

Areté 

Issue 9 | SUMMER Edition

VELLS

et Remis

Student Spotlight,
Stories of Grace &
much more.

Unwrap

your calling.

HOW YOUR GIFTS REVEAL GOD'S
UNIQUE PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE.



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HELLO FROM

Fr Chris

Dear friends,

Welcome to another beautiful edition of Velis et Remis. The stories in this issue are united by the theme of charisms, those special spiritual gifts the Holy Spirit gives us to assist us in our mission, whatever that may be.

There's no doubt that one of our students' favourite parts of the Foundations of Missionary Leadership program is the lectures and workshop devoted to the charisms. I also marvel at the fact that we live in a privileged moment in the Church's history, as we have rediscovered the important principle that the charisms are given to all the baptised, and not just a chosen few. The Holy Spirit wants to use everyone!

It is wonderful to speak to Areté graduates after they have finished the Foundations Program, and to learn more about how they are exercising their charisms today. In this issue of Velis et Remis you'll read some wonderful stories of charisms in action from some of our students. You'll also get a glimpse into some of the charisms that the Areté team possess. I think at least one of them might surprise you! Next year we are going to welcome our largest cohort yet. Each year we say we are full, and then we squeeze a few more in! But I really, really think we are at capacity this time! Please pray for the 2026 students, and enjoy this issue of the magazine.



May this Christmas season be a time of deepening faith and renewed commitment to our mission as the Church, sharing the hope and love of Christ with all.

Thank you for joining us on this journey. We are grateful for your continued support and prayers.

Wishing you a blessed and joyful Christmas season!

Fr Chris Ryan MGL
Director
Areté Centre for Missionary Leadership



Host of the new series produced by Parousia Media, Helena Roumanus, 2023 Areté Centre graduate.

‘The Hot Seat’ Now Airing

The Hot Seat’ is a brand-new video series where Catholic priests tackle real and often challenging questions about faith, God, and the Church in an open and honest conversation format.

Hosted by 2023 graduate Helena Roumanus, this eight-part series invites viewers to engage with topics that many wonder about but rarely hear discussed so candidly. The first episode dives straight into the issue of hypocrisy within the Church, exploring why people continue to stay despite its flaws.

New episodes air fortnightly on Sunday nights and are free to watch on Parousia Media’s YouTube channel.



Applications for our 2026 Program Now Closed

Applications for our 2026 program are now closed, with the program once again at full capacity and a waiting list in place. We’re blessed with a diverse group of students from various vocations and locations, including New Zealand, Melbourne, and Brisbane. For the first time, we also welcome a small group of clergy from different parishes to join this journey of formation. We give thanks to God for this wonderful cohort and ask you to keep them in your prayers as they prepare for a transformative year ahead.



Did you Miss our Open Night: *Tailor-Made for Mission?*

Fr Chris Ryan MGL was joined by Fr Sam French and 2023 graduate Helena Roumanus for our annual online open night, which this year was entitled, *Tailor-Made for Mission*. Together, they explored how our God-given charisms can help to reveal the unique part each of us is to play in God’s mission.

The conversation delved into the beauty and challenge of discovering these spiritual gifts or charisms, offering practical insights into how we can discern, develop, and use them effectively in our everyday lives. Along the way, they also shared wisdom on how to navigate some of the most common pitfalls that can arise when identifying and living out our charisms. If you missed the live event, you can watch the full recording on our YouTube channel here: [Click Here](#)

ACYF 2025

“If you need to know if God loves you; if you need to know if God really cares about you, look to the cross of Jesus.”

—Fr Chris Ryan MGL



FR CHRIS PREACHING AT THE ACYF PLENARY IN MELBOURNE

CHARISMS *of* CRAFTSMANSHIP

By Felicity Chang

Laura once asked me if Craftsmanship was one of my charisms and I unreservedly said, “Nope! I got a 6 for that one.” Her surprise sparked a discussion (and a revisit of my low-scoring questions on the charisms inventory we use) which helped redefine ministry for me. I’ve always confined ministry to works done in the capacity of a church representative, under the church-listed ministries. But I now realise that my making and gifting of cakes to lonely and elderly parishioners is ministry. Ministry is not reserved for the officially commissioned few. We are all ministers for Christ. We have all been commissioned when we said “Yes” at our Confirmation. So here I would like to share with you a recipe from my ministry.





Felicity's Strawberry Torte

Ingredients: Vanilla Sponge

100g plain flour
 100g sugar
 6 large eggs, separated
 1 tsp cream of tartar (or apple cider vinegar / lemon juice)
 1 tsp vanilla extract
 60g Butter, melted
 60ml Milk

Filling:

Strawberry Compote
 (or you can use store-bought jam)
 250g Strawberries (frozen or fresh),
 hulled and quartered
 100g Sugar (adjust to suit your taste)

Fresh Strawberries (optional)
 Whipped Cream

Method:

1. Preheat oven to 150C.
2. Beat egg yolks and 1 egg white with half of the sugar until tripled in volume.
3. Add butter, milk and vanilla extract and mix in gently.
4. Sift flour over the bowl and gently fold into the mixture.
5. In another bowl (ensuring bowl and whisk attachment are clean and oil-free), beat remaining egg whites and cream of tartar on low speed until slightly frothy. Add in remaining sugar and beat at medium-high speed until soft peaks form.
6. Fold the egg white mixture into the egg yolk mixture in three batches.
7. Pour batter into a 10-inch round tin. Gently drop the tin on the countertop 5-6 times to release any large air bubbles. Bake for 50 minutes.
8. To make the strawberry compote, cook strawberries with sugar over medium heat. Stir intermittently until the berries have broken down into a jammy consistency. Set aside to cool.

9. Remove cake immediately from oven after baking and leave to cool upside down on a rack for about 30 minutes until the tin is cool enough to handle, but still warm. Run a small knife around the tin to release the cake. With the tin tilted downwards, gently press down the sides of the cake with the knife to release the bottom. Let cake cool completely on rack. [Note: you can skip this step if you choose to line your tin with baking paper. I find this technique creates a lighter cake.]

10. Cut cake into half horizontally and fill with the whipped cream, jam and fresh strawberries. Decorate as you desire and enjoy!



Image: Felicity's daughter Sophie enjoying one of Felicity's amazing creations.

To each is *given*

Unwrapping our God-given gifts

By Laura Neeson

At the Areté Centre, we often say that formation is not so much a program as a pilgrimage, a journey of discovering who we are in Christ and how we are called to serve His Church. What moves me most is witnessing how our students, each uniquely gifted, are stepping into that call with courage, creativity, and deep faith.

Some teach children, patiently planting seeds of Scripture. Others lead in ministry, coordinating liturgies, mentoring peers, or guiding prayer groups with quiet authority. Many simply pray with others, offering presence and peace in moments of need.

These expressions of love are not always visible in their impact. But God sees. He sees how each charism, each act of grace, contributes to the beauty of His Church on earth. Pope Francis spoke to this mystery beautifully: "The most beautiful experience is discovering how many different charisms there are, and with how many gifts of the Spirit the Father fills His Church. They are all gifts that God gives to the Christian community, so that it might grow harmoniously, in faith and in His love, like one body, the body of Christ."

Our students and graduates live this out. Their witness is revealed in the way they serve, speak, create, and pray, and particularly in the way they exercise their charisms.



As St. Paul reminds us, “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit... To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Corinthians 12:4,7). In my five years at the Areté Centre, I’ve witnessed these gifts come to life in ways that continually surprise and inspire me.

Take Felicity, our Program Coordinator. While her gift for administration is evident in her mastery of spreadsheets, she also expresses a different charisma through baking. With thoughtfulness and skill and love, she creates recipes from scratch, often improvising with whatever ingredients she has on hand. Each creation is marked by care and creativity, and she truly comes alive when baking for others, whether to celebrate a birthday, support a parish event, or simply bring joy.



Image: Craftsmanship can take the form of many things, from baking to digital design. Moodboard for the Velis et Remis Magazine concept.

Fr Chris has a gift for healing that I think also shows up in a very unique way. He brings a quiet strength that puts people at ease. His presence is gentle and deeply attentive. He notices the need beneath the surface and responds with prayerful attention.

For me, well, I’m still figuring it all out but I often sense the Holy Spirit at work when I’m designing things, or creating ‘order from chaos’, as I like to say. Whether it’s the layout for *Velis et Remis*, a video production or our social media posts that share the Gospel, the process feels like a quiet offering, and it brings me a deep sense of

How to Spot Your Charisms

Charisms are spiritual gifts given by the Holy Spirit for the good of others and the building up of the Church. They are not talents or skills, but graces that flow when we serve in love.

Ways to begin discerning:

- *Notice where you feel most alive while serving*
- *Pay attention to gentle inner promptings*
- *Ask trusted friends what they see in you*
- *Reflect on what consistently bears fruit in others*
- *Read Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4*
- *Try different forms of service and reflect*
- *Pray for clarity and openness to the Spirit’s guidance*
- *Journal your experiences when you practice these charisms*

joy. I’m sure all of us have experienced those moments when we come alive while serving God, so here is the invitation to all of us: Remember that the Holy Spirit often speaks through quiet stirrings, through joy, and through that sense of meaning we feel when we serve. Pay attention to those moments because they are signposts on your journey, pointing to the role God has prepared for you within the body of Christ.

Jacky Krsnik

Class of 2021

From the heart of St Declan's and St Joseph's Parishes in Penshurst/Oatley, one of our inspiring graduates shares a journey of rediscovery, mission, and transformation. Raised Catholic and deeply rooted in her local community, Jacky's faith took on new life when her children began their sacramental journey, and something stirred within her.

A mother of three (plus one beloved fur baby), she balances motherhood, parish work and volunteering with running Narthex Digital, a business dedicated to helping churches build websites that shine light across the noisy digital landscape. But it was a moment in 2018, during Eucharist at Sunday Mass following an Alpha retreat, that changed everything. Struck by the Holy Spirit, her faith ignited in a new and powerful way. Jacky's story is one of everyday holiness, where vocation, family, and mission meet.

Have you always been active in your faith?

I was raised Catholic, but it was during my children's sacramental preparation that I felt a real pull to know God more deeply. Everything changed for me when receiving Eucharist at Sunday Mass following an Alpha retreat day in 2018, that's when I was struck by the Holy Spirit, and my faith life truly took off.

Tell us about your role at St Declan's/St Joseph's, and your favourite part of that mission.

My role at the parish has shifted and grown over time, and right now I serve as the Director of Ministry, working with Fr. Chris in the day to day leadership of the parish. One of the things I love most is being part of a team that dreams big for the future of our parish.



In our Senior Leadership Team meetings, we get to tackle challenges, brainstorm new ideas, and shape strategies that make a real difference in people's lives, and that's both exciting and deeply rewarding.

I also feel privileged to walk alongside our ministry leaders, supporting them as they grow their ministries and helping them bring their vision to life. Seeing people grow as leaders and take steps forward is one of the things I value most about my role.



“
Seeing people grow as leaders and take steps forward is one of the things I value most about my role.
”



Another big part of my heart is for our Life Groups, where small groups of 'friends in faith' gather to share life and grow closer to Jesus. Coordinating this ministry is such a gift because I get to witness real transformation, people finding community, deepening their faith, and building authentic friendships.





Can you share a moment during your Areté experience that deeply impacted your understanding of leadership or mission?

Spoiler alert: One moment that stayed with me was during the third lecture, when Fr. Chris reflected on Ad Gentes² and the idea that “God’s mission has a Church.” It made me see that mission begins with God, and we are invited to step in and take part in what the Son and the Spirit are doing in the world. Leadership, I realised, is about walking alongside others as we join God’s work, helping people discover their role in His mission, and witnessing His love transform lives.

What charisma or spiritual gift did you discover or grow in during your time at the Areté Centre?

During the course, I began to recognise and grow in the gift of wisdom. It’s less about having all the answers and more about learning to see situations with God’s perspective, discern what He might be calling me to, and supporting others thoughtfully on their journey.

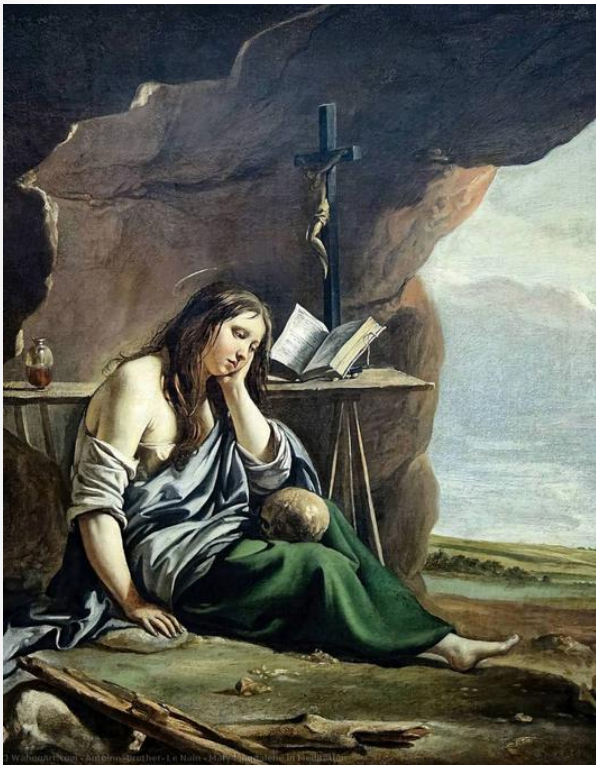
I’ve come to see that wisdom is something we develop over time, in everyday decisions and interactions, and through prayer and cooperation with the Holy Spirit. The Areté course gave me tools and insights to be more attentive and reflective in how I walk alongside others in ministry.

What’s something surprising or fun about you that most people wouldn’t guess; any hidden talents, hobbies, or quirks?

I’m always on the lookout for new information. I love learning about all sorts of things and picking up insights wherever I can. I’m also passionate about Clifton Strengths and enjoy helping people discover their unique talents, and as an Accompaniment Coach, I get to walk alongside others as they grow and develop in their faith, work, and life. You could say I always have my “antennae up” for interesting ideas and opportunities to help others flourish.

If you could encourage someone considering Areté, what would you say to them?

The great thing about this course is how well it balances human formation, intellectual formation, best ministerial practice, leadership, and spiritual growth. It’s not just about learning skills, it’s about growing as a person, deepening your faith, and discovering how God might be calling you to serve. It can be the start of something new, opening doors to fresh opportunities in ministry and helping you step confidently into God’s mission. For me personally, the course was a turning point; it helped me see my volunteering in ministry as part of something much bigger and more meaningful than I had realised.



Mary Magdalene in Meditation - Antoine (Brother) Le Nain

Who is your favourite saint, and why?

Often misunderstood and misrepresented, my favourite saint is Mary Magdalene. She truly understood love for Jesus, making her a prophetess of eucharistic love. She has helped me enter more deeply into adoration of Jesus present in the Blessed Sacrament, and her life continues to inspire my own prayer and devotion.

“My favourite saint is Mary Magdalene. She truly understood love for Jesus, making her a prophetess of eucharistic love.”

What book has most shaped your faith formation journey?

The Bible! Beyond that, if I may list a few ... reading *The Interior Castle* by St Teresa of Ávila was a spiritual guide for me at a time when I was growing in prayer and deepening my understanding of the Holy Spirit. Also the works of Raniero Cantalamessa have been incredibly formative; his books on the Holy Spirit set me on a path of knowing God more deeply and growing in relationship with the Trinity in my daily life. Another book that has been a lifetime read for me is *Divine Intimacy* by Father Gabriel of St Mary Magdalene, O.C.D., which, although intended to be read over one liturgical year, I return to repeatedly for inspiration and guidance in prayer and virtue.



NARTHEX
DIGITAL
CHURCH MEDIA SOLUTIONS

In an era where the first encounter with a parish often happens online, Narthex Digital has positioned itself as a leader in helping churches translate their mission into a compelling digital presence. Rather than treating websites as static noticeboards, Narthex Digital approaches design as an act of hospitality. Their projects emphasise clarity, warmth, and accessibility, ensuring that visitors immediately understand who the parish is, what it values, and how they might belong. This philosophy reflects the team's own experience as active parish members, familiar with the challenges of welcoming people both in person and online. The results are websites that both inform and invite. By combining technical expertise with pastoral sensitivity, Narthex Digital helps parishes extend their mission beyond church walls, creating digital spaces that embody the same openness and care found in the physical community. Find them at www.narthexdigital.com.au

Little Disciples, Loud with Love

By Dominique Farah

There's something sacred about watching children encounter God, especially through music. I've always believed that when we give children space to explore faith creatively, we're not just teaching them; we're witnessing the Holy Spirit move in them.

During our recent choir workshop, I saw this unfold in the most beautiful ways. From the moment they arrived, the children were eager, not just to sing, but to set up the prayer space, to learn, to listen. We began with Scripture, unpacking the readings for upcoming Masses, and it was incredible to see how quickly they connected the words of the Gospel to the lyrics of the hymns. They weren't just singing, they were proclaiming.

We spoke about All Souls Day and the hope it carries, and then looked ahead to Advent, reflecting on John the Baptist's call to prepare the way. The theme of hope for the Jubilee year threaded through everything we did. Father Brian and Father Michael joined us mid-morning, and having Father Michael accompany us on piano was such a gift. The children lit up with every chord.

What moves me most is how naturally children lean into reflection. At the end of the day, they sat close to the altar, writing and drawing while listening to gentle music. Some gazed at images of Jesus from *The Chosen*, others read short accounts of Eucharistic miracles. It was quiet, reverent, and deeply personal.

This moment of faith formation is a beautiful instance of evangelisation. It flows through relationship, intention, and the quiet work of the Spirit. I feel deeply honoured to journey with these young ones as they grow in confidence, lift their voices in song, and embrace their place in God's story. They are called to sing, to serve, and to live in the light of His love.



Dominique Farah (second from the left), one of our cherished graduates, lives out her calling with joy, creativity, and deep faith. Through her ministry with children, the Gospel comes alive... in song, in Scripture, in silence, and in community. This testimony reveals how Dominique helps young hearts encounter Christ as a living presence, reminding us that to be called is to become an instrument of grace.



Formed, commissioned + Sent

A look back at our last intensive weekend with our 2025 Cohort.



The final Areté Intensive of 2025 was a rich weekend of learning, prayer, and celebration. Saturday evening brought joy and fellowship with a praise and worship night led by Louisa Daniels, where voices rose together in gratitude for the journey shared.

Across the weekend, participants heard from inspiring speakers who equipped them for parish life. Daniel Ang offered a vision for parish renewal, reminding students of the call to re-energise communities with hope and mission. Tania Rimac provided a practical blueprint for running Alpha in parishes, while Selina Hashem spoke on the power of communications in evangelisation. Laura Neeson brought energy and creativity with a hands-on workshop exploring the ins and outs of parish social media strategies, and Frances Simon rounded out the program with insights into effective event management.

Sunday marked the true culmination of the intensive. The traditional walk up the hill offered a moment of reflection and unity, symbolising perseverance and faith. This was followed by the Commissioning Mass, where participants were sent forth with renewed purpose, ready to carry the spirit of Areté into their parishes and communities.





“We want to fix our eyes on God, we want to set our hearts on God. We know that He wants to be with us. We know that He loves us. We know that He wants to come close to us”.

-Louisa Daniels



*So open up your hearts
Let the King of Glory
Let him come in*

00:17:32



Class of 2025 Graduation Celebration

On Friday 28 November, the Areté community gathered at St Declan's for a joyful evening of thanksgiving and celebration. The night began with Mass and the graduation ceremony, where awards were presented in recognition of the students' dedication and achievement. We were blessed to be joined by mentors, along with Daniel Ang, Director of the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation, and Anita Sicari from Sydney Catholic Schools, who have generously supported many of the students undertaking the course. The liturgy was beautifully enriched by Louisa Daniels, who led the music and was joined by a group of students in singing the thanksgiving hymn.

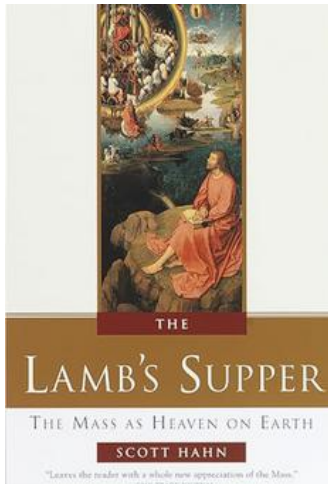
The student address was delivered by Margaret Savage, offering heartfelt reflections on the journey, while Jenny Merwyn gave the vote of thanks, expressing gratitude to all who made the program possible.

The celebrations continued at Enzo's Penshurst, where we enjoyed a delicious three-course meal, graduation cake, and the added joy of celebrating our Program Coordinator Felicity's birthday. It was a night of fellowship, laughter, and gratitude, and a fitting close to the year.

As the cohort steps forward, may they carry the spirit of Areté with courage and joy, continuing to serve the Church and their communities with faith, hope, and love.



Watch | Read | Listen



The Lamb's Supper: The Mass as Heaven on Earth by Scott Hahn

The Lamb's Supper reveals a long-lost secret of the Church: A key to the early Christians' understanding of the mysteries of the Mass was the New Testament Book of *Revelation*. In the midst of its sometimes bizarre imagery, its mystic visions of heaven, and its end-of-time prophecies, *Revelation* illuminates the sacrifice and celebration of the Eucharist. Beautifully written in clear, direct language, bestselling Catholic author Scott Hahn's book about the Eucharist in the Book of Revelation invites readers to see the Mass anew, pray with renewed devotion, and enter more fully and joyfully into the liturgy.



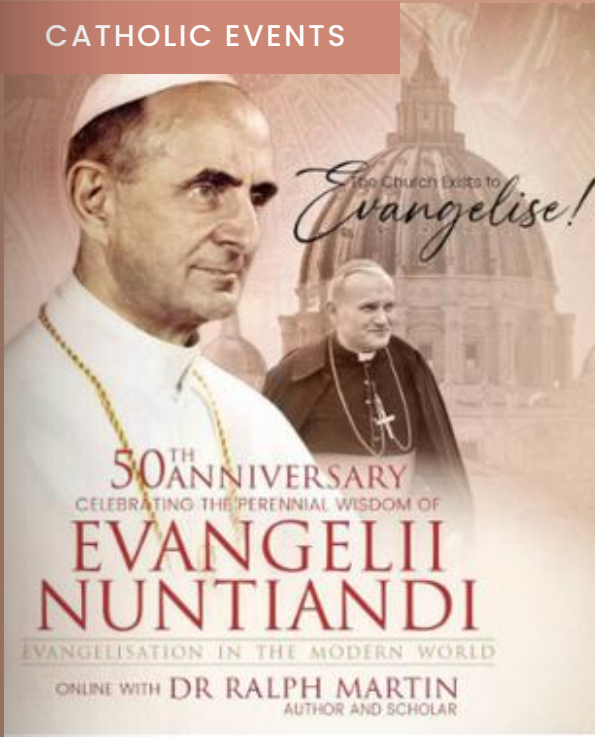
Parousia Podcast

Parousia Media, led by our friend Charbel Raish, has become a trusted hub for engaging Catholic content. What sets them apart is the heart behind the mission and it's evident in the warmth and authenticity of their talks. From Scripture studies to practical apologetics and inspiring interviews, Parousia Podcast makes the faith accessible and alive. Don't forget to tune in to our episode with Charbel featuring Fr Chris!



Triumph of the Heart (2025) Director: Anthony D'Ambrosio

In the harrowing confines of Auschwitz's starvation cell, Catholic priest St Maximilian Kolbe volunteers to die in place of another prisoner, joining nine others condemned by the Nazis. As despair and fear grip the group, the pressures of starvation and internal ideological division mount. Throughout this ordeal, however, St Maximilian's appeal to their shared humanity and Polish identity forges a brotherhood that culminates in a poignant act of sacrifice that echoes beyond the cell, illuminating hope in one of history's darkest moments.



The Perennial Wisdom of Evangelii Nuntiandi with Dr Ralph Martin

Millions of Australians do not know or have forgotten the love of Christ. If they are not coming to us, how do we reach them?

Gather as a parish or family group to hear renowned author, speaker, and scholar, Dr Ralph Martin as he shares insights from the Church's guiding document, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (On Evangelisation in the Modern World), along with his own experience of sharing the Gospel for over 50 years.

Date: Monday 8 December 2025

Time: 8:00 – 9:00pm

Venue: Online via Zoom

RSVP is essential via gomakedisciples.org.au/cas-events

Advent Reflections

Embark on a spiritual journey of hope this Advent and Christmas with *The Promise: Advent and Christmas Daily Reflections 2025*. *The Promise* is an ideal gift for family, friends, parishioners, and colleagues, or as a faith-filled alternative to Christmas cards. To purchase your copies, just select whether you are purchasing as an individual or on behalf of a GST free Catholic Religious Group and you will see the discounted bulk pricing rates. Purchase [here](#).



Pope's December prayer intention: 'For Christians in areas of conflict'

Pope's December prayer intention: 'For Christians in areas of conflict' Pope Leo XIV releases his prayer intention for the month of December, and invites the faithful to pray that Christians living in the midst of war may be seeds of peace.



"Let us pray that Christians living in areas of war or conflict, especially in the Middle East, might be seeds of peace, reconciliation, and hope,"
Pope Leo XIV

Missionaries of God's Love

Sisters



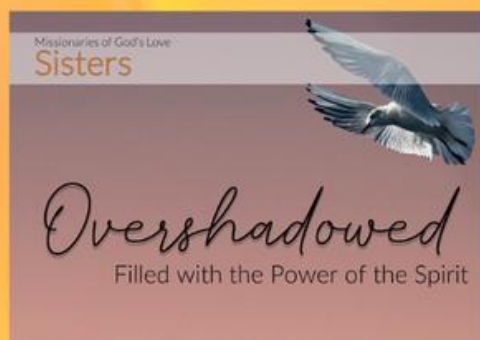
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Digital Retreats

To celebrate

*5 incredible years
running retreats at Varroville!*

we are launching three digital retreats for
you to access anytime, anywhere!



mglsisters.org/retreats

SAVE
THE DATES!

Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney Women's Lenten Retreat

Seek His Face

Psalm 27

Option 1

**Saturday 28th
February 2026**

9.00 AM - 4.00 PM

Option 2

**Saturday 14th
March 2026**

9.00 AM - 4.00 PM



**St. Mary's Cathedral
Sydney**

To accommodate the growing
interest in this beautiful retreat day,
we are offering the

**Same program
on 2 days**

More info to come

HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS | EUCHARISTIC ADORATION | CONFESSIONS
TALKS FROM DOMINICAN SISTERS | BREAKOUT SESSIONS | CATHOLIC STALLS



**CATHOLIC
WOMEN'S NETWORK**



DOMINICAN SISTERS OF

Saint Cecilia

Founded in 1860 - Nashville



**Sydney
Catholic
Schools**

IN OUR NEXT EDITION...

Music in the Life of the Church

Our next edition of *Velis et Remis* will explore one of the most powerful and universal languages of the Church: music. From the quiet beauty of chant to the soaring harmonies of contemporary worship, music has always held a unique place in Catholic life, shaping our prayer, forming our communities, and lifting our hearts toward God.

In this upcoming issue, we'll look at why music matters so deeply to our faith. You'll hear from musicians, parish leaders, and students who have experienced firsthand how song can open hearts, deepen worship, and renew the missionary spirit of a parish. We'll also explore the theology behind sacred music, the role of beauty in evangelisation, and the simple truth that when the Church sings, she prays twice.

It's an edition filled with story, reflection, and inspiration, and a celebration of the way God continues to speak through melody, rhythm, and the voices of His people.

OUT FEB 2026

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Missionary Leadership?

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