

Areté 

ISSUE 3 | WINTER EDITION

VELLS

et Remis



Transforming the culture

Empowering Leaders, and Igniting
Change with Vision and Purpose.



Daniel Ang talks
leadership
Tips for transforming
parish culture
Latest news + more



Contents

Hello From Fr Chris	02
Reflection by Melanie Dooner	03
5 Key Tips for Transforming Parish Culture	04
Areté Centre News	05-06
Transforming Parish Culture, by Daniel Ang	07-09
Student Spotlight: Teresa Vigroux	11-12
Parish Renewal & the Three H's, by Fr Chris Ryan MGL	13-15
Stories of Grace: Kevin Wong	16-17
June Intensive Wrap-up	18-20
Contact us	21

HELLO FROM

Chris

Welcome to this issue of Velis et Remis!

This bumper issue of the magazine is focused upon the topic of Parish Renewal. Here at the Areté Centre we believe that revitalised parishes can be the engine room of the Church's renewal, and so our Foundations of Missionary Leadership Program is designed to equip people with the theology (theory) and ministerial praxis (practical skills) to become fruitful and effective parish leaders.

This issue of the magazine provides some great insights into the nature of parish renewal. We are especially grateful to have Daniel Ang, Director of the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation, share some of his reflections upon the very personal foundations of any attempt to transform the culture of our parishes. Daniel is one of our lecturers in the Foundations program, and his workshop on the final intensive is a highlight for the students each and every year.

We are excited to announce that applications for the 2024 Foundations of Missionary Leadership Program have opened! If you would like to know more about the 2024 Program we would also like to invite you to attend our online Open Night on August 17. This year our Open Night includes a wide-ranging conversation on the topic, "Made for More than This: Discover the Role Your Spiritual Gifts Play in the Church's Mission". Our panel for this special evening includes Fr Rob Galea (who probably needs no introduction!) and Fr Simon Lobo CC, from St Benedict Parish, Halifax, Canada. Fr Simon is a pioneer in parish renewal and will bring great experience and wisdom to our conversation.



www.aretecentre.org

Frs Rob and Simon, and myself will be joined by Emma Plant, the Communications Manager for Evangelisation Brisbane, who is a current student in the course.

We will also be joined by Professor Renee Kohler-Ryan, the Head of the School of Philosophy and Theology at the University of Notre Dame. In addition to sharing her insights with us on the topic Professor Kohler-Ryan will also speak to the Graduate Certificate that students can choose to complete through the university when they undertake the Foundations Program.

For now though, grab a cup of tea and flick through the great articles in this edition of Velis et Remis.

Dancing with the Holy Spirit

By Melanie Dooner

Recently, I listened to a woman speak of her encounter with Jesus after many years of disconnection from the church. She spoke of her insatiable appetite to learn more about our Catholic faith, of her desire to spend time with God, and of her amazement and embarrassment at how little she understands of faith. The beauty of the transforming action of the Holy Spirit in her life has brought her so much joy.

When this woman's experience is multiplied in a parish setting, the Holy Spirit can and will help us transform our parishes in very practical ways. This may be through ensuring prayer and worship is at the heart of all we do, growing a stronger sense of belonging and community, and increasing the desire of parishioners to serve and reach out to those in need.

In the New Testament we read of Christ's desire for each one of us: "and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Galatians 2:20)." Like dancing with a strong lead partner, the call on our individual lives and that of our parishes is to surrender to the One who wants to draw us ever closer.

Can we personally and as a parish allow ourselves to be the Holy Spirit's ideal dance partner and surrender our decisions, actions and will to Him? Can we receive Jesus as he pours Himself out to us on the cross and give a wholehearted 'Yes' in return?

Let us pray individually and as part of our parishes for the grace and courage that makes this possible.



5

First Steps for Transforming Parish Culture

By Fr Chris Ryan MGL

01

Assume that there are visitors, non-Christians and skeptics at every Mass. Many are likely to be there for the “wrong reasons” (such as their child is involved, or to please someone else etc). See their presence as an opportunity rather than a problem. Address these people directly and warmly, inviting them to take a fresh look at the Catholic faith at every opportunity.

02

Invest in a course like Alpha or The Search. These courses are designed for people who are new to faith or who are searching. Having a regular program to help evangelise the people in the parish as well as newcomers is invaluable when you are trying to adopt a missionary stance as a parish.

03

Celebrate the stories of people’s lives being changed by Jesus. Have people who have had their lives changed by Jesus tell their stories. When we celebrate such stories we tell people that it is normal for people’s lives to change when they enter our parish and meet Jesus.

04

Throw people in the deep end when it comes to ministry and service. Nothing helps people grow more in faith than to call them to serve.

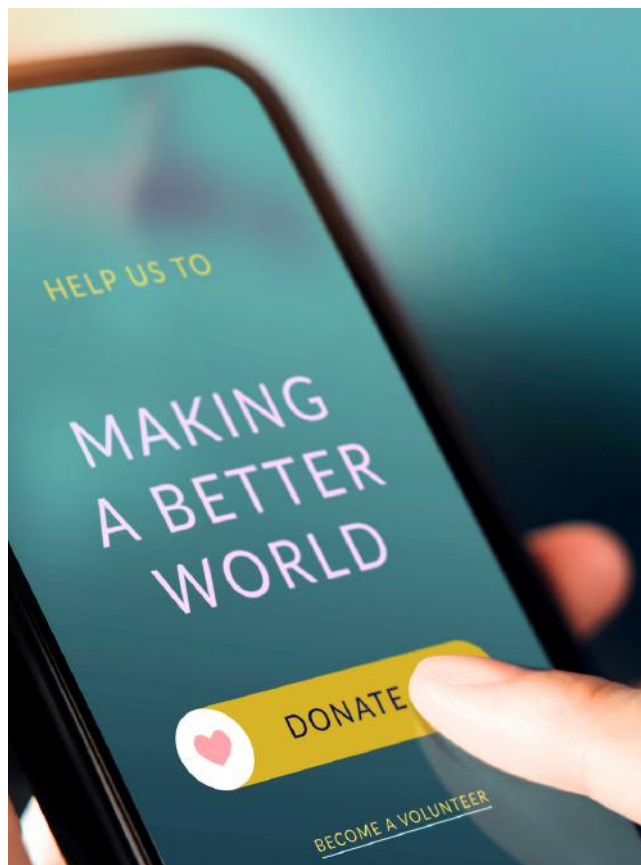
05

Work on defining the future you are aiming for. When you have clarity about what a vital parish community looks like, write it down, and then begin to share it with others. Nothing motivates people more than having a clear picture of the kind of parish you want to be.

Help us Form more Leaders for the Mission

At the Areté Centre, we wholeheartedly believe in the profound impact of lay formation for the renewal of our parishes. We invite you to become a crucial partner in our program, paving the way for others to embark on a transformative personal journey that makes a real difference at the 'grass roots' level.

Our work makes a difference on the ground, where it matters - in our parishes. Your financial support assists us in our mission to equip students through our transformative Foundations of Missionary Leadership Program. In this program we assist our students to unlock their full potential as leaders who have been formed to effectively contribute to the the Church's evangelising mission. Visit www.aretecentre.org to find out more about the instrumental role you can play in the renewal of our Church.



Virtual Open Night

We're thrilled to announce that our annual Open Night event will be held on August 17th. We have an incredible lineup of guests joining us, including Fr. Simon Lobo, Parish Priest of St. Benedict Parish Halifax and co-author of *Preaching on Purpose*, and Fr Rob Galea, priest, author, songwriter, and Executive Director of FRG Ministries. We will also be joined by Professor Renée Köhler-Ryan, Head of School of Philosophy and Theology at the University of Notre Dame, and Emma Plant, Communications Manager of Evangelisation Brisbane, and current Areté student.

Enjoy a wide-ranging conversation about the significant role that lay people can play in the mission of the Church. Discover how your unique spiritual gifts can make a real difference in the revitalisation of parishes. You can also find out about the Foundations of Missionary Leadership Program and how you can enrol for the 2024 intake.

This is a free online event taking place for one night only. Spread the word among your friends and fellow parishioners. Don't forget to register at aretecentre.org

MADE FOR MORE THAN THIS

DISCOVER THE ROLE YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS PLAY IN THE CHURCH'S MISSION

ARETÉ CENTRE VIRTUAL OPEN NIGHT

Fr Chris Ryan MGL
Director
Areté Centre

Fr Simon Lobo CC
Parish Priest
St Benedict Halifax

Fr Rob Galea
Executive Director
FRG Ministry

Professor Renée Köhler-Ryan
National Head of the
School of Philosophy
and Theology,
University of
Notre Dame

Emma Plant
Communications
Manager
Evangelisation
Brisbane

FREE ONLINE EVENT | ONE NIGHT ONLY

Join Fr Chris Ryan MGL and an exciting panel of guests for a wide ranging conversation about the powerful role lay people can play in the Church's Mission. Find out more about the Foundations of Missionary Leadership Program & how you can enrol for 2024.

17 August 2023
7.30pm (AEST)
Live on Zoom

Register for this free event
[Book Online Here](#)

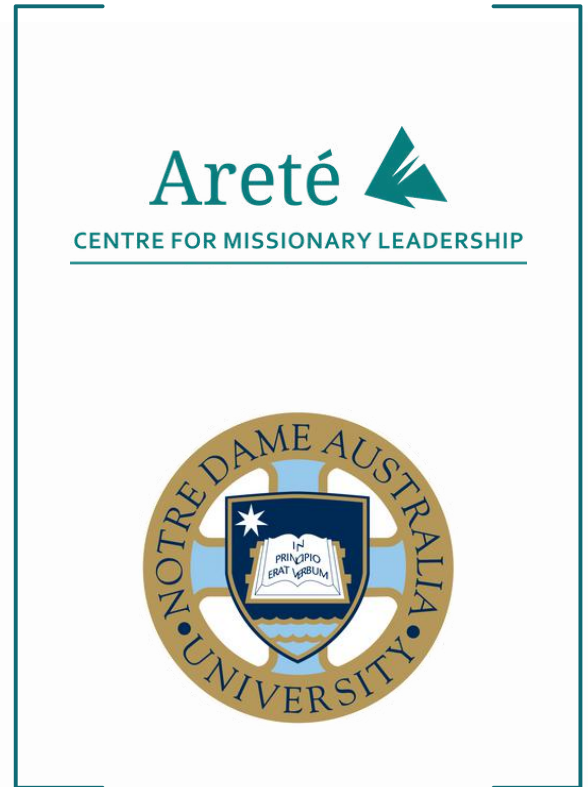
SCAN ME

Areté Centre Partners with Notre Dame

The Arété Centre for Missionary Leadership is excited to announce that their Foundations of Missionary Leadership program can now be undertaken as a Graduate Certificate option through a partnership with the University of Notre Dame, Sydney.

The new Graduate Certificate option provides students with the opportunity to earn academic credit as they deepen their knowledge and practice as missionary leaders. The Graduate Certificate option is designed for people currently in or pursuing a permanent role in ministry.

[For more information, visit aretecentre.org](http://aretecentre.org)



Are you Called to be a Missionary Leader?

Applications for the Arété Centre Foundations of Missionary Leadership Program are now open.

The Foundations of Missionary Leadership Program is unlike any other as it is designed specifically for the Australian context and offers a unique blend of theological knowledge, human development, spiritual formation, and practical skills needed for mission.

The course comprises four courses: the Spirituality of Missionary Leadership, the Theological Foundations of Mission in the Australian Context, the Theory and Practice of Missionary Leadership, and Practicum. The flexible nature of the program delivery allows students from anywhere in Australia or NZ to apply, and the course structure offers a blend of weekly, interactive online lectures, in-person intensives and monthly Zoom mentoring sessions. **Places are limited! Apply now at aretecentre.org**





T RANSFORMING PARISH CULTURE

BY DANIEL ANG

Since Holy Thursday I have spent some days and hours in hospital with my father who has been unwell, my father surrounded by his vulnerabilities and myself with the grace of loving him to the end. Though he has struggled with breath and energy, my father has over these weeks volunteered himself to be the 'test patient' for exams being sat by young medical students who come to poke and prod him every few days under the watchful eye of their examiners.

When I asked my Dad if he was strong enough to play this role, he shared that this wasn't his way of thinking. He told me that if he is generous to these students, they will one day be good doctors who will care for his children and his grandchildren.

By his witness of life, my father has taught me not to count the cost in our relationship to others, even from the bed of an acute care respiratory ward. He has shown me that new life and gracious possibility can be born if we are willing to give ourselves away.

Today we live in an era of mission, in a society largely unfamiliar with the Christian story, often sceptical if not distrusting of the goodness of the Church, and nonetheless marked by an immense hunger for God.

We live in a time when an increasing number of Australians have ceased participating in community, including our local parishes, struggle to experience meaningful community, connection with others or personal care, and yet still pray, believe in God or sense some whisper of the transcendent in their lives.

"our parishes are called to recover their identity as missionary communities"

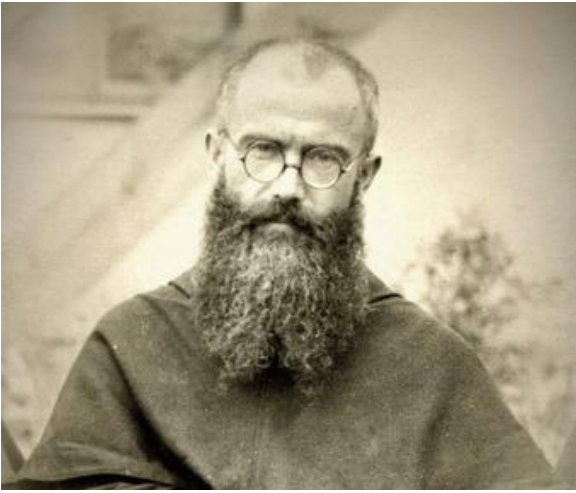
In a new landscape in which many do not bend the knee to God but still miss him, our parishes are called to recover their identity as missionary communities and each of us our calling as evangelisers or bearers of Good News. In the pattern of the Gospel, we will discover most deeply who we are as parishes and disciples when we give ourselves away.



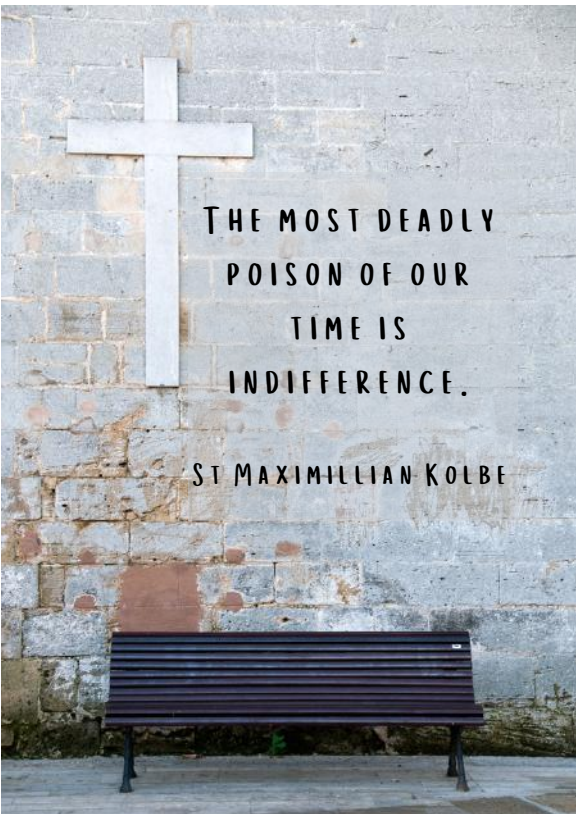
This has been the story of the great saints, missionaries and martyrs who transformed the world and hue of humanity through their incomparable witness and self-giving love – St Francis Xavier, Maximilian Kolbe, St Alphonsa, and St Laurent Imbert among them. It is the story of Christ himself, who emptied himself, set himself aside as an act of love, to bring humanity back to the Father (Philippians 2:7).

In seeking to transform our parish cultures, we must ask ourselves if we too are willing to not merely believe in Christ from the comfort of our pews but follow him into this missionary movement which he sets before us and upon which future generations depend.

It is a decision that each of us must make and which precedes any program, initiative or strategy we might apply to transform our Catholic parishes.



This is because culture is not the starting point for renewal but the end-product of individuals living out holiness, community and mission, and this begins with discipleship – people making a personal, conscious decision to follow Jesus with their whole lives, in and through His Church.



In an age of all-too-human contradictions – filled with isolated individuals and outraged mobs, personal anonymity and social media exposure, dangerous silences and superficial noise – our parishes can yet be transformed by the Holy Spirit to become centres of personal conversion and authentic communion. Our parishes can become ever more the sacramental presence of Christ’s healing and liberating love and outposts of his mission, a mission embodied and made present above all in transformed disciples who offer God’s love, mercy, healing and abundance to the world.

Daniel Ang is the Director of the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation, and a faculty member of the Areté Centre for Missionary Leadership.



Click to watch video about the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation

The Sydney Centre for Evangelisation places the encounter with Jesus Christ at the heart of its mission, offering practical support to parishes and Eucharistic communities of the Archdiocese of Sydney. The commission of Christ to “go, make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19) informs the support provided by the Centre toward parish renewal and deepening discipleship, outreach to youth and families, and the services of communications, digital and design and The Catholic Weekly that support the evangelising mission of the Church.

MADE FOR MORE THAN THIS

DISCOVER THE ROLE
YOUR SPIRITUAL
GIFTS PLAY IN THE
CHURCH'S MISSION

ARETÉ CENTRE VIRTUAL OPEN NIGHT



Fr Chris Ryan MGL
Director
Areté Centre



Fr Simon Lobo CC
Parish Priest
St Benedict Halifax



Fr Rob Galea
Executive Director
FRG Ministry



Professor Renee
Kohler-Ryan
National Head of the
School of Philosophy
and Theology,
University of
Notre Dame



Emma Plant
Communications
Manager
Evangelisation
Brisbane

FREE ONLINE EVENT | ONE NIGHT ONLY

Join Fr Chris Ryan MGL and an exciting panel of guests for a wide ranging conversation about the powerful role lay people can play in the Church's Mission. Find out more about the Foundations of Missionary Leadership Program & how you can enrol for 2024.



17 August 2023



7.30pm (AEST)



Live on Zoom

Register for this free event

[Book Online Here](#)

SCAN ME



Teresa Vigroux

Meet Teresa Vigroux, loving wife, devoted mother to two young boys a proud graduate from the 2022 cohort. Teresa's innate charm of craftsmanship, honed through her professional pursuits, has found a new expression in her role as a Family Educator. Through her creative approach, she helps families build strong foundations of faith and her journey serves as an inspiring example of how our unique gifts and talents can be beautifully intertwined with unexpected paths.

What inspired you to do the Foundations of Missionary Leadership Program?

I was really beginning to feel a call or a stirring in my heart to serve the Lord in some way but wasn't sure how. My friend Laura introduced me to Areté during the lockdown. Witnessing her transformative journey and newfound confidence in sharing her faith with others inspired me to embark on this path as well.

My thirst for knowledge and a deeper faith were ignited by the profound impact the program had on her life.

What was a highlight for you during the year?

There were so many. It was the diversity of those who embarked on this path along side me – people from varied backgrounds, ages, and cultures. Initially, I questioned how we could find common ground amidst our differences. Yet, to my surprise, I discovered a profound sense of unity and a feeling of becoming one big family. As we shared our stories and experiences, it became clear that our gathering was not a coincidence. It was a divine invitation extended by God Himself and for His purpose.

Can you share any specific experiences or moments during the course that had a profound effect on you.

One of the most profound moments for me was when we gathered and sang together, experiencing a room filled with love and joy. Hearing the stories of grace from each person was incredibly powerful, as it revealed the diverse paths we have walked, and yet we are united in our shared need for God.



The prayer ministry was a truly profound experience, where the Holy Spirit brought healing and a deep sense of peace amidst an environment overflowing with love. Each time we came together to nurture our faith, I felt my spirit drawing closer, and witnessing the growth of others around me added a profound depth to my own journey.

During the course you discovered your charisms, how have you grown in those gifts and how has this helped you in your current role as a Family Educator?

I loved being able to explore the different ways God has gifted me, and its been interesting to see how my charism of faith expressed itself through craftsmanship. I am continuing to discern these gifts and to understand how they express themselves in my life.

“

Areté helped me grow spiritually, but also intellectually, emotionally, and in my relationships with friends and family.

”

What's your favourite Bible verse?

My favourite Bible verse has to be Luke 9:12-17. This is one of Jesus' magnificent miracles that encapsulates his grace and compassion.

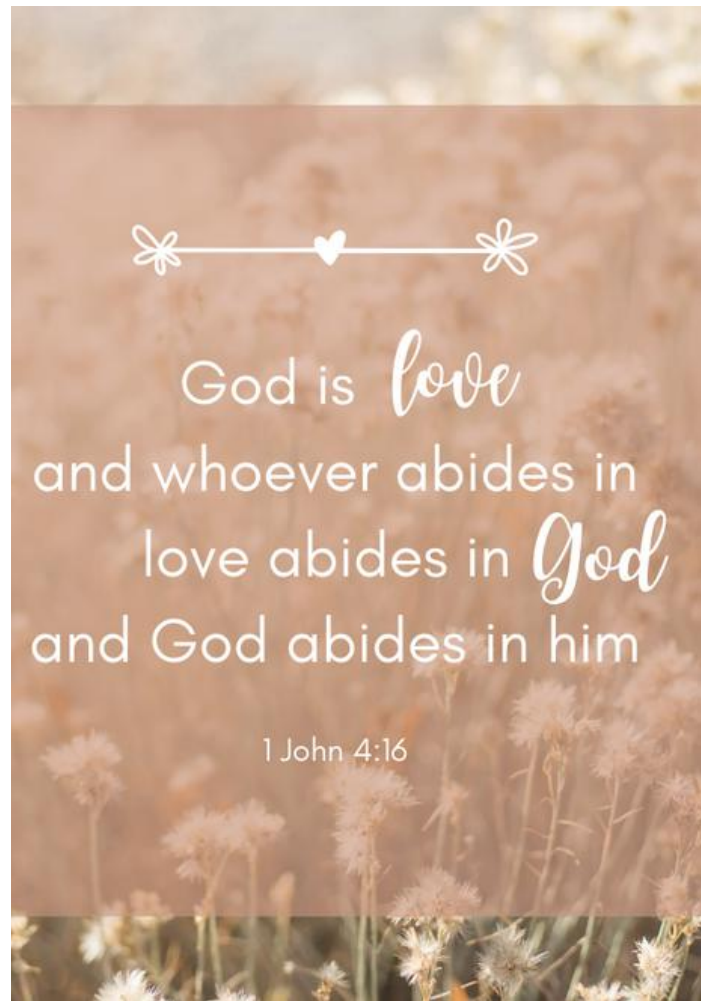
Who is your favourite Saint?

Padre Pio. Being born in Italy, St Padre Pio has always held a special place in my heart.

Learn more about Teresa's Parish

Mary Immaculate Church Waverley
40 Victoria Street, Waverley

Parish Priest: Fr Bernie Thomas
www.waverleycatholic.org.au



PARISH RENEWAL & THE THREE 'H'S.



by Fr Chris Ryan MGL

A really important element of parish renewal is improving the quality of the Sunday Eucharist. Now, of course, the Mass is the Mass, and we are not at liberty to change much about the liturgy, but that does not mean that we ought to be content with celebrations of the Eucharist that are aesthetically deficient, fail to nourish people, or are cold and unwelcoming to newcomers. As Fr James Mallon memorably puts it, if we are serious about parish renewal then we need to pay attention to the “3 H’s” each Sunday - the Hymns, Hospitality, and the Homilies.

Virtually my first act as a first-time parish priest many years ago was to hire a music coordinator. The little parish did not have the money, but I told the finance committee that I would pay for it myself if I had to. We hired a young faith-filled musician who needed a part-time job and the quality of the music at Mass increased exponentially. Other musicians came forward to volunteer and the number of people coming to Mass increased as people experienced the beautiful liturgies. Our finances grew accordingly, and I never had to pay for her role out of my own pocket!

“Music possesses a unique power to speak to people’s hearts, and so it is often through music that people first experience a taste of the Lord’s love for them. Its impact on parish renewal is undeniable”.



Areté Graduate Alina Geagea

The truth was that I had resorted to employing someone because the quality of the music had been so bad that something drastic had to be done, but it was one of the best decisions I made. Why? Music possesses a unique power to speak to people's hearts, and so it is often through music that people first experience a taste of the Lord's love for them. Its impact on parish renewal is undeniable.

"good homilies are an essential element of parish renewal!"

Hospitality at Sunday Mass is the second 'H' in Fr James' trio, and it is crucial for parish renewal too. Just today, I learnt about a couple who have started attending St Declan's. The lady has not been baptised and had been exploring faith in a local Protestant Church. Her fiancée though, is a Catholic, and so she was enquiring about becoming a Catholic too



While they had gone to a different Catholic parish initially, they had settled on St Declan's because of the warm experience of fellowship they had found there. So the welcome first-timers receive is often an important initial step on their journey towards Jesus. A gentle, non-threatening, but sincere welcome from parishioners goes a long way!

Finally, good homilies are an essential element of parish renewal! My brother priests, we need you to preach homilies that touch the hearts of people because they communicate the Gospel. And we need fire from you! Set hearts afire with the love of God! Newcomers and parishioners alike are crying out to be nourished by the Word of God as you break it open for them.

Attention to hymns, hospitality, and homilies make for a better Sunday Mass. What's one thing you can do in each of these areas to improve the quality of Sunday Eucharist in your parish?

Areté 

CENTRE FOR MISSIONARY LEADERSHIP

A work of the Missionaries of God's Love



FOUNDATIONS OF MISSIONARY LEADERSHIP

PROGRAM PROSPECTUS

2024



**APPLY
NOW**

WWW.ARETECENTRE.ORG

FROM ISOLATION TO INSPIRATION:

BY KEVIN WONG

When the COVID lockdown restrictions were lifted towards the end of 2021, our Chinese Catholic community cautiously began to gather again in person. At the time, I wondered how our faith community would be revived and resume in parish renewal.

Our community can be quite different to a local parish. While we celebrate our shared Chinese heritage and culture, we come from varied backgrounds - some of us are migrants who came to Australia more than 50 years ago, some have recently arrived seeking more economic and political stability, some are returning after studying here during their youth and an increasing number are "ABCs", or Australian Born Chinese. We speak in Cantonese, Mandarin or English. And so we gather to worship and nurture our faith in a uniquely blended Chinese Catholic culture.

Every Sunday, we gather in either Flemington, Ashfield, or Haymarket for the celebration of the Eucharist. Our homes are scattered all around Sydney and the journey to Mass can be an enormous effort for those who live further away. One obvious challenge after the lockdowns was in encouraging everyone to forgo "Mass in the lounge room" and resume travelling these long distances for in-person community worship.

One of the first initiatives to welcome everyone back was to provide morning tea after Mass, with good coffee and tea, yummy snacks and traditional Chinese foods. This helped to develop our sense of community and belonging after being apart, and gave a reason to linger, reconnect and for the children to let loose. It also inspired an informal group of dads to take turns to run the coffee cart, and provided an opportunity for youths to serve beverages to both young and old.



Recently we had a few special opportunities for the work of evangelisation in our community. We have launched a Pauline Year of Evangelisation consisting of initiatives to "Ignite (formation) and Evangelise (go out)", we welcomed neophytes and invited non-believers to a Pentecost celebration, and we celebrated the blessed role of mums with a Mother's Day morning tea.

At times, one may doubt whether our huge efforts will bear even a little fruit, but I can attest that the Holy Spirit really does draw people to relationship with God, and it helps immensely when we have faith to create some opportunities for Him. Some of the fruits include youth inviting their friends to "come and see" and seeking greater participation in ministries, while other community members having increased desire to contribute to activities and serve. The elderly in our community are filled with hope and sharing their joy in the community events.



I recently received some comments from newcomers expressing that they loved being warmly welcomed by a vibrant community during these activities.

At the Pentecost event, I observed that a good friend had become more open to the work of evangelisation - and without him even realising it (I suspect!).

He has become more comfortable in starting up conversations, approaching newcomers to welcome them and bringing joy to everyone around him. I was pleasantly surprised by this as he is usually one to abstain from engaging with newcomers. I believe this change was greatly influenced by the culture created from providing hospitality and from the heightened focus a shared vision for evangelisation has given us.

"At times, one may doubt whether our huge efforts will even bear a little fruit, but I can attest that the Holy Spirit really does draw people to relationship with God."

Thank you Holy Spirit, that these initiatives have combined to ignite opportunities for growth in discipleship, in my friend, and in the whole community.

Once again, I thank the Lord for what I have gained from the Areté Foundations of Missionary Leadership Program, in opening my eyes to see how we can all better participate in the great mission of evangelisation, and to be filled with excitement, joy and hope in the process. Come Holy Spirit!

June Intensive Weekend: An Unforgettable Journey of Formation, Connection, and Discovery

By Laura Neeson

On a frosty, winter weekend in June, our 2023 student cohort eagerly gathered for Intensive 3 of our Foundations of Missionary Leadership Program at the picturesque Mt Carmel Retreat Centre.

This retreat offered students an opportunity for deeper spiritual formation and valuable practical skills to help them engage in the important work of prayer ministry. They also embarked on a process of discernment to discover their charisms, those special gifts bestowed upon us by the Holy Spirit to help build up the Church, and learned more about the art of engaging in fruitful evangelising conversations.

During the first session of the weekend, Fr Chris led students through a discernment process to help them discover their unique combination of charisms and how they can understand, use and mature in these charisms for the building up of the kingdom.

On day two Kelvin and Frances Simon gave a very practical session on prayer ministry and its power to offer healing and support to others. Through engaging discussions and thought-provoking exercises, the students developed a deeper understanding of the transformative potential of prayer ministry in their lives and the lives of others.

Small group sessions provided a space for students to practise and hone their newfound skills, encourage one another, and grow in confidence in a safe and supportive environment.



As always, daily Mass was the cornerstone of the program. Gathered in the chapel each day, the students were united in worship and thanksgiving, offering their hearts and intentions to God.

Personally, one of the most heart-stirring elements of Intensive 3 was the deepening signs of fellowship that were evident among the students during mealtime conversations. Students shared their joys, struggles, and spiritual insights with one another, and in the safety of these sacred exchanges, genuine connections were made, souls were nourished, and faith was enriched.

May the seeds sown during Intensive 3 continue to bear fruit, enriching the lives of participants and inspiring them to share Christ's love with others.



"Students shared their joys, struggles, and spiritual insights with one another, and in the safety of these sacred exchanges, genuine connections were made, souls were nourished, and faith was enriched."





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

Contact us: office@aretecentre.org

