

# Newsletter

## Issue 24

## November 2025



Book of Gospels

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### UPCOMING FOR YOUR CALENDAR

**Speaking of Liturgy podcast**  
 Every two weeks a new podcast featuring a local or international guest presenter is available via your podcast provider.

### Online Liturgical Training Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

Tuesdays from 27 January 2026,  
 7– 8pm AEDST over 5 weeks

**Ministers of the Word**  
 Wednesdays from 25 February 2026,  
 7– 8pm AEDST over 4 weeks

**Communion of the Sick**  
 Wednesdays from 6 May 2026,  
 7– 8pm AEST, over 4 weeks

**Professional Learning Seminar**  
**In preparation for the 2028 Eucharistic Congress:**  
 THLS601 Eucharist 6 – 9 July 2026

**Find out more, visit**  
[acu.edu.au/centre-for-liturgy](http://acu.edu.au/centre-for-liturgy)



### FROM THE DIRECTOR

Proclamation of the Word is one of the most important ministerial roles in liturgical celebration. Through his motu proprio *Spiritus Domini* (10 January 2021), Pope Francis opened up the role of Instituted Lector to laywomen as well as laymen (who had earlier become eligible to serve as ministers of the Word through Paul VI's motu proprio *Ministeria quaedam*, 15 August 1972).

Ministry of the Word is an expression of the baptismal priesthood for those gifted with the necessary capacity, desire, training, and strong faith to undertake it well on behalf of the church community. *Spiritus Domini* clarifies that 'institution' as a Lector means that lay persons who "possess the age and qualifications established by decree of the conference of bishops" are "admitted on a stable basis through the prescribed liturgical rite" to the ministry of lector (see Canon 230 §1). Instituted Lectors are baptised people whose appropriateness for such a role has been carefully discerned, who have undergone sufficient preparation and training to serve as ministerial exemplars for others, and who are entrusted through a liturgical act of the bishop with a specific role that is

"publicly recognised and made available to the community".

This newsletter explores the liturgical role of ministering the Word more generally, as we await publication of our Australian bishops' decree on Instituted Lectors and Acolytes. In this issue, Bishop Paul Bird CSsR provides a helpful pastoral reflection on why the ministry of proclaiming the Word is such an important role in our assemblies while Sr Judy Foster SGS offers some useful pointers on preparing to proclaim the Word and tips for proclaiming well.

May all those who proclaim the Word of God in our midst be blessed and encouraged in their ministry of service.

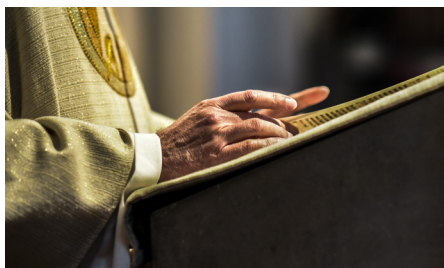


**Professor Clare V. Johnson**  
 Director, ACU Centre for Liturgy  
 Professor of Liturgical Studies and Sacramental Theology, Faculty of Theology and Philosophy



Endorsed by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference

# Proclaiming God's word: Why is this ministry so important?



When we think about the various services that people provide in the community, we might ask, "What's so important about their particular role?" If we think about the services provided by doctors and nurses, we can easily recognise the importance of their role especially when we are sick. Doctors and nurses provide treatment that can restore our health. In some cases, their service is vital to save a life.

Those who proclaim God's word also provide a vital service to our faith community in a spiritual sense. The word of God can be a healing word, bringing comfort in times of suffering or calling us to repentance so that God might heal the wounds of our sins. God's word can also be vitally important in the sense of being a word of life – an invitation to open our hearts to receive the fullness of life that God wishes to give us.

If we look back to the beginning of the Christian story, we find Jesus himself proclaiming God's word. In the gospel according to Luke, Jesus goes into the synagogue at Nazareth on a Sabbath day. He stands up to read, and he is given the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll, he finds the place where it is written, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor." Jesus then rolls up the scroll, gives it back to the assistant and sits down. The eyes of all in the synagogue fix

on him. Then he begins to speak to them saying, "today this text has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:16-21).

Jesus provided an important service by reading a message from the prophet Isaiah. In this case, it was a message of consolation, a message of joy about someone being anointed by the Spirit of God to bring good tidings to people in need. Jesus then provided a second service by explaining that Isaiah's prophetic words were being fulfilled at that very moment in the synagogue so that those present understood that God's word was a word of salvation for them.

Those who proclaim God's word in our liturgies today are continuing the ministry of Jesus. Whether they are readers who share the Scripture texts with the congregation or homilists who explain and apply the Scriptures, they are carrying on the mission of Christ in bringing God's good news to people of our time. In fact, we can see readers and homilists as channels through which Christ himself speaks to the congregation. As the Second Vatican Council said, "Christ is always present in his church, especially in her liturgical celebrations . . . He is present in his word, since it is he himself who speaks when the Holy Scriptures are read in the church" (SC 7).

The bishops gathered at the Second Vatican Council recognised the importance of the Scriptures in the life of the church. For this reason, they decreed that a fuller selection of texts from the Bible should be read in the liturgy in the liturgical year. "The treasures of the Bible are to be opened up more lavishly, so that richer fare may be provided for the faithful at the table of God's Word. In this way a more representative portion of the Holy Scriptures will be read to the people

over a set cycle of years" (SC 51).

The more we appreciate the importance of the Scriptures, the more we will appreciate the importance of the role of those who proclaim the Scriptures in the midst of the assembly.

The introduction to the Lectionary highlights the need for readers to be qualified and prepared for their ministry: "It is necessary that those who exercise the ministry of reader, even if they have not received institution, be truly qualified and carefully prepared so that the faithful may develop a warm and living love for Scripture from listening to the sacred texts read." The readers' preparation should include some biblical formation so that they can understand the readings in context. It is helpful if readers look for a key point in each reading so that they can convey this key point more clearly to the listening assembly. Their preparation should also include some technical formation in the art of public reading, with appropriate pace and volume, so that the congregation can appreciate the message as fully as possible. (General Introduction to the Lectionary, 55)

Before reading the gospel, a deacon asks the bishop or priest for a blessing and the bishop or priest prays, "May the Lord be in your heart and on your lips, that you may proclaim his Gospel worthily and well."

This is a good prayer for any of us who proclaim God's word. "May the Lord be in my heart and on my lips, that I may proclaim God's word worthily and well."



**Bishop Paul Bird**  
CSsR, Bishop of  
Ballarat

## NEWS AND RECENT EVENTS

**Mrs Cathy Murrowood and Dr Paul Taylor** delivered our 'Ministers of the Word' training program in June at St Catherine of Sienna Parish Caroline Springs and at Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish Hampton East. They also led a program for 'Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion' in July at ACU Fitzroy. All participants were sponsored by the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne.

**Prof Clare Johnson** presented a research paper during the *Societas Liturgica* Congress in Paris in late July.

**Most Rev Peter Elliott, MA (Oxon), STD**, Emeritus Auxiliary Bishop in the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne and author of several books on liturgy, sacraments and catechetics, died in Melbourne on 6 August, aged 81. He was a former Consultant to the Vatican Dicastery for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments and past member of the ACBC's Bishops Commission for Liturgy.

**Prof Clare Johnson** presented 'Encouraging the Assembly's Participation in the Liturgy' at Sacred Heart/Emmaus

Parish, Sydenham in August and 'The Christian's Final Journey: Preparing and Celebrating Catholic Funerals' for clergy, funeral directors and lay people at St Mary MacKillop Parish, Charlestown NSW in September.

**Prof Clare Johnson** published a chapter on 'Liturgy and the Sacraments' in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Liturgy*, edited by Joris Geldhof (Cambridge University Press, 2025). She also wrote an article titled 'How Beauty Can Lead You to Faith' for the Spring edition of *Catholic Outlook Magazine*.



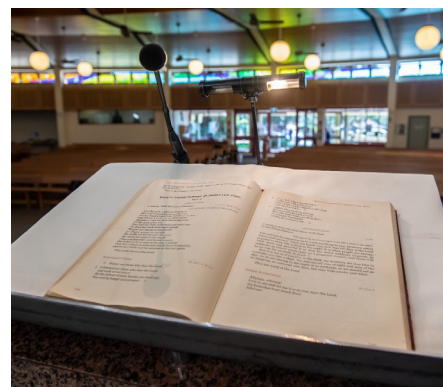
## FROM OUR BOARD OF ADVISORS

Having just returned from KU Leuven's intensive Enhancing Catholic School Identity (ECSI) course in Belgium, I have reflected on the vital role of Catholic education and the challenge faced by schools to be places where our Catholic faith is nurtured, and where authentic dialogue is entered into with other faiths. With Catholic school enrolments including more than 40 per cent of students of other faiths, there is a real need for formation in our faith traditions, in particular our liturgical celebrations. These should be invitational to those of

other faiths, while being grounded in our tradition. The ACU Centre for Liturgy is to be commended as a valuable resource to schools and systems to strengthen the formation opportunities for staff in schools to enhance liturgical celebrations as lived engagement in our faith tradition.



**Marea Nicholson AM** is Professor Emerita and former ACU Associate Vice Chancellor.



## SHARING GOOD PRACTICE

# A nourishing meal



Everyone who comes to the table of the word – whether as listener or proclaimer – needs to be aware of Christ's presence in his Word which nourishes them for mission. How can the whole assembly engage their hearts and minds in the dialogue with God which takes place during the Liturgy of the Word through the Holy Spirit?

Those who listen need to be able to hear and appreciate what is being proclaimed, without having to follow words on leaflets.

Assembly members can be encouraged to read the following Sunday's scripture beforehand so that they are open to hear God's word proclaimed on that day.

Those who proclaim need to take significant time to digest the readings so that their proclamation is not only understandable, but heartfelt. Summary lines atop the reading provide a clue to its meaning, but prayerful meditation on the reading is also required. It is helpful to explore the scriptural background and literary genre of the reading: discourse, poem, story etc. Underlining words and phrases which carry particular emphasis can help. Noting the punctuation is also vital: commas, full stops etc, all need to be 'read' as they break up the text for the listeners, especially when dialogue is part of it. Preparation can include videoing oneself to review technique and expression, as well as having someone to listen and provide feedback on what is going well and what may need improvement. Attention needs to be given to elements of delivery such as pace, pitch, and eye contact.

Readers need to come early to church and check that the page in the Lectionary is correct, and to make sure the microphone is on. At the appropriate time, they should approach the ambo calmly. The Liturgy of the Word should be celebrated in a way that fosters meditation and includes times for silence: as the assembly settles, after the announcement of the reading, and at the end prior to proclaiming 'The Word of the Lord' to invite the acclamation 'Thanks be to God'.

The *Lectionary for Mass: Introduction* is required reading for all, especially readers, so that a warm and living love for the Word who is Christ can develop.



**Judy Foster SGS** is Liturgy Consultant for the Diocese of Townsville and a Member of the National Liturgical Council.

**Dr Paul Taylor and Mrs Cathy Murrowood** attended the APMN and NLC Pilgrims of Hope Liturgy and Music Conference in Adelaide in early October. Paul offered a workshop on organ registration and Cathy co-launched the new NLC liturgy website ([www.nlc.catholic.org.au](http://www.nlc.catholic.org.au)).

**Prof Clare Johnson and Dr Paul Taylor** were among a group of staff who received an ACU Vice Chancellor's Staff Excellence Award in October in the Local and Global Strategic Partnership category for their

contributions to the global media coverage of the death and funeral of Pope Francis and the election and installation of Pope Leo XIV.

**Archbishop Peter A Comensoli**, Archbishop of Melbourne, launched *Sacrosanctum Concilium: Exploring Liturgical Futures*, edited by Clare V. Johnson, Gerard Moore and Peter G. Williams (Springer/Palgrave Macmillan, 2025) at ACU Fitzroy on 17 October, with guests present in person and online. The book was dedicated with gratitude

to members of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan of the Order of St Benedict and the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament in Australia.

The **10th anniversary of the ACU Centre for Liturgy** was celebrated with members of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, ACU staff, liturgical colleagues, and friends during the ACBC Plenary at ACU North Sydney on 3 November.

## 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 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](http://acu.edu.au/centreforliturgy) for future dates and enrolment.

### Parish training and formation workshops

ACU Centre for Liturgy offers a variety of in-person 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](mailto:CentreforLiturgy@acu.edu.au) for further information.

## Contact us

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### Centre for Liturgy Staff:

**Professor Clare V. Johnson**, Director

**Dr Paul Taylor**, Assistant Director

**Mrs Cathy Murrowood**, Professional Specialist,  
Liturgy Education

**Ms Maryanne Hemsley**, Program Coordinator

## The Liturgy Nexus

The Liturgy Nexus is an online subscription-based 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 Dr Gerald Gleeson**, Deputy Vice-Chancellor  
(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

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