



Photo: Giovanni Portelli

ACU CENTRE FOR LITURGY

Celebrating 10 years of the ACU Centre for Liturgy

Newsletter
Issue 23
July 2025



Endorsed by the Australian
Catholic Bishops Conference



Celebrating 10 years of the ACU Centre for Liturgy



By Professor Clare Johnson
Foundation Director,
ACU Centre for Liturgy

Sometimes opportunity, vision and passion align to enable the emergence of something new. In 2014 ACU's then-Vice-Chancellor, Professor Greg Craven, provided an opportunity for the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) to enter into a partnership with ACU to establish an institute for pastoral liturgy to promote the liturgical apostolate in Australia and beyond.

ORIGINS

Discussions about how to enact Vatican II's call in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 44 for the territorial ecclesiastical authority to set up "some kind of Institute for Pastoral Liturgy, consisting of persons who are eminent in these matters" had increased in frequency and fervour among those working in liturgy and related areas in Australia. The idea of a national liturgical institute had been discussed at a forum of professional liturgists, sponsored by the Sisters of the Good Samaritan and the Blessed Sacrament Fathers, at Mount Saint Benedict, Pennant Hills NSW on 4-7 June 2007. A clearer vision of what such an institute might look like began to coalesce at the January 2014 Biennial Meeting of the Bishops Commission

for Liturgy (BCL), National Liturgical Council (NLC), National Liturgical Music Board, National Liturgical Architecture and Art Board, and consultants, held in Wollongong. At this meeting, NLC member and ACU academic Dr Clare Johnson presented a session titled "Liturgical Formation in Australia: present needs and future directions" for the consideration of those gathered, and together the group envisioned what sort of liturgical institute and liturgical education opportunities Australia needed.

In April 2014, taking account of the ideas raised at the Wollongong meeting, Dr Johnson and Fr Anthony Casamento CSMA, ACU's Director of Identity and Mission, prepared a detailed briefing paper on the establishment of a national centre for liturgy at ACU for the consideration of the BCL. The guiding principles for the Centre (as determined by the Wollongong meeting) indicated that it should:

- foster fruitful international connections through access to existing networks of liturgical scholars
- deliver academically rigorous and pastorally focused programs in liturgy and the sacred arts tailored for the Australian cultural context while also serving the ecclesial and academic needs of geographically proximate neighbour countries
- offer accredited high-quality liturgical education at various levels (from parish pastoral learning and professional development through to PhD) to meet the specific needs of diverse target-markets
- engage actively in both scholarly research and the production of pastorally focused publications, and

- investigate the establishment of a foundation to support the Centre's future needs.



Choir and Guests at Official Opening of ACU Centre for Liturgy at ACU North Sydney Campus in 2016.

In May 2014, the Bishops' Plenary carried a motion to support the establishment of a national liturgical institute at ACU, under the auspices of the ACBC. On 20 May 2015 Professor Clare Johnson was appointed as the Foundation Director of the ACU Centre for Liturgy commencing on 1 June 2015.



Professor Greg Craven at Official Opening in 2016

10 YEARS ON

The ACU Centre for Liturgy has evolved from an initial idea into a vibrant entity with four dedicated part-time staff whose innovative educational and formational programs in liturgy, sacraments, and the sacred arts engage thousands of people annually across Australia and internationally. Among its many initiatives, the Centre serves as a resource for the Catholic Church in Australia providing:



Photo courtesy Sydney Catholic Schools

- ongoing expert advice to bishops, dioceses, Catholic education offices, schools and parishes
- face-to-face and online practical pastoral training programs
- post-graduate academic qualifications in liturgy and the sacred arts through ACU's Faculty of Theology and Philosophy.

The vision and ongoing support of ACU for this vital initiative in partnership with the ACBC, has enabled the Centre to flourish through provision of infrastructure, resources and personnel.

PEOPLE

The Centre began with just its foundation director, Professor Clare Johnson, and has since grown into a dynamic team with a wide range of perspectives, talents and expertise. This includes Dr Paul Taylor (Assistant Director), Mrs Cathy Murrowood (Professional Specialist – Liturgy Education) and Ms Maryanne Hemsley (Program Coordinator). Former staff members Dr Jason McFarland and Ms Sharon Boyd also contributed to the Centre's operations for several years. The expertise and passion of each team member is vital for the Centre's work.

The Centre has greatly benefited from the generous and faithful strategic guidance of its Board of Advisors (established in May 2016) which has provided a thoughtful independent discussion forum for programs and future directions, ensuring that the Centre remains true to its mission and maintains good standing with both the Roman Catholic Church and ACU. The board's membership has provided a wealth of outlooks and ideas

to enrich the Centre's development and ongoing operations. Members have included Fr Anthony Casamento, CSMA (Vice President, ACU), Most Rev Paul Bird CSsR (Bishop of Ballarat), Professor Emerita Sr Julia Upton RSM (St. John's University, New York), Very Rev Peter G. Williams (Vicar-General Diocese of Parramatta), Most Rev Patrick O'Regan (Archbishop of Adelaide), Rev Professor John F. Baldwin SJ (Boston College), Emeritus Professor Rev Paul F. Bradshaw (Notre Dame USA), Dr Paul Taylor, Professor Br David Hall FMS (ACU), Sr Judy Foster SGS (Diocese of Townsville), Mr Steven Warner (Notre Dame USA), Professor Emerita Marea Nicholson (ACU), Ms Josie Ryan (Loreto Kirribilli), Dr Emmanuel Nathan (ACU) and Associate Professor Stephen Downs (ACU).

Fr Anthony Casamento's support, encouragement, advocacy and guidance during the Centre's first 10 years cannot be overstated. His departure from ACU in April 2025 leaves the Centre well-positioned to continue the constructive work he championed.

REACH

During its first 10 years, the ACU Centre for Liturgy has been invited to present programs in many of Australia's dioceses and archdioceses, including Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, Canberra-Goulburn, Parramatta, Bathurst, Lismore, Armidale, Wollongong, Broken Bay, Maitland-Newcastle, Wilcannia-Forbes, Ballarat, Sale, Sandhurst, and Hobart. We look forward to serving these and other dioceses in the future.

Through its online training programs, public lectures and short courses, the Centre has engaged participants from every Australian state and territory, as well as from the USA, New Zealand, Nigeria, and United Kingdom (among others). The Centre's *Speaking of Liturgy* podcast regularly reaches thousands of people across the world, and we were delighted when we were invited to partner with St John's University Collegeville to feature our podcast on their popular blog *Pray-Tell: Worship, Wit and Wisdom* every fortnight.

FUTURE

In its first decade, the ACU Centre for Liturgy has matured into an organisational unit that actively fulfills its mission and promotes ACU's Catholic identity. We are immensely grateful for the support and encouragement provided by the BCL and the ongoing cooperation of the ACBC, and for the insight provided by the Centre's Board of Advisors. We acknowledge with gratitude the continuing institutional generosity and backing provided by ACU under the leadership of Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Zlatko Skrbis, which makes possible the important work we undertake. The privilege of facilitating pastoral formation in liturgy among the faithful, continuing the professional learning of Catholic clergy, teachers, pastoral associates, ministers, musicians, architects, and artists, and nurturing the next generation of liturgical scholars and researchers is not lost on the Centre's staff. We look forward to advancing the work of the liturgical apostolate in Australia and beyond into the future.

ACU Centre for Liturgy Highlights

PUBLIC LECTURES

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Centre diversified its offerings by drawing on its international network of liturgical scholars to present a series of public lectures by luminaries including: in 2020: Rev Prof Mark R. Francis CSV, Sr Prof Julia Upton RSM; 2021: Msgr Prof Kevin W. Irwin, Rev Dr J. Michael Joncas, Rev Prof Bruce Morrill SJ; 2022: Very Rev Peter Williams AM, Rev Dr Paul Turner, Prof Julie Hanlon Rubio; 2023: Rev Prof Lizette Larson-Miller, Dr Phyllis Zagano, Prof Teresa Berger, and Rev Prof John F. Baldovin SJ.

ONLINE TRAINING PROGRAMS

In making available its accredited pastoral liturgical formation programs to Australia's geographically dispersed dioceses and parishes, the Centre has utilised best practise online education strategies in designing and presenting its renowned training programs for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, Communion of the Sick, and Ministers of the Word. Trials and refinements of these programs have assured their quality, practicality and ongoing pertinence.

In 2023 representatives of the Archdiocese of Lagos, Nigeria asked if we could make our Ministers of the Word program available to them. Cathy Murrowood and Maryanne Hemsley worked diligently to adapt our online training program to utilise the Nigerian Lectionary and Ordo and find a suitable time for live classes. More than 60

Nigerian participants completed this program in 2024, and a new group from Lagos has commenced study of the program in 2025.

PODCAST: SPEAKING OF LITURGY

The Centre is always seeking new ways to broaden access to quality liturgical formation, and in mid-2023 began its *Speaking of Liturgy* podcast. Engaging an exciting array of local and international experts, the fortnightly podcast explores a wide range of thought-provoking topics on Catholic liturgy, liturgical music, art and architecture, liturgy in Catholic schools, preaching, and more. With more than 50 episodes so far, we are honoured to have had Australia's Cardinal Mykola Bychok CSsR, Archbishops Mark Coleridge, Timothy Costelloe SDB, and Denis Hart, Bishop Paul Bird, Prof Gerard Moore, Sr Prof Judith Kubicki CSSF, Rev Dr Paul Turner, Very Rev Peter G. Williams AM, Fr Andrew Menke, Sr Prof Julia Upton RSM, Rev Dr Gilles Drouin, Rev Prof Mark Francis CSV, and the Centre's staff and many others as guests. We look forward to many more interesting and educational episodes to come.

POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMS AND DOCTORAL GRADUATES

Promoting academic study and research in liturgy and related areas is a key part of the Centre's mission. Working with ACU's Faculty of Theology and Philosophy, Professor Johnson teaches into the Graduate Certificate in Theology

Studies (Liturgy), Graduate Diploma in Theology Studies (Liturgy) and Master of Theological Studies (Liturgy) courses which she has designed in consultation with others. Those who complete these specialised programs are well prepared to undertake liturgical leadership and educational roles for Australia's Catholic dioceses, Catholic education offices, schools and parishes.

During the past 10 years, Professor Johnson has supervised three doctoral students through to completion of their PhDs in liturgical music (Dr Jennifer Wakeling), sacramental theology (Dr Daniel McGrath) and liturgical inculturation (Rev Dr Michael Wallace). She is presently supervising a fourth student working on a doctorate in sacred architecture (Maree-Elizabeth Lewis).

SYMPOSIA

On 6-8 February 2019, the Centre partnered with the National Liturgical Architecture and Art Council to present a highly engaging symposium titled 'Where Your Treasure is, There Will

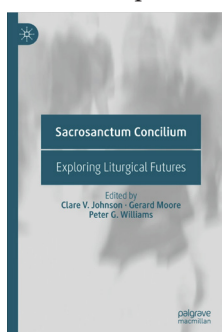




Photo: Phong Lam

Your Heart Be Also – Catholic liturgical heritage: architecture, art, artefacts'. This outstanding event featured expert Australian architects, artists and liturgical design consultants alongside leading American liturgical design consultant Fr Richard Vosko and British heritage expert Sophie Andreae.

To mark the 60th anniversary of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Vatican II's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, the Centre ran a highly successful scholarly symposium on 3-5 December 2023 beginning with a keynote public lecture by Rev Prof John F. Baldovin SJ. Nineteen local and international liturgical scholars presented peer-reviewed research papers for discussion, a beautiful conference Mass (with Archbishop Peter Comensoli, Archbishop Patrick O'Regan and Bishop Paul Bird CSsR) was celebrated, and emerging and experienced scholars interacted in a fruitful and enjoyable environment. Papers from the symposium were edited by Professor Clare Johnson, Professor Gerard Moore and Very Rev Peter G. Williams to produce the peer-reviewed



publication *Sacrosanctum Concilium: Exploring Liturgical Futures* (Cham Switzerland: Springer Nature/Palgrave Macmillan, 2025).



'THE CHRISTIAN'S FINAL JOURNEY'

Following an enquiry from representatives of Catholic Cemeteries and Crematoria (NSW), Professor Johnson developed the professional learning program 'The Christian's Final Journey' for clergy, funeral directors and interested laity, focusing on the theology and celebration of Catholic funerals. Reviewed and endorsed by the Archdiocese of Sydney, this program has been run in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Canberra, and is being expanded to run in other dioceses. Funeral directors receive accreditation for undertaking the program, which teaches them how to prepare and celebrate Catholic funerals according to the Church's liturgical expectations. The program's facilitation of dialogue between clergy and funeral directors is always a positive and productive experience.

BROAD SCOPE OF WORK

To reach as many people as possible, the Centre has delivered public lectures, keynote addresses, and conference workshops in Australia and overseas as well as expert engagement with the media on liturgical topics. It also publishes a triannual newsletter and other pastoral publications such as 'Celebrating the Lectionary Year A/B/C' (Mulgrave: Garratt 2019, 2020, 2021). Pastoral formation days, professional learning seminars and short courses (online and in-person) on Sacraments of Initiation, the Lectionary, and the Sacrament of Marriage have also been offered by the Centre.



The Centre sponsors a scholarship for an ACU postgraduate student with a particular interest in studying liturgy and sacraments and subsidises programs for rural and regional dioceses with fewer resources. It also facilitates the Liturgy Nexus (an online network for those qualified and working in liturgy and related areas in Australia) and prepares and directs major liturgies for ACU. We are eager to continue our work in all of these areas in the future.

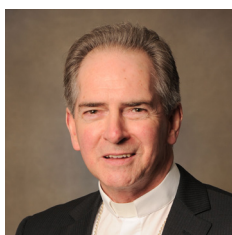
Testimonials



When it was established, the ACU Centre for Liturgy was visioned to be a leading provider of liturgical formation and scholarship for

Australia and the region. I am delighted that over the last ten years this vision has come to life. The reach and impact of the Centre on liturgical formation reflects the call of Pope Francis in *Desiderio desideravi* for “serious and dynamic liturgical formation.” It has been my privilege to work with the team in the Centre to oversee its establishment, set its strategic goals and watch its continued growth as a resource for the Church in Australia.

Fr Anthony Casamento CSMA
Vice-President and Director of Mission (2017-2025), Australian Catholic University



When the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference met in May 2014, one of the proposals before us was

the setting up of an Institute of Pastoral Liturgy linked with Australian Catholic University. After some discussion, we approved the motion: “That the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference accept in principle the establishment of an Institute of Pastoral Liturgy, under its auspices, and in conjunction with Australian Catholic University, embracing experts in liturgical science, sacred music, art and pastoral practice, in keeping with Sacrosanctum Concilium (1963) art. 44”. The next year, ACU’s Centre for Liturgy was launched. I have been honoured to be involved from the beginning as a member of the Centre’s Board of Advisors. I have been delighted to see how much the Centre has done to

fulfil the hopes of the Second Vatican Council in promoting appreciation for the Church’s liturgy. Congratulations on the Centre’s 10th anniversary! May the Centre’s great service continue to grow!

Most Rev. Paul Bird, CSsR
Diocese of Ballarat
Member of the Board of Advisors



The ACU Centre for Liturgy, since its establishment, has fulfilled the mandate that was given to Professor

Clare Johnson and her colleagues from its inception, namely, to provide a wide range of both scholarly and pastorally directed programs that would seek to enrich the liturgical life of the Church in Australia, and particularly that the Centre’s services might be available across this large and diverse land. To that end it is now an essential part of the work of liturgical renewal that was hoped for emerging from the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council.

Very Rev Peter G. Williams AM, VG
Diocese of Parramatta
Member, Board of Advisors (2016-2022)



When ACU’s Liturgy Institute was just the germ of an idea, I never imagined that within a decade it would grow into

such a multidimensional resource for the Catholic Church in Australia, now radiating out to under-resourced areas in Africa and the Pacific. It serves the needs of every stratum of church ministry. Clare’s energy and enthusiasm know no bounds. Onward!

Dr. Julia A. Upton, RSM, MPH
Provost Emerita, Distinguished
Professor of Theology (retired)
St. John’s University



One of the communications that I eagerly look forward to receiving is the Liturgy Newsletter. As a “practitioner in the field

hospital” it is always helpful for two main reasons: Firstly, it informs me of liturgical practice; the short pithy articles are most helpful. Secondly, it is an opportunity to see what is on offer by way of liturgical support. For example, in issue 21 of November last year, I found the online training program for Ministers of the Word and managed to round up 11 of our parishioners to avail themselves of the course. It was a roaring success. Happy 10th anniversary!

Rev. Joseph Taylor, PP, VG
St Brendan’s Parish, Shepparton
Vicar General, Diocese of Sandhurst



Since joining the staff in 2023, I have been constantly impressed by the quality of the Centre’s conferences, intensives,

liturgical celebrations, research students, and online or face-to-face formation programs. Capitalising upon developments in communications and technology (such as Zoom, and computerised learning platforms), the Centre has become recognised locally and internationally as a key player in fostering liturgical formation. I am inspired by collaboration with colleagues from the Bishops Commission for



Recent ACU PhD graduates in liturgy at the SC@60+ Symposium (December 2023): Rev. Dr Michael Wallace, Prof. Clare Johnson (supervisor), Dr Jennifer Wakeling and Dr Dan McGrath.

Liturgy, the Board of Advisors, current staff members Clare Johnson, Cathy Murrowood and Maryanne Hemsley, and to all our friends and associates who have supported the Centre's inspiring vision and creative initiatives over the past decade.

Paul Taylor,
Assistant Director



I love working at the ACU Centre for Liturgy. I started in 2016, at the end of my working life, having spent years

as a professional engineer and then in diocesan and parish administrative positions. As a parish volunteer and musician, I learnt a good deal about the liturgy and liturgical ministries in general and to work in the Centre which has a focus on raising awareness of the importance of liturgy celebrated well, and forming good liturgical ministers to achieve this, is very satisfying. I have seen and experienced how engaging is good liturgy, particularly with young people.

Maryanne Hemsley,
Program Coordinator



Forming people for ministry is an essential part of the mission of the ACU Centre for Liturgy. Since the establishment

of Centre, we have worked in partnership with city, rural and remote faith communities. We have also collaborated

with Deaneries, Dioceses and Catholic organisations. Our innovative online programs, podcasts and customised face-to-face workshops have been a lifeline for many who have had limited training opportunities, especially in recent times. It has been a great privilege to work with people from Australia, New Zealand, Asia and Nigeria. We look forward to expanding our liturgical ministry training programs in the future.

Cathy Murrowood,
Professional Specialist - Liturgy Education



Over the last ten years, I have done a number of courses at the ACU Centre for Liturgy across a range of areas. Each course has not

disappointed in any way. I have received great and deep formation, both liturgically and theologically. The presenters - all knowledgeable in their particular fields - have inspired, challenged and brought clarity in my moments of confusion. They have also directed me to resources for ongoing reference. Now, I send parishioners wishing to be involved in parish ministry to do all their formation at the ACU Centre for Liturgy because I am certain they will be endowed with confidence and ability to serve our parish well. Congratulations to the Centre for Liturgy on your 10th anniversary of supporting and enabling people to go forth and enrich our liturgies and serve one another and, in doing so, serve God.

Christine Mitchell,
Pastoral Ministry Leader, Parish of Sacred Heart and St Columba Archdiocese of Melbourne



I am delighted to acknowledge and celebrate the 10th anniversary of the ACU Centre for Liturgy. The Centre stands as a testament

to Australian Catholic University's commitment to realising the vision of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, particularly in promoting liturgical education and encouraging the full, conscious, and active participation of all the faithful. Approaching my postgraduate studies at ACU with a deep curiosity about the Church's liturgical heritage, I was greatly enriched by the academic excellence and intellectual leadership of the Centre's scholars. Their expertise and passion were instrumental in deepening my appreciation for the liturgy. Inspired by my first unit in liturgical studies, I chose to further specialise in this field. In 2017, I was honored to receive the ACU Centre for Liturgy Postgraduate Scholarship - an opportunity that greatly supported my academic journey. The mentorship of Professor Clare Johnson, in particular, has been formative and deeply valued. Through the Centre's diverse programs and outreach initiatives, I have remained connected to a vibrant community of liturgical scholars. The Centre's strong ties to an international network of experts make it a vital resource, especially for postgraduate and HDR students in sacramental theology. Congratulations to the ACU Centre for Liturgy on a remarkable first decade. I extend my heartfelt best wishes for the next ten years and beyond.

Samantha Wegner,
Sessional Academic, Core Curriculum, Faculty of Theology and Philosophy
Sessional Academic, Faculty of Theology and Philosophy, National School of Theology

Engage our expertise

Online training programs for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion and Ministers of the Word

The ACU Centre for Liturgy's online training programs for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion and Ministers of the Word are innovative and comprehensive short programs incorporating live Zoom classes, extensive online learning resources, interaction with your parish priest and a local practicum to prepare you well for these special liturgical ministries. These rich and engaging programs are run multiple times a year and are supported by the Bishops Commission for Liturgy. Visit acu.edu.au/centreforliturgy for future dates and enrolment.

Parish training and formation workshops

ACU Centre for Liturgy offers a variety of in-person specialised training and formation workshops for parish ministers and liturgical musicians. We can also provide detailed advice and specific strategies to improve liturgical celebrations in your parish through a comprehensive liturgy or liturgical music audit.

Professional development for teachers and religious education leaders

We tailor workshops and professional development sessions for schools and Catholic education offices to extend knowledge of liturgical celebrations and sacramental preparation.

Develop your skills as a presider at liturgy

Clergy can engage in our specialised professional development sessions on a range of topics from presidential singing to the art of presiding at worship and to the craft of preaching.

Bring our experts to you

Our academics and specialists are available to deliver keynote addresses, public lectures and conference workshops designed to meet the needs of your organisation or event.

Study liturgy and sacramental theology

You can study academic courses or undertake higher degree research in liturgical studies and sacramental theology through ACU's Faculty of Theology and Philosophy. Contact us at CentreforLiturgy@acu.edu.au for further information.

Contact us

ACU Centre for Liturgy

25A Barker Rd, Strathfield, NSW 2135

Phone: +61 2 9701 4751

Website: acu.edu.au/centreforliturgy

Email: CentreforLiturgy@acu.edu.au

Centre for Liturgy Staff:

Professor Clare V. Johnson, Director

Dr Paul Taylor, Assistant Director

Mrs Cathy Murrowood, Professional Specialist, Liturgical Education

Ms Maryanne Hemsley, Program Coordinator

The Liturgy Nexus

The Liturgy Nexus is an online subscription-based closed network run by the ACU Centre for Liturgy and designed for conversation on liturgical issues, resource sharing and problem solving. The Liturgy Nexus links postgraduate-qualified liturgists, current students of liturgy and those working in a liturgy-related profession, such as liturgical architecture, art or music. Membership or Associate Membership is granted to applicants who meet the eligibility criteria. To apply for membership or associate membership, depending on your qualification level, visit our website. Membership costs \$30 per year (not pro-rata), renewable on or before 1 March each year.



Support our work in rural and low-income parishes

You can support the crucial work of the ACU Centre for Liturgy by donating (tax-deductable over \$2) through the Give Now portal on our website. ACU is a not-for-profit institution, and 100 per cent of your gift will be utilised to provide formative education in liturgy and sacraments in areas of need. Endowments, bequests and gifts in kind are welcome.

Board of Advisors:

Bishop Paul Bird CSsR, Bishop of Ballarat

Very Rev Gerald Gleeson, Acting PVC Catholic Mission, ACU

Sister Judy Foster SGS, Liturgical Consultant, Diocese of Townsville

Professor Clare V. Johnson, Director, ACU Centre for Liturgy *ex officio*

Professor Emerita Marea Nicholson AM, former ACU Associate Vice-Chancellor

Sister Professor Julia A Upton RSM, St John's University, New York

Mr Steven C Warner, Founder and Director Emeritus of the Notre Dame Folk Choir, Associate Director of the Notre Dame-Newman Centre in Dublin, Ireland

ACU CENTRE FOR LITURGY

CRICOS registered provider: 00004G | PRV12008

© ACU 2025 All rights reserved.

Disclaimer (July 2025): Information correct at time of printing. The university reserves the right to amend, cancel or otherwise modify the content without notice.