Liturgy NEWS

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EDITOR

THE LITURGY: *Anti Antisemitic*

In Australia and in many other countries there has been an alarming rise in antisemitic behaviour over the last couple of years – nasty slogans and bullying, arson, vandalism and violence. Who are the perpetrators of this antisemitism in our midst? Anti-Zionist and pro-Palestinian stances can easily morph into antisemitism, but they are not of themselves discriminatory. Presumably some of this antisemitic rhetoric and action comes from people with a Christian background. For those who celebrate Christian liturgy, this is truly unbelievable.

Jesus was a Jew. We've heard this often before, haven't we? The Virgin Mary and the apostles were Jewish. We see Jesus and his disciples going to the synagogue. Jesus reads the scriptures and teaches there; he heals the sick there. From his earliest days he is found in the Temple in Jerusalem and this becomes the site of many of the incidents in the gospels. The Synoptic gospels present the Last Supper as a Passover meal and, although John has the death of Jesus coincide with the slaughter of the Passover lamb, the Lord's Supper still has a Passover context.

At first, Christian believers continue to go to both synagogue and Temple for prayer and worship. The landscape changes in the century or more after Jesus' death. The Romans' destruction of the Temple in 70 AD was a major disruption. As we see in the gospels, there were different groups within Judaism (Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots...) and soon there were different groups within Christianity too. While some Christians held to their Jewish traditions, the message of Christ is radically opened up to the Gentile population. In the second century, the Jewish and Christian traditions move further apart. Keeping the Sabbath at first coexists with but then gives way to the Sunday observance.

Without the Temple, from the time of the exile (6th century BC) and again after 70 AD, the synagogue became a significant part of Jewish life. This name means 'gathering place, assembly, congregation, meeting'. It was a place where one could study the scriptures and offer prayer, and these come to be seen as the heart of worship rather than Temple sacrifice. This experience shapes the liturgical life of the early Church.

Christian liturgy has continued to incorporate readings from the Hebrew Scriptures and, indeed, preserves the synagogue pattern of reading and preaching. The psalms remain a key element in Christian prayer, not only in the Liturgy of the Word, but even more so in the Church's daily prayer. The Christian forms of eucharistic thanksgiving are indebted to the Jewish domestic *berakah* prayers; to this we add the key idea of *anamnesis,* that is, the remembrance of God's saving deeds which become a present reality and which we enter through thanksgiving, praise and supplication. The Jewish tradition of family meals – the weekly Shabbat and the annual Seder – form the context for the Christian Eucharist, at first celebrated during a communal meal in people's homes. All in all, we Christians stand squarely in the tradition of the patriarchs, Moses and the prophets.

Vatican Council II, just twenty years after the Holocaust, called the Church "God's farm or field" in which *the ancient olive tree grows whose holy roots were the patriarchs and in which the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles has been achieved and will continue to be achieved* (LG 6). Paul notes that *the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable* (Rom 11:30).

So the Council affirmed: *Since Christians and Jews have such a common spiritual heritage, this sacred council wishes to encourage and further mutual understanding and appreciation. This can be achieved, especially, by way of biblical and theological enquiry and through friendly discussions* (NA 4). This document, *Nostra Aetate,* marks a significant change of direction for the Catholic Church in denouncing any kind of hatred or prejudice against the Jews. As we approach the sixtieth anniversary of its promulgation on 28 October, it is important that we embrace visible gestures of fraternal respect.

Of course, for centuries, the Christian Church was responsible for shocking antisemitism. Jewish people were stereotyped in extremely negative ways, they were severely restricted in community life and were often imprisoned or expelled. This arose from misguided ideas that Jewish people were responsible for the death of Christ and that the people of God of the first covenant were superseded or negated by the Christian Church. All of this is a terrible burden of guilt and shame that we continue to bear and for which we continue to repent.

Recasting the Good Friday prayer for the Jewish people is an example of how we have moved in our attitudes. We once prayed for the "perfidious Jews" that God who showed mercy even to these faithless people in their blindness would now bring them out of darkness. Today our Good Friday prayer acknowledges that they were the first to hear the word of God and that they are the people God first made his own. We ask that together we will grow in love of God and faithfulness to God's covenant.

My point is that our liturgy in both its texts and structures has very significant Jewish origins and that those who participate in the liturgy ought rejoice in and respect this common ancestry. This has been one of the most important insights of the liturgical movement during the 20th century.

Yes, there was also much that was new and unique in Christian worship. Yes, there are Hellenistic influences which appear soon enough, though these were perhaps not as strong as we thought in the 19th century – patterns of initiation, for example, the symbol of light/dawn, the idea of secrecy which was taken over from the mystery religions or, in due course, the adoption of the Greek (and later Latin) vernacular as the liturgical language.

Yes, it is also true that we cannot reconstruct a clear account of Jewish worship in the first century and it is impossible to be specific in terms of actual textual borrowing. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that when we celebrate the Christian liturgy, we are expressing in our rites a profound solidarity and fellowship with our Jewish brothers and sisters. It is utterly incompatible that we celebrate the liturgy and simultaneously harbour antisemitic sentiments.

PILGRIMAGE

Jubilee Year

The Church celebrates a Year of Jubilee every 25 years (and sometimes in between). It is a time to make a new beginning. In the Old Testament, it involved the restitution of land to original owners, the remission of debts, the liberation of slaves, and leaving paddocks to lie fallow. Sometimes Catholic practice gives the impression that a Holy Year is very tame: you walk through a Jubilee door to receive a special grace. It must be more than this: it must be tied up with (re)establishing relationships of justice, harmony and peace; it should lead to a discernment of and respect for our place in all of creation.

Jubilee 2025 has a strong focus on hope. This is most necessary at a time when so many places are being destroyed through shocking war and violence. Even in peaceful democracies like Australia, there is the constant challenge of domestic violence and discrimination, rising crime rates and the longstanding need for truth and reconciliation. How can we make this year count?

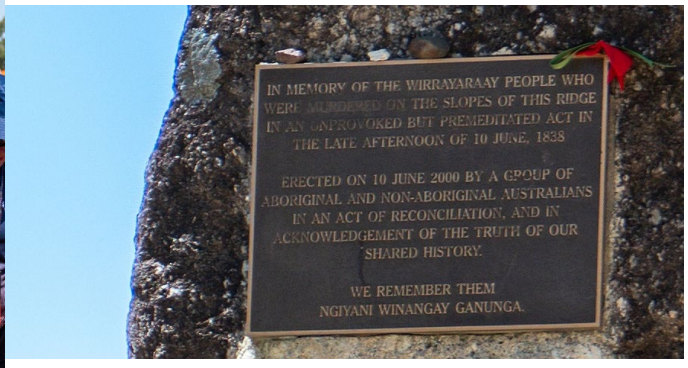
Pilgrimage

This is the second great theme of the Year of Jubilee 2025. Pilgrimage is not a kind of religious-themed tourism as the glossy travel brochures sometimes suggest. It is meant to be a tough spiritual exercise that brings us to a new place. Think of the famous pilgrimage to Compostela: the pilgrim walks meditatively for weeks across the top of Spain, staying in simple pilgrim huts, to arrive at the great basilica of St James. The Jubilee title *Pilgrims of Hope* challenges us to ask what difference our pilgrimage will make. Certainly, it will be valuable for people to experience moments of prayer and a deeper spiritual encounter with God. But will it also further the Jubilee purpose of fostering justice, reconciliation and peace in the world?

Many Australian dioceses have developed a program of pilgrimage to mark the Jubilee year. Mostly dioceses have nominated the cathedral and some other significant churches as places of pilgrimage: Melbourne has three churches in each quadrant of the diocese, Sydney has the cathedral and eleven other churches, Paramatta has the cathedral and two shrines as places to visit, Wollongong has listed six churches and has produced a 'passport' to get stamped in each place. There is a youth pilgrimage to Rome being organised. Many communities have learned to sing the official Jubilee hymn. The website of the bishops' conference has produced prayer resources for a list of Jubilee events throughout the year (they follow the program established for Jubilee celebrations in Rome).

While these spiritual exercises will undoubtedly enrich people's lives this year, *Liturgy News* would like to propose a few more adventurous ideas for a pilgrimage of hope. The first draws on a pilgrimage undertaken in October 2024 as part of the Spirit on Country conference hosted by Armidale Catholic Schools and Catholic Schools NSW.

Myall Creek Memorial Site



The photographs on our cover and on this page illustrate the 2024 Catholic education pilgrimage to the site of a massacre of Aboriginal people at Myall Creek in June 1838. Myall Creek is located west of Grafton, halfway between Moore and Glen Innes.

The 1830s was a boom time in the wool industry and pressure on Indigenous communities by pastoralists increased. There had been a number of violent clashes in the previous months.

Then, on 10 June 1838, a squatter led a group of ten convict stockmen to brutally massacre 28 Wirrayaraay Aboriginal people in an unprovoked and premeditated attempt to remove them from what had become pastoral land. This event is notable because it was the first time that the perpetrators were brought to justice – against public opinion and following a second trial, seven men were convicted of murder and were executed in Sydney at the end of 1838. Read the story of the massacre at https://myallcreek.org/the-massacre-story.

In 2000, 162 years after the massacre, a memorial was dedicated at Myall Creek. It is a monumental granite rock with a plaque attached. The dedication was attended by descendants of both the victims and the perpetrators who expressed their desire for reconciliation. A speaker on behalf of the memorial committee said: *Very soon we will all take a journey together. We will walk up the hill and along the serpentine path together, and as we walk down towards the rock, we will read about the massacre that happened 162 years ago today. And as you walk, I ask only this of you. Think about those who died, speak to them, say a prayer for them, remember them. And as you return back along the path, take a stranger by the arm and walk back in peace, knowing that today you have taken a very big step towards justice, truth and reconciliation.*

About 400 people gather at the site each year on the anniversary. It would be a powerful Jubilee Pilgrimage of Hope for Catholic groups to join them in remembrance. The three-day event in 2025 will occur on the weekend of Sunday 8 June.

My Liturgical Life

by Jacinta Walker

I was lovingly conceived under the watchful eye of the Sacred Heart of Jesus -- the painting hung above my parents' bed. I was born on Holy Thursday 1963, my mother's tenth pregnancy, five surviving to birth. Somewhere in between these events, my sexual orientation as a 'gay woman' (as I prefer to be called) was programmed in my brain by a mix of genetics and prenatal conditions. Then I was faithfully presented for baptism thirty-one days later. None of these factors were of my choosing and yet they have shaped my life in both profoundly satisfying and challenging ways.

One of my earliest memories as a toddler was sitting on the kneeler in church eating a piece of buttered toast which my mother had prepared, while my brother and sisters went up to receive communion. I always viewed this as my mother's way of making me feel like I was included and participating, no different to my older siblings. At age eleven, with the encouragement of an associate priest in our parish, I became a reader at Mass and helped my parents with the weekly hospitality ministry. In high school, I was trained and appointed a communion minister, and became involved in the music ministry as a singer and musician. By the time I was fifteen, I was serving my community in multiple ministries each Saturday night and I loved it. I was included and belonged. I was active and fully participating. I had a sense of the flow and richness of symbols and the seasons of the liturgical year. I was nourished and sent out into my week strengthened and motivated to serve others. My liturgical experiences in my teenage years formed my faith in tangible ways and it set me apart from most of my peers who never went to church. By the end of my senior year, three things had become clear to me: I wanted to be a teacher in a Catholic school, I sought to discern my call to religious life and I was gay.

Like many other gay Catholics, I experienced significant internal conflict due to the contradictory messages received from my Catholic family, schooling and Church regarding homosexuality. Even before I attended the Catholic primary school, I was aware that same-sex attraction was 'sinful', 'intrinsically disordered' (although I didn't know these words at the time) and was to be 'avoided at all costs' (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church,* 2357). A large part of my life seems to have been spent negotiating between my 'Catholic' identity and my 'homosexual' identity as I struggled to reconcile the two within my self-perception of 'being made in the image of God'.

There were times when I prioritised my religious identity over my sexual orientation and lived a celibate life both as a teacher within the Catholic Education system and as a professed sister within a religious community. I found strength and meaning as I immersed myself in the richness of liturgy firstly in my classroom, school and parish communities, and then in my religious order and the communities of sisters with whom I lived and shared life. Throughout my religious life, the daily rhythm of the Liturgy of the Hours and *Lectio Divina* was where I gained solace and strength in times of distress, shame and self-doubt.

I experienced the transformative power of liturgy for conversion of heart and mind. It drew me more deeply into the love of God, where I could find understanding, forgiveness, self-acceptance and love. My love of and experiences within the liturgy of the Catholic Church and my theological study formed me to bear witness, engage in acts of charity and take on liturgical leadership roles. These ministries took place within schools, as a chaplain in acute hospital settings, in the training and supervision of others in Pastoral Care, and as a pastoral associate in Catholic parish communities. But this was always at the cost of not fully integrating a significant part of who I am – my sexual identity – due to the 'don't tell' mentality and policies in these settings. There were many times when I experienced the vilification of gays and the gay culture when something came up in the media. I was criticised for attending the AIDS Quilt ceremony or a candlelight vigil and march, or for doing a ministry placement in a respite home for men who were dying of AIDS, to name a few. I was reprimanded for painting a rainbow on a banner for a peace march... because everyone knows 'the rainbow is a symbol for homosexuality'. My internal homophobic radar was honed to hear these words of ignorance, judgement and exclusion.

When I was approaching my final profession, my daily liturgical life was a source of inspiration which influenced my discernment process. Now I found the courage to speak the truth of my sexual identity and come out as a gay woman to my peers and to the sisters within formation and leadership roles within the order. The immediate reaction from most was silence, as if I hadn't said anything of importance; but this then changed and came to be seen as a problem – the fact that I was, that I hadn't spoken of it and had kept it secret. Yet I had never broken my vow of celibacy and had negotiated any attractions purposefully and successfully. Inevitably, I personalised these and many other messages, and once again struggled with the notions that my sexual identity was 'sinful', 'disordered' and 'to be avoided'.

In hindsight, I know the impact that being silent about my sexuality had had on my psychological well-being and self-

esteem. When my order offered for me to participate in a six-month psychological program in Sydney, I went to find wholeness and peace. However, I quickly came to see that integration would not be possible for me if I were to remain in religious life. When I left and went back to teaching in a Catholic school, I immersed myself in the faith community of my school and the parish liturgical life that welcomed me and gave me sustenance for my journey. I missed the daily rhythm of communal prayer and the sense of belonging I had experienced as a religious.

A few years later, I was outed to Catholic Education because I had begun a relationship with the woman whom I have now loved for twenty-two years and whom I am proud to call my wife. My accuser was the same priest who had encouraged me as a teenager to be a fully participating and active member of the worshipping community. I lost my job and spent six years retraining as a clinical psychologist. One of my special interest areas is working with LGBTIQA+ clients who seek to fully integrate their sexual identity and affirm their gender identity. The greatest gift is when I work with older clients who have struggled to integrate their sexuality and Catholicism and who have personalised those strong messages of 'sinful', 'disordered' and 'to be avoided'. The most freeing aspect for me is that I no longer work within the constraints of the Catholic doctrine or religious life under the policy of 'don't tell'.

When my wife and I came together, we searched for a parish in which we could feel accepted as a gay couple. Another priest of my youth welcomed us into our current parish, and there we have been nourished and sustained through its liturgical life. We became instantly involved in liturgical ministries and our lives were enriched by the acceptance, love, and support of fellow parishioners. We were circumspect in not announcing ourselves as a couple but never denied it if asked.

We also wanted to ritualise our love and fidelity and chose to do so in a service of commitment outside of the church. We called on God to bless us, our love, and our life together. This ritual drew heavily on our shared liturgical experiences and formation, and the scripture and prayers of our tradition. It was a faith-filled testimony of our love. At the time, we believed we would never be able to marry civilly or sacramentally. In fact, we experienced a lot of tension when we were allowed in 2018 to be married under Australian law, because of our understanding of Catholic teaching and our respect for the sacrament of marriage. When we did marry in a civil ceremony, we included many of the prayers of blessing and the sacred vows that we had shared in our commitment ceremony ten years previously. Friends from our parish joined with our family and gay friends to witness our civil marriage and offer their support.

Without our knowledge, the parish priest chose to acknowledge our civil marriage in the parish newsletter, and I recognise this as an attempt at inclusion. But of course there were some who objected and made official complaints about the acceptance of our civil marriage and the fact that I was involved in liturgical ministries and parish leadership as chairperson of the Parish Council. The parish priest's stance was to wait it out and let it all blow over rather than challenging the lack of inclusion and judgement of those who protested. Once again, faced with those strong messages of 'sinful', 'disordered' and 'to be avoided', I felt I'd been lulled into the false security of 'belonging'. All this happened just before Holy Week when my wife and I were to take part in proclaiming the Good Friday Gospel of the Passion of the Lord. Knowing the thoughts, judgements and actions of some in the congregation, we were nervous but were encouraged to go ahead by others. As we moved to take our place on the sanctuary, we noticed that the celebrant repositioned himself to stand and block from our view those who had made the complaints. He intentionally stood between us and our accusers and in doing so stood with us. This momentary, instinctive gesture of acceptance and love profoundly freed me to see how in liturgy we can experience God leading us beyond our own feelings and preferences, and helping us to put the needs of others ahead of our own.

Archdiocese of Brisbane

SYNOD24

I am making all things new.

RESPONSE TO 5TH PLENARY COUNCIL OF THE CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA.

DECREE 3: CALLED BY CHRIST, SENT FORTH AS MISSIONARY DISCIPLES.

This decree focusses on renewing the Church's mission and outreach by fostering a culture of inclusivity, dialogue and active participation…

Among the actions agreed upon:

- Create intentionally welcoming and safe spaces for LGBTQIA+ community members.
- Bring to light stories and experiences not often heard or shared such as those identifying as LGBTQIA+…

In this moment
we are called to be courageous
and make bold steps in changing and challenging
the modus operandi of the archdiocese,
in order to make it more inclusive and welcoming,
where all can find a place to belong.

As a gay woman, I have been encouraged by changes in the rhetoric used by some in the Catholic Church about homosexuality. It began in 2013 with Pope Francis' widely reported statement, *Who am I to judge?* Other comments followed which emphasised the need to accept, welcome and accompany LGBTIQA+ people, and which denounced laws criminalising homosexuality. Under this pontificate, the Dicastery of the Doctrine of the Faith has confirmed that transgender people can be baptised and, in the document *Fiducia Supplicans,* allowed the blessing of same-sex couples. Pope Francis indicated that the purpose of these blessings was to *concretely show the closeness of the Lord and the Church to all those who, finding themselves in different situations, ask for help to continue – sometimes to begin – a journey of faith*. Before, these changes in attitude and the growing acceptance of homosexual people, I used to feel shame because of the mix of truths and falsehoods I had been taught in the name

of orthodoxy. At times, I have found my place in the Church by ambivalence towards or by ignoring aspects of moral teaching that seemed outdated or harmful. I see the potential for a blessing as another gift of the liturgy to be reparative and restorative; the capacity to ask for God's blessing is a way of receiving the strength needed for our journey.

Now my life is lived as an openly gay woman who is married under civil law. I am an active member of a Catholic parish, involved in liturgical ministries and open to serving the community when I see a need or am called to do so. My wife and I offer each other the sign of peace with a kiss, we feel the freedom to reach out and hold the other's hand as we acknowledge our failings, or face the challenges put before us by the Scriptures, liturgical gestures and symbols, or words of sacred music. We hold in tension experiences of exclusion and judgement from some members of the parish but choose not to be constrained by them. We try to offer acceptance, welcome, hospitality and service to others.

What I do know is that today the consistently profound experience of God in liturgy arises from feeling united with my wife as we join in the liturgical celebration together. In the liturgy, we are called to conversion of heart, to be reconciled to God, our neighbours and each other, to be drawn into deeper communion with God, to have past hurts soothed and breaches of trust renewed, to be moved to works of charity, hospitality and justice, and to speak our truth in love.

And it is ***love***, the love of the One who created me in the image of God, which is the truth of who I am in my entirety. My life lived in the service of God and the people of God has been guided by Scripture and sustained by the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church across my years. It began in the momentous event of my baptism.

■ Jacinta Walker is a clinical psychologist who also holds degrees in theology and education.

MUSIC

Style Wars: a disturbance and a farce

by Anthony Young

My heart sank when I started online research for this article. Rarely had I read such vitriolic attacks on Catholics by Catholics. Music ministers are routinely pilloried for their repertoire with often wild claims about Church teaching used in support. Some claim modernising music or traditionalising it will cure the ills of the Church. These nasty debates ignore significant factors that are in play, including current Church realities and the fact that the parish musicians should, first and foremost, serve the sung prayer of their congregations.

Some traditionalists argue that 'modern' music lacks the otherworldliness of Gregorian Chant and the polyphony of Palestrina, two styles of music which are expressly encouraged in the Church documents (SC 116). They claim that other music is too profane and should not be allowed. Debate about sacred and secular music has raged for centuries. In the 1400s, the Council of Trent threatened to ban polyphonic music (like that of Palestrina) because Orlande de Lassus used bawdy secular music as the basis of the Kyrie and Gloria of his *Missa Entre Vous Filles*. Now, *Musicam Sacram* 'encourages new styles of sacred song' provided it has 'the qualities of genuine sacred music', a phrase which has, in practice, been very broadly interpreted (MS 9.53). Many also claim that, because of its rhythm, more modern music cannot be sung in large groups. This is despite evidence to the contrary in stadiums around the world, and the rhythmic complexity of some of the more melismatic chants which these same traditionalists espouse.

Some progressives claim that the only way to engage with people and evangelise is to mimic their style of music. Unchurched people should come to church and feel 'at home' with what they hear. If going to Mass is just like being at home, people will probably stay home. Strange stylistic assumptions are often made. For example, 'we need to sing this for the young people' and the piece nominated is in adult folk-rock style from the 1970s. I grew up in the 1970s and certainly do not qualify as young. At my school, any class of students has a wide range of musical preferences so an attempt by me as a music teacher to choose repertoire that makes them feel 'at home' is a fool's errand. In the same way, youth in our parish happily go to Emmanuel City Mission and sing contemporary Christian music at their mission-style Mass, then attend a Latin Mass at the Oratory, all the while regularly attending my parish of St Ignatius which has a Jesuit-influenced repertoire of many styles of music. It is not the youth. Rather, it is people of my generation who seem to vehemently reject chant or love chant, vehemently love the organ or hate the organ, vehemently want to play guitars or ban guitars, and let's not start on the drum kit debate – cahón anyone?

Overall, the basic directions from *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and *Musicam Sacram* are:

1) Treasure what the Church already possesses and develop new music that is sacred.

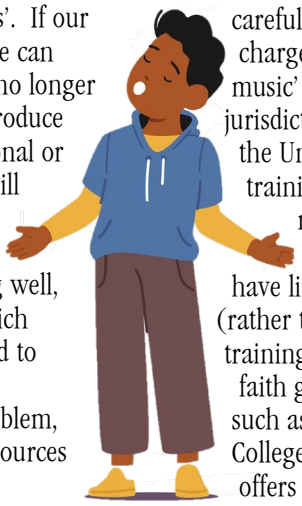
2) Develop congregational singing, especially of the Ordinary of the Mass, while still supporting choral singing.

3) Maintain the voice as the primary instrument for worship, followed by the pipe organ, with the admission of other instruments if they can be made suitable.

The enormous energy put into fighting about musical styles and genres should be put into serving our congregations. Whatever we think of what has happened in Catholic Church music, there is not much point in trying to 'shut the gate after the horse has bolted'. The 'treasury' of sacred music has grown enormously, and 'all that glisters is not gold'. In every era and in every style, we find the tremendous and the tawdry. Examples of each are being sung, well and badly, across the nation. But the way forward is not to simply disparage music and discard it.

The great music education and Church music researcher, Martin Ashley, states that school music does not need to be 'cool' but it needs to be mutually acceptable. It is different from the everyday music of the students, because teachers must decide on pieces that can be sung together in class, assuming the school uses a singing based pedagogy (*Singing in the Lower Secondary School,* Oxford University Press, 2016 and *How High Should Boys Sing,* Routledge, 2009). Similarly, congregational Church music is different from everyday music, because it serves a different purpose. Church musicians must decide on pieces that can be sung by people together in prayer. Our aim is to create a shared repertoire of music that is inter-generational, deeply-known and loved. We need music that will unite us to our Lord to crown our joys and console our sorrows. This music should bring generations, nations and communities together, not divide them.

Accordingly, we should be charitable instead of attacking the music loved by fellow Catholics. Music ministers have a heavy responsibility to nurture the singing of our communities, both in congregations and choirs. It would be arrogant to throw out the loved repertoire that has sustained a faith community simply because the style did not suit the musicians. It would be just as bad to allow a community's repertoire to ossify, rejecting anything that was new. If we are judging and choosing, we should focus on the quality of the language and theology, the quality of the word setting to rhythm, the range of the melody, the melodic contour, the harmony, and the form. We should treat the sung prayer of our people as the fragile thing that it is and work to support it. Stopping a congregation singing a piece that they love may be denying them a collective opportunity for powerful prayer. When changing repertoire, we should be like Telemachus in Tennyson's *Ulysses* who was told to exercise 'slow prudence' and 'soft degrees'. If our congregation sings well, we can gently retire music that is no longer appropriate and gently introduce new music, be it of traditional or contemporary style, that will enhance the shared prayer of our community. If our congregation does not sing well, we need to interrogate which aspects of our practice need to change. Often it is not the repertoire which is the problem, but instead the musical resources and leadership provided.



In my own context, our school sings, with gusto, music that ranges in style from traditional hymnody to modern Christian rock. The repertoire is small but well-known and grows slowly enough so that when graduates return for school functions they can join in the singing. Indeed some of the repertoire is sung on the sports fields, as it is the only material that all students have in common. Similarly at our parish we have developed common pieces of repertoire and a common Mass setting with our neighbouring parishes and schools so that when we meet, we can sing as one. This requires pastoral sensitivity to accommodate the differing communities, their traditions and their resources. While our parish and neighbouring high schools have paid music ministers who support both community and choral singing, a small primary school may need sheet music, words and a recording if they are to learn a piece of parish music without a school music teacher.

Lack of formation in singing and playing, not style, is the biggest hurdle to more successful sung prayer. *Musicam Sacram* clearly requires 'formation in singing' to 'be done even from the first years of education in elementary schools' (MS 18). There should be 'provision' for 'at least one or two properly trained singers' (MS 21) at Mass. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* demands the 'teaching and practice of music' in 'Catholic institutions and schools. To impart this instruction, teachers are to be carefully trained and put in charge of teaching of sacred music' (SC 115). While other jurisdictions (Ireland, Canada and the United States) mandate the training and payment of musicians for the Church, Australian Catholics have little access to practical (rather than theoretical) music training or employment. Other faith groups run institutions, such as Ecclesia University College in Pennant Hills, which offers a Bachelor of Music (Worship) including theology, practical teaching and congregational placement practicum.

If the Catholic Church ran institutions like this, the 'style wars' would subside, because the real cause of our musical malaise – the lack of trained musicians employed in our institutions – would be remedied. Of course, this has been consistently demanded by the Holy See since Pius X a hundred years ago (TLS 1903). Despite this, Catholic boys schools often spend more money on rugby union than on liturgy, which is why, in my job interview 27 years ago, I was told that rugby union was the religion of my school. At my school, that view has changed. What can you do to change attitudes in your community?

■ Musician and choral conductor Dr Anthony Young is Coordinator of Culture and Solidarity at St Laurence's College in Brisbane.

RELIGIOUS ART TO LITURGICAL ART

by Angela McCarthy

In many conversations over the years, the terms religious art, Christian art, sacred art, and liturgical art have arisen. Animated discussions about what each one means are entirely possible, indeed probable, if interested people come together. Some contemporary art critiques religion or even mocks it. It is religious art (it has religious content) but will not be included in this article because it lacks the context of religious belief. Still religious art is very diverse due to the large number of cultures that use art to express religious concepts. Every culture has developed forms of religion; and expressing beliefs in *visual theology* helps believers to respond and connect to religious meaning.

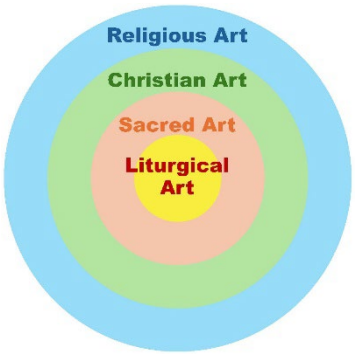
Within religious art is Christian art, a subset which responds directly to Christian beliefs and narratives. Such artworks do not have to be created exclusively by Christian artists but do need to be able to articulate something of the Christian world in images to support the faith of believers. Thus they may grow in their understanding and awareness of the relationship between the text, ritual, artwork and the Christian life. For many centuries in Christian history, artists have been employed by the Church to provide the finest examples of visual art to help people access the gospel story. The great cathedrals of the world hold exceptional examples, viewed by millions of religious pilgrims. In general, Christian art requires identifiable Christian content – Christ or a gospel narrative, a saint or Christian event.

Sacred art takes us to another dimension. Within either the world of Christian art or the art of other religions, this art draws a person into the mystery, the spiritual, a domain beyond our world. It evokes a sense of the sacred. These artworks – icons for example – draw Christians into prayer and contemplation of God, whether in their own domestic space or in shared communal spaces. This work might be abstract, using colour and light to summon the ineffable, rather as music might do – a Bach toccata played on the organ, for example.

Music offers us different examples of the way artwork may draw people into a transcendent experience. Mozart's Mass in C Minor performed in a concert hall, for example, might provide for a Christian the experience of sensing God both in the beauty of the music and through the Latin text and a personal knowledge of the order of the Mass. However, listeners without a specific religious perspective can also be drawn into a transcendent space that alters the senses. Jonathan Arnold provides excellent material from his research in the experience of fine art music in secular cultural spaces (*Sacred Music in Secular Society,* Ashgate, 2014).

Liturgical art is a subsection of sacred art. It is art which plays a direct role in the liturgical action, helping to open the sacramental words, gestures and signs to the transcendent. Liturgical artforms include architecture, music, visual art, furnishings, textiles, sacred vessels and other created things of beauty that are used for liturgical purposes. For example, liturgical art encompasses the processional cross and banners carried in procession, the vestments for the ministers and the vessels they handle, the crucifix above the altar and paschal candle, the designs carved into the baptismal font or tabernacle. The image of the patron saint or the Virgin Mary might figure in the celebration of their feast days during the year.

The wide range of religious art was seen in an extraordinary exhibition curated by Sr Rosemary Crumlin at the National Gallery of Victoria almost three decades ago. It had a profound effect on the many people who travelled the curated route through a spiral of beautiful artworks that acted like a labyrinth in the meditative action of walking. The journey can be recreated by consulting the substantial catalogue: *Beyond Belief: Modern Art and the Religious Imagination* (Melbourne, NGV, 1998). At the heart of the journey was an inspiring work of sacred art, a sculpture of Mary of Warmun by George Mung (it is described and illustrated on the website of the National Liturgical Architecture and Art Council, *Australian Catholic Liturgical Art:* http://art.catholic.org.au).



This simplistic diagram will illustrate the concepts from a Christian point of view and may visually help form a general understanding.

Australia's most significant thematic Christian art prize, the biennial Mandorla Art Award, was established in 1985 and is held in Perth (www.mandorlaart.com). Artists are invited to enter into a conversation with a biblical text. In 2024, artists responded to a text from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians 16:14: *Let all that you do be done in love.* Among the variety of the artworks, some could be called sacred art as they drew the viewer into an experience of the sacred. After all, St John tells us that *God is love*, and every piece of art in the exhibition was about love. It was such a moving experience that there were viewers in tears when experiencing the works and reading their stories. In general, there is no liturgical art in the Mandorla as this art is a very particular subset and will be a response to the culture of each Christian community.

Art in Churches: an example.

The sadness is that many of our churches in Australia do not have any art at all. Many of them will just have illustrative images/objects that remind us of particular pieties. Plaster cast materials from places of mass production are not touched by an artist's hand. These cannot receive the title of 'art' because true art is the work of an artist. Artists produce work from 90% perspiration and 10% inspiration.

The parish of St Thomas More, Bateman, in Western Australia is a wonderful example. This church has three

major works by Robert Juniper (1929-2012). He was an important Australian artist who is represented in national and international collections and who was declared a 'living treasure' by the government of Western Australia. He created many religious works and was very conversant with Christian scripture (although not a participant in religious institutions). He painted the images that became the glass walls of the Bunbury Catholic Cathedral.

Bateman architect Iris Rossen commissioned three liturgical artworks by Juniper for the St Thomas More church: a crucifix, a baptismal panel and a Marian image. When I interviewed him in 2009 about the artworks, Robert Juniper spoke of the strong influence that Russian icons have had on his work and on the crucifix in particular. Icons are a uniquely Christian form of art that were fully developed by the Eastern Orthodox Christians.

Crucifix

The crucifix that is suspended high above the sanctuary draws together many deep and rich traditions of the Catholic faith. For many centuries Christians could not use the cross as a symbol of faith because of the devastating use of crucifixion to execute criminals in the Roman Empire. The use of a crucifix – a cross with Jesus' body on it – was not common until the Middle Ages as the emphasis was always on the risen Christ. In the Middle Ages, it became more prevalent to look at our sinfulness and to focus on the crucifix where Christ died for our sins, rather than our redeemed nature made possible through the resurrection.

Juniper has used a Greek cross shape (the *crux quadrata* with equal height and width) to favour symmetry and to harmonise with the shape of the sanctuary. The crucifix is made from jarrah, a Western Australian hard wood, with a bronze, gold-plated figure raised in the middle. The body of Christ is not realistically portrayed but shown as a glorified and abstracted figure. In most of the Gospel accounts of the post-resurrection appearances of Christ, the disciples did not recognise him as he was in a different bodily form. Juniper's abstraction leads us deeper into the mystery of the resurrection by confronting us with the question of how we personally recognise the risen Christ.

Surrounding the Christ figure are icon-like portrayals of the four evangelists: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Each evangelist has his name in Latin which connects to our use of Latin since the fourth century. The background is gold leaf because in icons it represents the splendour of God and being present in God's time. Each of them holds a book to represent the Gospel of Jesus Christ and is dressed in a combination of red and blue – red representing divine Love and blue representing heavenly truth. The use of red in the gold halo surrounding their heads recognises that they were martyred for their faith, shedding their blood as Christ did. The inner corners of the frames surrounding the evangelists are gold plated so that they form arrows pointing to the Christ figure. The evangelists point to the reality of Jesus Christ and the Good News that he brings to all humankind.

Baptism Panel

This beautiful image painted by Juniper for the baptismal space is anchored in imagery from the Hebrew Scriptures. Exodus 17 recounts the story of Moses and the people in the desert, suffering anxiety because there was no water. God told Moses to strike the rock and water came gushing forth for the people to drink. Nothing is impossible for God.

Then, in Ezekiel 47, we have a description of how the waters flow from the Temple, a place sacred in the Hebrew people's understanding of where God is present. Ezekiel presented a vision of the way the temple would look when the people returned from exile. The waters flowing from the temple became increasingly deep. At first ankle deep, it grew into a river too large to cross and from it arose marvellous fertility in fish and plant life. It purified any bodies of water into which it flowed.

In this painting, the water flows from the desert rock and becomes a river that splits into four arms flowing to the four corners of the earth. Christ commissioned his apostles to go out to all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are missioned to do the same. The waters of baptism purify and make fertile ground for the spreading of the Gospel. The central image of the egret represents the Holy Spirit. The egret is a local bird with breeding grounds in the Beeliar wetlands which are close to the Bateman church. The bird does not breed in polluted water so it is an indicator of the purity of the water. It also indicates fertility because there must be fish there for it to eat. Fertility is also indicated by the foliage in the foreground. The landscape is typical of Western Australia. Just as the tradition of icons always includes a reference to the context of their creation, this panel sets baptism and evangelisation in our own local place.

The background is gold leaf and echoes the rich liturgical tradition of sacred icons. These were among the very early forms of Christian art and this aspect of the paintings links us to that heritage. Icons are images that are carefully and prayerfully created within the theology of the Church, they have a deep spiritual dimension, and they exist to lead us into prayer. The many people who pray in St Thomas More church, receiving the sacraments and the mission to live as Christians in the world, are led to prayer through the art works' deep symbolism and rich connection to the precious art heritage of the Catholic tradition.

Mary and the Child Jesus.

Catholicism has a long tradition of honouring Mary, the Mother of God, and every Catholic church needs to have an art image of the Virgin Mary. A most important aspect of that image is that she be seen with her Son, Jesus, without whom she would have been just another young Jewish girl living in Palestine under Roman domination. With Jesus, she is the first disciple and a wonderful example for Christians to follow.

Robert Juniper has again presented this artwork of Mary and Jesus in a typical Western Australian landscape. This tradition of Christian art locates the religious mystery in the cultural context of the worshipping community. The child Jesus has his hand raised to his face: is he putting his thumb in his mouth as a child would do or is he giving us a blessing? He is dressed in clothes normal to Australian children and sits comfortably with his mother, truly human and truly God. This was one of Juniper's favourite paintings. The models were his daughter and grandson and he had the original painted sketch hanging in the family room of his home (which is now a gallery dedicated to his works).

The parish of St Thomas More is very diverse – it has 69 national groups represented in the community. Consequently, Mary's face is almost indistinguishable and not ethnically recognisable. This places the emphasis directly onto the child Jesus. Mary's caring hands enfold him and her body supports his weight, indicating a deep connection between them. Mary's clothes are red and blue, red symbolising divine love (because God became flesh and blood to show the extent of this love) and blue symbolising heavenly truth (because all truth comes from God). The floral pattern of her garments harmonises with the landscape of the Kimberley.

She sits on a panel of fence which becomes a cross on each side of her, prefiguring Jesus' crucifixion where two thieves were crucified alongside Jesus. Mary was an enduring support for Christ and, in the way she is sitting, anchors the presence of Christ in the world. In the same vein are the two pelicans shown in the foreground. An ancient legend tells us that the pelican mother would use the flesh of her own breast to feed her babies in times of famine. This became an image of sacrifice referring to Christ.

The blue irises also seen in the foreground of the painting represent faith and wisdom. In art and in gardens dedicated to Mary, they sometimes replace the lily, symbol of Mary's purity. The iris has blade-shaped leaves suggesting that Mary's heart was pierced when she saw the suffering of her son.

The shape of the painting not only echoes the triptych form of the medieval altarpiece but also recalls the Triune nature of God. The number three is evident in the birds and the trees as well. The dove representing the Holy Spirit is seen above Mary's head to indicate that she conceived her son through the power of the Spirit. Once again, the gold of the background echoes sacred icons in our liturgical tradition. Both Mary and Jesus have a golden halo around their heads, indicating their important place in God's love.

The water patterns from the baptism panel are very evident in this work. That the Son of God has come to share human life draws all the baptised into the family of God as his brothers and sisters. This happens ritually in Christian baptism. Through the waters of the font, we are joined to Christ and are reborn into the divine life.

Conclusion

Questions arise about how artwork should be commissioned for churches, by whom the decision should be made, and when. Two helpful documents were produced by the National Liturgical Architecture and Art Board: *And When Churches Are to be Built... preparation, planning and construction of places of worship* (2014) and *Fit for Sacred Use: stewardship and renewal of places of worship* (2018). Artists should be chosen very early in the process as artworks take considerable time to create and the artist needs to understand and respond to a given space. Art for churches needs to be at the service of the community and express its faith. However, it is not always possible for each person in the parish to have a say. The community should be engaged in some way to express their desires but cannot give such highly prescriptive directions as to disallow the artistic process. Let the artist do the creating. Choose the artist who shows through existing artworks that they are capable and worthy of a contract and who has a style that is suitable for the community and the building.

In this age of synodality and change, the process must be cooperative, a journey that includes prayer if it is to be productive and worthy.

■ Dr Angela McCarthy is senior lecturer in theology at The University of Notre Dame in Fremantle, Western Australia and chairs the Mandorla Art Award.

COMMUNITY UNITY

Chicago's Cardinal Blase Cupich wrote to the archdiocese before Christmas 2024 reminding people that receiving holy communion at the Eucharist is not a private act but a communal one. *As such, the established norm – approved by the Holy See and the US Conference of Catholic Bishops – is for the faithful to process together and receive the Sacred Host standing.* The common ritual posture, he said, 'holds a profound meaning'. As the very word 'communion' itself implies, it expresses the unity of the Body of Christ.

He was responding to a minority of Mass-goers who, as an act of personal piety, choose to kneel to receive communion. *Disrupting this moment [of unity] only diminishes this powerful symbolic expression, by which the faithful in processing together express their faith that they are called to become the very Body of Christ they receive. Certainly reverence can and should be expressed by bowing before the reception of holy communion, but no one should engage in a gesture that calls attention to oneself or disrupts the flow of the procession. That would be contrary to the norms and tradition of the Church, which all the faithful are urged to respect and observe... Respecting these norms,* he said, *is not merely about liturgical order. It is about honouring the deeper truth that, in the sacred liturgy, we are one body, united in Christ.*

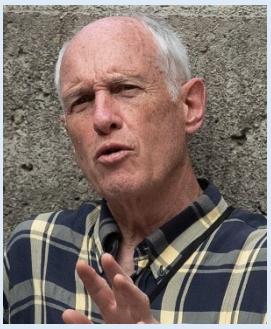
500 YEARS OLD

Palestrina (1525-1594) is 500 years old. Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina was one of the most important composers of liturgical music in the 16th century. He was master of music at the principal basilicas in Rome. He wrote over one hundred Mass settings and hundreds of Church motets. Famous in the development of counterpoint, he demonstrated the ideal of the post Tridentine period in which liturgical music needed not only to capture a sense of the sacred but also to be intelligible. His compositional style is dictated by the syntax of the text and his musical and choral textures are transparent.

AUSTRALIAN ACADEMY OF LITURGY

Sixty liturgy people from across Australia and from all the main Christian Churches met for a very successful conference in Brisbane in January 2025. Exploring the theme of 'Justice at the Heart of Liturgy', there were three keynote addresses and 17 short papers. There was a strong spirit of camaraderie and joy at the first face-to-face meeting since 2018. At the AAL General Meeting, a new constitution was adopted and subsequently elections have been held. The newly elected office bearers are John Fitz-Herbert (*president*), Kieran Crichton (*deputy*), Jennifer Close (*secretary*). State convenors are also part of the Committee. No nominations having been received, a treasurer is still being sought.

IN MEMORIAM



PAUL DE CLERCK (1939-2025), priest of the Archdiocese of Malines-Bruxelles in Belgium, was an influential liturgist and teacher. He was simultaneously a liturgy professor in both Brussels and Paris. His extensive involvement in pastoral liturgy in Belgium changed when, in 1986, he was appointed to serve as director of the Institut Supérieur de Liturgie in Paris, a position he held for fifteen years. He was a past-president of the international ecumenical Societas Liturgica and director of the quarterly journal, *La maison-Dieu.* He returned to ministry in his diocese of Brussels but was unwell for the last decade of his life.

NATHAN P CHASE (1990-2025) was baptised a Lutheran in Missouri USA. After a Jesuit education, he was received into full communion with the Catholic Church. After liturgical studies in Collegeville and Leuven (Belgium), he gained his PhD in liturgy from Notre Dame Indiana in 2020. He then served as assistant professor in sacramental and liturgical theology at Aquinas Institute in St Louis. He was especially interested in liturgical history and methods. A generous and productive scholar (eight books and 27 journal articles), he worked to the end, even during his year-long battle with leukemia.

For the last four years,
Liturgy News has been set up electronically and
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POPULAR PIETY AND CULTURE

Just before Christmas 2024, instead of going to the reopening of Notre Dame Paris, Pope Francis addressed a congress on Popular Piety in the Mediterranean.

He acknowledged an openness between the horizons of Christian and secular culture. Believers are at peace *practising their faith without imposing it, living it as a leaven within the world and in their communities. Non-believers or those who have distanced themselves from religious practice are not strangers to the search for truth, justice and solidarity.* The popular piety of symbols, customs, rites and traditions in a living community involves both believers and those who are on the threshold of faith. *By expressing faith through simple gestures and a symbolic language rooted in the culture of the people, popular piety reveals God's presence in the living flesh of history, strengthens the relationship with the Church and often becomes an occasion for encounter, cultural exchange and celebration.*

These considerations are crucial for the Australian Church and its liturgy. Catholics from Asia and the Pacific are the backbone of many of our liturgical assemblies. They bring traditions new to a traditionally Irish Catholic culture.

Take, for example, the Philippines. In Manila in January, there is a huge procession with devotions centred on the Black Nazarene; in Cebu, there is the danced procession focussing on the Santo Niño (Infant of Prague); there are processions of flagellants and crucifixions; or the novena of dawn Masses before Christmas, the *Simbang Gabi.* Traditions such as these express faith but are also cultural expressions for whole populations. A faith dimension is embedded in daily life. Australian Catholicism needs to recognise, respect and embrace these practices, making space for their celebration in our parishes, and even inviting those without a Filipino connection to join in. What cultural groups are part of your parish and what traditions of popular piety do they bring?

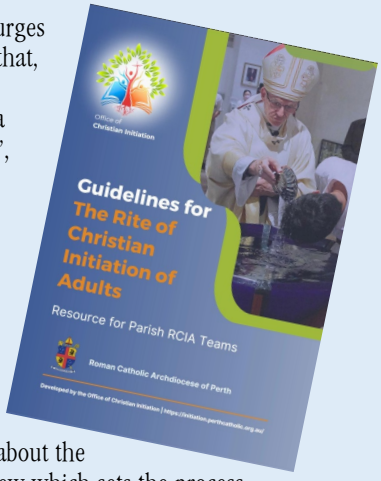
ALTAR SERVERS

So common are female altar servers in our parishes that it was quite surprising – shocking even – last October to read of Sri Lanka's Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith's ban on them. *It has been brought to my knowledge that several parishes in the Archdiocese of Colombo have appointed girls as altar servers. In this context, I wish to reiterate... that no girls should be invited to serve at the altar, as altar servers in the archdiocese.* He insisted that young boys only should be altar servers *because this is one of the main sources of vocations to the priesthood in Sri Lanka and it will affect the number of candidates entering the seminaries, which risk we cannot take.*

Following hard on the heels of the Synod on synodality which tried to promote the ministry and leadership of women in the Church, this edict reminds us not to take for granted what seems obvious. Female altar servers have been allowed by the Holy See for thirty years. Women may be instituted as acolytes and serve as readers and communion ministers. Many leadership roles on pastoral and financial councils at parish and diocesan levels are occupied by women. Even the ordination of women to the diaconate is being actively discussed. These points were made by women religious in Sri Lanka who said they were saddened by the decision, though they were pleased that it had provoked discussions on the role and dignity of women in the Church.

RCIA GUIDELINES

The Office of Christian Initiation in the Archdiocese of Perth has issued comprehensive guidelines to assist parishes in implementing the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.* The document sets out clearly the different stages of the process and describes the tasks and ministries involved. It urges flexibility so that, instead of establishing a 'starting date', inquirers are received whenever they make an approach to the parish. There is very helpful information about the initial interview which sets the process in motion – the process needs to be tailored to the specific situation of each person and take their background into account. The guidelines deal comprehensively with issues that may arise – including questions about marital status, recognition of baptism in other Christian communities, and welcoming Eastern Rite Christians. One of the key questions is the place of the RCIA in the midst of the whole parish community. See the guidelines at https://initiation.perthcatholic.org.au/ .



We wish our readers a HAPPY EASTER!

Pilgrims of HOPE
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NATIONAL CONFERENCE
LITURGY & MUSIC
HILTON ADELAIDE
1-3 OCTOBER, 2025

The next joint national liturgy and music conference will be held at the Hilton Hotel in Adelaide from 1 – 3 October 2025. It is jointly organised by the National Liturgical Council and the Australian Pastoral Musicians Network. Keynote speakers are US liturgical theologian and composer Fr Ricky Manalo CSP, New York-based theologian Rita Ferrone, and Australia's Fr Richard Leonard SJ.

Over 50 workshop options from expert presenters offer a broad range of topics and streams for liturgists, musicians, teachers and all involved in liturgy and music.

Early-bird discount until 30 April 2025. For full details and registration, go to: www.pilgrimsofhope.com.au

NICAEA – 1700 YEARS

The first Ecumenical Council was convened by the Emperor Constantine in Nicaea (Turkey) in 325. The place of Christ in the Holy Trinity, expressed in the Nicene Creed often said at Mass, is one of its enduring legacies. The anniversary invites renewed ecumenical dialogue in favour of Christian unity.

This year, the date of Easter coincides for Eastern and Western Churches. Finding agreement on a common date for Easter has been on the agenda for many decades and reaching agreement would be a fine achievement for the anniversary. In 325, the Council agreed on how the date was to be reckoned, but calendars have changed since then resulting in differing dates.

The other significant proposal to mark the 1700th anniversary is the establishment of a liturgical feast to celebrate the Mystery of Creation or Christ the Creator. Long celebrated in Eastern Churches, it is now proposed for Western calendars. A December 2024 meeting of Roman Catholic representatives in Assisi reached consensus that this celebration could be widened and included in the General Roman calendar.

Some Catholic bishops' conferences have already adopted it and many other Churches also mark the feast. The feast is based on the affirmations in the Nicene creed that God is the *maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible*, and that through the one Lord Jesus Christ *all things were made.* It is proposed that the solemnity be celebrated close to 1 September on the first Sunday of the month.

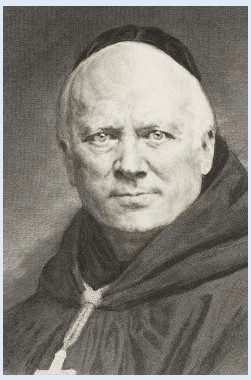
ST TERESA OF CALCUTTA

Mother Teresa, Missionary of Charity, died in 1997 and was canonised in 2016. She spent most of her life serving the destitute in Kolkata, India. She is an important contemporary witness to the words of Christ: *Whatever you have done to the very least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you have done also to me.* Now the Holy See has announced that her commemoration will be introduced into the General Roman Calendar as an optional memorial on 5 September. An official translation of the opening Collect will appear in due course.

JOINT LECTIONARY PROJECT

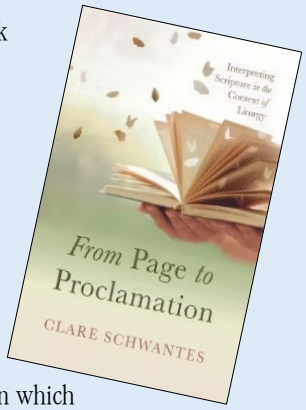
Australia has joined with New Zealand and Ireland to produce a new edition of the Lectionary for Mass using the Revised New Jerusalem Bible. The project is being coordinated by Martin Foster who assisted the Conferences of England and Wales and Scotland in compiling their new Lectionary. The commission with oversight of the new Joint Lectionary Project is made up of bishops from each of the three conferences, and a working group is holding regular online meetings. Work has begun on the Sunday Lectionary with the first sections (Advent-Christmas and Lent) having been sent to all the bishops in March. It is hoped that Volume 1 will be ready for vote towards the end of 2025. Volumes 2 and 3 for weekdays are planned for vote around Easter 2026 with Volume 4 for Ritual Masses etc to follow after that. The work, once approved by the bishops' conferences, will then need to be confirmed by the Holy See. The advantage of the Revised New Jerusalem translation is that it updates biblical scholarship, uses contemporary English, yet retains the cadences of the Jerusalem Bible which have become familiar over the last 55 years.

GUÉRANGER (1805-1875)



It is 150 years since Dom Prosper Guéranger OSB died at the abbey he had founded at Solesmes in France. He played a crucial role in renewing the tradition of Gregorian chant and in developing the historical, theological and ecclesiological understanding of the liturgy. He stands as one of the founders of the liturgical movement, the fruit of which is seen in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the liturgy document of Vatican Council II. Guéranger wrote extensively on liturgy, notably the three-volume *Institutions liturgiques* and the nine-volume *L'Année liturgique.* At the end of 2023, the French bishops conference voted to begin the process leading to his possible beatification.

NEW PUBLICATION



This pioneering work invites readers to embark on a transformative journey through the heart of liturgical worship and scriptural proclamation. It introduces a new tier to biblical interpretation, exploring the ways in which the liturgical event and the ecclesial community colour the understanding of Scripture. It challenges readers to view the Lectionary as a living text, intimately connected to the worshiping assembly and the modern world.

This thought-provoking work offers both theoretical insights and practical implications for scholars, clergy, and worshippers alike. It inspires a fresh perspective that resonates with the contemporary Catholic experience, guiding worshipers toward a profound engagement with Scripture in the dynamic event of liturgical celebration.

Dr Clare Schwantes is director of Liturgy Brisbane and chairs the National Liturgical Council. The book can be ordered online.

SCHOOLS

The Catholic Texture of School Liturgies

by Anthony Mellor

There is much discussion about the nature of Catholic education in our current context. The terms 'faith formation' and 'Catholic identity' dominate renewed strategies to maintain and deepen the Catholicity of school communities. Efforts to strengthen Catholic identity are approached from a variety of directions, and there is no shortage of methods to analyse data regarding the Catholic culture of a particular school.

Faith formation is one of the common threads of Catholic identity, often attempting to instil and explain basic and fundamental language regarding scripture, liturgy, sacramentality, spirituality and prayer, church history and action through social justice.

Perhaps the time has come to think differently about the context of our Catholic schools: to move beyond questions of 'identity', to explore more relational aspects of faith and Church, which might be called 'Catholic texture'. The term *texture* is rich in meaning. In Latin *textum* refers not only to 'text' but also to 'webs'. In this sense, we identify Christian webs of meaning expressed and created by rituals, relationships and spirituality and explore them as 'texts' which can be read, interpreted and experienced.

At the centre of these webs of rituals, relationships and spirituality sits Catholic liturgy. Liturgy and prayer, therefore, is *summit and source* of all the webs of Catholic identity and faith formation. It is the action of identity and formation. Often enough in a school context, however, liturgy sits in a rather lop-sided relationship to other forms of formation. Every gathered assembly passes through webs of meaning and relationship – and, as we all know, walking through a web can be a sticky *what-was-that?* experience. In a school context (whether this be as a class, a year level or whole school), liturgy can be a *what-was-that?* experience.

The very real and complex challenge is how school communities enter into the parish web of meaning in a way that enriches participation and engagement. It is not meant to be a startling experience of having walked through something but without being sure of what it is.

Part of the tension is that pastors, parents and teachers are frequently starting from very different places as they walk into the web of liturgy. Pastors desire to develop commitment in children and parents; teachers seek to provide an experience for the students; and parents are happy to spectate as their children participate! These are broad brushstrokes, but they do express something of the reality of a weekly class Mass or the opening/closing school Mass for the year.

How all these differing expectations work together is dependant upon a number of factors. Of course, the degree of compromise differs from a weekday liturgy to a Sunday or Feast Day. Nevertheless, pastoral astuteness plays an important role; so too does a recognition that it is counter-productive to bend liturgical principles too far out of shape.

> ***What might the liturgical web of relationship between a school and a parish look like?***

Whatever about the success or failure of liturgical formation (and however one might assess such things) within the Catholic education system – and the same could be said for liturgical formation more generally – the fundamental principles always provide the best and most important starting point. On the one hand, we note the primacy of the liturgy for Sundays and solemnities; on the other hand, we recognise the *ad libitum* of the week-day liturgy, alongside the flexibility offered in the *Directory for Masses with Children* where there is always room for adaptation and variation. Notwithstanding these possibilities, a few focusing points are helpful.

The first is the human element. What is necessary is a strong and productive working relationship and professional partnership between the parish leadership team and the school leadership team. This may seem like an obvious point but it is one that is often taken for granted. Without such a respectful and dialogical relationship, everything (including liturgical celebrations) will grind stubbornly like rusty and uncooperative wheels. Sometimes these relationships come easily and sometimes with great difficulty, but the fruits of an open and sincere working relationship will benefit both the school and parish communities.

The second is a common agreement on important and essential liturgical principles. Sunday Masses are parish Masses in which the school community might participate, but they are not 'school Masses'. Feast day Masses and weekday class Masses are a different category and offer the possibility of greater flexibility. Another point is that not every liturgy needs to be Mass. There might be good reason to celebrate a Liturgy of the Word or another form of common prayer together. Just as the Church as a whole prays in a variety of fashions, so too should a parish and school community.

The third point is the benefit of a simple and concentrated strategy. Imagine a parish and school community that embarked on formation based around the Liturgy of the Word. A class might engage in some weeks of preparation for their participation and ministry within Mass based around the readings. The effect of breaking open the word with the children over a couple of weeks, exploring the language, the text, the characters, the history and receiving the living and active voice of scripture in prayer could be significant. Each child could be encouraged to practise the reading at home (and as a result perhaps promote a form of family prayer!). Discovering the layers of meaning of the text, determining where to place emphasis, learning how to pronounce strange words and place names, and seeing how to engage people's imagination, these are all skills worth developing well beyond the liturgical context. By the time the celebration of the liturgy comes around, the readings might be proclaimed with a special resonance.

Too often, Catholic identity and faith formation are seen as a programmatic application. A re-focusing on 'Catholic texture' as webs of meaning in liturgy helps all in the community to experience and participate in these threads of connection, one thread at a time. And, as a good starting point, learning to proclaim scripture well could produce all kinds of other fruits. Ultimately, it begins and ends with human relationships which are always threaded by the grace of the Divine.

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BOOKS

Kimberly Hope Belcher, Nathan P Chase and Alexander Turpin, *One Baptism – One Church? A History and Theology of the Reception of Baptised Christians* (Liturgical Press, 2024) 199 pages

by James Cronin

Even in these ecumenical days when we recognise one another's baptism, there are anomalies in the way the Catholic Church receives a baptised Christian into full communion. The way we use Confirmation and Penance in the process reveals how we (mis)understand the ecclesial Body of Christ. The history of how we receive those who have already been baptised is complex, beginning with our treatment of schismatics and apostates in the 3rd century right through to our 20th century understanding of the other Christians of East and West. Our authors suggest that, after many turbulent centuries, we still haven't got this right!

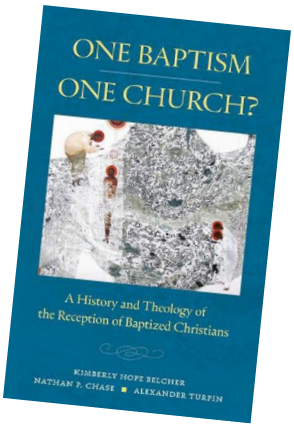
The rite of reception itself is utterly simple. There is a profession of faith, an act of reception (laying a hand on the person's head with words of reception) and some gesture of welcome. According to our authors, four principles should govern the use of our present RCIA and any future renovation of our rites in this area.

The first principle is respect for the previous baptism of those seeking membership. *Walking with candidates for reception will mean doing ecumenical work alongside the candidates to value the baptisms of communities whose theology divides them from us, and who in some cases have hurt the candidates or their families, or who may be prejudiced against Catholics. The foundation for this work is the same as it has been since Augustine: baptism belongs to Christ alone, and transcends the minister who baptises* (pp. 156-7).

The second principle is that *formators should not force the rite into a paradigm of initiation or reconciliation* (p. 160). Reception of the baptised is sometimes seen as a completion of initiation because the candidate is confirmed before joining in holy communion. Sometimes it is interpreted as an act of reconciliation because the confession of sins is recommended before communion. However, as Vatican Council II's Decree on Ecumenism (UR 3) says: *One cannot charge with the sin of separation those who at present are born into these communities and in them are brought up in the faith of Christ, and the Catholic Church accepts them with respect and affection as brothers [and sisters]* (p. 2).

The third principle reiterates that *the rite of reception is not a rite of initiation: rather it is a rite of welcome into and belonging within the Catholic communion* (p. 160). We should remember that *not every important ritual in a Christian's life needs to be a sacrament... After all, it is the reception of the Eucharist that sacramentally manifests the fullness of 'full communion', and the ritual performance should communicate this clearly* (p. 161).

The fourth principle is that *the combined rite at the Easter Vigil can blur distinctions between those undergoing the* [RCIA], *those being received, and uncatechised adults preparing for confirmation. ...Those being received are already part of the Body of Christ by virtue of their baptism* (p. 163). The RCIA includes (as rites for special circumstances) the preparation of uncatechised adults for confirmation and the rite of reception of baptised Christians into the full communion of the Catholic Church. In an appendix, for the sake of convenience, all these are combined into a single sequence for the Easter Vigil. Belcher, Chase and Turpin are clearly against such a practice. We should point out here that they are using the 2024 USA edition of the ritual book called the *Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA).* This gets confusing for us because the OCIA makes it even worse by also giving combined rites to match the Rite of Acceptance into the Catechumenate and the Rite of Election.



To sum up, we need to develop an ecumenical theology, and eventually a practice, of reception that focuses on *(1) ecclesial reconciliation rather than the completion of initiation; (2) the healing of an ecclesial wound rather than the forgiveness of a sin against doctrine; and (3) a liturgical recognition of the sharing among churches of the one divinely instituted baptism* (p. 172).

The key gesture of this rite would be the laying of a hand on the candidate's head (which is neither confirmation nor penance). *In the West...the touch of the bishop's hand on the head of a Christian was the normative way of understanding the biosocial integration of the ecclesial body, but it was not absolutely necessary to have been touched by a bishop to be fully initiated* (p. 150).

The second part of this perplexing statement derives from the fact that many baptised Catholics who receive communion have not been, and perhaps never will be, confirmed. Thomas Aquinas held that infant baptism alone suffices to make one ready for holy communion. Some of this confusion is an unintended consequence of the praiseworthy

recovery of the baptism-confirmation-eucharist flow of the sacraments of initiation. Unfortunately this '*ressourcement*' has led to the fact that, in the rite of reception, *confirmation now occupies the symbolic centre of the rite. This change is deeply regrettable and has contributed to the ongoing confusion about the ritual act of reception: technically, the moment of reception should still be the formula 'the Lord receives you into the Catholic Church*' (p. 137). Most clergy are still unsure about the correct practice. In the 1980s the wonderful RCIA ordo exploded into parish life and the plethora of rites applicable to the unbaptised were often blithely used with all those seeking to join the Catholic Church.

Receiving a baptised Christian with the profession of faith, the laying-on of the hand and a formula of reception culminates with sharing communion. Confession of sins should be deferred until later and, if confirmation is required, this too could happen at a later date when other people in the parish are celebrating the sacrament.

Taking seriously the ecumenical sharing called for in this book would open our eyes to the wonderful gifts offered by Christians of all denominations. When I attend combined ministers' meetings, I am impressed with their Spirit-filled work. Even those with small congregations share the gospel through vibrant youth ministries, and by caring for the desolate and destitute who turn up at their doors when Vinnies has closed for the day!

I especially relished the second part of this book with its comments on present- day practice and recommend-ations for renewal. Studying the earlier historical chapters let me see where the wisdom for this renewal was coming from. Difficult though it may be in parts, I strongly recommend this volume to pastors and to all who are serious about accompanying people on their journey of faith!

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