their relationship. Such a request is an expression of gratitude for their love and the hope for a future accompanied by God. A blessing recognises that everything that is true, good and humanly valid in the common life of these relationships is enriched, healed and elevated by the presence of the Holy Spirit. Whenever people ask for a blessing, they are expressing a request for God's help to be able to live the values of the gospel with greater fidelity.

Some of the practical information provided in the guidelines is well known: the blessings may be led by ordained ministers or other designated lay leaders of liturgy; the minister should display non-judgemental pastoral wisdom and empathy; pastors who cannot reconcile a blessing with their conscience should refer the couple; the blessings should avoid any

confusion with the celebration of the sacrament of marriage; and no approved liturgical celebrations or prayers are provided.



However, the guidelines imagine more than a private improvised blessing at the sacristy door.

- The blessing symbolically represents an event between God and people. Blessing is also an act of the Church, which places itself at the service of the encounter between God and humankind. The Church takes seriously the couple's desire to place their future life together under God's blessing. It sees in the request for blessing the hope for a relationship with God that can sustain human life. In order to encourage the couple in this hope, everyone who is involved in the blessing should participate, in cooperation with the leader, through acclamation, prayer, and singing.

- The blessing requires joint consideration, taking into account the wishes and concerns of the couple regarding the respective setting and appropriate arrangements, and incorporating these in a theologically meaningful way. The greater spontaneity and freedom of these blessings should be combined with careful preparation. How the blessing is conducted, the location, the overall aesthetic, including music and singing, should value and respect the people asking for the blessing, their togetherness, and their faith.

- Words from Scripture make clear the connection between God's saving action and blessing. Biblical texts

appropriate to the situation should therefore be recited during the blessing and interpreted if necessary. The blessing prayer addresses the God of the Bible and commemorates God's history with humankind and all creation in praise and thanksgiving. This is followed by a blessing for the couple. The blessing prayer concludes with an offering of praise to God.

## VENERABLE ARCHITECT

Antoni Gaudí, famous architect of Barcelona's *Sagrada Família* basilica, has moved another step towards canonisation. In April this year, recognising his heroic virtue, the Holy See declared him 'venerable'. Once a miracle is documented, he may proceed to beatification.



Born in 1852, he became an architect in 1878 and revealed in his writing how his artistic vision and love of church building was an expression of his faith. A fervent and celibate Catholic, a daily Mass-goer, he lived an austere life in the spirit of St Francis of Assisi. Called 'God's architect', he made his art a hymn of praise to the Lord and he saw his architecture as a way of making God known to the world. From the beginning in 1882, he saw the construction of *Sagrada Família* above all as his God-given, life-long mission. He died in 1926, struck by a tram. He was not recognised at first and was taken to hospital. When he died, around 30,000 people took part in his funeral.

## AMAZONIAN RITE

The theologians and anthropologists who make up the thirteen Amazonian Rite commissions have compiled their proposals and put them out for consultation to Catholic parishes and other communities. The rituals and texts of the Mass and the sacraments prepared for the Pan-Amazone region are accompanied by a theological rationale. Final editing is expected to take place in the next few months.



The collaborative work has been full of hope and well-received by pastors, catechists and other leaders. The process of inculturation has drawn on a 500-year history of Catholic presence and pastoral action in the Amazon. One of the anthropologists, Franciscan priest Florencio Vaz Filho, told *Crux* news: *Despite the Amazonian diversity, there are several common elements in the regional culture, like the people's relationship with the rivers' flood and drought cycles in the rainy and dry seasons, something that impacts the Amazonians' creeds, memories, and forms of being.*

Among the major aspects to be reflected in the liturgy are firstly the recognition that nature is something alive. Nature is a subject, not an object. It speaks. It is created by God, inhabited by God, and so is sacred. Secondly, relationships between people

(living and dead) and between people, nature and the spiritual world are reciprocal. Memories, suffering and life are shared, talked about and celebrated. This happens in movement, touching and dance. Dimensions such as these affect the cultural way in which the liturgy is experienced. So, for example, the gesture of incensing the cross is quite scandalous in the Amazon. The Roman Rite sees incense as a sign of respect, but in the Amazon smoke is a purification – how can one expel a spirit of evil from a crucifix?

## MASS INTENTIONS

New norms came into effect on Easter Sunday concerning Mass intentions. The decree was published in Italian by the Dicastery for Clergy. It says that it is important not to give the impression that making a Mass offering is some kind of commercial transaction. It is always a sign of someone's spiritual participation in the Mass and their desire to support the mission of the Church.

The new decree however permits 'collective intentions'— a practice where multiple offerings are united in a single Mass – *only* under strict conditions: the donors must be explicitly informed and must freely consent. The decree further restricts the frequency of such collective celebrations, aiming to preserve the normative link between each offering and a distinct Eucharistic celebration. An example of when this might occur is the celebration of November Masses for the dead.

The document aims to protect the dignity of the Eucharist and to promote greater transparency and trust within the People of God.



## When a Principal Leaves a School

by John Fitz-Herbert + Gerry Crooks

When a new Principal takes up their position in a Catholic school, it is common practice to mark this with a special commissioning or blessing ceremony. This generally takes place within a school liturgy. But there also comes a time in the life of all schools when the Principal, another key senior leader or even a long-serving staff member completes their period of service. Here too a school liturgy is a good possibility. Times of farewell are marked by a range of feelings and reactions within the school community and perhaps even from the wider community. Of course, there are plans for the usual farewell speeches, listing of achievements and sharing of reflections at an assembly or school community gathering. But just as at a commissioning, the significance of marking this occasion with a liturgy of farewell and blessing should not be overlooked or underestimated.

Many would agree that a liturgy of farewell is a little more challenging to put together. While a commissioning has an agenda that is visionary and hope-filled in terms of planning and new directions, perhaps a leave-taking may be tinged with elements of sadness, regret or even feelings of abandonment; on the odd occasion there may even be a sense of relief in the school community that this tenure has ended; mostly however the mood of the farewell will be one of thanksgiving and blessing for the future.

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Liturgy is in our DNA as Catholics. For significant events, liturgy helps us give meaning to our life experience, in this case, not just for the leader who is leaving but for the whole community. Little wonder then that we turn to liturgy to farewell a person who has been influential in the school.

How then do we go about this? The initial decision to be made, of course, pertains to the *type* of liturgy that will be the most appropriate context for the farewell.

A Liturgy of the Word including an appropriate Rite of Blessing for the leader is an option and a relatively easy one to put together. Readings that reflect the leadership and contribution of the Principal can be selected (see the suggestions below). In addition, following the readings and homily, the Prayer of the Faithful can include intercessions that highlight particular achievements of this period of leadership. Time can be allocated at the conclusion of the liturgy for the appropriate acknowledgements and a final blessing over the person.

The other choice might be a Mass. The Mass situates the event within a different dynamic and the choice of a Mass should never be made lightly. The Mass is the core celebration of our Christian identity as the Body of Christ, our authentic statement of who we are as the Church; it takes us to the heart of our encountering Christ.

Acknowledging someone within this context brings with it a sacramental dimension that cannot be negated – it speaks of the reality of the whole Christian community. ‘Eucharist’ means thanksgiving for God’s blessings which might be just the right context for a farewell. Within a Mass, possibilities also exist for suitable intercessions, blessings and paying tribute.

So, what must we consider in preparing a liturgical farewell?

Firstly, in deciding the day for the celebration, the *Ordo* must be the first port of call. There may be an appropriate feast day that will help the liturgical prayer, even the patronal feast of the school. How will the liturgical season colour the event?

Here are a few reminders of things to consider for a liturgy of farewell:

- A welcome prior to the commencement of the Mass might include a naming of distinguished guests and members of the school community, introducing the significance of the occasion, together with an appropriate Acknowledgement of Country according to the local parish/school custom.
- Music and singing should play an important part. Perhaps school musicians can take the lead. Singing a blessing for the Principal at the end can be a beautiful way for the school to bid farewell (e.g. *Gather Australia* 441, ‘May God Bless and Keep You’).
- An entrance procession could include not only the person presiding and the Principal who is leaving but also a representative group from among the student cohort – perhaps student leaders, students who symbolise the inclusive nature of the school, perhaps carrying banners or symbols which speak of the ethos of the school, etc.
- A rite of sprinkling water might be a good way to begin. The blessing of water and sprinkling of all present reminds everyone of their baptism and their belonging to Christ. This can also be a powerful sign to those present who may not be Catholic. (Texts are in the *Roman Missal* pp. 1507ff).
- Readings from Scripture can be selected as appropriate. Here are a few suggestions:

#### FIRST READING

Prov 2:1-9 *Apply your heart to truth*

Ephes 3:14-19 *May Christ live in your hearts through faith*

Col 3:12-17 *Be clothed in love*

1 Jn 4:7-16 *Let us love one another since love comes from God*

#### GOSPEL

Lk 10:38-42 *Martha and Mary*

Jn 20:1-2,11-18 *Mary Magdalene, first witness of the resurrection*

Matt 23:8-12 *The greatest among you must be your servant*

Jn 10:11-18 *The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep*

Jn 15:9-17 *You are my friends if you do what I command you*

- Preaching the word opens up the Scripture readings but should also relate to the occasion.
- The Prayer of the Faithful provides opportunities to invite prayer for the departing Principal and any favourite projects. Note the format. They are brief and to the point; they are invitations to prayer addressed to the people; they are followed by the actual prayer (for example: *Lord, hear us. Lord, hear our prayer.*)
- At the end of the liturgy, a speech or tribute may be given and a final message from the Principal received. This should probably not be the occasion for all the farewell speeches that will be given. The speech and response would occur *before* the final blessing which concludes the liturgy.
- Other discussions, particularly with key school personnel, may revolve around student management on the day, arrangements for special guests, speakers, rehearsals, etc. It must always be borne in mind that good organisation and attention to detail make for good liturgy.

To conclude, Catholic schools exist to form and educate children in response to the gospel and the Lord’s command to welcome the children. One distinctive mark of a Catholic school is the liturgical and sacramental celebrations of the community. May the encouraging words of St Paul guide all who take on responsibility for preparing a farewell for Catholic school leaders:

*Let the message of Christ, in all its richness, find a home with you. Teach each other, and advise each other, in all wisdom. With gratitude in your hearts sing psalms and hymns and inspired songs to God; and never say or do anything except in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him (Col 3:16-17).*

■ John Fitz-Herbert is parish priest of Moorooka/Salisbury. Gerry Crooks is pastoral assistant at the Cathedral of St Stephen.

## Anticipating our First Melanesian Saint

by Paul Sireh

**A**s a Melanesian, I woke up on the last day of March to the best and most exciting news: Pope Francis had authorised the canonisation of martyred layman Peter To Rot from Papua New Guinea. Peter was beatified in Port Moresby on 17 January 1995 and Australia – given our long fraternal links with PNG – had him included in the Australian calendar. His feast day is 7 July.

Born on 5 March 1912, Peter was educated in the Christian faith. He was a model student respecting the sacraments and praying regularly. His life was characterised by charity, humility and dedication to the poor and orphans. After graduation, the bishop accepted him as a catechist and he earnestly began his pastoral work. He married Paula Ia Varpit, a young Catholic from a neighbouring village and lived an exemplary family life.

During World War II, Japanese troops invaded Papua New Guinea and imprisoned priests and religious in a concentration camp. Since there was no priest, Peter devoted himself to pastoral service, administering infant baptism and funerals and assisting at marriages. Japanese troops however interfered in Church activities and destroyed Church buildings. When his pastoral activity was forbidden, he carried out his apostolate in secret, fully aware that he was risking his life.



Catholic teaching on monogamy was forbidden and people returned to polygamy. Peter To Rot strongly affirmed his own marriage and continued to prepare couples for marriage. He confronted even his older brother who had taken a second wife. But Peter resolutely refused to change his teaching that married couples are united by God. Consequently, his brother reported him to the police. He was arrested, imprisoned, tortured and, in July 1945, killed by poisoning.

When I was chaplain to the PNG Catholic Community in Brisbane, I organised with community leaders to build a shrine for Blessed Peter To Rot at the Archdiocesan pilgrimage site at Marian Valley, Canungra. I was keen to promote his pathway to sainthood. In 2017, the foundation stone of the chapel was blessed by the Apostolic Nuncio, His Excellency Adolfo Yilana, formerly nuncio in PNG. Then fundraising was undertaken which enabled the PNG community to commission a life-like statue of Peter to complete the shrine. It was carved out of wood by NSW artist Engelbert Piccolruaz.



*BLESSING with Bishop Ken Howell, Cardinal John Ribat and Fr Paul Sireh O.Carm, Photo: Alan Edgecomb.*

Finally, I invited PNG cardinal His Eminence John Ribat to bless the shrine in 2020 on the silver jubilee of To Rot's beatification. This joyful event took place as planned with the participation of Brisbane Bishop Ken Howell and a good number of the PNG Catholic community. It is highly significant in that it is the first international chapel outside PNG to be dedicated to Blessed Peter. It commemorates Peter as a catechist and martyr for the faith, servant of God and defender of marriage; it is also a dedication to all the Christian missionaries who introduced Christ to PNG and Oceania.

The community regularly gathers at the shrine, celebrating colourful liturgy in memory of Peter To Rot. Now with the recognition and announcement of the late Pope Francis, we are eagerly waiting to celebrate the canonisation of SAINT PETER TO ROT, Martyr.

■ Fr Paul Sireh O.Carm, formerly chaplain to the PNG community in Brisbane, is now chaplain at Whitefriars College, Donvale, Victoria.





## Singing *Hillsong* at Mass: YES OR NO?

by Michael Mangan

\* *My Year 6 students really want to sing a Hillsong piece at their graduation Mass. But can we do that?*

\* *A group of new musicians in our parish want to introduce some songs they found online. But the band isn't Catholic – are we allowed to sing non-Catholic music at Mass?*

These, and similar questions are often asked in parishes and schools. Musicians, priests and teachers want a definitive answer so that they 'do the right thing' and 'don't break any rules'. Unfortunately, it's not that simple.

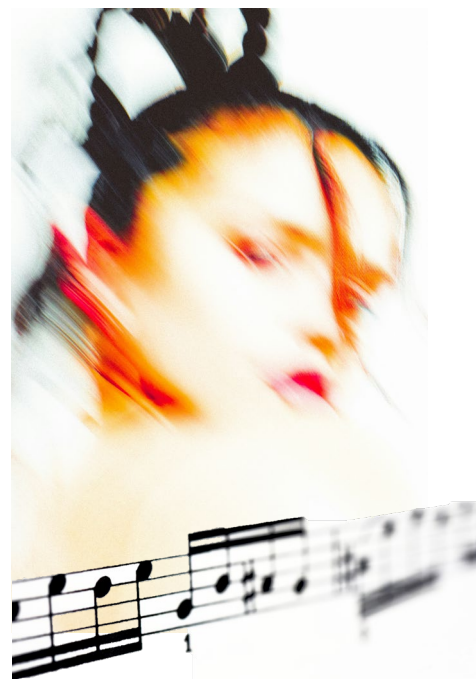
The appropriateness of the style, genre and sources of music that should be sung in Catholic liturgy generates much passionate discussion. Some argue that only chant should be sung, many prefer traditional hymnody, and others promote a more contemporary praise-and-worship style repertoire. And some do believe that if the composer of the song isn't Catholic, the hymn has no place in liturgy.

The documents of Vatican Council II take quite a broad approach to the question of suitability. In 1967, *Musicam Sacram* stated that *no kind of sacred music is prohibited from liturgical actions ... as long as it corresponds to the spirit of the liturgical celebration itself and the nature of its individual parts* (MS 9).

Other Church documents offer a checklist of inter-related criteria which help us make informed decisions about whether or not a particular song does in fact 'correspond to the spirit of the liturgical action'. These criteria are succinctly summarised in the 2019 Australian Catholic Bishops Conference document, *Music in the Order of the Mass*.

Briefly, the criteria are:

- **MUSICAL** – Is this composition technically, aesthetically and expressively 'good' music? Is it within the musical capabilities of the congregation and are they able to participate easily?
- **LITURGICAL** – Is this piece suitable for this liturgy and this particular part of the liturgy? Does it voice the corporate action of the gathered community rather than being personal in nature? Does it accompany the liturgical actions of gathering or processing? Does it highlight the particular feast or season?
- **PASTORAL** – Does this hymn help this particular gathered community to celebrate? Does it call this group into active participation? Does it reflect their cultural and age demographic? (The pastoral criteria must consider the whole community and not just the preferences of the musicians.)
- **THEOLOGICAL** – Are the song lyrics 'in conformity with Catholic doctrine' (SC 121)? Is the liturgical assembly singing what the Church believes and teaches? The denomination of the composer or source of the song is not one of the criteria. There is no ban on using music from other Christian denominations as long as it fulfills the four criteria above. Australia's official Catholic hymnal, *Catholic Worship Book II*, contains many tunes and texts by non-Catholic contributors. Well-known composers, Marty Haugen and John Bell, neither of whom are Catholic, have a combined 30 pieces in the hymnal; and one of Hillsong's early 'hit' songs, *Shout to the Lord*, by Darlene Zschech is also included.



If a Hillsong piece, or any other hymn, meets the criteria above, there is no barrier to its use. It is important to note that songs by Catholic composers are not deemed automatically suitable for liturgy either; they too must address the same criteria.

Let's use Hillsong as an example. Many songs from this source may not find a place in Mass for a variety of reasons. Firstly, some Hillsong pieces are musically quite difficult for the congregation to participate in, and participation is vital. Other songs may express an individualistic 'me-and-Jesus' spirituality rather than the communal 'we' theology which is central to Catholic worship.

A number may promote a particular atonement theology that doesn't align with Catholic beliefs and teachings. Catholic theology of Eucharist is quite different from that of other Christian denominations. Consequently, it is unlikely that a suitable Communion song would be found in Pentecostal Church repertoire.

An important role of the Entrance Song is to build up a sense of corporate unity. Tim Redman's well-known '*Here I am to worship, here I am to*

*bow down, here I am to say that you're my God'* individualises rather than unifies the ritual action of gathering. On the other hand, some rousing mission-themed songs from non-Catholic sources may provide the perfect inspirational Recessional song!

One of the attractions of Hillsong and similar repertoire, especially for young people, is that contemporary musical genres that are used. However some Catholic composers employ similar styles to great effect, including US musicians Matt Maher, Sarah Hart, Josh Blakesley, along with Australians such as Gen Bryant and Timothy Hart.

So there is no simple 'yes or no' answer to using Hillsong or other non-Catholic repertoire at Mass. It is a case-by-case, song-by-song question which requires formation, knowledge, understanding and discernment. Often the theological nuances of the decision may be beyond the expertise of local parish musicians. If there is uncertainty, it would be wise for parishes and schools to seek advice before using the song at Mass.

IN SUMMARY:

- The Church welcomes all styles of music into liturgy as long as it 'corresponds to the spirit of the liturgical celebration'.
- All music used in Catholic liturgy must meet certain liturgical, musical, pastoral and theological criteria.
- There is no liturgical ban on Hillsong or any other music as long as it meets the established criteria.
- The music of non-Catholic composers is welcomed into liturgy if it meets the criteria.
- Establishing these criteria for particular songs requires liturgical and theological knowledge which may sometimes be beyond the expertise of local parish musicians.

■ Liturgist and teacher, Michael Mangan is a well-known composer of liturgical music, especially for children.



## Ann M Garrido, *Preaching with Children* (Chicago, LTP, 2021) 96 pp.

by Tom Elich

**T**his little book comes from the context of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS). This ministry across many countries and church traditions arose from the Montessori movement. The book's rationale is set out in the introduction. *Preaching has never been easy. There is the challenge of finding the right message to speak at the intersection of Scripture and daily life. Then the struggle of crafting words that touch a particular congregation and motivate action. Yes, preaching in any context requires prayer, time and effort. But preaching to children? Even the most experienced and otherwise most effective preachers still find themselves at a loss for where to begin* (p. 2).

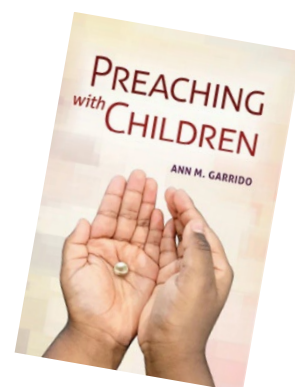
For those who may not have experience of the CGS, the first chapter gives some history of the movement and its philosophy. It is about forming a community of adults and children who listen together to the word of God and in which the child's way of being in the world is taken as the norm. The second chapter considers this paradigm shift. How might a preacher begin by listening, drawing on the children's experiences of faith in order to make new connections with them and so help their liturgical participation? *What if Christ – present in word and sacrament – was understood to be the only teacher in the space*, asks Garrido (p. 19). It

means reading the Scriptures through the eyes of the children and letting their questions drive the preaching preparation.

Then, with the help of Montessori, Garrido explores something of the psychology of children (3 to 12 years old). She recognises, for example, that children ask big questions about life and death and have the capacity to delve into these mysteries. They have absorbent minds before they possess reasoning minds. They are attracted to beauty and order. A preacher will tap into these dimensions. *When the needs of the child's spirit are met, it manifests itself in joy... most often... joy expressed in a quiet settled satisfaction* (p. 31). It is not all about frivolous distraction and bouncy songs.

How then do children receive the Scriptures? Chapter 4 shows how children are able to lift out the 'golden thread' of God's love from stories of creation, the heroes and prophets, and Jesus himself. They are able to enter the symbolic world of Baptism and Eucharist. The preacher's role is to fit the pieces together. *How? By facilitating the process of discovery and organisation. I suspect that for many children in our congregations, Scripture still feels like a jumbled toybox of stories and moral lessons tossed in... When I preach, I can help listeners place a particular pericope within the context of the whole... Help them begin to wonder where they fit into this story. And if I can do all of this by way of a few well-framed questions, then I can assist...* (p. 42).

*'Letting the Sparks Fly'* is the climax of the book. *We know that children are meant for the word [of God] and the word is meant for children, like flint and iron, when struck together, ignite and produce a flame* (p. 45). In





general, for children under nine, the preacher should focus on Christ and the gospel story. Preparation is crucial. There are helpful suggestions about how to meditate on the text from a child's perspective. Can the key message be summarised in thirty words or less? Then how does one make the message memorable... perhaps a story or something humorous, perhaps a prop or an action. But make sure these devices serve the message – we don't want them to remember the joke but forget the gospel. The preacher should leave the children wondering, perhaps with a question. It is more important to entice their minds and open their hearts than to thump home a conclusion. The style should be oral. A preacher may speak from notes perhaps, but preferably not read from a written text – it sounds different, stilted. Preachers need to consider the physical aspects of where and how they will sit or stand, how they are in relation to the children, their movements and gestures. And having done all this, make space for the Holy Spirit!

To conclude this simple and helpful book, Garrido offers some summary remarks and gives six sample homilies for different age groups and occasions. These examples help to nail down her reflections and enable preachers to imagine how they might be able to do it themselves. *Yes, when speaking with children, be essential and count your words. Speak to the big mysteries and leave them wondering. Honour the wisdom already present in their midst and acknowledge how much you know that they know. Foster connections between a particular passage of Scripture and the larger History of the Kingdom of God* (pp. 60-61).

We generally associate preaching with the priest. This book will certainly be useful for a priest or deacon, but seems always to presume a lay preacher as is allowed by the 1973 *Directory for Masses with Children*, 24. *Preaching with Children* is short and simple, insightful and highly recommended.

**STOP  
PRESS**



**THANK YOU**



**+ WELCOME**

After thirteen years of clear and prophetic leadership as Archbishop of Brisbane, the resignation of Mark Coleridge has been accepted by Pope Leo XIV.

With great joy, the Archdiocese has received the news that Sandhurst's bishop, Shane Mackinlay, has been appointed as our new archbishop. Ordained bishop in 2019, he will be installed in the Cathedral of St Stephen's on 11 September 2025.

We are welcoming a gifted intellectual, a wise and experienced pastor.

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