

# Newsletter

## Issue 20

### July 2024



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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 for download via your podcast provider.

##### Online training programs

Our next online training program for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion is scheduled to commence on 23 July and our next local online training program for Ministers of the Word is scheduled to commence on 21 August. See our website for details and to enrol.

##### Professional learning seminars

**8 – 11 July**, THLS606 Celebrating Liturgy Today: Exploring the Ritual Enactment of Faith (online)  
**3 and 4, 17 and 18 August**, THCT608 Theology of Marriage and Holy Orders (online)  
View our website for details.

Visit [acu.edu.au/centreforliturgy](http://acu.edu.au/centreforliturgy) for further details.

#### FROM THE DIRECTOR

Contemplating Christ's body as the locus of God's incarnate life through gestation, birth, maturation, suffering, death and resurrection provides us with a chance to reflect on the extraordinary gift of human existence divinely experienced, a life of pure grace, a sacralising embodiment in time and place which forever changed what it means to be human.

As baptised members of Christ's body we can only 'live, move and have our being' (Acts 17:28) because human existence is embodied existence. In liturgy, living, breathing human beings join with all the angels and saints, and 'all those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith' (EP1, 1975) to offer praise in concert.

Our current liturgical celebrations tend to be textually dominated. Consequently, we can be disposed to prioritise the liturgy's cognitive, internal aspects, when full liturgical engagement (as called for by SC14) is more appropriately holistic, drawing into play one's entire being, utilising and speaking to the cognitive, physical, and spiritual self in relationship to the many other selves comprising the assembled body offering praise under the headship of Christ.

This newsletter explores the embodied nature of human existence and what that means for liturgical celebration. Sr Professor Julia Upton RSM focuses on how inspiration transforms physical prayer from mere movement into enacted beauty while Sr Ursula O'Rourke SGS investigates the many opportunities liturgy provides to attend to how our faith is enacted physically.

Embracing both the extraordinary possibilities and humbling limitations of human bodies at all ages and stages of life reminds us of the gift of existence and presents us with the opportunity to use our full potential to offer right praise in liturgical celebration: body, mind, and spirit.

##### 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

## NEWS AND RECENT EVENTS

On **20 February**, Professor Johnson presented a workshop day for the Western Region Religious Education Leaders Network of Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools.

Liturgical musician, choir director and composer Mr Steven Warner, founder and Director Emeritus of the Notre Dame Folk Choir, Associate Director of the Notre Dame-Newman Centre in Dublin, Ireland, presented a wonderful public lecture on **20 May 2024** live via Zoom on “The Ageless Voice of the Young: *Fostering Emerging Liturgical Musicians*”.

In **April and May**, Ms Murrowood and Dr Taylor presented the Centre’s online training program for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to a new group of engaged students. A new group will commence this program in August 2024. More information on this program is available on our website.

On **21 May**, Professor Johnson and Dr Taylor presented a keynote address and liturgical music workshop (respectively) for the Diocese of Sandhurst Liturgical Formation Seminar in Bendigo.

Over two Saturdays in **June** Ms Murrowood and Dr Taylor presented a face-to-face version of the centre’s Ministers of the Word training program to participants from several parishes in the Archdiocese of Canberra-Goulburn. More information on this program is available on our website.

On **8, 9, 10 and 11 July** Professor Johnson will present ‘THLS606 Celebrating Liturgy Today: Exploring the Ritual Enactment of Faith’ as an intensive live-online postgraduate unit through the ACU Faculty of Theology and Philosophy and as a professional learning opportunity for clergy, teachers, pastoral associates and interested others. Professor Johnson will also present ‘THCT608 Theology of Marriage and Holy Orders’, an online weekend intensive, on **3, 4, 17 and 18 August**, 9am – 5pm. Special guest lecturers include Very Rev Peter G. Williams AM VG and Dr Daniel McGrath. Professional learners can choose from a selection of available sessions, and the Centre provides certificates of completion for those applying for professional development hours through their organisations. Further details can be found on our website.

## FROM OUR BOARD OF ADVISORS



The very word ‘liturgy’, or *leitourgia* in its Greek origins, implies people in action, human bodies working together in, with and through

Christ the head of his body, the church, to do the work of worship. In the liturgy the paschal mystery is celebrated and communicated through gathering, signing, anointing, laying on of hands, speaking, listening, standing, sitting, processing, singing and more. We are sanctified through signs perceptible to the senses from being washed in water to the great mystery of being fed at the

table of the Eucharist. Words which accompany liturgical actions have been carefully crafted and usually do not require additional commentary which may diminish the impact of the sacramental action. Liturgy is of its nature embodied since its source is the incarnation – the Word made flesh among us



**Sr Judith Foster SGS** is the Liturgy and RCIA Consultant for the Diocese of Townsville, Qld, and a Consultant to the National Liturgical

Council of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference

## LITURGY SPOTLIGHT

# Embodied Liturgy



Photo by Giovanni Portelli

Invited to lead the Entrance Procession at Mass in our diocesan cathedral years ago, I held the bowl of incense aloft. With arms raised high so the billowing smoke could be seen by the congregation, and not get into my eyes, nose and mouth, they say I seemed to float down the center aisle. “I wish I could do that,” the rector admitted when we spoke after Mass.

“Do what?” I wondered. That was several decades ago, and I have thought back on that moment often trying to parse its meaning. That was not the only time people have drawn attention to how I look when singing or processing. They find something fascinating and say I light up. When I look at pictures that have been taken of me, I know what they see and mean,

but I don’t know how it happens.

My mother was a ballerina, so I first danced with her *in utero*, and thereafter through many years of ballet classes. Dancers must feel their bodies and have a continual sense of where they are physically. Mother always taught us that we needed to have our feet planted and our head pulled up by an invisible string. For me this has had a natural carryover to worship, and I use that experience when I prepare people for all forms of liturgical ministry.

“I go to the altar of God, the God who gives joy to my youth” (Ps 42:4) is the magnetic force (or invisible string) that draws me forward in the entrance rite, whether I’m in the procession or the congregation.

“Full, active, conscious participation” includes the body. “Sing the text!” I insist. Too often choir members are so focused on getting the notes, rhythm and harmonies right they forget that the text conveys the meaning. Yes, it takes effort to put it all together and stay in the moment. Mind, heart, voice, body – all need to function together with intention, not tension.

In 2002, I had the great privilege of traveling to Ghana, hosted by one of my former students, specifically to worship with the community I had heard so much about during Kwame’s studies in the United States. It was a warm July morning, and as the liturgy began, everyone in the community pulled out

large white cloths and waved them during the entrance procession. The cloths came out again as we began to sing the Gloria, and during the Alleluia some parishioners even began dancing in the aisles. Now that was embodied worship.

Although our ritual books have prayers and instructions that presume an embodied liturgy, too often worship remains too cerebral, and at times too casual or social. In his fine work, *Embodied Liturgy: Lessons in Christian Ritual* (Fortress Press, 2016) theologian Frank Senn reminds us that liturgy is “a sensuous experience that involves speaking and hearing, touching and tasting, seeing and doing, motion and emotion”.

Why do I seem to float down the aisle or light up a church or a classroom? Maybe it is because my prayer and my teaching are embodied. My head, heart, voice and body are attuned to what I am doing in the moment. I am fully present. Does it happen automatically? Far from it. Embodied liturgy requires intention and attention.



**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).

## SHARING GOOD PRACTICE

# Graceful Gestures and Purposeful Postures

The celebration of the Church’s liturgy is expressed through the totality of the human person. As stated in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*: “the gestures and bodily posture of the priest, the deacon, and the ministers and also of the people, must be conducive to making the entire celebration resplendent with beauty and noble simplicity, to making clear the true and full meaning of its different parts, and to fostering the participation of all...A common bodily posture...is a sign of unity of the members of the Christian community gathered together for the Sacred Liturgy, for it expresses the intentions and spiritual attitude of the participants and also fosters them” (#42).

Some of these postures and gestures are: standing, hearing, eating and drinking, proclaiming, responding, singing, kissing, elevating, processing, kneeling, genuflecting, bowing, imposition of hands, washing, sitting, bringing, carrying, receiving, smelling, and signing.

All these actions express the praise, thanksgiving and joy of all those gathered to celebrate the liturgy. They are signs of



respect and reverence, of being open to the presence of Christ in the midst of the assembly, of receiving peace and being healed and cleansed, of being welcomed and included in the liturgical action; of being fed at the table of the Word and the table of the Lord; of moving in procession throughout various moments of the liturgy to focus on specific symbolic moments; of being sent out to live the liturgy being celebrated.

A focus on one of these elements, processions, teaches that through this symbolic action we are reminded that we are a pilgrim people; that we are on a journey to eternal life. Throughout the celebration of Eucharist, there are several processions in which we engage. In the entrance procession, while the gathered assembly stand, the presider of the liturgy with the various liturgical ministers (deacon, servers) process to the altar. The presider reverences the altar and moving to the presider’s chair invites the assembly to begin with the signing of the cross. During the singing of the Gospel Acclamation, the Deacon processes the Gospel Book to the Ambo for the proclamation of the Gospel. Some members of the assembly process the gifts of bread and wine through the assembly and give to the presider who then places them on the altar. Following the praying of the Eucharistic Prayer, the assembly process to the table of the Lord to eat and drink the Body and Blood of the Lord. This procession expresses our unity as the Body of Christ and witnesses to our call to be the Body of Christ in our world. The final procession of the Eucharist follows the Blessing and Dismissal of the assembly, to go and ‘announce the gospel of the Lord’ or to ‘glorify the Lord by our lives’ to go and be the Good News in the world.

Processions are integral to all the celebrations of the Church’s Sacraments:

- throughout the Catechumenal journey, for example, gathering with the faith community, processing from the assembly to continue to reflect on the Word of God proclaimed each Sunday;
- in infant baptism: entrance into the Church following the initial questions to the parents and godparents; procession to the place of the Word; procession to the font; and the final procession at the conclusion of the liturgy;
- in the Order of Christian Funerals, with reception of the body and the final procession to place of committal;
- in the Order of Christian Marriage, when priest/deacon meets bride and groom at the front door of the church, they process together into the assembly, they process to the place of exchanging their vows to one another, and then process from the assembly to live out the sacrament in their daily lives.

These and other gestures and postures in the liturgy give physical expression to the liturgical season or feast being celebrated. They remind the worshipping assembly that they are a pilgrim people, on a journey to the fullness of life in the kingdom of God.



**Sr Ursula O’Rourke SGS, MA** (Liturgy) is on the formation staff at Holy Spirit Seminary at Banyo, Qld. She is a member of the editorial board

of *Liturgy News* produced by Liturgy Brisbane and a Consultant to the National Liturgical Council of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference.

# Engage our expertise

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

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](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 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](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**, Liturgy Educator

**Ms Maryanne Hemsley**, Program Coordinator



## 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, such as 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 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 making a donation (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

**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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