



Image by Phong Lam

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**UPCOMING FOR YOUR CALENDAR**

**Public lectures 2023 –**

**8 May:** Rev Canon Dr Lizette Larson-Miller (University of Western Ontario)

**7 August:** Dr Phyllis Zagano (Hofstra University)

**6 November:** Professor Teresa Berger (Yale University)  
Further details will be available on our website.

**THLS502: Liturgical Music –**

**3 – 6 July, 9am – 5pm:** For postgraduate students, auditors and professional learners. Taught in person by Professor Clare Johnson at ACU's Melbourne Campus.

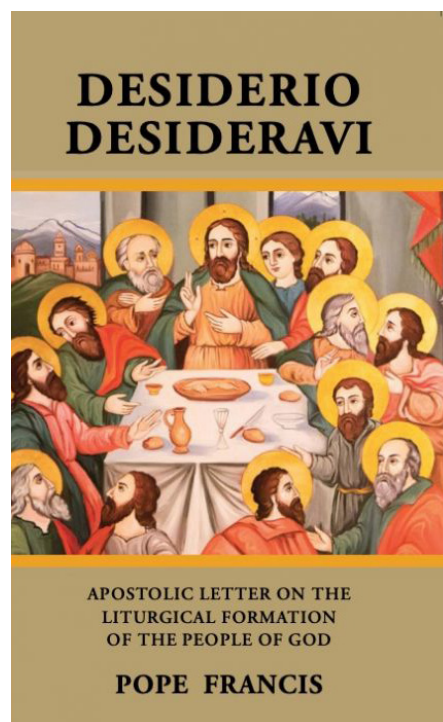
More information and registration details will be available on our website.

**FROM THE DIRECTOR**

Pope Francis's apostolic letter *Desiderio Desideravi* (29 June 2022) challenges the entire Catholic Church to learn more about what we are doing when we celebrate the liturgy, especially the Eucharist, so that we can celebrate as fruitfully as possible (see DD #16). A better understanding of what we are doing, why we are doing it, and what it all means when we celebrate liturgy, ought to lead us to be one in holiness, to hold fast in our lives to what we have grasped by our faith, to be drawn into the compelling love of Christ and set on fire by it, to have grace poured forth upon us, to be sanctified in Christ, and to give glory to God, as *Sacrosanctum Concilium* #10 teaches.

Every Catholic, lay and cleric, church and unchurched, can benefit from an increase in liturgical knowledge and understanding. When we pray and worship God more mindfully, our faith is strengthened, and ideally our thoughts and deeds in liturgy and beyond can become more fruitful and Christ-like.

This newsletter offers two rich reflections on the importance of liturgical formation. Sr Dr Kathleen Hughes RSCJ proposes a practical, poetic, dialogic strategy to promote liturgical formation in parish life, while Sr Louise Gannon RSJ shares insights and benefits to be gained from taking a mystagogical approach to sacramental preparation and liturgical reflection. Sixty years after *Sacrosanctum Concilium* was promulgated, Pope Francis has called on us to become better formed and informed about the liturgical celebrations in which we have the privilege of encountering Christ. I invite you to consider the practical methods for doing this offered here.



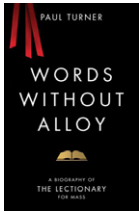
**Professor Clare V. Johnson**

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

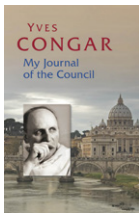


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## FROM OUR BOARD OF ADVISORS



Perhaps it is an effect of recent participation in discussions preparing for the upcoming Synod on Synodality, but I am finding among the laity a surprising interest in Vatican II. This both surprises and delights me. Besides returning to the documents themselves, in the intervening years there have been several books that have taken us behind the scenes to understand



the dynamics of the council and the consequent liturgical reform. The most recent is Paul Turner's *Words Without Alloy: A Biography of the Lectionary for Mass*. History and theology woven together with Paul's usual skill for understanding what needs to be said, and for doing so succinctly and artistically.

For those with more time and interest in the machinations of the Council itself there is Yves Congar's *My Journal of the Council* which, besides being historical and theological, is also very personal and even emotional. Besides the journal, the

large volume includes appendices with highlights of each of the four sessions and a recapitulation of Congar's participation in the various conciliar schemas. It is a treasure trove I return to often.



**Sr Professor Julia A Upton RSM** is Professor Emerita of Theology at St John's University, New York, and the author of *Worship in Spirit and Truth: the Life and Legacy of H. A. Reinhold* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2010).

## NEWS AND RECENT EVENTS



On 9 February, Professor Clare Johnson presented 'The Christian's Final Journey' – a funerals formation day for clergy, funeral directors and others interested in preparing funerals at the Polding Centre, Archdiocese of Sydney.

The ACU Centre for Liturgy is delighted to welcome a new part-time Assistant Director, Dr Paul Taylor. Paul most recently served as Executive Secretary to the ACBC Bishops Commission for Liturgy and National Liturgical Council until the end of 2022 and is

concurrently Director of Music at Sacred Heart Cathedral, Bendigo. Previously, Paul worked in various agencies in the Archdiocese of Melbourne as a liturgist, musician, editor and publisher, and served as Director of Music at St Patrick's Cathedral Melbourne (2015 – 2019). He has master's degrees in liturgy and music and completed his doctorate at ACU on the ministerial and congregational singing of chant.

After farewelling two generous long-serving members of our Board of Advisors, Very Rev Peter G Williams AM and Dr Paul Taylor, the ACU Centre for Liturgy welcomes two new advisory board members: Professor Emerita Marea Nicholson AM, former ACU Associate Vice-Chancellor, and Mr Steven C Warner, Founder and Director Emeritus of the Notre Dame

Folk Choir (USA) and Associate Director of the Notre Dame-Newman Centre in Dublin, Ireland.

ACU Centre for Liturgy staff are finalising our new online training program for **Ministers of the Word**. This four-week interactive program introduces you to the spiritual and technical preparation needed for ministry and features multiple practical examples and helpful formative exercises. In addition to engaging content examining key aspects of Ministry, Sacred Scripture and the Church's Liturgy, participants will gather for live Zoom classes led by an experienced liturgy expert who will prepare you for an interactive practicum in your local community. Further information and registration details will be available on our website soon.

## LITURGY SPOTLIGHT

# Liturgical formation – a different approach

One day, not so long ago, I gave a presentation on the Eucharist to a few hundred people in a parish setting. As I was talking through the key moments of the celebration, a hand went up mid-audience: "Besides you, who knows this stuff?" Lots of nervous laughter from the audience, but I think that's a really provocative question: Who knows this stuff?

The reform of the liturgy is now well into middle age, having begun in 1963 with the publication of *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, and launched in earnest in the mid-70s when every major sacrament had been revised. Over these many years, and despite the numerous strategies employed to form assemblies

in its contours and inner meaning, the liturgy remains inscrutable for many. Diocesan letters, parish programs, study days, bulletin inserts – all manner of formation possibilities have been employed, but often they attract those already formed and eager for more. Meanwhile the number of those attending Sunday worship continues to decline, abetted by the Covid pandemic which gave all of us permission to stay home.

Liturgical formation is on the mind of Pope Francis. He wrote a splendid letter on the topic in the northern summer of 2022. *Desiderio Desideravi* is a meditation to "rekindle our wonder for the beauty of the truth of the Christian celebration, to remind us of the necessity

of an authentic liturgical formation, and to recognise the importance of an art of celebrating that is at the service of the truth of the Paschal Mystery and of the participation of all of the baptised in it, each one according to her or his vocation". The letter is well worth praying over. It is filled with thought-provoking reflections about our worship. My disappointment is that, as in so many documents of its kind, it concludes by suggesting that seminary formation and really excellent presiding need to be the linchpins of formation. Leave it to the clergy.

I'm no longer satisfied with that approach. I want to propose a new formation strategy, one addressed to all of us, one that will reach the maximum number of

people, one that will engage both mind and heart, one that might even revitalise the Sunday assembly. What if we decided that, for a whole year, the focus of the Sunday homily was the Eucharist itself, a possibility included in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* #65? What if, over the course of the year, the homilist walked through the Eucharist slowly, thoughtfully, poetically, exploring the words, gestures and objects of the Eucharist in a way that touches our hearts and nourishes our spirits? What if the homilist prepared these reflections with the help of a rotating group of thoughtful parishioners who would ponder together the way this particular element of the liturgy discloses to us something about ourselves and something about God's invitation to us to become what we celebrate?

What if we used the language of poetry rather than prose, the language of mystagogical reflection – for it seems to me that all of us in the pews are post-Easter neophytes in need of reflecting on our experience. How does a procession evoke the journey into God that we have undertaken? What are the many kinds of silence and why are they important in the rite? How do we make familiar language

come alive? How do the postures of our prayer illuminate for us what we are doing? Do we really mean it each time we say “Amen”?

Take that word, “Amen”. It's a modest word, a frequent response, but packed with meaning as teased out in this poem: (see box).

That's precisely the kind of poetic reflection that I am suggesting. There are resources available of course, but perhaps the best resource is the imagination of worshippers once enkindled by word and sacrament, teased out by mystagogical preaching, broadened in the occasional post-worship conversation, and then reinforced by liturgy which, to paraphrase Pope Francis, revitalises wonder and plunges us all into the death and rising of Christ for the life of the world.



**Sr Dr Kathleen Hughes RSCJ** is a former Professor of Word and Worship, Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, and former provincial of the United States Province of the Society of the Sacred Heart. Kathleen is

the author of *Saying Amen: Entering Into the Mystery of the Sacraments* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2022).

**Amen**  
**Be careful of simple words said often...  
 “Amen” makes demands  
 like an unrelenting schoolmaster:  
 fierce attention to all that is said;  
 no apathy, no preoccupation,  
 no prejudice permitted.**  
**“Amen”: We are present. We are open.  
 We are of one mind. We understand.  
 Here we are; we are listening to  
 your word.**  
**“Amen” makes demands  
 Like a signature on a dotted line:  
 Sober bond of all that goes before;  
 No hesitation, no half-heartedness,  
 No mental reservations allowed.**  
**“Amen”; We support. We approve.  
 We are of one mind. We promise.  
 May this come to pass. So be it.**  
**Be careful when you say “Amen.”<sup>1</sup>**

Footnote 1: “Amen,” Barbara Schmich Searle, *Liturgical Gestures, Words, Objects: Collection*, ed. Eleanor Bernstein (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Center for Pastoral Liturgy, 1995).

## SHARING GOOD PRACTICE

# Burning hearts and liturgical formation



Image by Phong Lam

In the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, liturgical formation is undergoing a process of transformation. It began with our desire to reimagine the ministry of Christian Initiation of adults and children in accord with the vision and principles of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). We appointed a diocesan Christian Initiation Forum and Fr Andrew Doohan and I began the process of forming members by embarking on a mystagogical journey through the RCIA. In the process, they fell in love with mystagogical reflection.

Now, nearly all liturgical formation is approached through mystagogical reflection. Young people love it. They have no problem with any version of the word

‘mystagogy’ or with the discipline of the process. More mature Catholics often find the process challenging because, while we have been schooled in talking about God, scripture, church, liturgy and many other Catholic things, we don't find it so easy to engage in dialogue about our personal relationship with God or the joys and challenges of living the paschal mystery every day.

Mystagogical reflection acknowledges that Christ is the ultimate formator, forming us through word, liturgy and life. As people of faith, we share life in Christ and are filled with and led by the Holy Spirit. This is everyone's domain and requires, firstly, attentiveness to experience. In mystagogical reflection,

knowledge and understanding take their proper place, emerging from reflection on the experience of encounter with Christ. Interestingly, we are finding that the knowledge and understanding that emerge from mystagogical reflection is more deeply inscribed in the hearts and muscle memories of those who participate in this type of liturgical formation. There are more “burning heart” moments thanks to Christ – not indigestion.

Where formation in any of the rites, liturgical ministry or study of liturgical documents is concerned, mystagogical reflection is increasingly our way. As the central dynamic of the RCIA, mystagogical reflection has a natural home in the parish and school community, and in the life of all who long to deepen their relationship with God and to live in Christ.



**Sr Louise Gannon RSJ** MTh (Hons), MA Liturgical Studies is the Manager of Worship and Prayer in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle.

## 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 a 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

**Dr Paul Taylor**, Assistant Director

**Mrs Cathy Murrowood**, Liturgy Educator

**Ms Maryanne Hemsley**, Administrative Officer



Image by Maryanne Hemsley

## 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, eg: 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*

**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

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