

# Newsletter

## Issue 14

## July 2022



Image by Giovanni Portelli

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### UPCOMING FOR YOUR CALENDAR

**Let's Celebrate the Lectionary** – Garratt Publishing and the ACU Centre for Liturgy present a **free four-night Zoom short course** on Lectionary-based catechesis for those involved in faith formation of school students – 9, 16, 23 and 30 August 7 – 8pm. See our website for details.

**THLS606: Celebrating Liturgy Today** – for postgraduate students, auditors, and professional learners, and will be taught by Professor Clare Johnson, 26 – 29 September, 9am – 5pm via Zoom. Details on our website soon.

**“Does the Catholic Sacrament of Marriage Have a Future?”** Join us for a **public lecture** by **Professor Julie Hanlon Rubio**, Jesuit School of Theology, Berkeley CA, USA on 17 October 2022, 10 – 11.30am via Zoom. Registration will be on our website soon.

### FROM THE DIRECTOR

Christians believe that how we die is just as important as how we live, and the Catholic Church counts among its seven corporal works of mercy, visiting the sick and burying the dead. The sick, the dying, and the dead continue to be members of Christ's body (militant and triumphant) even when their mortal bodies decline and decay. Many people are unsure about how to accompany and offer support to the dying and their loved ones and doing so can be both a confronting and enriching experience. Facing the reality of a loved one's death can force one to confront one's own mortality, which can be uncomfortable. Honouring a loved one's life in its end stages can require us to suspend self-focus, put aside personal uneasiness and sadness, and prioritise their needs, offering them our presence, prayers, and comfort as they pass into God's hands. Working alongside competent and compassionate medical palliative care providers, pastoral carers (both clergy and lay), can help the dying to experience a meaningful, natural, and peaceful

Christian death. Ideally, celebrating the final sacraments of reconciliation, anointing and viaticum can bring a sense of completion and peace to the dying.

Our July newsletter explores Christian dying, palliative care, and viaticum with a beautiful reflection by Sister Professor Julia Upton RSM, some sensitive and practical advice for those visiting the dying and their families by Sophy Morley, and a thoughtful reflection on caring for the dying by Father Anthony Casamento CSMA. The provision of pastoral care to the dying and their loved ones is a privilege every Christian should embrace if possible.



**Professor Clare V. Johnson**

Director, ACU Centre for Liturgy  
 Professor of Liturgical Studies and Sacramental Theology, Faculty of Theology and Philosophy



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## FROM OUR BOARD OF ADVISORS

In his 2022 message for the 30th World Day of the Sick, in February this year, Pope Francis noted how often the Gospels related Jesus' encounters with people suffering from illness. Specifically, he remarked that *"we do well to ask ourselves why Jesus showed such great concern for the sick, so much so that he made it paramount in the mission of the apostles, who were sent by the Master to proclaim the Gospel and to heal the sick."*

The Catholic rites for Pastoral Care of the Sick when celebrated well and as intended, can play a critical role in the pastoral care and comfort not only of those facing death – but also of their loved ones as well. One of the most important and valuable things we can do for a person is to care for them in the final stages of their life. To do this well is never just a matter of clinical knowledge or professional skill, though these are valuable. Just as critical is the

role that ritual plays in celebrating the sense and knowledge of a whole life, of the wholeness of a person and their relationships that make up a life – the very reasons that Jesus showed such great concern for the sick.



**Father Anthony Casamento CSMA** is Vice President of Australian Catholic University.

## NEWS AND RECENT EVENTS

July 4 – 7: Sister Professor Julia Upton RSM with Professor Clare Johnson taught a Zoom intensive postgraduate unit – **THLS603 Liturgy and Prayer in Pastoral Care** – with special guests Professor Maria Cigolini, RPAH and University of Sydney, Dr David Kirchhoffer, Queensland Bioethics Centre and Father Peter Carroll MSC, Long Bay Correctional Centre.

July 12 and 14: In collaboration with Catholic Cemeteries and Crematoria and Archdiocese of Sydney, Professor Clare Johnson will run pastoral formation days on **"The Christian's Final Journey: Preparation and Celebration"** at All Saints Catholic Parish, Liverpool NSW.

July 18: **Reverend Dr Paul Turner** will present "Celebrating Catholic Funerals in the Face of Secularism, COVID and other challenges" live from Washington DC as part of our public lecture series.

Professor Clare Johnson has been appointed to the **Euthanasia Taskforce** advising and supporting the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference in their attempts to promote alternatives to euthanasia.

After serving for almost six years as the Assistant Director of the ACU Centre for Liturgy, in May 2022, **Dr Jason McFarland** decided to move into a full-time role within ACU's Faculty of Theology and Philosophy

to pursue his teaching and research interests. We are most grateful for Jason's contribution to the Centre as its inaugural Assistant Director and wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

University of Vienna has developed a new ecumenical research journal in liturgical studies **Ex Fonte – Journal of Ecumenical Studies in Liturgy**, launched mid-2022, to promote dialogue between liturgical history and liturgical theology. Professor Clare Johnson is a member of the international Editorial Advisory Board. For more information about *Ex Fonte* please see: [exfonte.org/index.php/efx](http://exfonte.org/index.php/efx)



## LITURGY SPOTLIGHT

# Christian dying – palliative care and viaticum

One Sunday morning, I was leading song in our parish church, and just before Mass began, one of the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion came up to me and said that I absolutely must visit Fede – one of the lectors who had been living with pancreatic cancer and was now near death. In those days, I was also coordinating the parish lectors, so I knew Fede well, and promised that I would visit her at home directly after Mass. Although she had already received Holy Communion (*viaticum*) that morning, Fede and her family wanted another kind of communion as it turned out, and I was happy to be with them on the journey.

In our experience of serving as Ministers of the Word, the parish lectors had not only developed a warm and living love of the Scriptures, but they had also come to share that with each other and with the broader

community. For Fede and her family in that moment, they wanted someone to be that nourishing presence of the Word too. They did not need me to do anything, just to be with them in the time of this great passage from one world to the next. It was a privileged moment in my life to be called like that, and in the years since, it has led me to deeper reflection on the levels of communion and the modes of presence.

In *The Habit of Being*, Flannery O'Connor wrote that "sickness before death is one of God's mercies," which is rarely the way people think about sickness. Sickness is usually equated with pain, diminishment, and suffering, but it doesn't have to be that way. "Palliative care" is focused on providing relief from the pain and stress of living with serious illness ('palliate' means to relieve or lessen without curing). Attending to the needs of the patient



Image by Phong Lam.

rather than the patient's prognosis, its goal is to enhance quality of life for both patient and family. It is appropriate at any age and at any stage in a serious illness and can also accompany curative treatment. Jesus always provided palliative care for those he encountered and encouraged his followers to do likewise. Asking "what can I do for you?" as Jesus so often did, is the beginning of palliative care for anyone

with a serious illness or just experiencing the storms and stresses of ordinary life.

The Church's sacrament of Anointing of the Sick is another aspect of palliative care and Christian dying. Although I had taught about the sacrament for forty years, until I was facing serious surgery five years ago, I had no personal experience of the sacrament. I was surprised that the experience of receiving the sacrament stayed with me long after the oil had seeped into my body, mind, and spirit. It calmed me more than I had imagined, and I was confident that the Church's prayer was not just strengthening me but also my surgeon for whom we prayed.

On another Sunday morning, I received a telephone call from one of the sisters telling me that my friend Sister Grace had suddenly fallen seriously and mysteriously ill. As her closest friend and health proxy,

I knew that I should be with her. Seven hours and a thousand miles later I was at her bedside. By then the ominous diagnosis had been made – advanced pancreatic cancer. When I explained this to her, Grace's instantaneous response was an overjoyed, "you mean I'm going to see God soon?"

By the next morning she wanted a natural death and asked that all the various tubes be removed. It took a few hours to obtain the necessary permissions, but by early afternoon she was still alert enough that we sang the *Salve and Suscipe* together. Grace was a beloved pastoral minister at that hospital, so many people stopped by to say farewell. The sisters from the convent came to pray the rosary at her bedside. By then, Grace was dozing, but each time she awakened her response was the same, "I'm still here?" but eventually

her blood pressure was so low that she fell into a coma. A while later she suddenly sat upright in the bed and raised her arms as though she was trying to reach someone, before collapsing back into the bed. Her blood pressure continued to drop and by early evening Grace was home with God. It was the most beautiful, peaceful day I ever spent. That is the of Christian dying I wish for everyone.



**Sister Professor Julia A Upton** RSM is Provost Emerita and retired Distinguished Professor in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, St. John's University, New York.

## SHARING GOOD PRACTICE

# Pastoral care suggestions for lay people

A person's final days can bring sadness and grief to the family who accompany and support them on their final journey. Despite the challenge and strain of living this liminal time, it can also bring great grace and blessings. The sacraments of anointing, reconciliation, and viaticum can be celebrated during this time however, pastoral care can also be provided by lay people through visitation of the dying, keeping in close contact with their families, and accompanying them by offering compassion, empathy, listening, and mercy. Simple rituals and prayers which can bring much comfort, when family members may not be confident or able to pray these for themselves, can include:

- making the sign of the cross on hands, forehead or, if they are unable to be touched, over the person, as a reminder of their Baptism
- lighting a candle during prayer

- praying familiar prayers like the Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary, or the Rosary, or other short prayers in contemporary style
- praying a litany of the saints and including the person's favourite saints (inviting family members to say the 'Pray for us' response)
- giving the dying person a small cross to hold and offering a prayer card to family members so they are enabled to join in the prayers
- setting up a small sacred space or prayer table featuring a favourite devotional image
- asking open questions such as: "what were some special times that you remember?" or "can you tell me about...", to encourage the dying person and their loved ones to tell their stories of life and love. This can help us to appreciate how much the dying person is loved as we focus on some of their endearing qualities.

In addition to the sacramental care provided by clergy, all Christians have a role to play in pastoral care, through visitation, maintaining contact with families, phone calls, coffee conversations, offers of assistance and food, and a willingness to be attentive to what is happening in our communities. The power of presence, care, and compassion for the dying and their families lets them know that the Christian community surrounds them with Christ's love.



**Sophy Morley** is Diocesan Coordinator for Liturgy and Pastoral Ministry in the Diocese of Sale, Victoria.



Image by Giovanni Portelli.



## Engage our expertise

### Online training program for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

ACU Centre for Liturgy's online training program for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion is an innovative and comprehensive five-week program incorporating live Zoom classes, extensive online learning resources, and interaction with your parish priest and a local practicum to prepare you well for this special ministry. This rich and engaging program is run multiple times per year and is supported by the Bishops Commission for Liturgy. See our website for future dates and enrolment.

### Parish training and formation workshops

ACU Centre for Liturgy provides a variety of specialised training and formation workshops for parish ministers and liturgical musicians. We can 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 to extend knowledge of liturgical celebrations and sacramental preparation for schools and Catholic education offices.

### 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 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 for further information.

## Contact us

### ACU Centre for Liturgy

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### Centre for Liturgy Staff:

**Professor Clare V. Johnson**, Director

**Mrs Cathy Murrowood**, Liturgy Educator

**Ms Maryanne Hemsley**, Administrative Officer



Images by Giovanni Portelli.

## The Liturgy Nexus and Liturgy Nexus for Schools

The Liturgy Nexus and Liturgy Nexus for Schools are online subscription-based closed networks 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, e.g., liturgical architecture, art or music (membership is granted to applicants who meet the eligibility criteria). The Liturgy Nexus for Schools links those preparing liturgical celebrations in school communities. To apply for membership or associate membership (depending on qualification level) of the Liturgy Nexus or to join the Liturgy Nexus for Schools see 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 making a donation (tax-deductable over \$2) through the Give Now portal on our website. ACU is a not-for-profit institution, and 100% 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

**Father Anthony Casamento CSMA**, Vice President, ACU

**Sister Judy Foster SGS**, Liturgical Consultant, Diocese of Townsville

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

**Dr Paul Taylor**, Executive Secretary, Bishops' Commission for Liturgy

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

**Very Reverend Peter Williams**, Vicar General, Diocese of Parramatta

## ACU CENTRE FOR LITURGY

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