

VELLIS

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Made to *Praise*

The Sound of a Church Alive

Latest news

Student spotlight

Upcoming events

& much more



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HELLO FROM

Chris

Welcome to the latest edition of VER Magazine, where we continue to celebrate the life, faith, and mission of our community. This issue is full of stories that speak to the heart of who we are becoming as people shaped by the Gospel and sent out with hope.

One of the highlights of this edition is our conversation with Louisa Daniels, whose ministry of music has touched so many. Her reflections on creativity, prayer, and service offer a beautiful reminder of how the Spirit moves through the gifts of 'ordinary' people. You'll also find the latest Centre news, a student spotlight featuring one of our inspiring 2025 graduates, Rosa Romeo, and as always, staff reviews of our favourite books, podcasts, and films that continue to shape our thinking and prayer.

We're also delighted to share moments from our recent graduation and retreat, both of which were powerful reminders of the grace at work in our community. A special congratulations to our 2025 Graduate Certificate students, who celebrated their achievement alongside the wider cohort at Notre Dame. Your dedication and perseverance are a gift to the Church.



As always, we finish with a look ahead at upcoming events, opportunities for formation, and ways to stay connected with the mission we share.

Thank you for reading, for praying with us, and for walking this journey of discipleship together.

Fr Chris Ryan MGL
Director, Areté Centre
for Missionary Leadership

A Heart Tuned for Worship

How One Voice Is Shaping Catholic Worship in Australia



Helene Paquet, Still-Life Photographer

With a beloved worship hit already woven into the prayer life of parishes and events across the nation, Louisa has become a steady, Spirit-tuned presence in

the Church's musical landscape, someone whose voice carries both craft and calling.

Her sound has accompanied some of the most significant moments of worship in Australia's recent Catholic memory, yet the story behind that voice, where it began, how it was formed, and what God is asking of her now, is far richer than most realise. We sat down with Louisa to trace the journey behind the music.

"I would dance and sing around the house, to mum and dad's Celine Dion album, or The Corrs."

When did you first realise you had a gift for music?

I was a dancer as a kid. I did something like 10 hours a week of dancing from ages 8-12. I just loved music. I would dance and sing around the house, to mum and dad's Celine Dion album, or The Corrs. When I was asked to sing at my dance school's concert around age 7, people seemed to notice, and I realised I wasn't terrible at it. That sense kind of increased over the years as more and more people heard me sing. I started lessons when I was 10.

Who formed you musically in your early years?

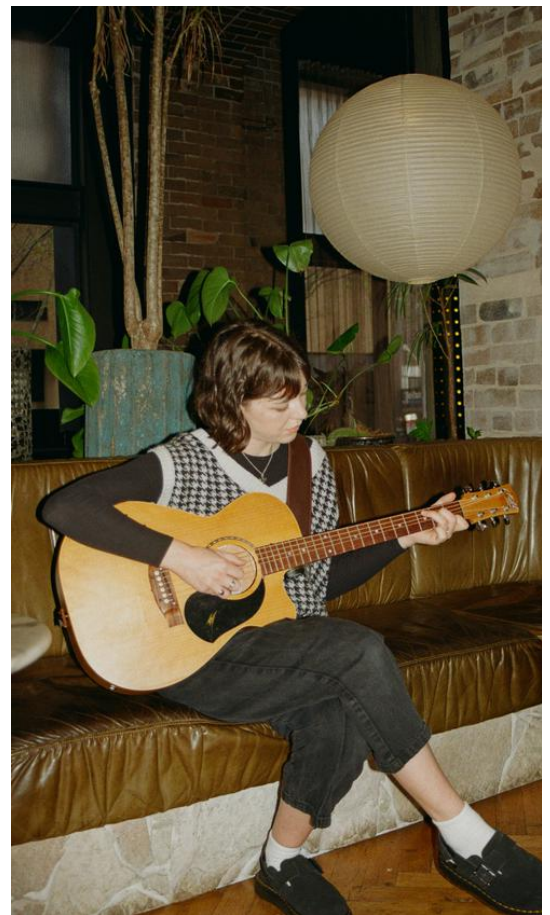
My parents have a great taste in music and educated us well in 80s rock - Cold Chisel, U2, Meatloaf, Crowded House etc were in regular rotation in our house when I was growing up.

My singing teacher was a huge influence throughout high school especially. I did a lot of musical theatre stuff to begin with, but also some jazz. She encouraged me not only as a musician, but as a person.

When I started to take my faith seriously in late high school, a few of my youth leaders were amazing. I learned guitar by playing with them in our youth ministry in my home parish, and piano from one of them too. I didn't do much formal training on piano, and none on guitar - most of what I learned was through being given opportunities to play in church.

When did you first realise that music wasn't just something you enjoyed, but something God was calling you to offer as ministry?

A core memory for me was when one of my cousins made me a mix CD of a bunch of old school 90s worship songs - My Redeemer Lives, The Potter's Hand, Power of Your Love, that kind of thing. I had been to Mass every Sunday of my life, but I hadn't heard church music with passion like that before. I remember being about 11 or 12 years old, kneeling on my bedroom floor, with the door closed, listening to 'Better Is One Day,' and just being in awe, and moved to tears by what I now know was the Holy Spirit.



In the years around then I began to really learn how to pray through music in my personal prayer, as well as with others. I was drawn into serving, first in my local community, in my parish, at Masses, youth group, and prayer meetings, and then over time at larger worship events. It was through serving that the gift was drawn out of me. It became really clear that it was in fact a gift, not just for me, but for the Church, and that I have a responsibility to give it away and not just keep it to myself.



I knew then that I wanted to sing like that for God one day, to use this gift to be with Him and worship Him. Even then, in the early high school years that followed, I was lukewarm about my faith. I found belonging in the parish youth group, and went to Church because I wanted to be seen as a 'good girl', but I was distracted by school, friends, insecurity and caring too much about what everyone thought of me. I finally went all in and gave my whole life to God after a powerful encounter when I was 17.



"Holy Is the Lamb" has become a beloved worship song for so many. Can you take us back to the moment or season when that song was born?

It was around 10 or 12 years ago. My friend Marilyn and I had been writing together for a few years and were working on recording and releasing our first EP together. We talked a lot about wanting to write a communion hymn. Both of us had studied theology and love the Lord, love the Church, love the beauty of the Eucharist. We wanted to write something beautiful that could express the richness of our Catholic understanding of the Eucharist, and really help people pray the Mass.

"It was an absolutely undeniable Holy Spirit moment. The song felt like a fully given gift, like it was dropped from heaven to us fully formed."

Maz had this piano riff (the intro) that she'd been playing with for a while, and we just started singing some lyrics. Honestly, the song poured out of us in about half an hour at her parents' house. It was an absolutely undeniable Holy Spirit moment. The song felt like a fully given gift, like it was dropped from heaven to us fully formed. It's not always that easy. It feels like the Lord really wanted the Church to have this song, and we just said 'yes'. We've always been so grateful for it.

Can you take us inside your songwriting process? Where does a song usually begin for you?

It's a bit of a mixed bag, but mostly songs tend to begin in prayer. The best ones, anyway. It usually starts from something I'm journaling, or just trying to work through with the Lord. I'll start writing some lyrics and then just singing it to some tune or other, and go from there. Sometimes I'll be praying and worshipping on the piano at home, and then will start singing something new and eventually turn it into a whole new song.

*Photo credit
Louisa Daniels*

Sometimes I'll start with a specific idea - a Mass part I want to write for (processional, offertory etc), or a particular theme I want to write about, or a scripture or text I want to draw inspiration from. I'm working on one based on the Stations of the Cross at the moment, and one based on the Easter Sequence. The text is just so beautiful - we have such rich sources of inspiration in the Church. I like to draw on that.

I'll feel a really strong sense of the Holy Spirit moving, which feels like confirmation that I'm on the right track.

Sometimes a melody or riff drops into my head, and I try to ask the Holy Spirit, 'what's this one about?' And work out where to go from there.

Often at some point in the process, I'll feel a really strong sense of the Holy Spirit moving, which feels like confirmation that I'm on the right track. If that doesn't happen, I sometimes leave it and come back later. If it does, I try to follow it.

I have a hard time finishing songs, if I'm honest - I have stacks of unfinished pieces or ideas running around, but carving out the time and space to finish them is a challenge. I love working with friends, writing with other people is such a blessing. God moves through different people in different ways, and seeing those gifts interplay in real time is truly incredible. It's absolutely a way I have encountered God many times. It's amazing.

When you step onto a stage at a Catholic event, what's going on interiorly for you?

Depending on the event, sometimes there's a bit of nerves beforehand. I think that's a pretty natural thing. I feel the weight of the responsibility I'm given - being invited to help lead people into the presence of God is a big deal. I don't take it lightly at all. I pray, and especially try to pray that God would move and be glorified, and that I would get out of the way. And then honestly, when I actually step out there and start, something happens. It's like the weight falls off and the Holy Spirit shows up and it's just... easy. I don't say that pridefully, but gratefully. God moves and I'm just there, getting to be a part of it. It's such a joy. One of my life's greatest joys, truly.

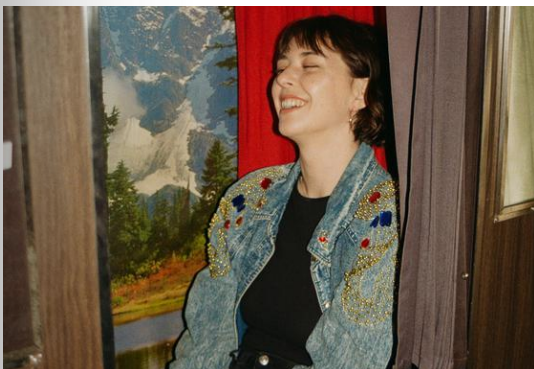


Photo credits: Louisa Daniels





What has God been teaching you about yourself in this season of ministry?

Honestly, my limitations! I'm finally (much too late) learning that I can't do it all. The Lord has been very patient in teaching me that I'm human, and it's not my job to do everything. He's very gently leading and guiding me as to where to focus my time and energy.

I've also been learning a lot about the interplay between motherhood and ministry. I feel so fortunate to be called into both of these missions at the same time, and the Lord is revealing so clearly how my motherhood makes me better at my ministry, and likewise, ministry makes me a better mother. It's not always easy, but it's been such a comfort to have confidence that even though it's often a challenge to manage the balance, both things are good and have a place in my life in this season.

Are there new songs or on your heart right now?

I feel a very strong mandate to write at the moment, like the Lord is being insistent that now is the time to 'sing a new song.' It comes up so frequently in my prayer. I especially feel called to write worship music specifically, and have been diving deep into what worship means for us as Catholics, and what worshipful music, both within and outside of the Mass, should look like. That's where my focus is at the moment.

Do you have any wisdom to offer any young musicians who are feeling called into music ministry?

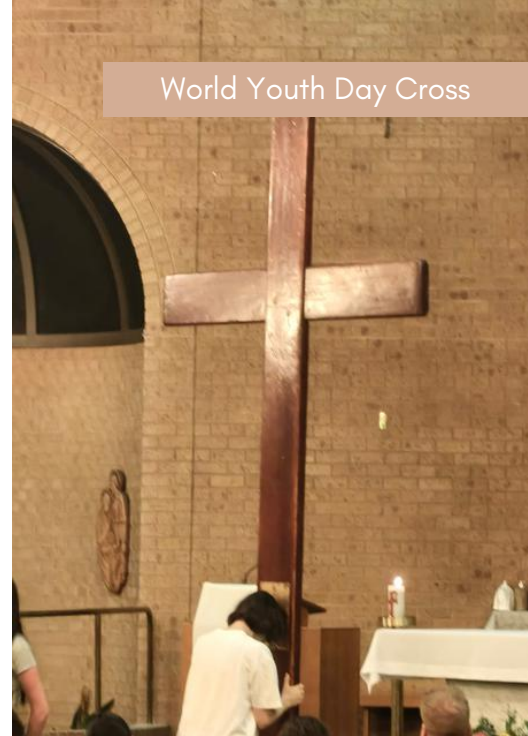
Oh man, pray. Every day. Become a disciple. Go to Mass during the week. Get a mentor, spiritual director, someone trustworthy to show you the way. Say yes when you're asked to serve. Serve your local parish community. Love your people by sharing your gifts with them. Pray with music in your 'secret place'. Continue to seek encounter with God.

The goal is always to point people to Him. So be sure to keep your own eyes on Him, so that when you lead, others will follow. Know the presence of God, so that you know where you're taking people. Pray to forget yourself, and that others would forget you too. That when you serve, they would forget you, and remember Him. That's the dream. That they would remember Him.

[Listen to the latest interview with Louisa at Universal Sisterhood Podcast here](#)



Louisa with the YMT team



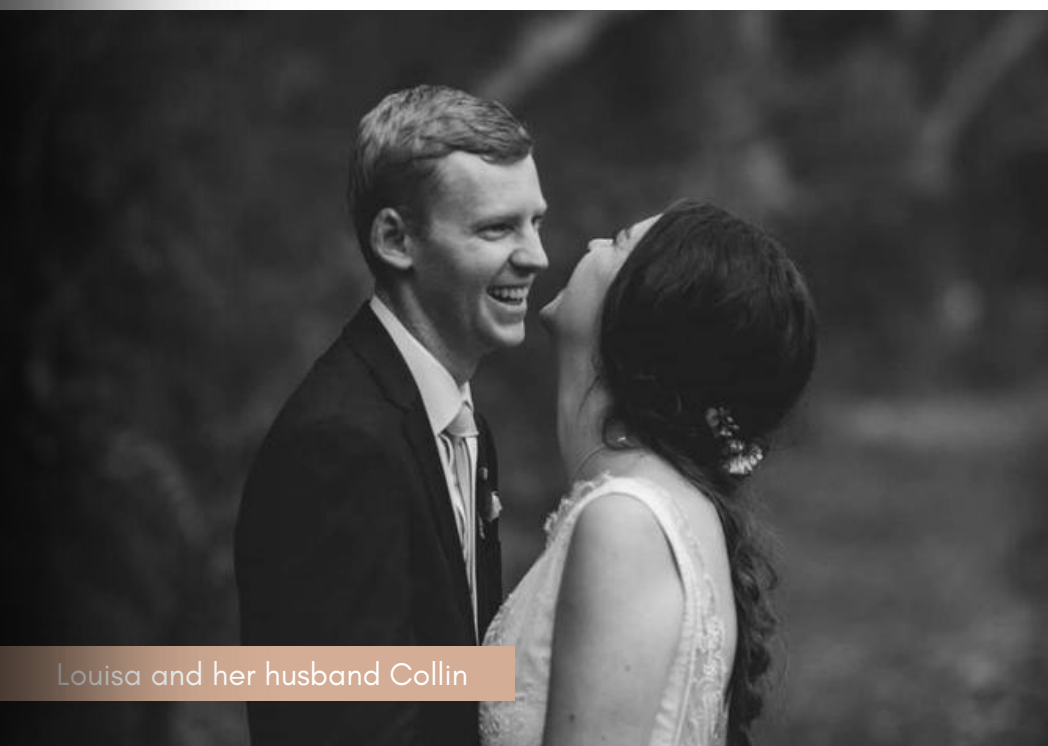
World Youth Day Cross



Christmas cheer



The Daniels family



Louisa and her husband Collin



Catch us at the Parish Renewal Conference

Join parishes from across Sydney and beyond for a day of formation, workshops, and networking as we share experiences and equip ourselves to respond to this new openness. This conference is for everyone – individuals as well as groups. Bring both established and emerging leaders to receive practical tools to grow as the prayerful and vibrant community you are already striving to be!

Date: Saturday 18 July 2026

Time: 9:00am – 5:00pm

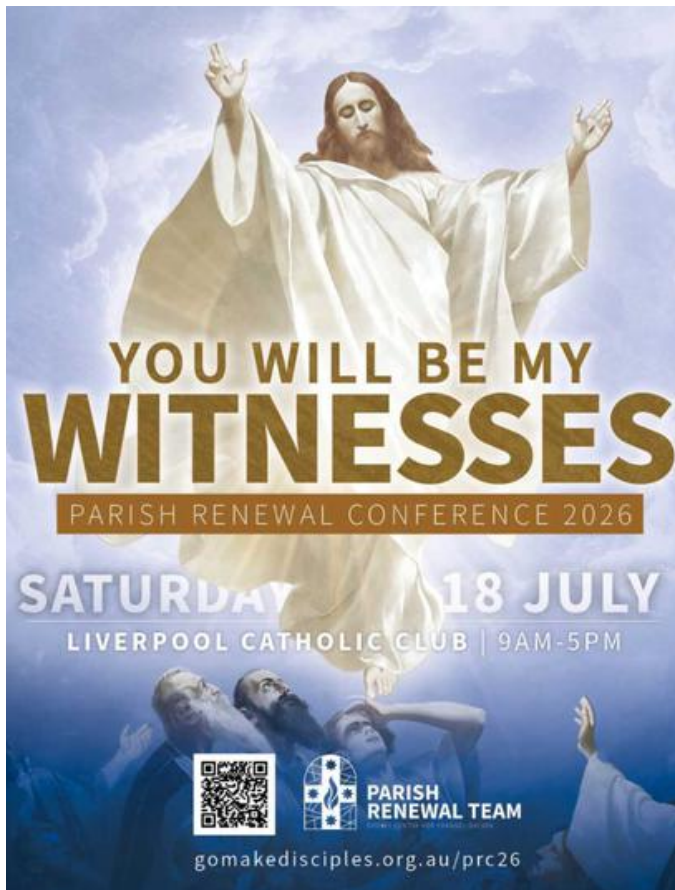
Venue: Liverpool Catholic Club

Address: 424 – 458 Hoxton Park Road, Prestons NSW 2170

Cost: \$99 per person, or

\$495 – buy 5 tickets and get one free

Registration closes Friday 3 July 2026



We're Heading to the Divine Renovation Conference in October!

The Diocese of Wollongong and Divine Renovation will host the Renewed & Sent Parish Renewal Summit from 1-3 October at St Gregory's College, Campbelltown. More than 1,000 clergy, parish teams, and ministry leaders are expected to gather for formation, prayer, and practical tools to strengthen missionary discipleship.

The summit will open with a clergy day, followed by two days for parish and ministry leaders featuring keynote speakers – including Fr James Mallon – along with workshops, Mass, Eucharistic adoration, and opportunities for personal prayer. With growing interest in the Catholic faith across Australia, the event aims to equip communities to respond boldly and hospitably to this moment of renewal.

Fr Chris will be one of the guest speakers and we look forward to welcoming guests at our Areté stand in the exhibition space.

Find out more at <https://renewedandsent.com.au/>



Image Credit: Giovanni Portelli, Catholic Weekly.

“We will become a missionary church to the degree that we ourselves have fallen in love with Jesus Christ.”

–Fr Chris Ryan MGL

Fr Chris Ryan Speaks at the Sydney Synod

Our Director, Fr Chris Ryan MGL, addressed the Sydney Synod this week, offering a compelling call for the Church in Sydney to embrace a renewed missionary identity. Many Areté graduates and current students who were present would have recognised familiar themes, since this vision of missionary discipleship is at the heart of the Areté Centre and the work we do in forming lay leaders for the life and mission of the Church.

Fr Chris reminded delegates that authentic mission begins with personal encounter. “We will become a missionary church to the degree that we ourselves have fallen in love with Jesus Christ,” he said. He also encouraged the Synod not to wait for ideal conditions, noting that “if we wait until everything is perfect before we begin to evangelise, we will never begin.”

He spoke with hope about the moment we are living in. “We are living in a privileged moment experiencing a fresh wave of faith particularly among young adults searching for meaning, happiness and a life truly worth living and increasingly open to finding that in God.”

Fr Chris also emphasised the central role of grace in the work of evangelisation. “The Holy Spirit is the principal agent of evangelisation, but we are called and are privileged to participate in this mission.”

We are proud that the Areté Centre continues to play a significant role in preparing lay people to step into this mission with confidence, clarity and faith.

[Explore more about missionary discipleship.](#)



Class of 2025 Graduates Graduation Ceremony

Our 2025 Graduate Certificate students finally had the chance to celebrate their graduation with the students of Notre Dame at a wonderful ceremony in Darling Harbour on May 12th this year. Congratulations also to those interstate students who couldn't be there for the ceremony, Martin and Donna Brennan, Barbara Conlan and Adele Abraham for this wonderful achievement.



Left to right: Makatalena Afeaki, Louisa Daniels, Emma Bakker, Bronah Nicholson

Rosa Romeo

Rosa Romeo, a dedicated catechist at St Patrick's Parish, Mortlake, brings together a deep love for her Catholic faith, a professional background in hospitality leadership, and a growing missionary spirit shaped through her transformative journey with Areté. Through this formation, Rosa has moved from simply knowing the faith to intentionally living it, discovering her charisms, embracing a more servant-hearted leadership style, and finding renewed purpose in both her parish and professional life. Her passion for helping others encounter Christ has recently inspired the creation of Missio Pilgrimages, a ministry rooted in meaningful spiritual travel. Rosa's story is one of courage, rediscovery, and a heartfelt desire to accompany others on their journey toward peace, purpose, and deeper faith.

In what ways has Areté deepened your faith or relationship with Jesus, and how has this impacted your professional and personal life?

Areté has helped me move from simply knowing my faith to truly understanding and living it. It has deepened my relationship with God and given me a clearer sense of purpose. In my personal life, I've become more intentional in prayer and service, and professionally, I approach leadership with greater compassion, patience, and integrity and with a new attitude arising out of the charisms that I received.

What is one highlight or experience during your journey that you can share with us?

One highlight of my journey was discovering how faith can be lived out in everyday moments, not just while I am at church. The sense of community and shared growth with others on the same journey was also incredibly meaningful and encouraging.



During the course you discovered your charisms, how has this changed or impacted your leadership style in your professional work or as a parishioner?

Discovering my charisms has helped me lead with more confidence and authenticity. I've become more aware of my strengths and how to use them to serve others, whether in my workplace or parish. It has shifted my leadership style to be more servant style leadership in the attempt to demonstrate the way in which Jesus calls us to serve, welcome and love all.

“ I enjoyed the leadership lectures on what constitutes effective leadership qualities, and learning about vulnerability, resilience and “leading when not in charge”. ”

What did you find most challenging during the Areté journey?

One of the most challenging aspects was making the time to fully commit while balancing work and personal responsibilities. It also challenged me to step out of my comfort zone as I hadn't returned to studying since leaving school ... it also taught me to reflect more deeply on my faith and personal growth.

You have recently started a pilgrimage company, tell us about Missio Pilgrimages and its mission.

The idea of Missio Pilgrimages started with a little flame in the belly after having visited Medjugorje as a pilgrim myself.. I felt a strong calling to use my lifetime skill of hospitality to encourage, serve and walk alongside people truly seeking Christ in their life and a real sense of Peace.

Its mission is to provide meaningful spiritual journeys that combine faith, history, and community, allowing pilgrims to grow in their relationship with Christ while experiencing the richness of the Catholic tradition not only around the world, but even in the day to day.



Rosa visiting Medjugorje on her second pilgrimage to the special Marian site in 2025.



This year, you're collaborating with Harvest Travels to coordinate a Pilgrimage to Medjugorje.

I'm excited to be coordinating a pilgrimage to Medjugorje this August with Harvest Travel. It will be a grace-filled opportunity to step away from the noise of daily life and enter a place where countless people have encountered peace, healing, and renewed faith. Our days will include visits to the key sites of prayer, time for reflection, daily Mass, and the chance to climb Apparition Hill and Cross Mountain—experiences that have touched pilgrims from around the world.

If you've ever felt drawn to Medjugorje, or you're simply seeking a deeper spiritual reset, this journey offers a beautiful way to reconnect with God and with yourself. I'd love to have you join us on this special pilgrimage.

What is your favourite Bible verse?

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13)

Who is your favourite saint?

St Thérèse of Lisieux, because of her "little way" and her reminder that holiness can be found in small, everyday acts of love.



[Click here](#) to find out more about how you can book your spot on The Harvest Pilgrimage to Medjugorje in August this year.



St James Church in Medjugorje, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Queen of Peace

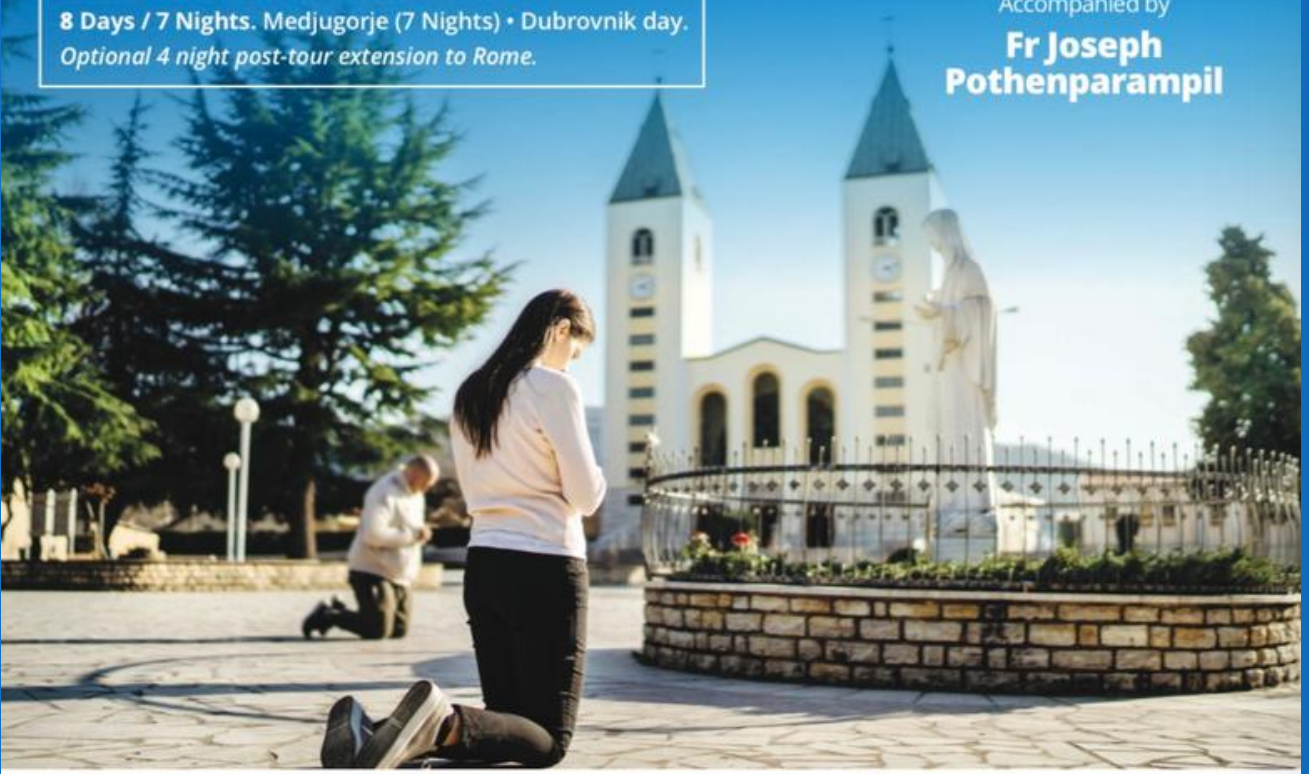
Nestled in a quiet village, Medjugorje has become one of the most loved pilgrimage destinations of our time. Since the apparitions of Our Lady began in 1981, millions have journeyed here seeking peace, healing, and a deeper encounter with God. Walk the paths of prayer up Apparition Hill and Cross Mountain, join in powerful moments of Adoration and Confession, and open your heart to the grace and call of Our Lady Queen of Peace.

COMMENCES MONDAY 31 AUGUST 2026

8 Days / 7 Nights. Medjugorje (7 Nights) • Dubrovnik day.
Optional 4 night post-tour extension to Rome.



Accompanied by
**Fr Joseph
Pothenparampil**



Parish of St James, Medjugorje



Podbrdo (Apparition Hill)



Križevac (Cross Mountain), Medjugorje



BOOKINGS & ENQUIRIES
1800 819 156

www.harvestjourneys.com/medjugorje

harvest
journeys



There are just a few spots left to book this pilgrimage to Medjugorje with Rosa as your tour coordinator.



PROCLAIM

26-27 JUNE 2026

MELBOURNE 26 JUNE - 27 JUNE 2026

Proclaim26 is an inspiring two-day gathering to equip, form and send clergy, lay leaders and all who want to share Christ Jesus, in this particular time, into their communities.

Sherry Weddell, internationally-renowned author and speaker on missionary discipleship, will headline two days of inspiring keynotes and practical workshops.

Friday 26 June - 11.00am - 4.30pm

This day is tailored to clergy and lay leaders.

Saturday 27 June - 9.30am - 3.30pm

This day is open to all.

Both days include Keynote Speakers, workshops, morning tea & lunch.

[Click here to book & learn more](#)



Our Course intensives are consistently a highlight of the year for our student cohort, and this year has been no exception. Our first two intensives overflowed with graces, joy, deep bonding, rich learning, heartfelt fellowship, and above all, the unmistakable presence of the Holy Spirit. Here are a few snapshots capturing the beauty of our time together as a cohort.

HIGHLIGHTS





January Intensive Highlights

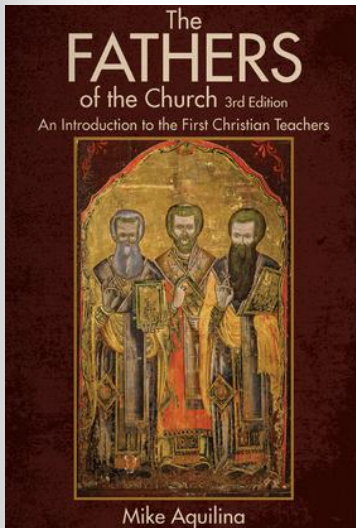




March Intensive Highlights



Watch | Read | Listen



The Fathers of the Church, 3rd Edition Mike Aquilina

This updated edition is a fantastic and accessible way to get to know the Church Fathers and why their voices still matter today. It gives a clear picture of how their teaching, worship and witness shaped the Church and what they can still teach us about faith in the 21st century.

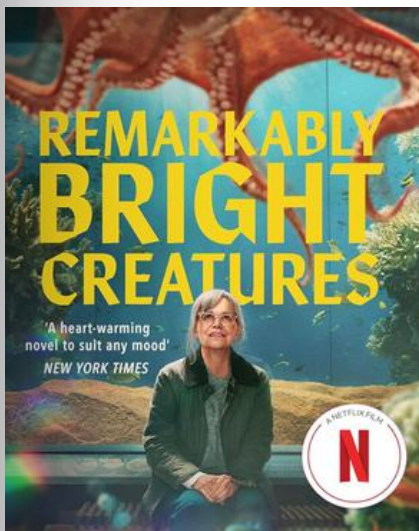
With twenty new Fathers added, more material on the Mothers of the Church, ancient Christian poets and a very user friendly layout, it is a great resource for RCIA, catechists, clergy or anyone who simply wants to understand our roots more deeply. **(Highly recommended by Laura Neeson).**



Crooked Lines Podcast with Fr Sam French & Tomasz Juszcak

The Crooked Lines podcast is a fresh, honest take on faith and culture and the kind of show that isn't afraid to wrestle with the messy bits of Catholic life. Hosted by Fr Sam and Tom, it's smart, funny, and deeply human. They tackle everything from AI and spirituality to masculinity, theology, and pop culture, always with curiosity and a touch of humour. It's a great listen for anyone who wants to think more deeply about faith in the modern world, without losing sight of the joy and complexity that come with it.

(Highly recommended By Louisa Daniels)



Remarkably Bright Creatures – Starring Sally Field, Lewis Pullman, Alfred Molina

Remarkably Bright Creatures is a gentle, heartfelt adaptation of the bestselling book, capturing the same mix of warmth, grief, and quiet hope that made the novel so loved. The film stays true to the spirit of the story; an unlikely friendship, slow healing, and the small moments that change everything, while giving it a beautiful visual life on screen.

It's tender without being sentimental, and the characters feel just as real and layered as they do on the page. A lovely, thoughtful watch for anyone who enjoyed the book or loves stories about connection and second chances. **(Highly recommended by graduate Mina Mihás)**

Gardens: Day Retreat

“Grieve not as those who have no hope...”
1 Thess 4:13.

Spend a day reflecting on how while we experience pain, grief and loss in life, we can also discover in such moments that God is renewing us and doing “a new thing” (Rev 21:4) within us.

Date

Saturday 27 June 2026 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Location

Our Lady of Mt Carmel Parish
193, VARROVILLE NSW 2566



Homecoming: Silent Retreat

“His father saw him, ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.” Lk 15: 20

Your heavenly Father waits for you to come away with him for a weekend of silently soaking in his great love for you. Embrace this opportunity for encountering deep peace and serenity.

Date

Friday 28 August 2026 6:00 PM - Sunday 30 August 2026 2:00 PM

Location

Carmel House
345 ST ANDREWS RD, VARROVILLE NSW
2566



Missionaries of God's Love

Sisters



Alive

Holy Spirit Family Retreat

Saturday 14th November



Alive: Holy Spirit Family Day Retreat

Your family has been carefully chosen and put together by God and has an important mission entrusted only to you. Discover as a family the power of the Holy Spirit to live with boldness and love!

Date

Saturday 14 November 2026

9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Location

Our Lady of Mt Carmel Parish

193 St Andrews Rd, VARROVILLE NSW 2566

Missionaries of God's Love

Sisters



Handmade

Creative Retreat

Carmel House
16-18th October



Hand Made: Creative Healing Retreat

**“In his hand is the life of every creature”
Job 12:10**

Come away for a weekend of reflection on how carefully God has made and upheld your life through different creative prayer experiences.

Date

Friday 16 October 2026 6:00 PM - Sunday 18

October 2026 2:00 PM

Location

Carmel House

345 ST ANDREWS RD, VARROVILLE NSW
2566

Click here to learn more & register.



Want to learn more about the
Areté Centre for Missionary
Leadership?

Follow us 

