

GO MAKE DISCIPLES

Mission Plan for the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney



A Prayer for Renewal

B

lessed are you, Father,
who, in your infinite love
sent us your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ,
that we may have life, and have it in abundance.

By the power of the Holy Spirit,
renew our Eucharistic communities.

May they be places of encounter
with the living Christ,
centres of evangelisation and outreach
to our community in love and mercy.

Grant us the gifts of faith, hope and love
to be faithful disciples of Jesus and
radiant witnesses to the people of Sydney.

Our Lady, Help of Christians. *Pray for us!*

Our Lady of Guadalupe, Star of the New Evangelisation.
Pray for us!

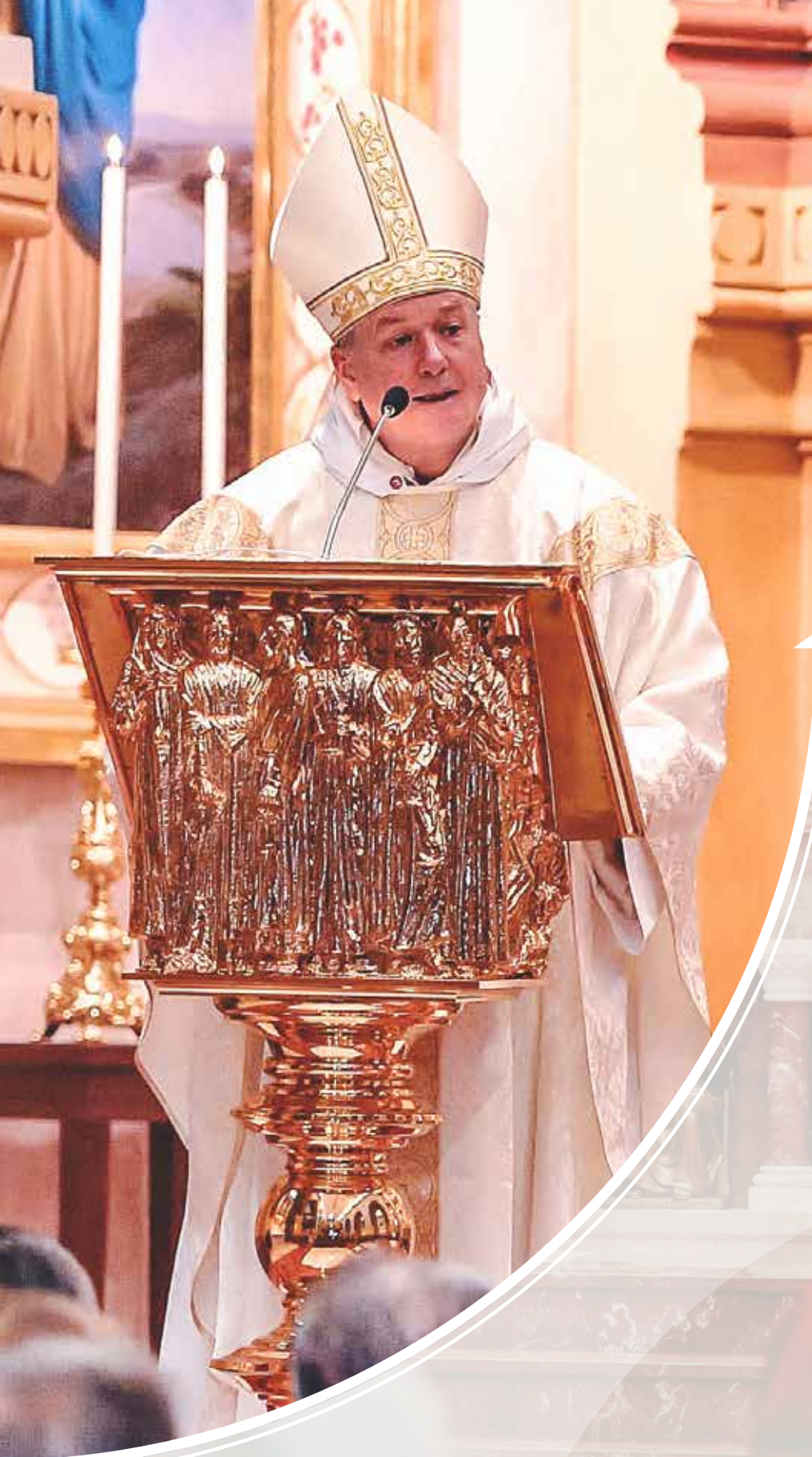
St Mary of the Cross MacKillop. *Pray for us!*





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The Archbishop's
VISION

A Message from **Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP**

When the remaining disciples saw the Risen Lord on Ascension Mount, Matthew tells us, “they worshipped Him; though some doubted” it was Him.



Then Jesus came and said to them,

‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

And remember, I am with you always, to the very end of the age”.

Matthew 28:18-20



his ‘great commission’ is given anew to every generation. As Pope Francis affirms, “In our day Jesus’ command to ‘go and make disciples’ echoes in the changing scenarios and ever new challenges to the Church’s mission of evangelisation, and all of us are called to take part in this new missionary ‘going forth!’”¹ Like the first disciples some of us are worshippers, some doubters, some a bit of both. Like them, we need to draw close to Jesus if our doubts are to be dispelled. Like them, changed by that encounter and empowered by the Spirit, we can do great things.

Jesus’ parting mandate was not just to ‘go and make disciples’ but also to baptise and teach. By Baptism (and all the sacraments and worship that follow) and by hearing God’s Word (and all the Christian teaching and action that follow), we become witnesses to God’s saving love – poured out in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

¹ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 20.

When I was installed as Archbishop in 2014, I shared something of my dreams for our Church in Sydney:

“My hope is for a Church in which the Gospel is preached with joy, the wisdom of our tradition mined with fidelity, the sacraments celebrated with dignity and welcome, and the seminaries, convents and youth groups teeming with new life; a Church in which our parishes, chaplaincies and educational institutions are true centres of the new evangelisation, our laity theologically literate and spiritually well-formed, our outreach to the needy effective and growing, and God glorified above all”.

Since then, I’ve witnessed the many strengths of the Church in Sydney: the scale, diversity, piety and zeal of its pastors and people. Despite many difficulties, our parishes and schools have nurtured the faith of hundreds of thousands across the years and continue to do so. There are many causes for hope.

But these past few years have also been very challenging times for the Church in Australia. The unmasking of historical child sexual abuse in the Church occasioned disillusionment, anger and hurt for many. The COVID-19 pandemic, church closures and restrictions on worship have also been keenly felt. In the meantime, I was seriously ill myself and took quite some time to recover. But Passion and Resurrection are the ordinary rhythm of Christian life and, just as I have recovered my health, so I am confident that our Church in Sydney will come through present trials, humbled, purified and renewed, ready to bear new fruit!

Soon after my installation, I initiated our five-year pastoral planning project entitled ‘Parish 2020’, with the goal of examining the situation and mission of the Archdiocese, its challenges and opportunities, the spiritual gifts of its people, and the structures that can best support new approaches to evangelisation and renewal of our local communities. This enabled me to hear the voices of clergy, religious and lay faithful, in our deaneries, parishes, migrant communities, schools and agencies. After such sharing of hopes and insights, I am more confident than ever about our Church’s future.



I want to thank all those who offered their reflections through conversations, surveys, deanery meetings or in other ways, and to recognise all who contributed to the development of our thinking. *Go Make Disciples*, the Archdiocese of Sydney's Mission Plan, is the fruit of that conversation, research and discernment, and will set our direction and priorities for some years to come. It also offers practical resources for renewal, drawing on examples from the life and ministry of Christ as well as 'best practice' locally and from elsewhere.

As the Church in Sydney, we seek to live out the mission of Jesus Christ in a time of unprecedented change. Sydney's population continues to grow while the way people live, work and worship has changed. Not as many people engage with our parishes or transmit faith and practice to their children as once did. Our culture is less supportive and many now identify as 'no religion'. Some traditional methods of outreach no longer work; others can be rediscovered and reinvigorated. Some of our structures no longer support mission as well as they once did.

Especially in times of great change, we rightly cling to those things that are perennial: one faith, one Lord, one Baptism (Ephesians 4:5). But we need new passion, expressions and methods of evangelisation and community-building in Sydney. Every pastor, every member of the faithful and all our parish communities are called to deep spiritual renewal as disciples, to being better connected with each other, and to reaching out better to others.

Along with our migrant chaplaincies and other Eucharistic communities, our parishes are to be living signs of the proximity of Christ by the proclamation of the Word of God, the sacramental life and the witness of charity, in which the poor and excluded must have a privileged place in the heart of the Church. In an age increasingly marked by marginalisation and isolation, the parish is called to be a living sign of the closeness of Christ, reaching out to the homeless and oppressed.

This call to renewal of life and mission to others must also shape our Catholic educational, healthcare and social service ministries – and everything we do in the name of God's kingdom.

I give thanks to all who have contributed to the 'Parish 2020' phase of our pastoral planning including Bishop Terry Brady and Bishop Richard Umbers, Fr Gerry Gleeson and their committee early on, through Anthony Farley, to Daniel Ang, Elizabeth Arblaster and their team today. I am confident Sydney is ready for this new *Go Make Disciples* phase.

With great faith in the future of our Archdiocese, I invite you to read, pray and reflect on this Archdiocesan Mission Plan. We need your faith and discernment, your courage and gifts as the Church in Sydney seeks to live the Great Commission in this twenty-first century. Like those first Christians emerging from the dark times of Holy Week, we hear the Easter Jesus saying to us: *go make disciples!*

Yours hopefully in Christ

Most Rev. Anthony Fisher OP
Archbishop of Sydney





INTRODUCTION

As we look to the future, our Church is called to place the encounter with Jesus Christ anew at the heart of our life, our structures and our ways of doing things. It is from this living encounter with the Lord that all genuine renewal in the Church becomes possible and the mission of evangelisation finds its source and inspiration.



It is impossible to persevere in a fervent evangelisation unless we are convinced from personal experience that it is not the same thing to have known Jesus as not to have known Him, not the same thing to walk with Him as to walk blindly, not the same thing to hear His word as not to know it, and not the same thing to contemplate Him, to worship Him, to find our peace in Him, as not to”.¹

Pope Francis



When we have encountered Christ and made a personal and conscious decision to follow Him, we become missionaries in the midst of the Church. We “boldly take the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast”.²

The encounter and invitation to missionary discipleship takes place throughout our Christian lives. Like the apostle Peter, our journey in Christ can begin by pushing out our boat “a little way” from the shore, before being called out “into the deep” to trust Jesus anew (Luke 5:3-4). Over time, we “let down our nets” and experience the abundance that Christ makes possible; we can be called to weather the storms of life with our eyes fixed on Christ (Matthew 14:30-33) and, ultimately, to become a fisher of all nations filled with the Good News (Matthew 4:19; Mark 1:17; Matthew 28:18-19).

¹ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 266.

² Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 24.



Duccio di Buoninsegna,
The Coming of the Apostles Peter and Andrew, 1308

It is for this deepening discipleship and widening outreach that our Archdiocesan Mission Plan, *Go Make Disciples* has been prepared, drawing from these past years of discussion and discernment. Like St Peter, we must encounter Jesus continually and respond again to the invitation to be fishers of men.

This plan has been authored and designed as a practical resource for our parishioners and other Eucharistic communities of faith as *communities of disciples*. It is an invitation and a tool to reflect upon our identity by encountering Christ once again and by hearing His call to us today to “go, make disciples”. It invites us to review the foundations in our communities that help us to be and make disciples; to consciously place Jesus’ call to lead others to Him at the heart of our identity; to enact that by strengthening the foundations in our communities that help us to be and make disciples; and to build upon those foundations, new structures and expressions that can lead others to an encounter with Christ.

Within *Go Make Disciples* you will find:

- The Archbishop’s vision for the future of our Archdiocese
- An overview of our present life in Sydney and the pastoral realities of our Eucharistic communities
- An invitation to spiritual renewal through fidelity to Jesus’ mission to “go, make disciples”
- Five foundations which can assist us to strengthen this mission in our parishes and other Eucharistic communities
- Strategies to strengthen these foundations as well as practical actions and support to implement them
- An invitation to structural renewal in our parishes and communities to better serve the mission of Jesus in our changing city and suburbs

A Vision for Parish Life

For most Catholics, the parish is the primary context in which the Gospel is proclaimed, the sacraments are celebrated and the ministry of charity is exercised. *Go Make Disciples* represents an opportunity to live the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the Archdiocese of Sydney in fresh, creative and faith-filled ways. It is a call to transform the culture of our communities by faithfulness to Jesus' command to "go, make disciples" so that our parishes become outposts of the Great Commission, making disciples who bear fruit for God (Romans 7:4).

A disciple is one who has encountered Jesus personally in the midst of the Church, who has surrendered his or her life to His way, and has made the decision to live by His teaching in all aspects of life. A disciple is intentional and active, committed to the lifelong process of learning from Jesus and, inflamed by this encounter, to sharing His way, truth and life with others for the sake of the world.

"Disciples evangelise because they have really good news to share. Disciples share their faith with their children. Disciples care about the poor and about issues of justice. Disciples take risks for the Kingdom of God".

As observed by Sherry Weddell, "[t]he presence of a significant number of disciples changes everything: a parish's spiritual tone, energy level, attendance, bottom line, and what parishioners ask of their leaders. Disciples pray with passion. Disciples worship. Disciples give lavishly. Disciples love the Church and serve her with energy and joy. Disciples hunger to learn more about their faith. Disciples fill every formation class in a parish or diocese. Disciples manifest charisms and discern vocations. They clamour to discern God's call because they long to live it. Disciples evangelise because they have really good news to share. Disciples share their faith with their children. Disciples care about the poor and about issues of justice. Disciples take risks for the Kingdom of God".³

It is this vision of fruitful discipleship that *Go Make Disciples* has been designed to support. We honour and celebrate the rich faith and good works that are already present and active in our parishes, and at the same time hear the Gospel's call to ongoing conversion and constant spiritual renewal. It is this renewal of culture for discipleship and mission to which all parishes and communities of the Archdiocese are invited.

³ Sherry Weddell, *Forming Intentional Disciples*, 80-81.



WE ARE A PARISH COMMUNITY THAT...	WE <i>DESIRE</i> A PARISH COMMUNITY THAT...
Has parishioners with faith	Has parishioners who see their lives as a mission field and look for opportunities to share their faith with others
Runs some programs and activities for parish members	Runs programs and activities specifically for people who are not involved in the life of the parish
Has a number of parishioners who serve in parish programs and activities	Has a growing number of parish leaders who enthusiastically serve in parish programs and activities
Has parishioners who have a positive regard for the Church	Has parishioners who see themselves as part of the Church on mission to the world
Is a place where people can learn about Jesus	Provides opportunities for people to have a personal relationship with Jesus and choose to intentionally follow Him
Experiences growth through births, immigration and surrounding development	Makes new disciples through a pathway of discipleship and conversion including personal outreach and invitation, proclamation of the Gospel, community, and worship
Receives financial giving from some parishioners	Receives generous financial giving from the majority of parishioners who desire to support the mission of the parish
Has parishioners who find comfort in their relationship with God	Has parishioners who surrender everything to God, are prepared to make significant changes in their lives, and evangelise others
Provides opportunities for faith formation which some parishioners attend	Experiences high demand for faith formation opportunities
Proclaims the Word	Proclaims the Word and becomes a 'doer of the Word', including by the exercise of the ministry of charity
Has parishioners who routinely receive the sacraments	Has parishioners who receive the sacraments with personal faith and spiritual expectancy, and experience the full fruit of sacramental grace in their lives

WE ARE A PARISH COMMUNITY THAT...

WE *DESIRE* A PARISH COMMUNITY THAT...

Offers a place where couples can marry	Accompanies and supports engaged and newly married couples
Relies predominantly on the school and catechists to teach the faith to children	Empowers parents and families as the primary educators of their children in collaboration with the parish school
Allocates resources according to the most immediate demands in the parish	Has a plan to ensure resources of the parish best serve the evangelising purpose and priorities of the parish
Believes that most Mass attenders have a personal relationship with Jesus, and shapes programs, homilies and events accordingly	Understands that many Mass attenders may not yet have a personal relationship with Jesus, and shapes programs, homilies and events accordingly
Has parishioners who fulfil their duty to worship God	Has parishioners who pray, gather and worship with ardent faith
Communicates with language that parishioners can understand	Communicates with language that both the initiated and the uninitiated can understand
Has some parishioners who are aware that God has an individual call for their lives	Has many parishioners who know that God is calling them and who want to actively discern what that call is
Has some parishioners who might speak about their relationship with Jesus from time to time	Equips many parishioners to share their lived relationship with Jesus, with others, as a norm in the life and outreach of the parish
Has some ministries where parishioners can choose to serve	Calls forward the God-given gifts of parishioners and provides many opportunities for service, including via ministries of love and charity
Offers assistance to those who ask for it	Draws others into communion, providing support and a sense of belonging to the disconnected, the lonely and the vulnerable
Cares for the needs of those within the parish community	Is seen as a community of love and care, with a capacity to identify the needs of the people in our area and to address those needs with faith and love

Foundations

Go Make Disciples sets out five foundations for spiritual renewal that help us build communities of fruitful and missionary discipleship. These foundations present opportunities for every community to build a culture of holiness and mission.

In the New Testament, we see that these five foundations are central to Jesus' life and mission to proclaim the Good News, and our faithful continuation of that mission today can be built upon the rock of His life and mission. During the 'Parish 2020' consultations, various expressions of these foundations were cited as central mission priorities. As well, from best practice and research we know that while every parish and community is distinct in its history, gifts and resources, these five foundations are essential for building healthy and disciple-making parishes.

Just as there are systems in our physical bodies that are essential to our health and growth, and which work together to this end, so are there foundations that build up the body of the Church and allow us to carry forward Christ's mission with vitality. Each of these foundations work together to support the building of disciples on mission in a Christian community, regardless of its age profile, ethnic background or social circumstance.

- 1 Evangelisation
- 2 Leadership
- 3 Community
- 4 Formation
- 5 Worship



Saint Catherine's Monastery,
Christ the Saviour (Pantokrator)

Evangelisation

To bring others into an encounter and friendship with the person of Jesus Christ

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20).

Jesus gave witness to the purpose for which He was sent; His mission was to proclaim the Good News (Luke 4:43) and He calls us as His disciples to continue that mission today.

Inspired by his or her encounter with the Lord, the missionary disciple seeks to witness and proclaim Christ to all people, including those who do not know Him and those who may no longer practise their faith or participate in the life of the Church. Evangelisation is a natural expression of this discipleship, as Pope Benedict XVI observed: “[d]iscipleship and mission are like the two sides of a single coin: when the disciple is in love with Christ, he cannot stop proclaiming to the world that only in Him do we find salvation (cf. Acts 4:12). In effect, the disciple knows that without Christ there is no light, no hope, no love, no future”.³

The vitality and future of our parishes and communities depend on our desire and ability to be faithful to Jesus’ call, by cooperating with the Holy Spirit to bring others into an encounter and friendship with Jesus Christ, and at the same time allowing ourselves to encounter Him anew. The story of the Church has always been that of a community of faith into which others are grafted and grow as disciples.

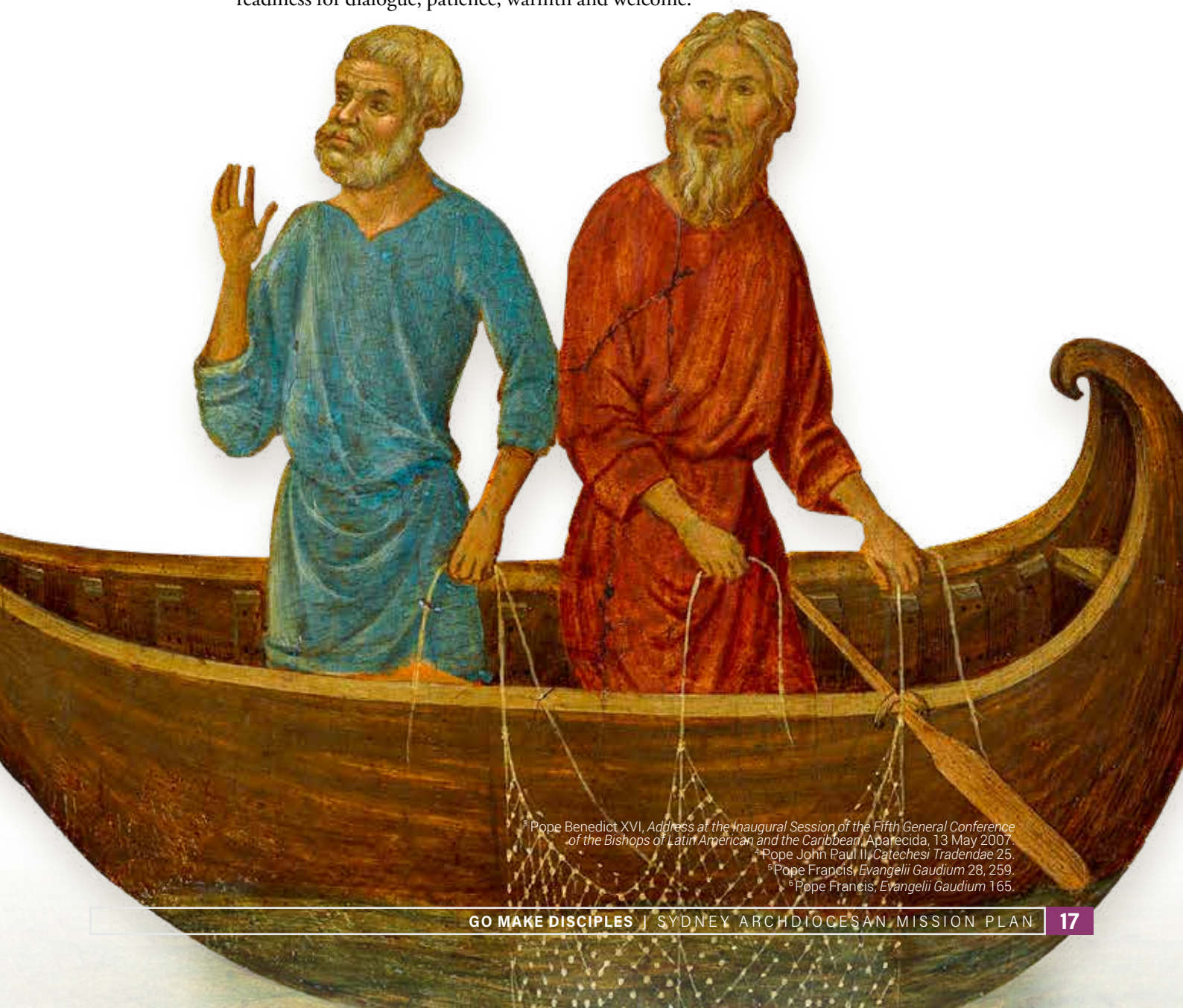
By building relationships of trust with others, awakening their spiritual curiosity as well as openness, we can then proclaim with fervour and joy the Good News “by which a person is one day overwhelmed and brought to the decision to entrust himself to Jesus Christ by faith”.⁴

The Calling of the Apostles Peter and Andrew
Duccio di Buoninsegna, 1308

At the heart of evangelisation is the *kerygma* – the announcement of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the expression of God’s saving love and the heralding of the Kingdom.

The parish “encourages and trains its members to be evangelisers”, equipping the baptised to proclaim the Good News of Jesus not only with words but above all by a life of witness and prayer transfigured by God’s presence.⁵ This includes bringing to life the ‘supreme law’ of charity, fixing our gaze upon the sick, the unemployed, the lonely, the marginalised and the poor, and responding to their needs.

This announcement of God’s love is made present and effective in local communities by an invitational culture that fosters trust and openness to the message on the part of those we are seeking to reach. It demands of the community of faith and all who form it the qualities of approachability, readiness for dialogue, patience, warmth and welcome.⁶



⁵ Pope Benedict XVI, *Address at the Inaugural Session of the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean*, Aparecida, 13 May 2007.

⁶ Pope John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae* 25.

⁵ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 28, 259.

⁶ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 165.

Leadership

The ability to influence, serve and move people toward the work of building God's Kingdom

"The gifts He gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors, and some teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ"
(Ephesians 4:11-12).

Leadership was central to the ministry of Jesus who took the time to call and form a group of leaders. Leadership is a foundation of parish life and an essential part of the cultural change required if parishes are to be renewed and become more missionary. Encountering and following Jesus entails leading in His mission.

Leadership involves the ability to influence, serve and move people toward an embrace of Jesus' Great Commission to make disciples and to the work of building God's Kingdom. Leaders cast a compelling vision of where the community is going so that others can engage in the effort to bring about that preferred future.

The growth and health of parishes and communities also require leaders who work together. In our parishes and communities, the leadership of the priest engages the God-given strengths and talents of the lay faithful, building up the entire Church and raising up new leaders who joyfully live out the mission of Jesus in service to others. Leadership teams in a parish are a critical support to presenting and sustaining a vision and culture of missionary discipleship, for making concrete plans and deciding on priorities that bring it about.

The Predication of Saint Paul,
Joseph-Benoît Suvée, 1779

Community

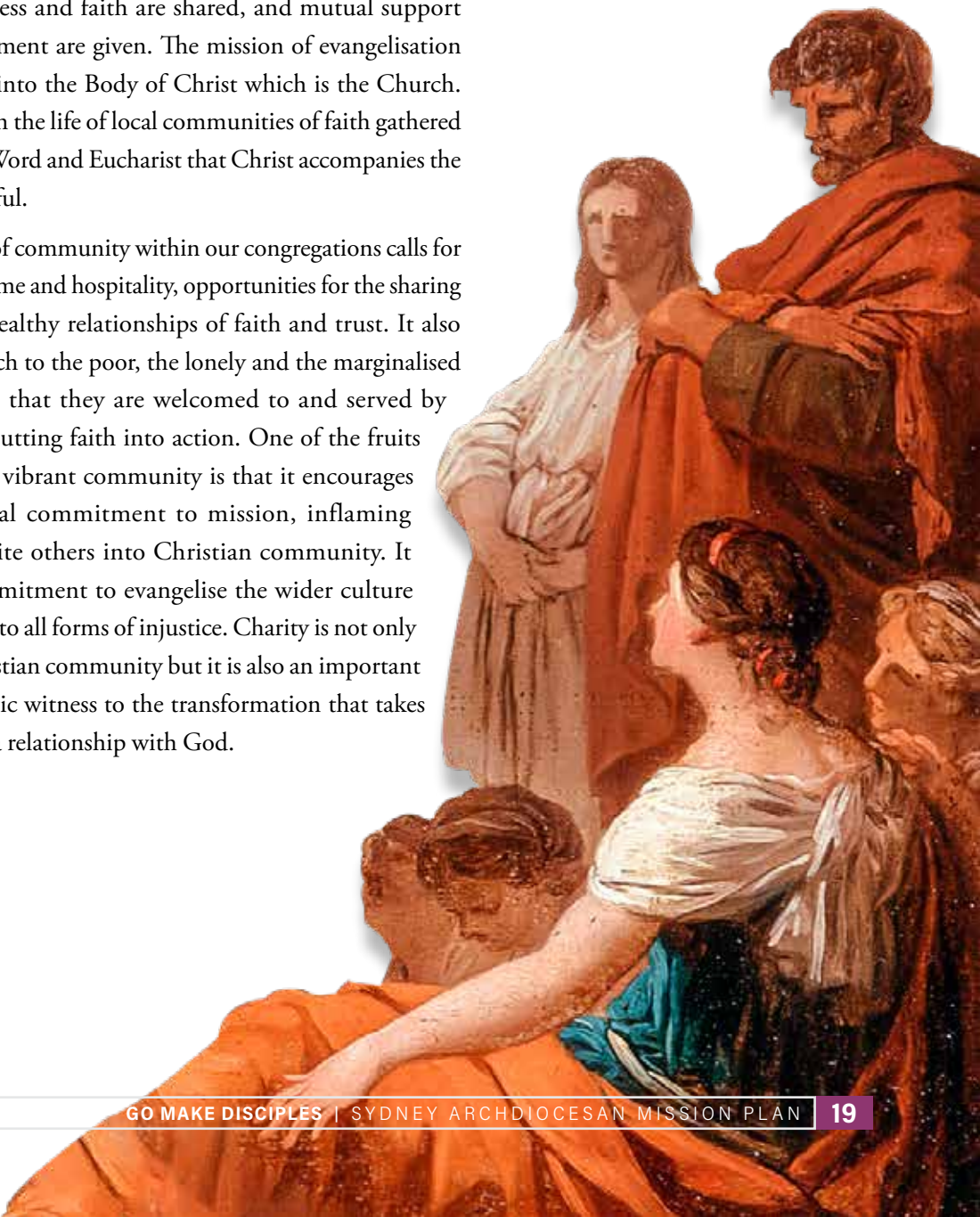
The experience of belonging to meaningful community

“Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul” (Acts 4:32).

As seen in the life and ministry of Jesus and His first disciples, community is the place in which the faith of disciples grows and the place from which they are sent out on mission.

The experience of belonging to a meaningful community is essential to the growth of discipleship as it is in the communion of the Church where we are known and loved, where Christian witness and faith are shared, and mutual support and encouragement are given. The mission of evangelisation invites people into the Body of Christ which is the Church. It is especially in the life of local communities of faith gathered around God’s Word and Eucharist that Christ accompanies the Christian faithful.

Building a life of community within our congregations calls for generous welcome and hospitality, opportunities for the sharing of faith, and healthy relationships of faith and trust. It also calls for outreach to the poor, the lonely and the marginalised with the sense that they are welcomed to and served by communities putting faith into action. One of the fruits of healthy and vibrant community is that it encourages deeper spiritual commitment to mission, inflaming a desire to invite others into Christian community. It inspires a commitment to evangelise the wider culture and to respond to all forms of injustice. Charity is not only central to Christian community but it is also an important part of authentic witness to the transformation that takes place through a relationship with God.





Christ in the House of Mary and Martha,
Cornelis Kruseman, 1853
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Formation

Growth in holiness, faith and understanding

“Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15).

Jesus’ call to us to be missionary disciples includes a call to grow in holiness, faith and understanding. The disciple is called into a gradual and lifelong process of conversion to Jesus Christ.

Once a person has encountered Christ and made the decision to follow Him, the process of conversion to ever greater spiritual, intellectual, emotional and human maturity unfolds. It is reflected in a growing life of prayer, ongoing encounters with Christ in His Word and sacraments, the witness and testimony of fellow disciples, the cultivation of habits which help us to grow in virtue, commitment to receiving catechesis concerning the person and teachings of Christ, and dedicated service to others.

Each one of us is constantly maturing in our knowledge and love of Jesus, “following Him on the way” (Mark 10:52). The evangelising parish provides ongoing opportunities to be formed and grow in the Gospel as lifelong disciples, equipping the baptised to share the saving person and message of Christ with others.

As St Paul proclaims, “[i]f I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a ringing gong or a clanging cymbal” (1 Corinthians 13:1). Hence, the works of mercy, love and charity are an essential element in the formation and expression of Christian discipleship.

Worship

The encounter with God's mercy in the Eucharist and other sacraments, prayer, and devotions

“While they were eating, He took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it He broke it, gave it to them, and said, ‘Take; this is my body’. Then He took the cup, and after giving thanks He gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, ‘This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God’”

(Mark 14:22-25).

In worship, we join in the praise of the Father by the Son in the Holy Spirit. As our primary act of worship, the celebration of the Eucharist brings us into an encounter with Christ and draws us deeper into His mission. From this experience we are sent forth to invite others to encounter Christ, and to the fullness of communion with Him and His Church.

As well, the mission of evangelisation leads to the Eucharist, as the Eucharist is the fullness of communion with Christ and His Church. As Pope Francis affirms, “[t]he Church evangelises and is herself evangelised through the beauty of the liturgy, which is both a celebration of the task of evangelisation and the source of her renewed self-giving”.⁷ For this reason, the liturgy is an essential dimension of our growth and outreach to others, bearing the fruit of active, intentional discipleship when “preceded by evangelisation, faith, and conversion”.⁸

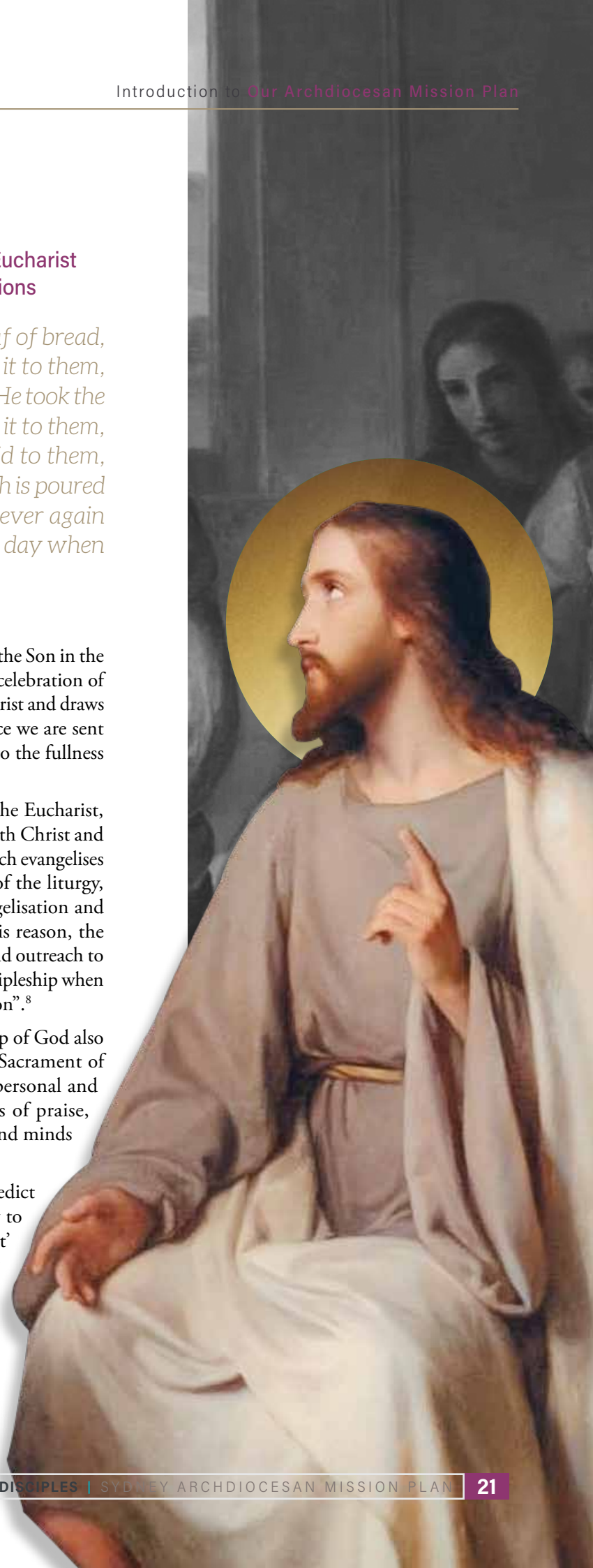
In the richness of our Catholic faith, our worship of God also includes the encounter of God's mercy in the Sacrament of Penance, Eucharistic Adoration, practices of personal and communal prayer, devotions and other forms of praise, thanksgiving and petition in which our hearts and minds are raised to God.

This worship has a social dimension as Pope Benedict XVI reminds us, “if in my life I fail completely to heed others, solely out of a desire to be ‘devout’ and to perform my ‘religious duties’, then my relationship with God will also grow arid. It becomes merely ‘proper’, but loveless”.⁹ Thus, the ministry of charity within a parish is inseparable from its worship.

⁷ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 24.

⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1072.

⁹ Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* 18.





GO MAKE DISCIPLES

Why:

Faithfulness to the mission of Jesus Christ; a deepening encounter with Him and widening outreach for Him.

Who:

The parishes and other Eucharistic communities of the Archdiocese of Sydney.

What:

Spiritual and structural renewal; 'new wine' and 'new wineskins'.

How:

Five foundations for spiritual renewal; missionary foundations for structural renewal.

Each of these five foundations offers an opportunity to build vital communities of missionary discipleship in our Archdiocese, a vitality which will strengthen the faith and engagement of young people as well as adults, parishes and movements, and all those we seek to reach with the Gospel.

Evangelisation, bringing people into relationship with Christ and His Church in faithfulness to His mission, is essential if our communities are to thrive. Missionary leadership is critical to making Jesus and His vision of the Kingdom known, and for making plans to bring it about. Community is the context in which faith grows and disciples are sent out on mission. Formation sustains the journey of faith by enabling us to know Christ better and live our discipleship more fully. In our worship, and most especially the Eucharist, we encounter Christ with us and are sent by Him on mission in the world.

The centrality of each of these foundations to Jesus' mission, and so to our mission today, is examined in greater detail in the chapters ahead. *Go Make Disciples* then offers a range of strategies that can help communities to strengthen each of these foundations, and invites them into a process of review, discernment and action to implement these strategies. It is important to recognise that these foundations are not isolated ends in themselves but are deeply interconnected aspects of the life of each disciple of Jesus and of Eucharistic communities seeking to form missionary disciples of Jesus. As such, strategies concerning one foundation will always depend upon and relate to the other foundations. For example, we may build our foundation of evangelisation in our parish, but if there is no welcoming community to receive newcomers, or formation programs to deepen discipleship, then our efforts in evangelisation will be stunted.



Photo: Giovanni Portelli

Structural Renewal for Mission

Like Christians of every generation, we are called not only to spiritual revitalisation but also to new ways of organising ourselves for God's mission. As Pope Francis has stressed, ecclesial renewal must be shaped by "a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelisation of today's world rather than for her self-preservation".¹⁰

The renewal of all parishes and faith communities in Sydney depends on deeper fidelity to Jesus and strengthening the five foundations of His mission. In some cases, it will also depend upon new structures that ensure the community, resources and personnel needs for spiritual renewal and missionary outreach are developed and sustained.

During the 'Parish 2020' process, the viability of our parishes was studied particularly with regard to the capacity of these communities to carry out Jesus' mission today and into the future. Among the elements included in the assessment of viability were community participation in each parish, its temporal resources and personnel. It became clear that some communities will require further assessment and consideration with regard to viability in the coming decade.

New ways in which parishes can organise themselves for the sake of mission include: the collaboration of parishes, the twinning or clustering of parishes, the amalgamation of parishes, changes to parish boundaries and the establishment of new parishes in areas of growth.

The goal of such new structures or arrangements will be to ensure that our communities are faithful to the mission of Jesus, capable of strengthening the five foundations on which communities of missionary disciples depend, whilst also being better connected with one another, and sustainably resourced. Such communities are well-placed to reach out to those yet to hear the message of the Gospel, and to plan for the life and faith of generations to come.

"During the 'Parish 2020' process, the viability of our parishes was studied particularly with regard to the capacity of these communities to carry out Jesus' mission today and into the future".

¹⁰ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 27.



The
PASTORAL REALITY

The Realities We Face

Every parishioner in the Archdiocese of Sydney wants our parishes to be vital, growing and teeming with life. There is much to celebrate in our local Eucharistic communities – the commitment of our clergy and the thousands who regularly gather around God’s Word and sacraments, various forms of pastoral care and outreach, and the living faith that makes these communities a true spiritual home.



While many of our parishes and communities are flourishing, others face shrinking and ageing congregations. Those who remain are rightly concerned about the long-term viability and life of their parish in the light of these realities.

We live in a time of unprecedented change as Sydney’s population continues to grow while the way people live, work and worship has changed. Patterns of immigration have shifted and families and households have also changed. Change is evident in the impact of technology on the ways in which people connect with one another, the increasing secularisation of culture and the hostility of sections of the media, academy and lawmakers towards religion. Indeed, in the most recent census almost a third of Australians identified as having ‘no religion’.¹ This is a great change from just fifty years ago when less than one percent of people did not adhere to any religious faith.²

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Census* 2016.

² Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Census* 1966.

There has also been a shift within the Catholic community itself. Between 2011 and 2016, five per cent of Catholics ceased attending Mass in the Sydney Archdiocese; almost one thousand people each year. Decline was especially marked among Catholics aged 30-49 years (7.7%), a period in many people's lives when they are having families and when the faith is introduced to the next generation. We are also aware of the absence of many younger adults from our congregations. Meanwhile, more and more of the pastoral responsibilities fall on the shoulders of priests and parish staff as they experience a shrinking and ageing pool of volunteers. Financial resources may also be stretched.

The reasons for declining engagement are varied, as shared by a study commissioned by the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference.³ The influencing factors can be categorised in two groups – issues relating directly to the experience of Church structure and life, and those reflecting personal or family circumstances and beliefs.

Some respondents felt the Church was simply 'out of touch' on matters such as contraception, pre-marital cohabitation, and the role of women. Some found little intellectual stimulation in going to Mass, while others felt unwelcomed in parish community. Some said they struggled to get their children to attend Mass and ceased going to avoid 'the weekly battle'. Many reported being too busy or that attendance at Mass was simply no longer a priority in their lives. In recent years, the revelations of the Royal Commission and the sexual abuse crisis have also impacted on people's trust in and engagement with the Church.

There is much to do if we are to ensure the bountiful Church we inherited remains equally bountiful for those who come after us.

However, before we can plan for our future we must first look at who we are, who we are planning to serve, and what we would hope to do for and with them. The Catholic Church has a rich tradition in Australia, with its earliest roots in our Archdiocese of Sydney. But much has changed in the past 200 years, most significantly in the last fifty years.

We can better understand the realities we face and the opportunities that lie ahead by accessing nation-wide census surveys conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) every five years and re-collated by the National Centre for Pastoral Research (NCPR), the primary research agency of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference. The Archdiocese compiles annual and quinquennial data for reporting to Rome that also helps inform a profile of who we are today.

“Between 2011 and 2016, five per cent of Catholics ceased attending Mass in the Sydney Archdiocese; almost one thousand people each year. Decline was especially marked among Catholics aged 30-49 years”.

³ ACBC, *Catholics Who Have Stopped Attending Mass*, 2007.

Our Archdiocese

The first Catholics to reside in Australia arrived with the First Fleet in 1788. The first Catholic chaplains appointed by the Government arrived in 1820 and the first bishop, John Bede Polding, in 1835. He was bishop of the whole continent and other dioceses were eventually divided off from the Archdiocese of Sydney.

Today the Sydney Archdiocese is bounded to the north by the Diocese of Broken Bay, to the west by the Diocese of Parramatta, and to the south by the Diocese of Wollongong.⁴

The Archdiocese is divided into three regions and nine deaneries and is led by the Archbishop with his Auxiliary Bishops, Vicar General, and Episcopal Vicars. They are responsible for the care and welfare of the clergy and parishes within each region and deanery.

Each deanery consists of a number of parishes, over which presides a Dean who coordinates common pastoral activity within the deanery, supports local parishes and priests in their ministry, and advises the Archbishop on appointments.

In his governance and pastoral planning for the Archdiocese, the Archbishop is also advised by his Curia, the College of Consultors, the Council of Priests, the Council of Deans, the Finance Council, the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation and other bodies.

⁴ When people speak of 'the Church in Sydney' they sometimes mean all four dioceses. In this Mission Plan, we mean the Archdiocese of Sydney.



Archbishop Polding,
Paul Newton

The Facts

Overview

594,145 Catholics⁵

- 891 religious sisters
- 259 religious priests
- 169 religious brothers
- 250 priests active in ministry, of which
 - 115 are incardinated (that is, permanently attached to the Archdiocese for the purpose of serving the Christian faithful)
 - 44 are non-incardinated (that is, serving the faithful at present without being permanently attached to the Archdiocese)
 - 91 are religious priests (example, a member of a religious order such as the Jesuits)

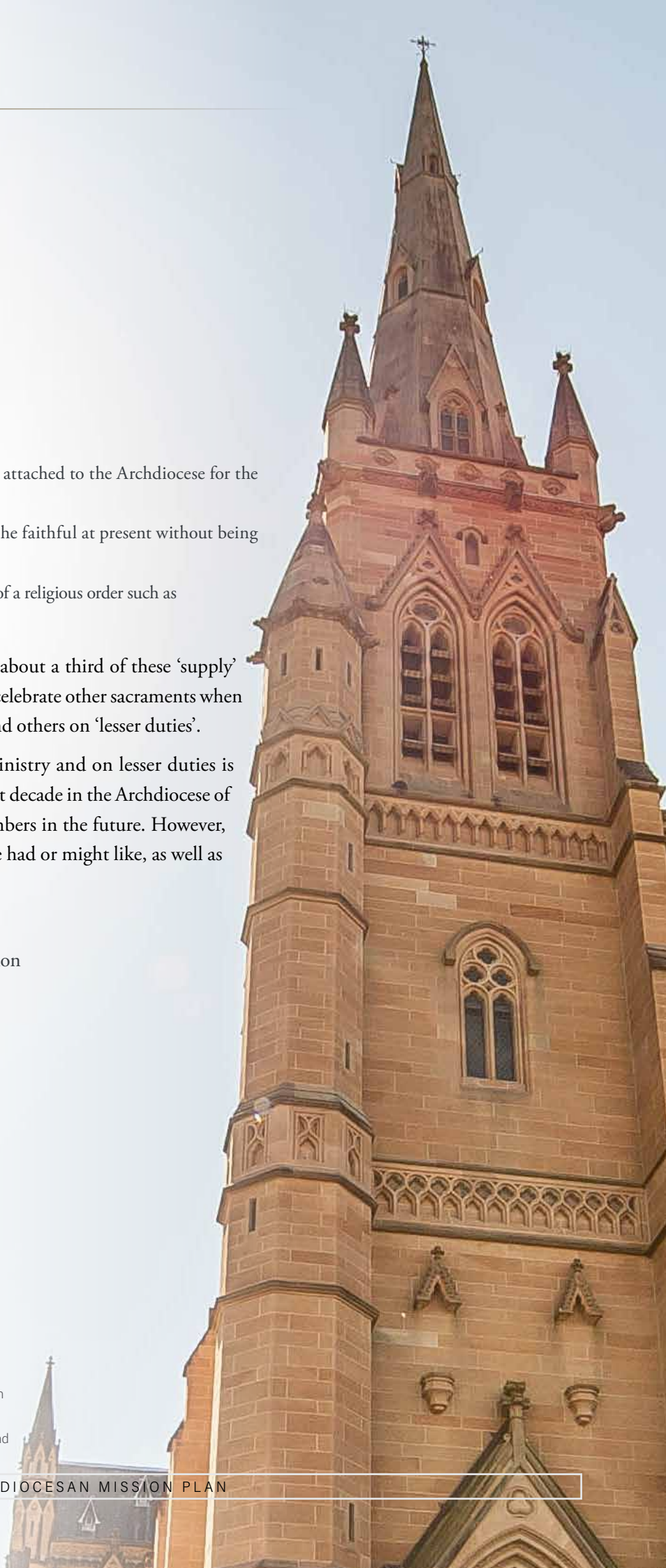
There are also 59 priests who are retired, with about a third of these ‘supply’ priests who will say Mass, hear confession, and celebrate other sacraments when the parish priest or administrator is on leave, and others on ‘lesser duties’.

While the number of clergy both in active ministry and on lesser duties is expected to remain relatively stable over the next decade in the Archdiocese of Sydney, we cannot presume an increase in numbers in the future. However, many parishes have fewer clergy than they once had or might like, as well as fewer ‘clergy hours’ than they might need.

The Archdiocese also includes:

- 14 permanent deacons, and two in formation
- 37 seminarians
- 135 parishes
- 9 deaneries

⁵ The data contained in this section of the Mission Plan has been gathered through the 2016 Social Profile for the Archdiocese provided by the National Centre for Pastoral Research, the 2018 Quinquennial Report prepared for the Ad Limina visit of 2019, and other Archdiocesan sources.



The Facts

Catholics in the Archdiocese of Sydney

- The Latin Rite Catholic population living within the boundaries of the Archdiocese of Sydney is 569,987, which is 23.2% of the general population. This makes Latin Rite (or Western Catholics) the largest religious grouping in Sydney
- There are also 24,149 Eastern Rite Catholics throughout the Archdiocese
- Sydney is the most Catholic region of Australia
- The Church in Sydney still has many strengths, in its 135 parishes, 174 schools, 72 hospitals and aged care homes, its many welfare programs, and above all in its pastors and people
- However, this Catholic population is declining even though the total population of Sydney is growing
- The 2016 figure is down by 3.3% (17,259 people) from 2011
- Current migration trends are diluting the proportion of the population that is Catholic

Losing their Religion

- 25.93% of the population in Sydney said they had no religion in 2016
- That's an increase of 229,920 people or 7.64% since 2011
- Just two generations ago less than 1% (0.81%) said they had no religion (1966 Census)
- In 2016, 9.83% of the population left the religion question blank

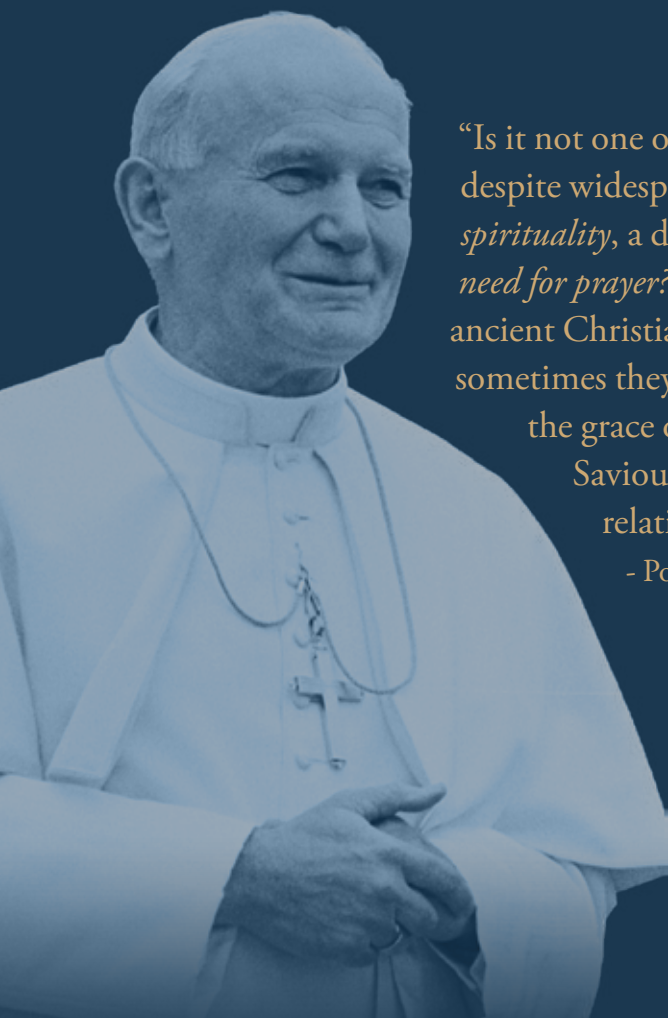
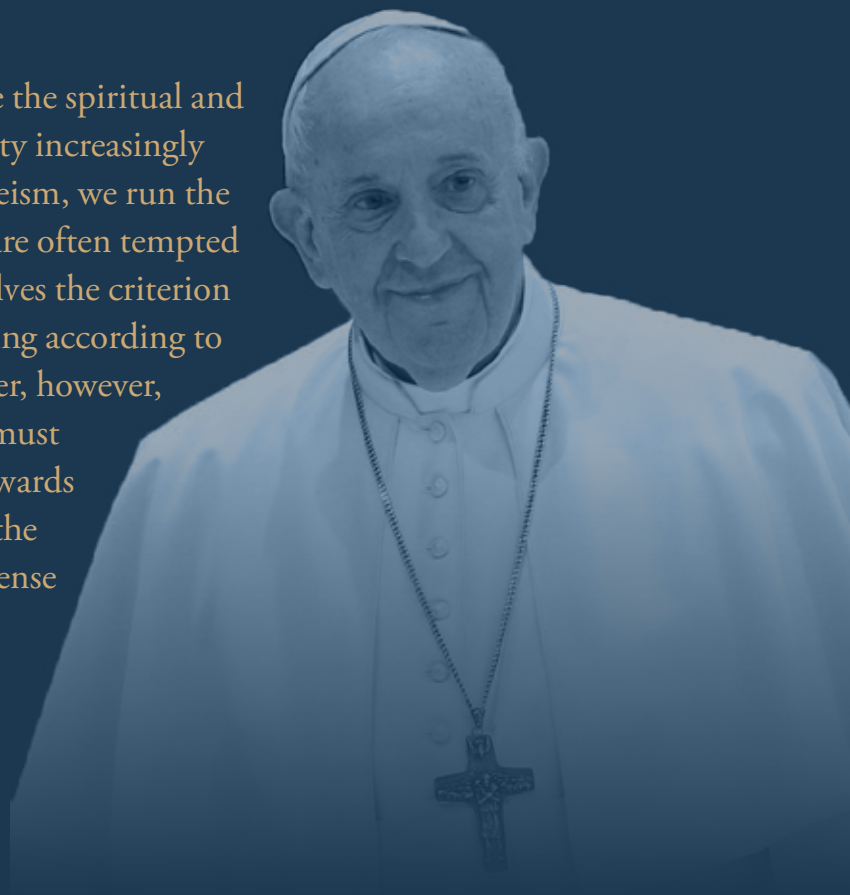
This means an increasing number of people claim no religious affiliation in Sydney. But two-thirds still do claim a religious affiliation, and many continue to ask big questions about life's meaning, even if not connected to any Church.

“Australia remains a religious country, with 60% of our population reporting a religious affiliation. However, the proportion of people reporting no religion, including people with secular and other spiritual beliefs, increased to 30% in 2016 – up from 22% five years ago.”

- Australian Bureau of Statistics, “Australia Today: The Way We Live Now”

“It is more important than ever to emphasise the spiritual and religious dimension of human life. In a society increasingly marked by secularism and threatened by atheism, we run the risk of living as if God did not exist. People are often tempted to take the place of God, to consider themselves the criterion of all things, to control them, to use everything according to their own will. It is so important to remember, however, that our life is a gift from God, and that we must depend on him, confide in him, and turn towards him always. [We] have the blessing but also the responsibility to help preserve the religious sense of the men and women of today, and that of our society, by our witness to the sanctity of God and human life”

- Pope Francis, *Address to Members of the Delegation of the 'Conference of European Rabbis'*, April 2015



“Is it not one of the ‘signs of the times’ that in today’s world, despite widespread secularization, there is a *widespread demand for spirituality*, a demand which expresses itself in large part as a *renewed need for prayer*? Other religions, which are now widely present in ancient Christian lands, offer their own responses to this need, and sometimes they do so in appealing ways. But we who have received the grace of believing in Christ, the revealer of the Father and the Saviour of the world, have a duty to show to what depths the relationship with Christ can lead”

- Pope John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte* 33

The Facts

New Demographics

The ethnic composition of our Catholic community is changing.

Top birth places among Catholics in Sydney include:

- Australia (367,242)
- Italy (29,932)
- Philippines (22,815)
- Vietnam (13,481)
- Lebanon (11,788)

Of all dioceses across Australia, Sydney has the highest proportion of Catholics born in non-English speaking countries (31.4%) and the highest proportion of Catholics who speak a language other than English at home (6.1%).

Communities that have seen significant growth include:*

- Catholics from the Philippines which grew by 3,485
- Catholics from Iraq which grew by 3,076

In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of Catholics from countries including India (especially Kerala), Africa, Brazil and Colombia, among others.

The number of Australian-born and Italian-born Catholics are experiencing decline.

65.2% of Sydney Catholics were born overseas or had at least one parent born overseas.

* These figures refer to growth between 2011 and 2016. In the 2016 Census, there were changes to how Catholics born overseas were asked to nominate their birth country. Countries that had been grouped together were allocated their own designations. For example, Spain and Portugal were originally categorised as 'Other Europe' but in 2016 were given their own place in the Census. Sudden rises in some populations can be attributed to this new categorisation.

Family Matters

For Census purposes, a 'Catholic' family* is defined as a family in which at least one person is Catholic.

- There are 204,898 Catholic families in the Sydney Archdiocese
- 68.3% of these Catholic families in the Archdiocese are living in the context of a registered marriage
- Close to half (46.5%) of all Catholic two-parent families were couples of mixed religion, that is, with one parent who is not Catholic
- 12.2% of all Catholic families in Sydney are one-parent families, slightly higher than the national average (11.6%)
- 16.5% are de facto couples in Sydney, compared to 17.1% across Australia

More than half of all Catholic families (52.7%) have no dependent children, while one-fifth (18.5%) have one dependent child and one-fifth (19.8%) have two dependent children. 1.8% have four or more dependent children.

- 36.5% of our adult Catholic population has never married
- 47.5% are married
- 10.2% are divorced or separated in Sydney, compared to 11.2% Australia-wide
- 5.8% are widowed

* A family is defined by the ABS as two or more persons, one of whom is at least 15 years of age who are related by blood, marriage (registered or de facto), adoption, step or fostering, and who are usually resident in the same household. Family members who live elsewhere are not included in the Census definition.





THE ANGEL AND THE MOTHER
- LOUIS JANMOT, 1854

“The family is experiencing a profound cultural crisis, as are all communities and social bonds. In the case of the family, the weakening of those bonds is particularly serious because the family is the fundamental cell of society, where we learn to live with others despite our differences and to belong to one another; it is also the place where parents pass on the faith to their children. Marriage now tends to be viewed as a form of mere emotional satisfaction that can be constructed in any way or modified at will. But the indispensable contribution of marriage to society transcends the feelings and momentary needs of the couple. As the French bishops have taught, it is not born of ‘loving sentiment, ephemeral by definition, but from the depth of the obligation assumed by the spouses who accept to enter a total communion of life’”.

P O P E F R A N C I S

Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* 66

Critical Mass

The Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference (ACBC) conducted its own surveys the same years as the Census in 2011 and 2016. These looked specifically at Mass attendance.

- 15.7% of Catholic adults (aged 15 and over) within the Sydney Archdiocese attended weekly Mass. This is significantly higher than the national average among Catholics (11.8%) and most other Christian communities, though some are stable or growing.
- However, 4,943 fewer people attend Mass in 2016 compared to 2011, representing a 5% decrease. Weekly Mass attendance declined by 5.9% across Australia in the same period.

Catholics aged 65+ years now represent 16.4% of our people, compared to 12.5% twenty years ago, while the average age of Mass attenders in Sydney (aged 15+) rose from 51 to 56 years from 2001 to 2016. The median age of our congregations varies from parish to parish throughout the Archdiocese, with some parishes characterised by a larger number of young people and young families, while others have a larger presence of retirees and seniors. These variations reflect complex issues including housing affordability, infrastructure and other demographic influences. The Australian population as a whole is also ageing.

- Over 1 in 4 adult Mass attenders is over 70 in our Archdiocese
- Over 65% of adult Mass attenders is over 50 in our Archdiocese
- Fewer teenagers, young adults and middle-aged people attend weekly Mass than in the past
- Between 2011-2016, there was a 7.7% decline in attendance among those aged 30-49 years
- In some parishes the weekly attendance rate is as high as 57.6%; in others as low as 2.3%.⁶ In some ethnic communities and chaplaincies practising rates are still very high.

Down Gender Lines


Considerably more women than men attend Mass.

- 62.8% of attendees in the Archdiocese of Sydney are women, while 37.2% are men

Much has been written in academic research about the gender gap in church attendance. The age profile of Mass attenders is one influence that can skew toward more females than males attending, alongside other social, cultural and historical factors. For most of history and in most cultures, women have significantly outnumbered men in church attendance.

⁶It is worth noting that while the total Catholic population of a parish is based on those living within the parish, the Mass count is calculated on anyone who was at Mass on the day of the count whether they lived in the parish or not, including visitors. It is common for cathedrals and shrines to have higher than average attendance rates, as these Masses and locations can attract people from outside of the parish geography.





“The Sunday celebration of the Eucharist is at the heart of the Church’s life (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2177). We Christians go to Sunday Mass to encounter the Risen Lord, or better still to allow ourselves to be encountered by him, to hear his Word, to nourish ourselves at his table, and thus to become the Church, that is, his mystical living Body in the world... Some secularised societies have lost the Christian sense of Sunday illuminated by the Eucharist. This is a shame! In these contexts it is necessary to revive this awareness, to recover the meaning of the celebration, the meaning of the joy, of the parish community, of solidarity, of the rest which restores body and soul... Without Christ we are condemned to be dominated by everyday weariness, with its worries, and by fear of the future. The Sunday encounter with the Lord gives us the strength to experience the present with confidence and courage, and to go forth with hope. For this reason we Christians go to encounter the Lord on Sunday, in the Eucharistic celebration”.

P O P E F R A N C I S

General Audience, 13 December 2017

The Sydney Archdiocese: In Our Own Words

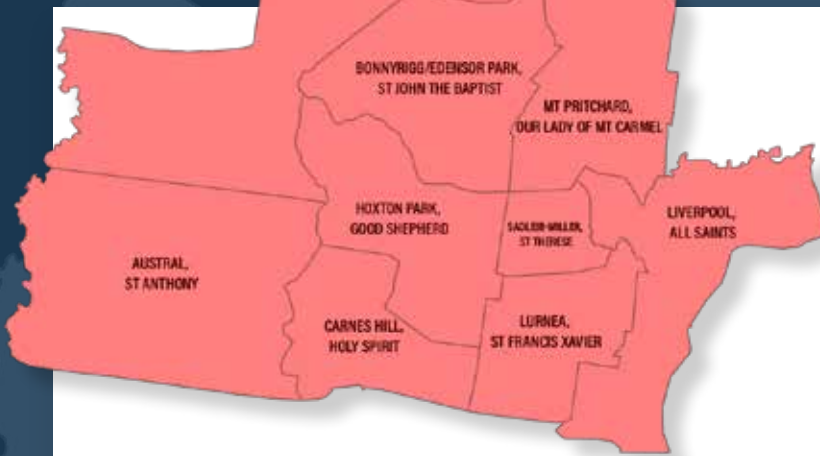
In addition to Census and National Centre for Pastoral Research data, there have been a number of consultations and surveys conducted over these past years that have provided important insights into our Archdiocese as we look to the future.

Among these are written submissions collected in the first months of 2017 under the 'Parish 2020' project and in other consultations that give us a qualitative and pastoral insight into how Sydney Catholics feel about their parish communities. These are presented on the following pages, arranged by deanery.

While there was considerable variation in parish participation in these surveys, which was voluntary, there were also consistent themes that arose in several areas. Communities in all of our deaneries confirmed the reality of ageing congregations, the broader population growth taking place in Sydney, often on account of immigration, and the priorities of evangelisation, community, and worship for the renewal of their parishes. Indeed, the feedback and responses shared over these past years have shaped the key priorities and strategies outlined in *Go Make Disciples*.

Individuals and groups have also provided feedback on parish life and mission within the Archdiocese, and across Australia more generally, through dialogue and consultation conducted toward the Plenary Council now to be held in 2021-2022. A summary of the insights of this process is also provided in this Mission Plan, shedding further light on the pastoral reality of our life and faith as Sydney Catholics.

Western Deanery



- Austral
St Anthony
- Bonnyrigg/Edensor Park,
St John the Baptist
- Bossley Park,
Mary Immaculate
- Carnes Hill,
Holy Spirit
- Horsley Park,
Our Lady of Victories
- Hoxton Park,
Good Shepherd
- Liverpool, *All Saints*
- Lurnea,
St Francis Xavier
- Mt Pritchard,
Our Lady of Mt Carmel
- Saddleir-Miller,
St Therese

Over 300 individual and group responses were received from parishes within this deanery

Survey participation varied across parishes:

- 40% of responses were from Mt Pritchard parish
- 26% of responses were from Liverpool parish
- 10% were from Carnes Hill parish
- Remaining 24% were from Horsley Park, Saddleir-Miller, Austral, Hoxton Park, Bonnyrigg/Edensor Park, Lurnea and Bossley Park parishes

278 agree they have a strong sense of belonging to their parish while 16 disagree

Biggest issues impacting on this deanery were identified as:

- Large increase in overall population
- Ageing population

Respondents recorded strong satisfaction with their parish in terms of involvement and fellowship

Most don't know whether:

- Parishes operate with a balanced budget and have sufficient operating funds for ministries, programs, facilities and paid staff
- Parishes are overly dependent on other sources of income (as distinct from income from collections) to manage their day-to-day running costs

Top ethnic communities identified in this deanery include:

- Italian
- Vietnamese
- Maltese
- Filipino
- Polish

Top 2 mission priorities identified were:

- Evangelisation
- Improving liturgical celebrations

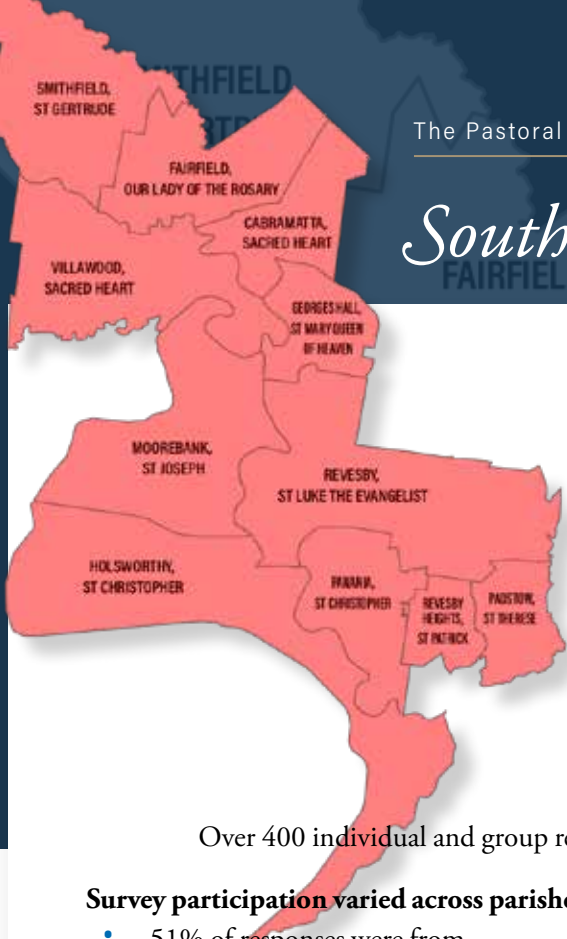
Top 2 areas of collaboration identified were:

- Shared events, retreats, pilgrimages
- Sharing youth ministry

Other comments:

- Growing region of the Archdiocese
- By 2031, Western Sydney will be home to the greatest share of population under 15 years and the number of residents aged over 65 years is projected to double

South West Deanery



- Cabramatta, Sacred Heart
- Fairfield, Our Lady of the Rosary
- Georges Hall, St Mary Queen of Heaven
- Holsworthy, St Christopher
- Moorebank, St Joseph
- Padstow, St Therese
- Panania, St Christopher
- Revesby, St Luke the Evangelist
- Revesby Heights, St Patrick
- Smithfield, St Gertrude
- Villawood, Sacred Heart

Over 400 individual and group responses were received from parishes within this deanery

Survey participation varied across parishes:

- 51% of responses were from Panania parish
- 14% were from Revesby Heights parish
- 13% were from Padstow parish
- Remaining 22% were from Cabramatta, Revesby, Smithfield, Fairfield, Moorebank, Holsworthy, Georges Hall and Villawood parishes

341 agree they have a strong sense of belonging to their parish while 39 disagree

Biggest issues impacting on this deanery were identified as:

- Ageing population
- Availability and cost of housing

Respondents recorded strong satisfaction with their parish in terms of involvement and fellowship

Most don't know whether:

- Parishes operate with a balanced budget and have sufficient operating funds for ministries, programs, facilities and paid staff
- Parishes are overly dependent on other sources of income (as distinct from income from collections) to manage their day-to-day running costs

Top ethnic communities identified in this deanery include:

- Samoan
- Vietnamese
- Lebanese
- Italian
- Filipino

Top 2 mission priorities identified were:

- Engagement with youth
- Improving liturgical celebrations

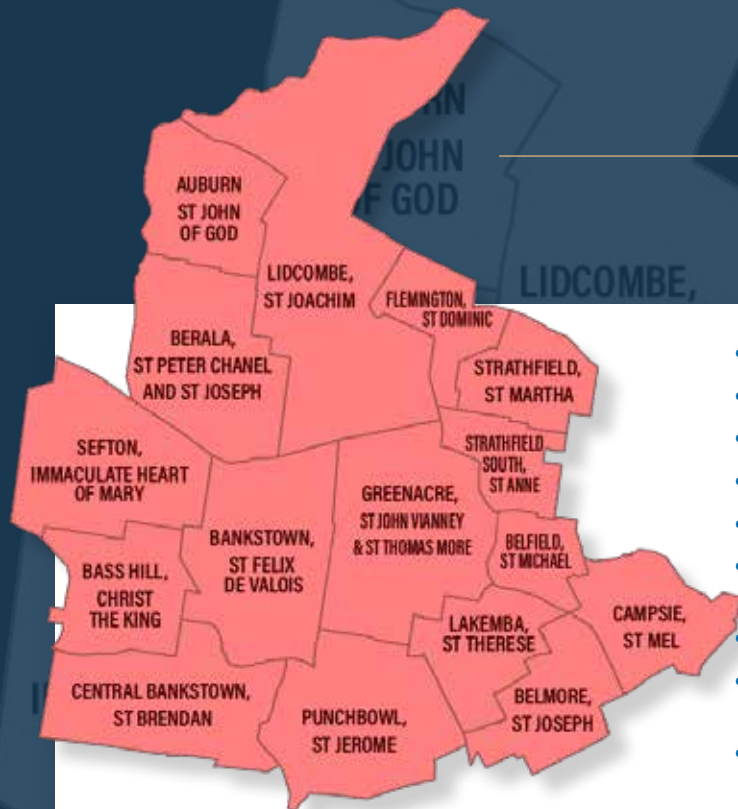
Top 2 areas of collaboration identified were:

- Sharing youth ministry
- Shared events, retreats, pilgrimages

Other comments:

- Keen interest in meeting pastoral needs of two age groups: 12-18 years and 19-30 years
- This region is forecast to experience an increase in households with children

Central Deanery



- Auburn, *St John of God*
- Bankstown, *St Felix de Valois*
- Bass Hill, *Christ the King*
- Belfield, *St Michael*
- Belmore, *St Joseph*
- Berala, *St Peter Chanel and St Joseph*
- Campsie, *St Mel*
- Central Bankstown, *St Brendan*
- Flemington, *St Dominic*
- Greenacre, *St John Vianney & St Thomas More*
- Lakemba, *St Therese*
- Lidcombe, *St Joachim*
- Punchbowl, *St Jerome*
- Sefton, *Immaculate Heart of Mary*
- Strathfield, *St Martha*
- Strathfield South, *St Anne*

Over 540 individual and group responses were received from parishes within this deanery

Survey participation varied across parishes:

- 34% of responses were from Bass Hill parish
- 18% were from Berala parish
- 14% were from Campsie parish
- Remaining 34% were from Flemington, Belmore, Auburn, Lakemba, Sefton, Strathfield, Central Bankstown, Bankstown, Strathfield South, Punchbowl, Greenacre, Lidcombe and Belfield parishes

482 agree they have a strong sense of belonging to their parish while 46 disagree

Biggest issues impacting on this deanery were identified as:

- Ageing population
- Increase in number of immigrants

Respondents recorded strong satisfaction with their parish in terms of involvement and fellowship

Most don't know whether:

- Parishes operate with a balanced budget and have sufficient operating funds for ministries, programs, facilities and paid staff
- Parishes are overly dependent on other sources of income (as distinct from income from collections) to manage their day-to-day running costs

Top ethnic communities identified in this deanery include:

- Vietnamese
- Lebanese
- Filipino
- Chinese

Top 2 mission priorities identified were:

- Improving liturgical celebrations
- Evangelisation

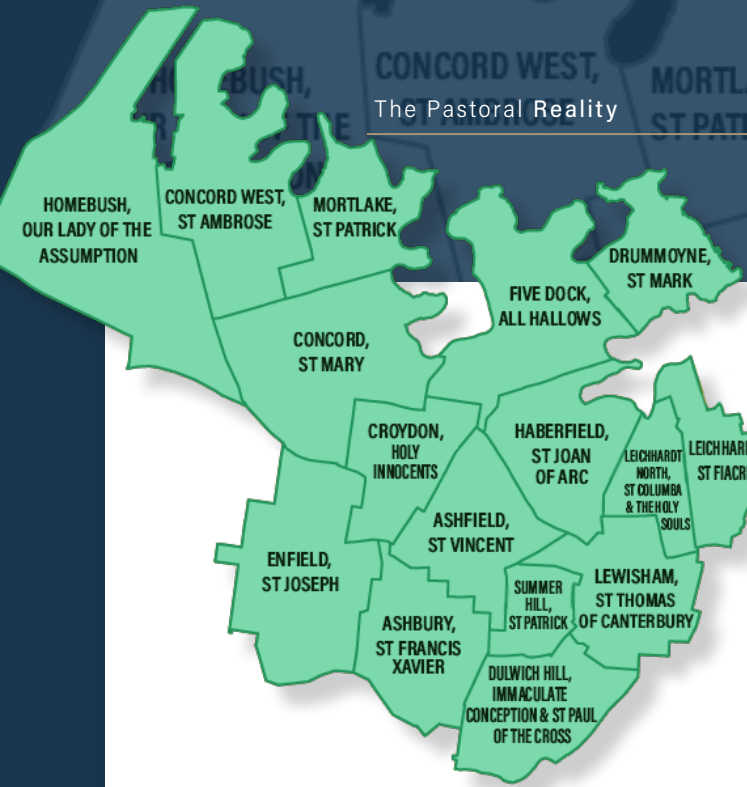
Top 2 areas of collaboration identified were:

- Shared events, retreats, pilgrimages
- Sharing opportunities to serve the vulnerable

Other comments:

- Inner West is popular with couples and couples with children
- Identified need to provide for the pastoral needs of two age groups: 18-30 years and 31-55 years
- Opportunities for collaboration with the Maronite church at Croydon, Australian Catholic University and the Catholic Institute of Sydney in Strathfield
- Interest in evangelisation but not sure 'how' it is done

Concord Deanery



- Ashbury, *St Francis Xavier*
- Ashfield, *St Vincent*
- Concord, *St Mary*
- Concord West, *St Ambrose*
- Croydon, *Holy Innocents*
- Drummoyne, *St Mark*
- Dulwich Hill, *Immaculate Conception & St Paul of the Cross*
- Enfield, *St Joseph*
- Five Dock, *All Hallows*
- Haberfield, *St Joan of Arc*
- Homebush, *Our Lady of the Assumption*
- Leichhardt, *St Fiacre*
- Leichhardt North, *St Columba & The Holy Souls*
- Lewisham, *St Thomas of Canterbury*
- Lewisham *Maternal Heart of Mary (Personal parish)*
- Mortlake, *St Patrick*
- Summer Hill, *St Patrick*

Over 500 individual and group responses were received from parishes within this deanery

Survey participation varied across parishes:

- 24% of responses were from Leichhardt North parish
- 23% were from Concord parish
- 8% were from Ashbury parish
- 8% were from Dulwich Hill parish
- 7% were from Mortlake parish
- Remaining 30% were from Ashfield, Croydon, Haberfield, Lewisham, Leichhardt, Drummoyne, Enfield, Concord West, Five Dock, and Homebush parishes

456 agree they have a strong sense of belonging to their parish while 25 disagree

Biggest issues impacting on this deanery were identified as:

- Ageing population
- Availability and cost of housing

Respondents recorded strong satisfaction with their parish in terms of involvement and fellowship

Most don't know whether:

- Parishes operate with a balanced budget and have sufficient operating funds for ministries, programs, facilities and paid staff
- Parishes are overly dependent on other sources of income (as distinct from income from collections) to manage their day-to-day running costs

Top ethnic communities identified in this deanery include:

- Italian
- Filipino
- Lebanese

Top 2 mission priorities identified were:

- Engagement with youth and young adults
- Social Justice

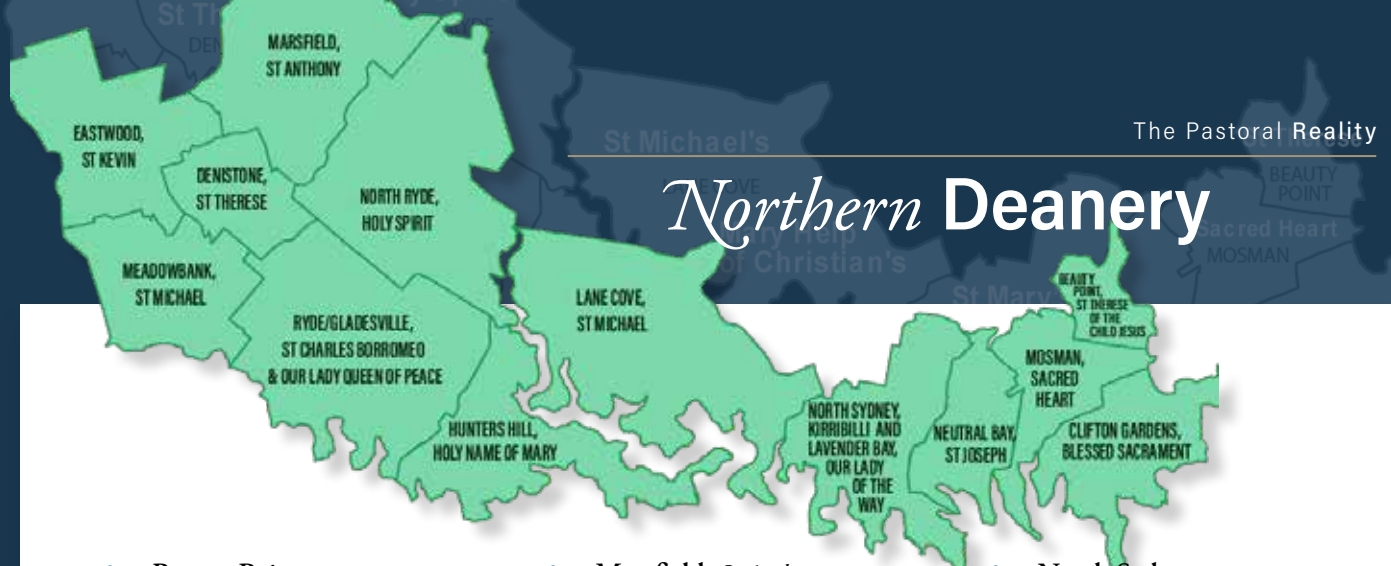
Top 2 areas of collaboration identified were:

- Sharing opportunities to serve the vulnerable
- Shared events, retreats, pilgrimages

Other comments:

- Experiencing a growing population and non-Christian population
- Responses suggest more opportunities to develop the laity and involve them in leadership
- Opportunities for collaboration with Maronite community at Punchbowl and Melkite Greek-Catholic Eparchy at Greenacre
- Strong interest in promoting youth ministry across the deanery and using social media to reach out to people

Northern Deanery



- Beauty Point, *St Therese of the Child Jesus*
- Clifton Gardens, *Blessed Sacrament*
- Denistone, *St Therese*
- Eastwood, *St Kevin*
- Hunters Hill, *Holy Name of Mary*
- Lane Cove, *St Michael*
- Marsfield, *St Anthony*
- Meadowbank, *St Michael*
- Mosman, *Sacred Heart*
- Neutral Bay, *St Joseph*
- North Ryde, *Holy Spirit*
- North Sydney, Kirribilli and Lavender Bay, *Our Lady of the Way*
- Ryde/Gladesville, *St Charles Borromeo & Our Lady Queen of Peace*

Over 470 individual and group responses were received from parishes within this deanery

Survey participation varied across parishes:

- 24% of responses were from Denistone parish
- 21% were from Lane Cove parish
- 17% were from Ryde-Gladesville parish
- 11% were from Mosman parish
- Remaining 27% were from Meadowbank, Clifton Gardens, Beauty Point, North Sydney (including Lavender Bay), Neutral Bay, Eastwood, Marsfield, Hunters Hill and North Ryde parishes

376 agree they have a strong sense of belonging to their parish while 45 disagree

Biggest issues impacting on this deanery were identified as:

- Ageing population
- Availability and cost of housing

Respondents recorded strong satisfaction with their parish in terms of involvement and fellowship

Most don't know whether:

- Parishes operate with a balanced budget and have sufficient operating funds for ministries, programs, facilities and paid staff
- Parishes are overly dependent on other sources of income (as distinct from income from collections) to manage their day-to-day running costs

Top ethnic communities identified in this deanery include:

- Italian
- Chinese
- Indian
- Filipino

Top 2 mission priorities identified were:

- Engaging with youth and young adults
- Improving liturgical celebrations

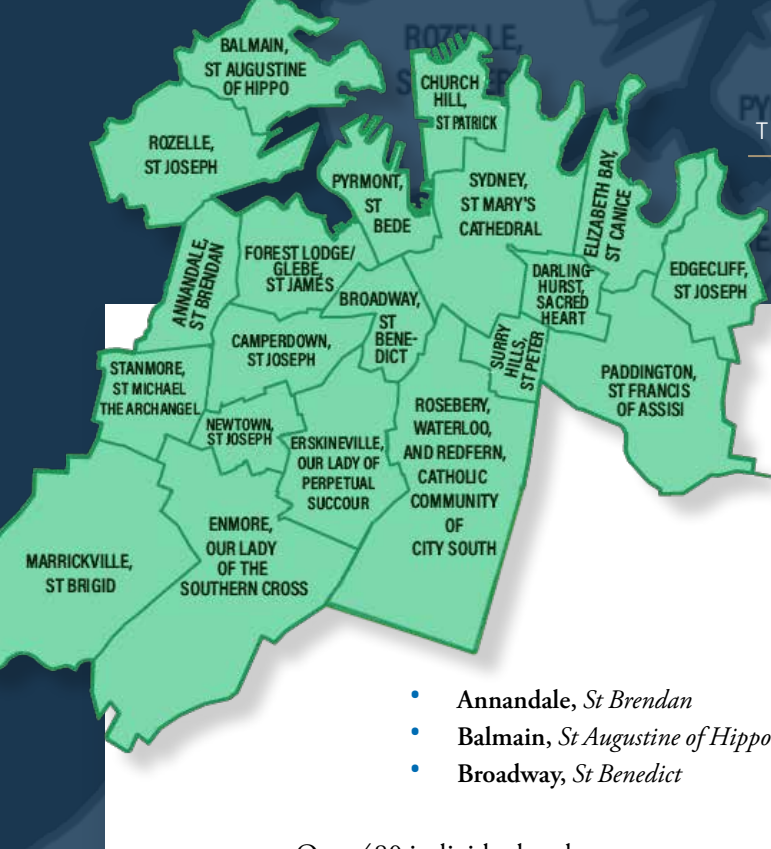
Top 2 areas of collaboration identified were:

- Shared events, retreats, pilgrimages
- Shared youth and young adult ministry

Other comments:

- Diverse community attracting ages 25-49 for people seeking proximity to CBD, including single professionals, families and new migrants
- Not sure what 'evangelisation' means
- Interest in better use of social media and technology
- Half of respondents had children living at home, with broad interest in meeting the pastoral needs of two age groups: 12-18 years and 19-30 years

City Deanery



- Annandale, *St Brendan*
- Balmain, *St Augustine of Hippo*
- Broadway, *St Benedict*

- Camperdown, *St Joseph*
- Church Hill, *St Patrick*
- Darlinghurst, *Sacred Heart*
- Edgecliff, *St Joseph*
- Elizabeth Bay, *St Canice*
- Enmore, *Our Lady of the Southern Cross*
- Erskineville, *Our Lady of Perpetual Succour*
- Forest Lodge/Glebe, *St James*
- Haymarket, *St Peter Julian (Shrine)*
- Marrickville, *St Brigid*
- Newtown, *St Joseph*
- Norfolk Island, *St Philip Howard*
- Paddington, *St Francis of Assisi*
- Pyrmont, *St Bede*
- Rosebery, Waterloo, and Redfern, *Catholic Community of City South*
- Rozelle, *St Joseph*
- Stanmore, *St Michael the Archangel*
- Surry Hills, *St Peter*
- Sydney, *St Mary's Cathedral*

Over 480 individual and group responses were received from parishes within this deanery

Survey participation varied across parishes:

- 29% of responses were from Marrickville parish
- 10% were from Surry Hills parish
- 10% were from Stanmore parish
- 9% were from Erskineville parish
- 8% were from Elizabeth Bay parish
- Remaining 34% were from Church Hill, Balmain, Newtown, Redfern, Edgecliff, Paddington, Forest Lodge/Glebe, Broadway, Waterloo, Rozelle, Pyrmont, Enmore, Camperdown and Darlinghurst parishes

395 agree they have a strong sense of belonging to their parish while 45 disagree

Biggest issues impacting on this deanery were identified as

- Availability and cost of housing
- Ageing population

Respondents recorded strong satisfaction with their parish in terms of involvement and fellowship

Most don't know whether:

- Parishes operate with a balanced budget and have sufficient operating funds for ministries, programs, facilities and paid staff
- Parishes are overly dependent on other sources of income (as distinct from income from collections) to manage their day-to-day running costs

Top ethnic communities identified in this deanery include:

- Vietnamese
- Filipino
- Spanish
- Chinese

Top 2 mission priorities identified were:

- Social justice ministry
- Improving liturgical celebrations

Top 2 areas of collaboration identified were:

- Shared opportunities to meet the needs of the most vulnerable
- Shared events, retreats, pilgrimages

Other comments:

- Parish life in inner city is dynamic and unique
- Interest in training laity on 'the new evangelisation', sharing faith with others
- New apartments and more transient population – issue of how to make parishes known to new residents
- Interest in social justice activities
- Interest in social media
- Interest in ensuring liturgy can involve, inspire and feed those in the assembly. Music that uplifts and enriches the celebration

St George Deanery



- Beverly Hills, *Regina Coeli*
- Bexley, *St Gabriel*
- Blakehurst, *Mater Dei*
- Brighton-le-Sands, *St Thomas More*
- Carlton, *St Bernadette*
- Earwood, *Lourdes*
- Hurstville, *St Michael*
- Hurstville South, *St Raphael*
- Kingsgrove, *Our Lady of Fatima*
- Kogarah, *St Patrick*
- Oatley, *St Joseph*
- Peakhurst, *Our Lady of Fatima*
- Penshurst, *St Declan*
- Riverwood, *St Joseph*
- Rockdale City, *St Mary MacKillop*
- San Souci, *St Finbar*

Over 1,290 individual and group responses were received from parishes within this deanery

Survey participation varied across parishes:

- 25% of responses were from Brighton-le-Sands parish
- 11% were from Earwood parish
- 9% were from Beverly Hills parish
- 9% were from Riverwood parish
- 9% were from Carlton parish
- 9% were from Kingsgrove parish
- Remaining 28% were from Hurstville, Rockdale City, Blakehurst, Hurstville South, Kogarah, Bexley, Oatley, Sans Souci, Peakhurst and Penshurst parishes

1,081 agree they have a strong sense of belonging to their parish while 108 disagree

Biggest issues impacting on this deanery were identified as:

- Ageing population
- Increase in number of migrants

Respondents recorded strong satisfaction with their parish in terms of involvement and fellowship

Most don't know whether:

- Parishes operate with a balanced budget and have sufficient operating funds for ministries, programs, facilities and paid staff
- Parishes are overly dependent on other sources of income (as distinct from income from collections) to manage their day-to-day running costs

Top ethnic communities identified in this deanery include:

- Italian
- Chinese
- Filipino
- Lebanese

Top 2 mission priorities identified were:

- Improving liturgical celebrations
- Developing a deeper understanding of evangelisation

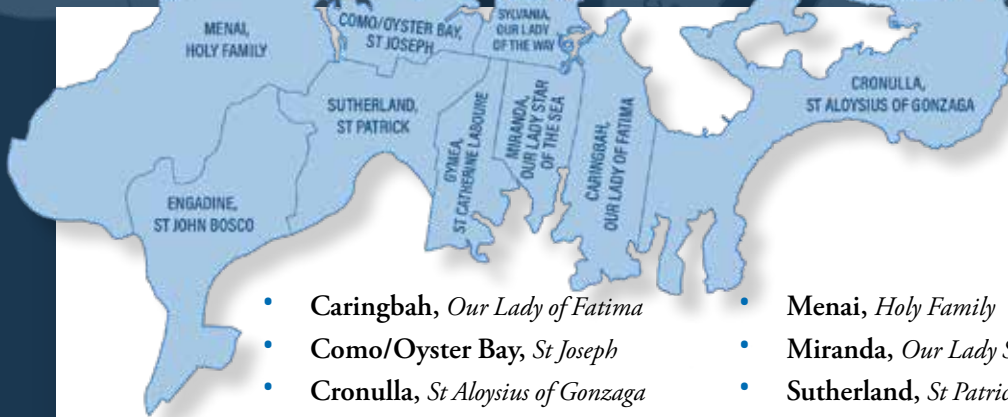
Top 2 areas of collaboration identified were:

- Leadership teams for fellowship / exchange of ideas
- Faith / spiritual formation between parishes

Other comments:

- Diverse community in terms of culture, language and religions. Challenge to foster unity and fellowship and meet the needs of culturally diverse community
- Openness to collaborating within deanery and across local communities
- Opportunity for parishes to give better feedback on financial position and encourage and thank those who contribute
- Interest in using facilities for new purposes, for example, aged care, care for the sick, etc.

Sutherland Deanery



- **Caringbah, Our Lady of Fatima**
- **Como/Oyster Bay, St Joseph**
- **Cronulla, St Aloysius of Gonzaga**
- **Engadine, St John Bosco**
- **Gymea, St Catherine Laboure**
- **Menai, Holy Family**
- **Miranda, Our Lady Star of the Sea**
- **Sutherland, St Patrick**
- **Sylvania, Our Lady of the Way**

Over 930 individual responses and group responses were received from parishes within this deanery

Survey participation varied across parishes:

- 26% of responses were from Menai parish
- 25% were from Sutherland parish
- 11% were from Caringbah parish
- 10% were from Miranda parish
- Remaining 28% were from Cronulla, Engadine, Gymea and Sylvania parishes

734 agree they have a strong sense of belonging to their parish while 96 disagree

Biggest issues impacting on this deanery were identified as

- Ageing population
- Availability and cost of housing

Respondents recorded strong satisfaction with their parish in terms of involvement and fellowship

Most don't know whether:

- Parishes operate with a balanced budget and have sufficient operating funds for ministries, programs, facilities and paid staff
- Parishes are overly dependent on other sources of income (as distinct from income from collections) to manage their day-to-day running costs

Top ethnic communities identified in this deanery include:

- Italian
- Indian
- Filipino

Top 2 mission priorities identified were:

- Improving liturgical celebrations
- Reviewing engagement with youth

Top 2 areas of collaboration identified were:

- Shared youth and young adult ministry
- Faith / spiritual formation between parishes

Other comments:

- Growing population including new families
- Interest in knowing how to evangelise
- Interest in collaborating with local community and using social media
- Opportunity for parishes to give better feedback on financial position and encourage and thank those who contribute
- Interest in using facilities for new purposes

Other Consultations

Through dialogue conducted with clergy and deaneries in 2018 as well as parish and group consultations held toward Plenary Council 2020 – involving over 1,000 individual submissions and 447 group submissions from our Archdiocese – we gain further insight into the lived experience of our people and their communities.⁷

Further sources of information and insight about our parishes, their aspirations and needs include the feedback provided by clergy and laity through Episcopal Visitations, through advisory bodies such as the Council of Priests and the Council of Deans, as well as the work of our agencies including in Catholic education and social support.

Below are some of the challenges and possibilities shared through these avenues of consultation that have shaped this plan for mission as we seek to proclaim and live out the Gospel anew:

- The importance of prayer, the sacraments, Scripture and enlivening liturgy and music
- The need for greater evangelisation within the Catholic community and beyond
- The importance of leadership and governance, and the desire for increased shared responsibility and for planning at a parish level
- The need to build strong connections between parishes and schools, and the need to encourage the engagement of school families in parish life
- The challenge of encouraging succession in pastoral ministry, of recruiting new leaders into parish ministry, and reluctance to change among many of our people
- The workload and complexity of pastoral ministry for the priest and lay collaborators
- The financial situation of some parishes and increasing costs
- The challenge of proclaiming the unchanging Gospel and the Church's teaching in a changing social context
- The opportunity presented by social media for outreach among Catholics and to the broader community



⁷ Plenary Council 2020 Working Group Report, April 2019

National Response to the Australian Catholic Bishops' Youth Survey

In 2017, a national survey of over 15,000 young people from every diocese and eparchy in Australia, as well as a small number from the Personal Ordinariates and Prelatures, was conducted by the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference. The survey sought to study the interactions between young people, the Church and society, to examine young people's religious practices and Church involvement, and to explore how the Church might engage better with young people. This survey found:

- The most common involvement of those surveyed in the life of the Church was through Mass or liturgies, Catholic school groups, prayer experiences and social events
- The groups of people who influenced young people's key decisions and directions in their life were family, friends and their school or teachers. 44% of young people said that the parish or church community and Church or religious leaders had had at least some influence on them
- The main factors that largely contributed to young people's positive experiences of being listened to were talking to people who valued their story, the positive attitude of the clergy and the welcoming and supportive attitude of parishioners
- Young people are concerned about mental health issues, including depression; about personal problems, including sexual, ethnic and spiritual identity; about their educational employment and housing future; about formation and sustaining good relationships; about the direction of our politics, culture and Church on issues of life and love, justice and mercy; about avoiding loneliness and finding a community of real support; and about being a person of faith in an increasingly secular environment
- Participants believed that the main ways in which the Church could respond to young people today was by providing them help in dealing with personal problems and relationship issues, more faith formation opportunities and help in leading a Christian life, more resources for youth ministry and by being more open and inclusive to people of all walks of life
- The Church could use social media to better connect with young people, by having a greater presence on such platforms with engaging content, more advertising of events, and through the development of great websites and apps with helpful resources



The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

There can be no discussion of parish renewal without addressing the harrowing history of child sexual abuse within the Church, in parishes and schools as well as other Catholic institutions and agencies.

Evidence heard by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has exposed the sinful and criminal activity of some clergy, religious and lay church-workers, as well as the failure to respond by some Church leaders. This shameful history must be acknowledged if justice is to be done and healing is to take place.

We are determined that the learnings from the Royal Commission process will become an integral part of our Church life going forward. The Church in Australia asks again for forgiveness for crimes too often committed or denied – forgiveness from God, the community and, above all, survivors. And we ask them to help us move forward, to be a better Church.

Nationally, the Church has established bodies with the expertise and independence to develop credible new standards in safeguarding children and adults at risk, and to ensure compliance.

More locally in the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney, since 2015 we have had an Office for Safeguarding and Ministerial Integrity with a focus on preventative strategies to safeguard children and adults at risk and to respond compassionately to those that have been harmed. In addition to Policies and Protocols of the Archdiocese that reflect legislation and support our parish priests and other leaders in keeping communities safe, the Safeguarding Office produces practical and online resources to educate, communicate and ensure compliance within our parishes and communities. The Archdiocese will also seek to have a Parish Safeguarding Support Officer (PSSO) in every parish by April 2021. Our PSSOs play an integral role in working with the parish priest and the Safeguarding Office to build a culture of safeguarding in our local communities. The Safeguarding Office also works closely with external bodies and government agencies such as the Office of the Children’s Guardian, the Department of Communities and Justice, and the Police.

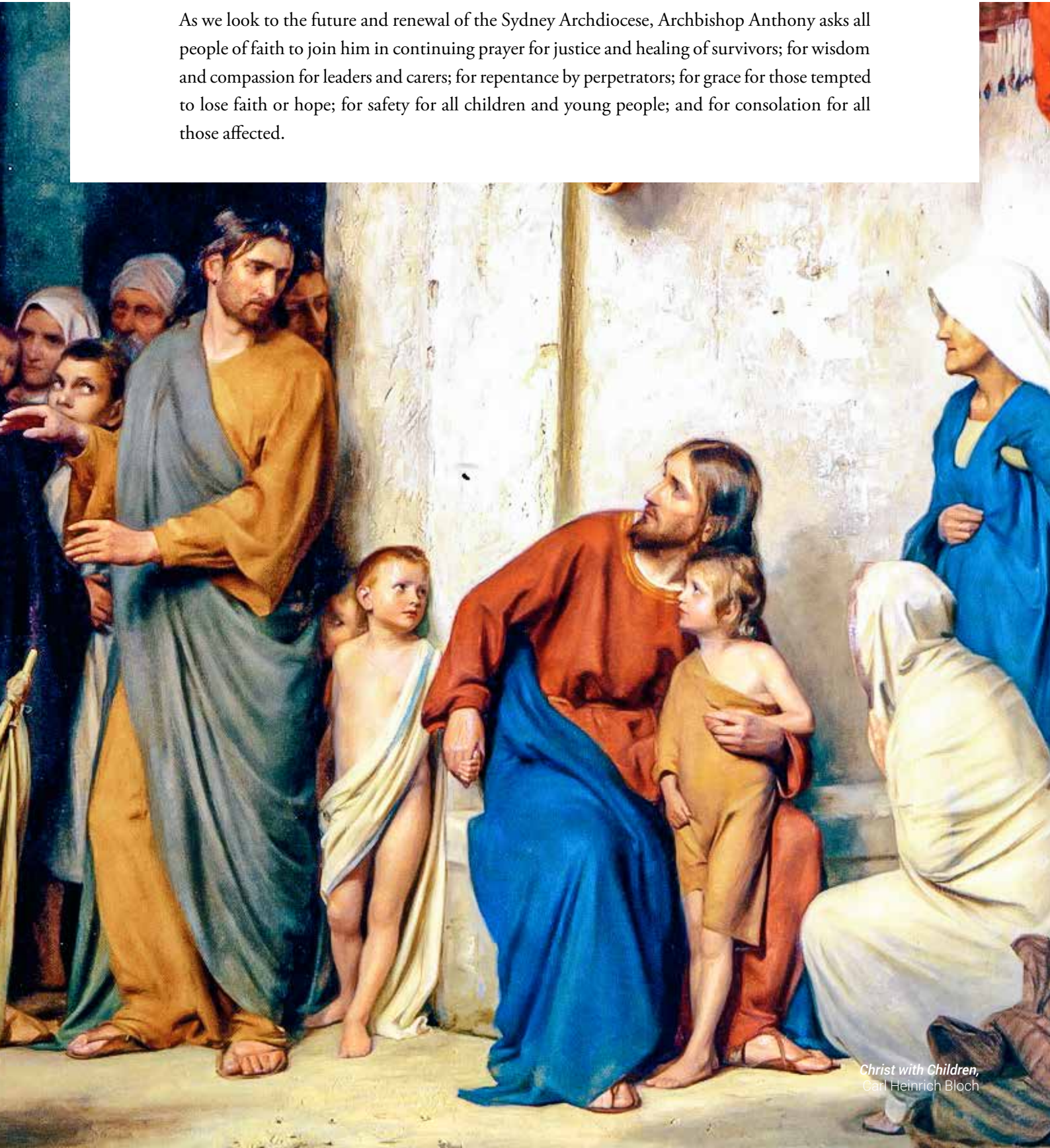
The Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney has implemented rigorous recruitment processes within the Archdiocese and safeguarding training is mandatory for all those working with and ministering to children. Our Catholic schools and social services have been similarly proactive to ensure the rights of children to be safe, heard and responded to appropriately are always respected.

We will continue to respond pastorally to those who have been harmed by the Church and we seek reconciliation with survivors, families, the faithful and the wider community. We keep seeking healing for them also. This requires reparation, both material and spiritual. It requires prayer and fasting for the purification of the Church.



By God's grace, the prompting of the community, and hearing survivors, the Church can emerge from this purified, humbler, and more compassionate. After pruning comes growth, after the Cross, Resurrection. This is our Paschal wisdom and hope.

As we look to the future and renewal of the Sydney Archdiocese, Archbishop Anthony asks all people of faith to join him in continuing prayer for justice and healing of survivors; for wisdom and compassion for leaders and carers; for repentance by perpetrators; for grace for those tempted to lose faith or hope; for safety for all children and young people; and for consolation for all those affected.



Christ with Children,
Carl Heinrich Bloch



Foundation 1

EVANGELISATION

Introduction



“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the very end of the age”.

Matthew 28:19-20

The previous sections might be challenging but they also serve as an excellent wake up call. After decades of following the well-trodden paths of previous generations, it is time to enter more deeply into our own discipleship, encountering Jesus anew and being sent by Him to invite others into that encounter and friendship.



The difficulty many parishes can face in seeking to grow in the mission of Christ is determining where to begin. A starting point, echoed in the feedback shared by our deaneries and communities, is a renewed focus upon evangelisation.

Creating a parish that is committed to building a culture of evangelisation – a parish committed to cooperating with the Holy Spirit to call and form disciples as Jesus invites us to – is a foundation of our identity as communities of faith.



Walk with Christ Procession

Evangelisation is a natural expression of our own discipleship in Christ. Pope Benedict XVI explained it this way: “[d]iscipleship and mission are like the two sides of a single coin: when the disciple is in love with Christ, he cannot stop proclaiming to the world that only in Him do we find salvation (cf. Acts 4:12). In effect, the disciple knows that without Christ there is no light, no hope, no love, no future”.¹

When we cooperate with the Holy Spirit to bring others to Christ and the Church, it deepens our own identity as missionary disciples and plants new energy and life in our communities. As Pope John Paul II declared, “faith is strengthened when given to others!”² When we personally encounter Christ and invite others into relationship with Him, our parishes will grow and be renewed, and our society ultimately transformed, as disciples herald the Kingdom of God in our world.

What is Evangelisation?

The word ‘evangelisation’ comes from the Greek *euangelion* which means “**good news**”. Jesus gave witness to the purpose for which He was sent: His mission was the proclamation of God’s love to all people in fulfilment of God’s promises, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor’... Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:16-21).³

Pope Paul VI taught that the Church also knows that Jesus’ words about proclaiming the Good News “apply in all truth to herself”. The Church in its very being “prolongs and continues” Jesus, and “it is above all His mission and His condition of being an evangeliser that she is called upon to continue”. Evangelisation is, therefore, not only “the grace and vocation proper to the Church”, but it is “her deepest identity”.⁴

Just as Jesus’ evangelising activity includes “all aspects of His mystery – the Incarnation itself, His miracles, His teaching, the gathering together of the disciples, the sending out of the Twelve, the Cross and the Resurrection, the permanence of His presence in the midst of His own”,⁵ so too **the Church in her being and all her activities “exists in order to evangelise**, that is to say, in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God, and to perpetuate Christ’s sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of His death and glorious Resurrection”.⁶

¹ Pope Benedict XVI, *Address at the Inaugural Session of the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin American and the Caribbean*, Aparecida, 13 May 2007.

² Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* 2.

³ Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 6.

⁴ Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 14-15.

⁵ Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 6.

⁶ Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 14.

Jesus did not remain in one place because His mission compelled Him to preach the Good News “to other towns” (Luke 4:42-44). This included places like Sychar where He encountered the Samaritan woman at the well. Today the Church can never be “closed in upon itself”.⁷ In faithfulness to Jesus, we are called to do for others as Jesus did for the Samaritan woman: to go beyond our borders, communities and places of comfort to people who are hurting and are thirsting but do not always know what they need. We are called to invite all those who seek goodness, friendship, healing and hope to an encounter with Jesus, as it is He who reveals their true identity as a beloved son or daughter of God.

“The word ‘evangelisation’ comes from the Greek euangelion which means ‘good news’”

Parishes as Centres for Evangelisation

In his 2013 Apostolic Exhortation on the joy of the Gospel, Pope Francis shared his vision for parish life as a centre for evangelisation:

*“The parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God’s word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration. In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelisers. It is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a centre of constant missionary outreach. We must admit, though, that the call to review and renew our parishes has not yet sufficed to bring them nearer to people, to make them environments of living communion and participation, and to make them completely mission-oriented”.*⁸

In the parish community, there are at least three ways in which we evangelise. Firstly, we share beyond the parish with those who do not know Jesus Christ or who have refused Him. Secondly, we share the Good News with infrequent church attenders, encouraging them anew to a deeper relationship and fresh engagement with Jesus and with the life of His body, the Church. Thirdly, we share the Good News in ordinary pastoral ministry to inflame the hearts of the faithful.⁹

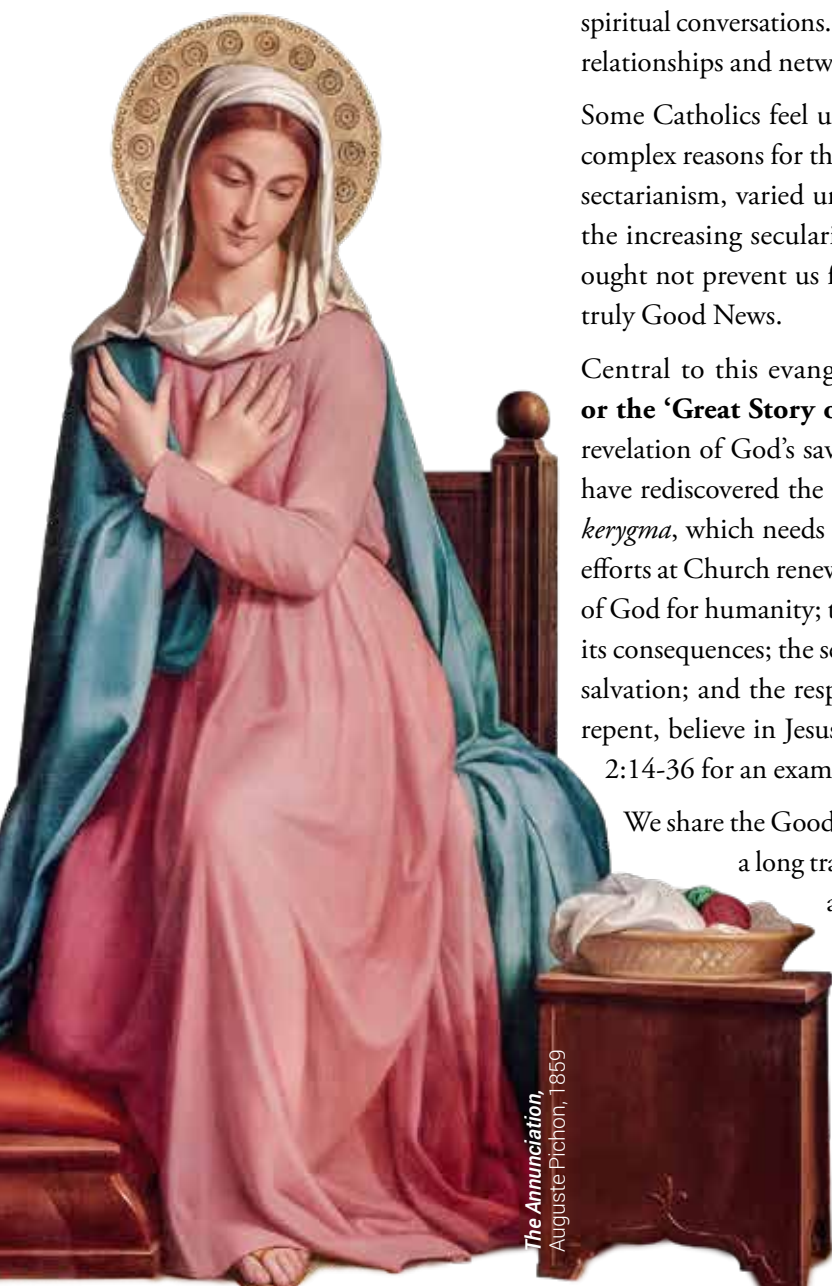
⁷ Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 15.

⁸ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 28.

⁹ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 14; Pope Benedict XVI, *Homily for the Closing of the Synod on the New Evangelisation for the Transmission of the Faith*, 28 October 2012.



“ ... through prayer we recognise, invite and trust the Holy Spirit as the principal agent of evangelisation and the one who gives the growth”



The Annunciation,
Auguste Pichon, 1859

It is important to provide those we meet at Sunday Mass with opportunities for encounter and formation in order to deepen their discipleship. However, the Great Commission calls us to do more than this. As Pope Francis has shared, the Church is not a ‘private club’ but a missionary movement that reaches beyond itself, appealing to those who have not yet encountered Christ and those who are poor, suffering, marginalised or in need. It lives by the conviction that “Jesus never stops welcoming and speaking with everyone, even with those who no longer expect to encounter God in their life”.¹⁰

At the heart of this task of evangelisation is a **culture of invitation** in the parish and the **faith-filled witness** of intentional disciples. Communities faithful to the mission to evangelise are deliberate in inviting others to experience the spiritual and social life of the parish, ask questions, and enter spiritual conversations. This invitation begins with outreach in our existing relationships and networks of friends, family, neighbours and colleagues.

Some Catholics feel uncomfortable in sharing their faith and there are complex reasons for this in our Australian context, including a history of sectarianism, varied understandings of mission and evangelisation, and the increasing secularisation of our society. However, these influences ought not prevent us from doing as Jesus asks us to do: sharing what is truly Good News.

Central to this evangelisation is the **proclamation of the *kerygma* or the ‘Great Story of Jesus’**, His life, death and resurrection as the revelation of God’s saving love and mercy. As Pope Francis affirms, “we have rediscovered the fundamental role of [this] first announcement or *kerygma*, which needs to be the centre of all evangelising activity and all efforts at Church renewal”.¹¹ The *kerygma* communicates: the loving plan of God for humanity; the separation from God brought about by sin and its consequences; the sending of Jesus the Christ, the Son of God, for our salvation; and the response this grace calls forth from every person, to repent, believe in Jesus, be baptised and live as a new creation (see Acts 2:14-36 for an example of this primary proclamation in Scripture).

We share the Good News through **words and deeds**. The Church has a long tradition of sharing the Gospel through proclamation and faith-filled initiatives. Through words, we proclaim the *kerygma* just as the first disciples did and we speak this truth into all the scenarios, places, cultures and situations in which we find ourselves - even at the risk of rejection. We also

¹⁰ Pope Francis, *General Audience on the Family and Community*, 9 September 2015.

¹¹ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 164.

share the Good News through many works of mercy of which the Church has a long history, and through active engagement with all that shapes the human family including the environment, the economy, politics and our common social life. Both are essential: our words express the reason for our hope (1 Peter 3:15) and our deeds are the way we 'walk the talk' in our love of God and neighbour.

In the desire to share this Good News and develop a culture of evangelisation and outreach in the parish, **intercessory prayer is also essential.** In intercessory prayer, we look not to our own interests but to those of others, especially people whom we desire to know Christ more deeply.¹² Most importantly, through prayer we recognise, invite and trust the Holy Spirit as the principal agent of evangelisation and the one who gives the growth (1 Corinthians 3:7). It is the creative power of the Holy Spirit we invoke to come and give us new life. Existing prayer groups and individuals with a particular gift for intercessory prayer (such as many of our elderly parishioners) can be invited to pray for the ongoing work of evangelisation and the spiritual renewal of our parish community.

As essential parts of the body of Christ, these foundations of evangelisation are also relevant to other Christian communities, such as our migrant communities, ecclesial movements, Catholic schools, and social support agencies in their mission to the world.

¹² *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #2634-2636.



Putting Evangelisation into Practice

Those who are missionary disciples of the Lord have had, and continue to have, a life-giving encounter with Him, and seek to offer their lives to God in order to give others the opportunity for that encounter. Communities of fruitful and missionary discipleship are built on a number of essential foundations, one of which is evangelisation. This means evangelisation is foundational in our identity as disciples and as communities of disciples, as well as the priorities and activities that express who we are.

Below is a four (4) step process which your community may choose to undertake to **reflect** upon the place of evangelisation in the life of Jesus and in your community, **review** how that identity is being expressed in the actions and priorities of your community, **discern and decide** how God might be calling your community to strengthen that foundation, and take particular **actions** with the help of the support and resources outlined in this Mission Plan.

This four step process can be led by the pastoral leader of your community on a parish retreat day or a series of reflections days. In the parish, the priest may do so with the help and gifts of lay co-workers such as members of the Parish Pastoral Council, Parish Finance Committee, heads of pastoral ministries, and pastoral leaders within the schools such as the Principals, Religious Education Coordinators and Family Educators. Likewise, leaders of other communities can undertake this process with their key collaborators in mission.



The Appearance of Christ Before the People,
Alexander Andreyevich Ivanov, 1857

Priests seeking to strengthen their parish's foundations for mission are also welcome to engage in this process by attending a *Parishes for Mission* day and bringing their parish leaders with them. These days will be offered regionally and online by the Parish Renewal Team of the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation. These days will provide parish leaders with formation in mission, strategies to assess and strengthen foundations for mission, and practical ways to implement suggested actions for mission. For more details, visit www.gomakedisciples.org.au or contact the Parish Renewal Team on (02) 9390 5330 or at parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org.





Our Lady's Nurses of the Poor

Step 1: **Reflect on the Evangelising Mission of Your Community**

1.1 In the case of a parish community, a starting point can be to undertake a ‘prayer walk’ around the suburbs within your parish boundaries. Recognising intercessory prayer as a foundation of evangelisation, priests and leaders can walk through their local community, together or separately, praying for the Holy Spirit to assist them to see through the eyes of Christ, inviting Him to guide their outreach as a parish. Parishioners already engaged in prayer ministries such as rosary groups, Holy Hours, and other devotions or prayer groups can pray for this endeavour and renewed vision. Maps of our Sydney parishes are available at www.sydneycatholic.org/parishes_list. Other Eucharistic communities can do similarly by praying about their mission field as revealed by their location, apostolate and charism.

1.2 Parishes can also ‘explore’ their area by reading the social data on their community. The National Centre for Pastoral Research produces excellent reports on a range of social indicators among all the people who live within the parish boundaries (e.g. how many people act as carers, unemployment rates, housing statistics, languages spoken, and religious identification). This can help identify needs, problems, and gifts in your community that could be a starting point in considering strategies and practices of evangelisation. These reports are free and available for every parish in the Archdiocese of Sydney. You will find the latest reports online at www.ncpr.catholic.org.au/2016-parish-social-profiles/sydney. If you have difficulty finding them, please contact the National Centre for Pastoral Research at ncpr@catholic.org.au or the Parish Renewal Team of the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation on (02) 9390 5330.

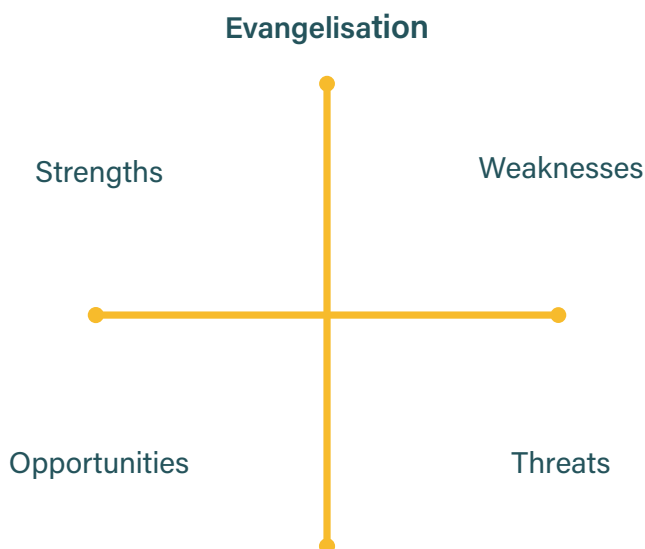
- 1.3** In the light of the pastoral realities within your local community, you can then reflect on the evangelising mission of the parish as modelled in the life of Jesus whose mission we continue today. One story that is fruitful for this meditation is that of Jesus meeting the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1-30). As shared, this narrative can act as a model for our evangelising mission, for Jesus goes beyond borders, communities and places of comfort to people who are hurting and are thirsting but do not always know what they need. This story can be a helpful way to start to contemplate our own call to continue Jesus' mission of evangelisation today. You will find this meditation available at www.gomakedisciples.org.au.

Step 2:

Review the Foundation of Evangelisation in Your Community

- 2.1** As the Church's vocation is to continue Christ's mission to share the *euangelion* ('Good News') with all people, being faithful to that mission requires consciously developing outreach to others as a foundation of the culture of your community. A starting point is to examine how this evangelising mission is expressed in the actions and priorities of the parish community. These kinds of assessments can be challenging but when it comes to spiritual renewal – whether in our personal lives or as communities of faith – the only real starting point is the reality of our current circumstances. No matter what the situation of our parish or community is, this is where God meets us. Moreover this reality can be faced without fear and with hope, knowing that “nothing is impossible to God” (Luke 1:37).
- 2.2** The first practical evaluation tool to review how evangelisation currently expresses itself within your parish and the wider community is a 'SWOT' analysis. This is an assessment of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the practice of evangelisation, enabling your parish to consider the ways in which it is called to be the sign and presence of Christ in your local neighbourhood.

The advantage of this tool is that it takes into account the unique circumstances of your community and enables the priest and his community to identify areas for action. This exercise allows communities to reflect on current practices and also discover new possibilities for practical outreach. Once completed, the resulting information will help you to identify areas for response and enable your parish to choose practical actions included in this plan to grow its outreach. This tool is designed to get the conversation started in the local community and can be applied to the other foundations of disciple-making, that is, leadership, community, formation, and worship.



Once this brainstorming has taken place, and a list of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to evangelisation is recorded, it is then possible to identify specific areas within each for response. No parish can be expected to address all these areas of concern at once. The following questions will assist your parish or other community to focus on practical areas where it can best begin to strengthen and renew its efforts to evangelise:

- a. What current strength in evangelisation can our community most easily build upon?
- b. What current weakness in evangelisation would be the easiest one to fix?
- c. What is the greatest opportunity in evangelisation we could seize upon with the least amount of time and resources?
- d. What is the most immediate or greatest threat we need to address for evangelisation to grow and renew our community?¹³

2.3 The second practical evaluation tool is to measure how much practical support, time and priority the community gives to evangelisation by answering the following questions:

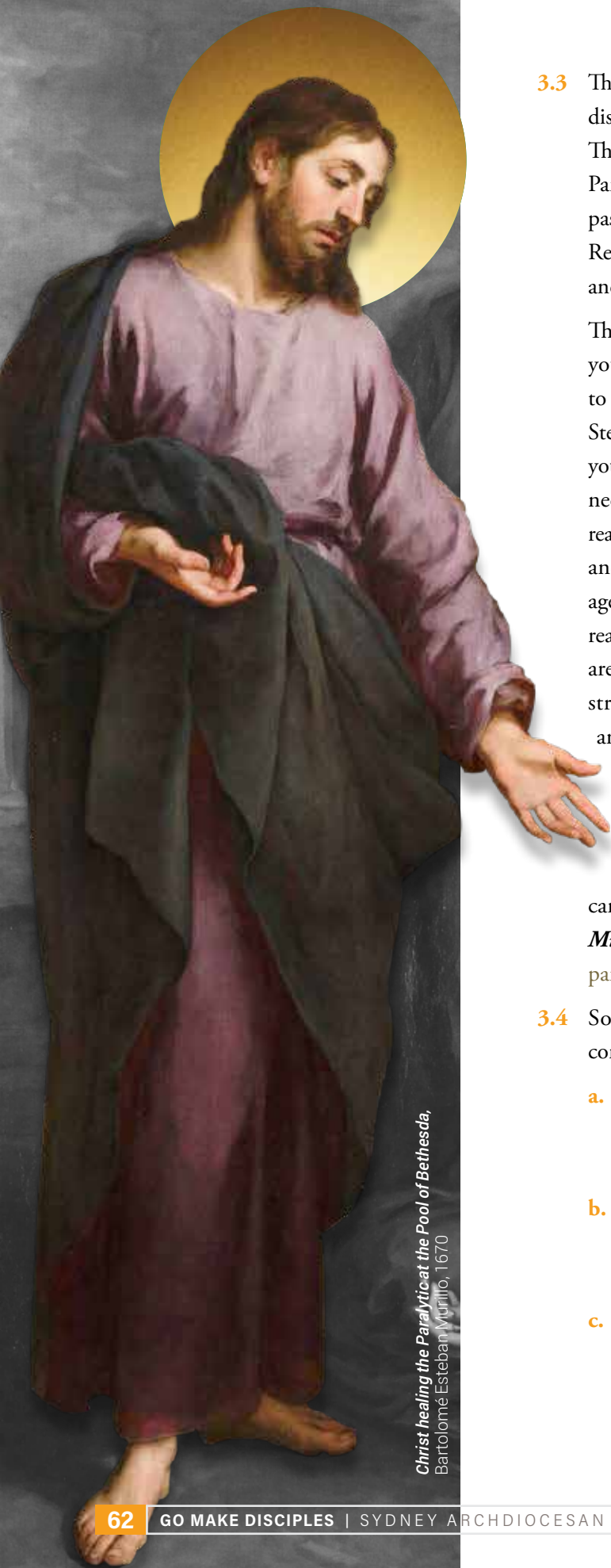
- a. Are there any paid staff whose role explicitly includes support of evangelisation? (This does not include the priest leading your community, an assistant priest or deacon).
- b. Do our prayer groups pray for the evangelisation of the whole community and invoke the creative power of the Holy Spirit to bring abundant life to our parish? Have we as leaders asked them to undertake this essential prayer?
- c. How much of our staff's time is spent reaching beyond the Sunday Mass-goers to proclaiming or supporting the proclamation of the Good News "to other towns" (Luke 4:43)?

¹³Adapted from Fr James Mallon's *Divine Renovation Guidebook: A Step-by-Step Manual for Transforming Your Parish*.

- d. How much of the annual parish budget is spent on evangelisation initiatives, programs, and formation of our leaders? Do we have funds to support this foundation for parish renewal?
 - e. Of the ministries and groups in our parish or other community, how many of them are specifically engaged in helping parishioners, Catholics who do not attend the parish, or those who do not know Christ to encounter Him? Do we need more volunteers to support evangelisation?
 - f. Are any of the groups specifically directed at proclaiming the Good News “to other towns” (Luke 4:43), that is, to those who are not Christian? Examples of resources to support this outreach include Alpha, ChristLife, and Sycamore.
 - g. Are there any groups or activities, such as ‘Catholics Returning Home’ or ‘Landings’, that seek to reach out to Catholics who are not involved in any Eucharistic community?
- 2.4 A third way in which the life of the parish can be reviewed, and new plans for evangelisation made, is through the Australian resource *Building Stronger Parishes*, developed by the National Centre for Pastoral Research of the Australian Catholic Bishops’ Conference. Drawing from the experience of parishes in Australia, this resource examines eight aspects of parish vitality, worksheets for review and discussion of parish practices, and templates for planning in local communities of faith. This resource is available online at www.buildingstrongerparishes.catholic.org.au.

Step 3: Discern and Decide

- 3.1 By now you should have a clearer sense of the place of evangelisation in your identity as a parish or other Eucharistic community and how that foundation for renewal is currently being expressed in the actions and priorities of your community. The next step is to discern and decide how God might be calling your particular community to strengthen its foundation of evangelisation.
- 3.2 Discernment is a process of prayerfully separating good things you *are* called to do at this time from good things you are *not* called to do at this time. It involves gathering information and then, through prayer and discussion, making a decision about what you discern God is calling you to do. This involves being detached enough from your own plans and opinions in order to have the freedom and docility to listen to and respond to the Holy Spirit.



Christ healing the Paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda,
Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, 1670

3.3 The priest can lead his parishioners in a conversation to help discern together what God is calling the community to do. This conversation can include the Parish Pastoral Council, Parish Finance Committee, heads of pastoral ministries, pastoral leaders within the schools such as the Principals, Religious Education Coordinators and Family Educators, and others with a passion and gift for evangelisation.

The discernment begins by thinking and praying about your identity, as well as the people in your mission field to whom you can intentionally reach out as established in Steps 1 and 2. Based on the information in Steps 1 and 2 your conversation can embrace who is in your region, their needs, and who your community should be focused on reaching. You might consider the demographic information and local trends that are shaping your community, the age and spiritual background of those you are seeking to reach, their current life stage, and the key questions they are asking. You can then intentionally shape your parish strategies of invitation, welcome, enquiry, community and formation with this group in mind. This is a good way to start in the creation of a vision of a parish built on a strong foundation of evangelisation. Resources for a group discernment process are available at www.gomakedisciples.org.au or the Parish Renewal Team can facilitate the conversation for you at a **Parishes for Mission** day. Contact the team on (02) 9390 5330 or at parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org for more details.

3.4 Some things to consider in your discernment and conversation include:

- a.** What did you notice when you took your prayer walk around the streets within your parish boundaries? Were there any situations or observations that struck you?
- b.** What did you notice when you reviewed the parish social profile? Were there any obvious needs, hurts or aspirations in your community?
- c.** When you meditated upon Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman, did anything strike you in particular or did it reveal anything about the place of evangelisation in the life of your community?

- d.** What is the greatest strength in evangelisation that emerged from your SWOT analysis and how might you build upon this? What was the greatest threat and how could you address this?
 - e.** Do you give practical support, time and priority to evangelisation? Would you like to commit to increasing that support in some measurable way through funds, volunteers, and time dedicated to outreach?
- 3.5** As part of your discernment, consider the list of strategies below to strengthen the foundation of evangelisation and actions to implement each strategy. These recommendations represent the wisdom of communities in Sydney gathered through these past years of consultation with clergy, deaneries and communities, as well as research into best practices for evangelisation here in Australia and overseas.

You are encouraged to choose those actions that allow you to best respond to your local circumstances, with relevant support and resources also listed for implementation in your community.

Your parish or community may already be doing many of the good things outlined. However, there will also be actions that your community can take up to strengthen the foundation of evangelisation in your parish. Many of these actions will also be applicable to migrant chaplaincies, shrines and ecclesial movements in the Archdiocese of Sydney.



Strategy 1:

Provide a Discipleship Pathway

Conversion is a process and not instantaneous. Therefore, communities seeking to ‘make disciples’ can benefit from **putting in place clear steps for people to walk and follow, a pathway of discipleship through which people can grow**. Such a discipleship pathway identifies steps that parishes can offer — and people can take — to encounter Jesus and then continue in spiritual conversion and maturity in our community.

The experience of growing parishes locally and abroad has affirmed the importance of clearly communicating what people can do to grow in relationship with Jesus and the journey in the parish that will help them to grow in this relationship.

For example, a pathway for parish evangelisation might begin with building up a culture of invitation in the community, and for people to be drawn into an encounter with the Gospel via an initiative such as Alpha or ChristLife that explores life and the Christian faith. Following this initial encounter, participants can then be encouraged to join the organising team for such a course where they will receive formation in leadership and service, or otherwise join a small group in the parish to connect more deeply with others in community. They might join a small group Bible study in order to deepen the faith they have discovered. As a next step, the parish might then encourage participants to commit to active mission in the form of service to others; for example, to become involved in a parish ministry or share their God-given talents in social outreach in the wider community.

Such a discipleship pathway enables a parish to have a sense of where people are on the journey of faith and what to offer to help them to move to the next step in faith in the context of parish ministries.

The questions below will also assist in discerning the pathway that best suits the people you are seeking to reach:

1. What does it mean to say we want to ‘make disciples’?
2. What structured steps or ‘discipleship pathway’ do we want to offer, to help people to take a next step and grow in their relationship to Christ?

Resources

- The Parish Renewal Team will address this strategy in its *Parishes for Mission* days. For more information, visit www.gomakedisciples.org.au or contact us at parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9390 5330

Strategy 1 (continued):

Provide a Discipleship Pathway

- Consider what a discipleship pathway could look like in your parish by watching the video created by St Ann's Catholic Parish in Coppell, Texas: www.youtube.be/kA4DD1TKQVg
- Access a discipleship pathway template online at the *Go Make Disciples* website: www.gomakedisciples.org.au
- A helpful resource for developing such an intentional parish pathway can be found in the 'Game Plan' of Saint Benedict's Parish, found in the *Divine Renovation Guidebook: A Step-by-Step Manual for Transforming Your Parish*, pages 164-167

Strategy 2:

Make the *Kerygma* Central

A renewed evangelisation includes a renewed focus on **the *kerygma* or 'Great Story of Jesus'**. This focus can begin by prayerful meditation on Acts 2:14-36 or Acts 3:12-26, writing down in our own words the basic Gospel message and identifying this kernel of the Gospel with others (e.g. 'God made us for relationship with Him, through our sin we broke the relationship we were intended to have, Jesus came to heal this relationship through His life, death and resurrection, giving us the Church, and we have the opportunity to respond to His grace by choosing to become His disciples and inviting others into relationship with Him').

Resources

- A guide on the ways in which to present the *kerygma* in parish ministries, sacramental preparation and outreach initiatives can be found at www.catholicmissionarydisciples.com/news/the-content-of-the-kerygma-good-news-for-the-world

Strategy 3:

Support Evangelisation with Intercessory Prayer

In offering a pathway for disciples to be called and to grow, each step and initiative can be supported by formalised intercessory prayer in the parish, that is, by **bringing to prayer all those who do not know Christ or are called to know Christ more deeply**. This foundation of prayer recognises that evangelisation is the work of the Holy Spirit and is essential to parish growth. Local initiatives of prayer can begin with existing prayer groups and can range from focused intercessions during Mass in the Prayer of the Faithful, to invitations to parishioners to pray a Hail Mary each day for conversions, fasting and prayer days in the parish, or a monthly Holy Hour to pray for the parish and its evangelising mission. Parishioners with a particular gift for intercessory prayer (such as many of the elderly in our parishes) can also be asked to make this a particular intention. Your parish can invite other established groups to pray for evangelisation such as the St Vincent de Paul Society, the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD), RCIA groups and the Legion of Mary which already have a spirituality and practice of prayer, as well as members with a gift for evangelisation.

Resources

- A helpful introduction to intercessory prayer can be found at www.focusoncampus.org/content/intercessory-prayer
- On the role of the prayer team in evangelisation, visit www.sycamore.fm/planning/the-prayer-team

Strategy 4:

Provide Formation in Evangelisation

Parish teams, Parish Pastoral Councils and leaders in ministry might **dedicate reflection day/s to the evangelising mission of the parish**, praying about and discerning opportunities to cultivate a culture of evangelisation in the parish and initiatives to reach out to the wider community as disciples ‘called and sent.’

Resources

- Apart from *Parishes for Mission* days at a regional level, the Parish Renewal Team will be offering reflection days and other formation on the evangelising mission of the parish. For more information, visit www.gomakedisciples.org.au or contact the Parish Renewal Team on (02) 9390 5330 or parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org

Strategy 4 (continued):**Provide Formation in Evangelisation**

Parish teams, Parish Pastoral Councils and ministry group leaders can promote, and themselves participate in, **formation on the theology and practice of evangelisation.**

Resources

- The Parish Renewal Team will offer reflection days and other formation on the evangelising mission of the parish. This will include catechesis on evangelisation and mission drawing on experienced practitioners. Guest speakers will include Fr James Mallon, Sherry Weddell, Dr Mary Healy, George Weigel, Prof Hayden Ramsay, Peter Holmes, Fr Jacques Philippe and others to be announced, as well as access to contemporary resources. For more information, contact parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9390 5330
- Parishioners seeking to run Alpha in their parish can receive formation and training in the theology and practice of evangelisation in the context of Alpha. Alpha is an 11-week series that creates a space, online or in person, where people can invite their friends for a conversation about faith, life and God. The Parish Renewal Team includes an Alpha Parish Development Coordinator who can answer any questions you have about Alpha and support the implementation of Alpha in your parish including coordinating Alpha training for leaders, providing forums to reflect on best practice when running Alpha, and offering ‘Come and See’ nights for those unfamiliar with this evangelising resource. For more information on Alpha and for parish support, contact Tania Rimac at tania.rimac@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9390 5338
- The following Catholic organisations produce resources which can assist your parish to provide formation in the theology and practice of evangelisation:
 - Two programs from ‘Word on Fire’ Catholic Ministries (hereafter ‘Word on Fire’) provide a good introduction to the theology of evangelisation. The *Catholicism* series offers an overview of the evangelising mission of the Church. *Untold Blessings: Three Paths to Holiness* provides formation on the indivisible connection between discipleship and evangelisation. Online versions can be purchased or rented on ‘Word on Fire’ Digital (www.wofdigital.org/products) or DVDs ordered through the Mustard Seed Bookshop (www.mustardseed.org.au/shop)
 - For a modest fee, the ‘Word on Fire’ Institute provides training on methods and approaches to evangelisation. You may consider investing in the subscription fee to provide access to formation for your leaders and potential leaders: www.wordonfire.institute

Strategy 4 (continued):**Provide Formation in Evangelisation**

Action 2

- The resources below provide foundations in the evangelising mission of the Church:
 - Read *Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus* by Sherry Weddell
 - Read *Divine Renovation: Bringing your Parish from Maintenance to Mission* by Fr James Mallon on the renewal of parishes through reclaiming their evangelising mission
 - Read Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* ('*The Joy of the Gospel*')
 - Listen to a talk by Dr Scott Hahn, *Evangelizing Catholics: The Bible, the Eucharist, and the New Evangelization*, available as MP3 download at www.lighthousecatholicmedia.org/store/title/evangelizing-catholics
 - Undertake a Bible study by Jeff Cavins and Sarah Christmyer on evangelisation in the early Church, *Acts: The Spread of the Kingdom*
 - Read *101 Ways to Evangelize: Ideas for Helping Fearless, Fearful, and Flummoxed Catholics Share the Good News of Jesus Christ* by Susan Windley-Daoust

Contact the Mustard Seed Bookshop (www.mustardseed.org.au) to obtain copies of the resources above. Resources on the theology and practice of evangelisation are also available at Parousia Media (www.parousiamedia.com), Pauline Books and Media (www.paulinebooks.com.au), and St Paul's Book Centre (www.stpauls.com.au)

Parishes can **promote online shows and podcasts focused on methods of evangelisation** for everyday life, as formative tools and resources for personal and parish initiatives.

Resources

Action 3

- *This Catholic Life* produced by the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney www.thiscatholiclife.com.au
- *Word on Fire Show* with Bishop Robert Barron www.wordonfireshow.com
- *The Divine Renovation Podcast* www.divinerenovation.tv/categories/divine-renovation-podcast
- *Stories from the Street* by St Paul Street Evangelisation www.streetevangelization.com/stories-from-the-street
- *Every Knee Shall Bow* from Ascension Press Media www.media.ascensionpress.com/category/ascension-podcasts/every-knee-shall-bow

Strategy 5:**Give Witness to Discipleship****Action 1**

Parishes can invite and promote on a regular basis **the stories and testimonies of faith, discipleship and witness of the community** in parish and school publications, highlighting the way in which the Gospel has changed and directed the lives of their people. Samples of such testimonies can be found on the *Go Make Disciples* website www.gomakedisciples.org.au.

Action 2

Parishes can identify suitable occasions and forums for **sharing testimonies of faith** that witness to Christ alive in the community (e.g. during sacramental preparation, in small groups, RCIA, youth groups, or other key parish touchpoints), preferably with a range of speakers with varied life experience. This might include those who have entered the Church through the RCIA, families with powerful stories of growth and change in their lives, or youth who have experienced Christ or served in inspiring ways.

Resources

- The Parish Renewal Team can assist in identifying speakers for such sharing of faith in the local community. Contact the team at parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9390 5330

Action 3

Encourage leaders to **learn to develop and share their own testimony** witnessing to the love of God in their lives.

Resources

- The Parish Renewal Team will be offering workshops on practical skills in aspects of evangelisation, such as giving personal testimonies, among others. Contact the team at parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9390 5330
- The St Paul School of Evangelisation offers an 'Introduction to Evangelisation' course which includes training on how to deliver a personal testimony www.evangelizationschool.com/spse-courses
- The following blogpost by Catholic Missionary Disciples will support parishioners and leaders to share their story faithfully and effectively: www.catholicmissionarydisciples.com/news/an-indispensable-tool-of-an-evangelist-how-to-give-your-testimony
- FOCUS also provides advice on this skill at www.focusoncampus.org/content/the-power-of-your-testimony
- Read Nancy H C Ward's *Sharing Your Catholic Faith Story: Tools, Tips, and Testimonies*. Find this resource in the Parish Renewal section at www.mustardseed.org.au

Strategy 5 (continued):

Action 3

Give Witness to Discipleship

- *How to Give Your Christian Testimony* podcast is available at www.media.ascensionpress.com/podcast/how-to-give-your-christian-testimony

Strategy 6:

Create a Culture of Invitation

Action 1

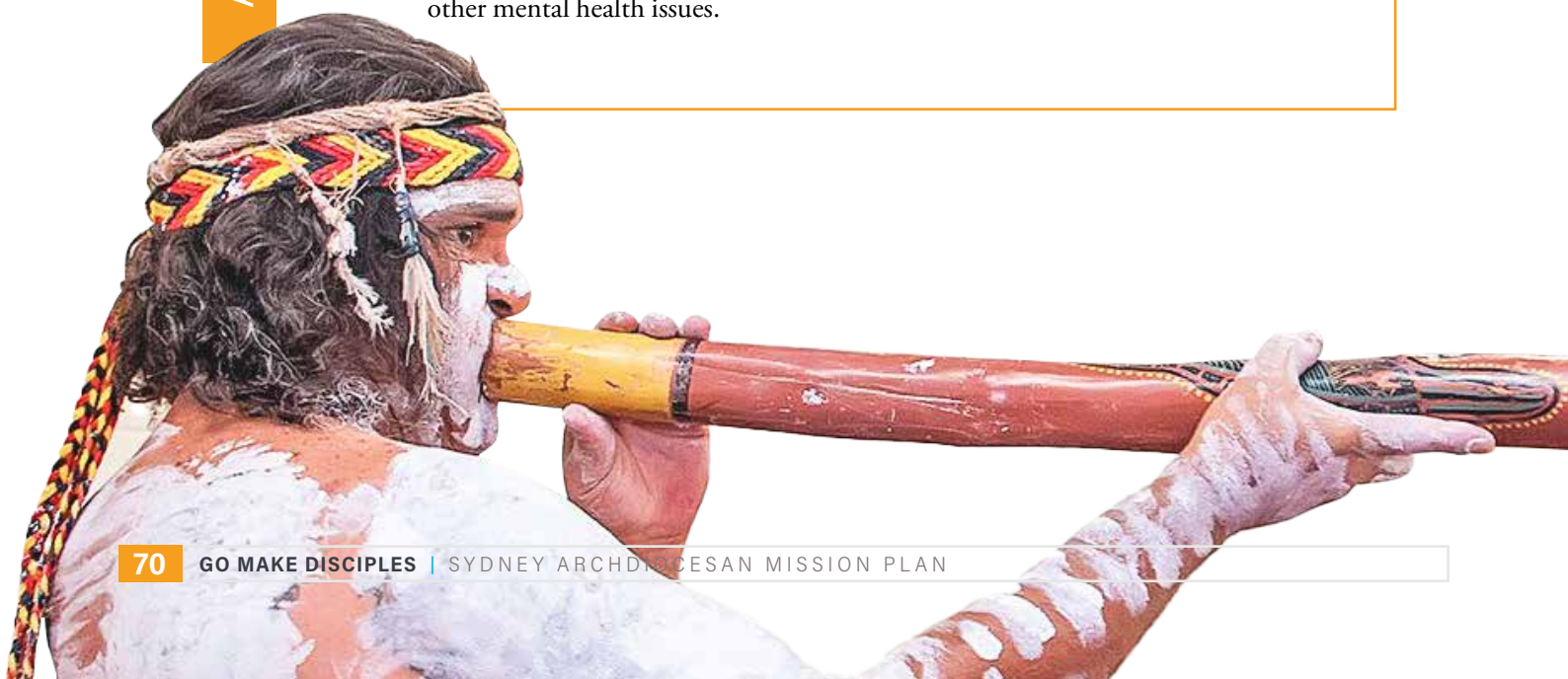
In developing an invitational culture, a parish can **dedicate particular Sundays and seasons to inviting those on the margins of faith to participate in parish life** (e.g. in person, online and print invitations to the friends and relatives of parishioners to join the community on Ash Wednesdays, at Confirmations, and at Christmas and Easter liturgies).

Action 2

An invitational culture can also extend to the Stations of the Cross, community Christmas carols, or **any event that nurtures belonging and trust with the community and a hearing of the Gospel message**. Christmas cards or calendars as invitations can also be letterbox dropped in the local neighbourhood.

Action 3

Other events in the parish can be offered to **attract those in the community who would not necessarily be open to attending a religious event**. These are opportunities to connect and offer a warm welcome with the wider community and may include events such as talks on current topics such as parenting, anxiety and other mental health issues.



Strategy 7:

Evangelise Those Who Do Not Know Christ

Parishes can adopt **tools and programs designed to reach out and invite those outside of our community into contact with the Gospel and the Church**. Programs such as Alpha, ChristLife or Sycamore can focus the entire parish on its essential task, which is to offer Jesus to the world. These tools enable people to encounter Christ in a way that is welcoming and non-judgemental, support the training of lay leaders in the practice of evangelisation, and encourage a parish culture where all the baptised are conscious of their vocation to holiness and to missionary outreach and accompaniment of others.

Resources

- The Parish Renewal Team includes an Alpha Parish Development Coordinator who can answer any questions you have about Alpha and support the implementation of Alpha in your parish, including coordinating Alpha training for leaders, providing forums to reflect on best practice when running Alpha, and offering ‘Come and See’ nights for those unfamiliar with this evangelising resource. Alpha is a tool used for evangelisation, it allows people to explore the basics of Christianity in a safe, non-judgemental environment, a place where people are encouraged to ask questions and share experiences. There is no cost to access Alpha resources. For more information about Alpha, visit www.alpha.org.au or contact Tania Rimal for information and support at tania.rimal@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9390 5338
- ChristLife is a program that focuses upon making missionary disciples and equipping disciples for the evangelising mission to which they are called. This program was developed to help parishes reach out in a relational way to make missionary disciples by helping them discover, follow and share Jesus with others. For more information, see www.christlife.org
- Sycamore provides free, informal courses about the Christian faith and its relevance for life today. It can be offered in small groups in your community, and includes training sessions for anyone seeking to run a group. Sycamore’s ‘Enquiry Pathways’ are aimed at those with little or no Christian background and include topics such as ‘The Search for Happiness’, ‘Who is Jesus?’ and ‘The Power of Prayer’. Sycamore also offers ‘Formation and Renewal Pathways’ for Christian communities, ‘Sacramental Pathways’ for sacramental preparation or catechesis in your parish community, and ‘School Pathways’ for discussion groups and faith formation in schools. These sessions can be accessed by individuals and include training for new leaders about how to run these courses effectively in groups. All courses can be accessed at no cost at www.sycamore.fm

Strategy 8:

Evangelise the Baptised

Action 1

Parish teams or a small team of two or three people can adopt the ‘**Catholics Returning Home**’ program, a six-week resource that can be offered two or three times a year in community. This resource is designed to reach out and invite non-practising or inactive Catholics, welcoming them to re-join the faith community and participate in its sacramental life.

Resources

- For more about the program, visit www.catholicsreturninghome.org. The book *Parish Guide for Implementing Catholics Returning Home Ministry: Outreach to Non-Practicing Catholics* provides additional input and guidance for this program. To obtain a copy from the Mustard Seed Bookshop, visit www.mustardseed.org.au or contact bookshop@mustardseed.org.au or (02) 9307 8350
- The ‘Landings’ program from the Paulist Fathers is a program for welcoming those who are inactive, disconnected or wanting to take another look at the Catholic faith. It is a program best used in a small group setting where people are able to share experiences and re-examine their faith. For more information, go to www.landingsintl.org

Action 2

All relationships benefit from renewal. Offer **programs to help your parish community to renew and rediscover** their relationship with Christ.

Resources

- The Sycamore program referred to in Strategy 7 (see previous page) offers ‘Formation and Renewal Pathways’ for Christian communities that will speak to the already baptised. It includes training for new leaders about how to run the course effectively in groups and is available at no cost at www.sycamore.fm. For training and support in running small groups effectively, contact the Parish Renewal Team on (02) 9390 5330 or parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org

Strategy 9:**Build Relationships in the Wider Community**

Action 1

Parish teams and the parish priest can **reach out intentionally to people within the parish area** (such as parents of students at Catholic schools) to build relationships and a shared sense of community and mission. Parishes can provide talks on parenting and family life and ensure school parents are aware of resources such as the Archdiocese of Sydney's newsletter for school parents and families, *Connect*, as well as *The Catholic Weekly*.

Resources

- For further support and ideas for parenting and family formation, contact the Life, Marriage and Family team in the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation on (02) 9307 8480 or steven.buhagiar@sydneycatholic.org

Action 2

Many local communities have **regular markets at which parishes can be a presence** through a stall. This can be an opportunity to engage in conversations, answer people's questions, offer a prayer box to receive people's intentions, and offer small gifts that encourage reflection and prayer.

Resources

- The Parish Renewal Team can help you with ideas and training for such stalls and events. There will also be evangelisation workshops that will offer practical skills for in-person evangelisation. For more information, contact parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9390 5330

Strategy 10:**Schools and Parishes Collaborating for the Evangelisation of Families and Students**

Action 1

Each parish and its associated schools could **share celebrations, liturgical and otherwise, whenever possible** (e.g. parish feast days) in order to strengthen a sense of common identity and mission. For example, parishes and schools could consider a combined 'Commissioning Mass' or similar at the start of the school year, to bring together key leaders as well as groups that serve the faith of the community, blessing them for their evangelising mission in the year ahead and invoking the power of the Holy Spirit upon their ministries. Parish staff, school staff, school students and parents, baptismal preparation teams, CCD catechists, sacramental teams, Alpha teams, Family Educators, and RCIA teams can be included.

Strategy 10 (continued):

Schools and Parishes Collaborating for the Evangelisation of Families and Students

Action 2

Parishes could **invite students from associated schools to take up a variety of ministry roles in the parish** (e.g. as altar servers, youth leaders, catechists, music ministers, Youth Alpha teams). Acknowledgements of service can be an opportunity to draw parents and families into contact with the life of the parish.

Resources

- Students who require work experience, volunteer or community service hours or take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award program could be invited to complete the required hours serving within the parish community
- Students and young adults can be trained to work with youth ministers in street evangelisation to reach those outside the parish. Participants are then encouraged to be a witness and share their experience with the parish and school community to encourage and foster local engagement. For more information, contact Sydney Catholic Youth at info@sydneycatholicyouth.org or (02) 9307 8152
- When asking a young person to volunteer, consider the advice on how to undertake this effectively on page 97 in the chapter on Leadership

Action 3

Each parish should review the availability of, and invitation to, **Masses, sacramental initiation, and RCIA for children in both Catholic and state schools**, to ensure their inclusion in the life of the parish community via various communication platforms including email, postcard invitations, social media and community and digital notice boards.

Resources

- Parishes can work with the Family Educator, Religious Education Coordinator, school Youth Minister or Principal to ensure invitations are sent to students and families
- For support and advice on reaching families of those students in state schools who participate in Special Religious Education, contact the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) at office@ccdsydney.catholic.edu.au or (02) 9307 8330

Action 4

Parish teams and parents from the parish can **represent the parish community at Catholic school orientation days to welcome and inform new school parents** of activities, programs and support available within the parish and Archdiocese. Parish 'welcome packs' can be made available and new parents can be invited to Alpha as a way to meet other new parents and the wider community.

Strategy 10 (continued):**Schools and Parishes Collaborating
for the Evangelisation of Families and Students****Action 4****Resources**

- Parishes can connect with schools about such initiatives through their Family Educator, Religious Education Coordinator or Principal

Strategy 11:**Evangelise Through the Preparation
for and Celebration of the Sacraments****Action 1**

All of the sacraments, and preparation for the sacraments, present parishes with an opportunity to evangelise not only the person or people directly involved in the sacrament but also their wider family and friends who may be in attendance. Whether preparing a child for Baptism, a couple for Marriage, or a grieving family for a funeral, take some time to think about the wider group involved in these sacrament and how you might reach out by word or deed to help them encounter Jesus more deeply, or for the first time.

For example, when a priest attends the wedding reception of a couple he has married, he might ask the bride and groom's permission to offer grace before the meal and take that opportunity to pray for all the married couples at the reception, as well as those who hope to marry someday.

At funerals, the priest can ensure that as much as possible his homily can speak to those in the congregation who do not know Jesus, as well as explaining the symbols and rituals. Grief and bereavement groups in the parish can consider how to support the family and friends of the deceased person through prayers, messages of consolation, and offers of other practical support such as the preparation of meals. If you have a grief or bereavement group in your parish, ask the grieving family if you can pass on their contact details so that the parish group can be in contact as a source of support.

Intercessory prayer groups in the parish could pray specifically for all those who the parish will meet through the sacraments, that these moments may touch their hearts and bring them closer to God.

Strategy 11 (continued):

Evangelise Through the Preparation for and Celebration of the Sacraments

Action 1

Resources

- The parish secretary, sacramental coordinator and supporting volunteers have essential roles to play in ensuring that wider groups with which the parish has contact during the preparation and celebration of the sacraments have an opportunity to encounter Jesus. Dedicating time within the parish team to discuss the formative and evangelising opportunities during these sacraments can surface new ideas and opportunities for this outreach. Parish teams may also like to contact the Parish Renewal Team for support and ideas on (02) 9390 5330 or parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org

Action 2

When children undertake sacramental preparation, **invite the parents to attend a parallel course for the development of their own faith**. This parent-based formation might focus on their relationship with God, the life of Jesus, the role of the Church in faith, and the nature and fruit of the sacraments. The Evangelisation and Formation chapters of this Mission Plan outline a number of resources which can be run in a small group format and could serve as a suitable refresher course on the sacraments for parents.

Resources

- For advice and ideas, contact the Sacramental Life and RCIA Coordinator within the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation on (02) 9307 8477 or becomingcatholic@sydneycatholic.org

Action 3

The parish sacramental coordinators can coordinate **ongoing gatherings and reunions of parents of the newly baptised** (e.g. annually for all those baptised in the previous year). Parishes might also consider personalised cards, including a prayer bookmark and saint's medal, on baptismal anniversaries.

Resources

- For advice and ideas for such 'reunions', contact the Sacramental Life and RCIA Coordinator within the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation on (02) 9307 8477 or becomingcatholic@sydneycatholic.org
- For gifts and books, visit the Mustard Seed Bookshop at www.mustardseed.org.au or call (02) 9307 8350. Alternatively, visit Church Stores at www.churchstores.com.au/product-category/christian-gifts-devotional-items or call (02) 9233 2268 or visit Aid to the Church in Need at www.catholicshop.com

Strategy 11 (continued):**Evangelise Through the Preparation for and Celebration of the Sacraments**

Action 4

Parishes and sacramental coordinators can consider ways of strengthening the **integration of catechumens and candidates in the Rite of Christian Initiation into the wider life of the parish** (e.g. some open parish sessions). Consideration can be given to the intentional invitation of catechumens and candidates to other parish ministry groups and social groups prior to Baptism or Confirmation.

Resources

- For advice and ideas, contact the Sacramental Life and RCIA Coordinator within the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation at becomingcatholic@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9307 8477

Strategy 12:**Evangelisation and Youth**

Action 1

Parishes and schools can collaborate to **encourage and support youth to attend events** where there are opportunities to encounter Christ, build community through Christian relationships, and deepen faith through experiences and witness. Such events include World Youth Day, held every three years internationally, and the Australian Catholic Youth Festival, a biannual event hosted nationally.

Resources

- For information about World Youth Day, visit www.worldyouthday.com
- For more information about the Australian Catholic Youth Festival, visit www.youthfestival.catholic.org.au
- The Archdiocesan annual youth camp 'Y-Factor' occurs each April school holidays and parishes are encouraged to promote and support youth to attend
- For support and assistance in organising parish attendance at these events, contact the Sydney Catholic Youth team (SCY) at info@sydneycatholicyouth.org or (02) 9307 8152

Strategy 12 (continued):

Evangelisation and Youth

Action 2

The **Ignite Conference** is an annual event that serves as an entry point for young people in the Archdiocese to encounter Christ and the Church. The Sydney Catholic Youth team can support youth ministers to engage with young attendees of the conference to grow in belonging and community via various platforms, help facilitate connection between attendees and youth groups, connect with priests, as well as organise follow-up events and initiatives stemming from the Ignite Conference.

Resources

- For general information on the Ignite Conference, go to www.igniteyouth.com
- For more information on the Ignite Conference in Sydney, go to www.sydneycatholicyouth.org or contact the Sydney Catholic Youth team (SCY) at info@sydneycatholicyouth.org or (02) 9307 8152

Action 3

Parishes and schools can work together to **offer Youth Alpha as a tool for evangelisation**. Youth Alpha can be offered during lunch time at school or after school as a way to extend the invitation to youth in the wider community. Parish Youth Ministers, Family Educators, and school Religious Education Coordinators, can work together to establish Youth Alpha and then connect the youth with other parish youth groups post-Alpha, to continue connecting and gathering, to nurture relationships formed and continue building community.

Resources

- For more information or support to establish Youth Alpha, contact Tania Rimac in the Parish Renewal Team at tania.rimac@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9390 5338

Action 4

Youth ministers can be trained in street evangelisation and **partake in the Archdiocesan Night Fever Evangelisation event**. Training will be provided for this outreach initiative which opens conversations around faith and life. During this outreach, leaders will be paired at all times. Participants can be encouraged to share their learnings and testimonies about their experience with their home parishes and local priests to foster parish involvement.

Resources

- For more information, contact Sydney Catholic Youth team at info@sydneycatholicyouth.org or (02) 9307 8152

Strategy 13:**Evangelise through Catholic Social Teaching and Works of Mercy**

As an integral dimension of evangelisation, parishes can **review their wider social engagement through the lens of Catholic Social Teaching** and consider the social issues to which the parish may be better able to respond. Many people come to an appreciation of the Church through a concern for the injustices in society and come to know Catholic Social Teaching and see the work of the Church as it seeks to respond to these injustices. This witness and engagement can open opportunities for them to encounter Christ and His Church.

Parishes have a vital interest in Archbishop Anthony Fisher's strong and public commitment to eradicate modern slavery and human trafficking, a fundamental mandate of Catholic Social Teaching.

Archbishop Fisher instituted the Archdiocese of Sydney's Anti-Slavery Taskforce in 2017 and it has since introduced:

- Shop for Good -an ethical purchasing guide for parishes and families. More information including product catalogues is available online www.sydneycatholic.org/solidarity-and-justice/anti-slavery/shop-for-good
- Domus8.7 Australia's first comprehensive socio-legal service for people impacted by modern slavery. This provides a safe and secure response to anyone with concerns of slavery-like practices or labour exploitation.
- The Australian Catholic Anti-Slavery Network (ACAN). The Anti-Slavery Taskforce coordinated the establishment of this network, made up of 36 Catholic organisations from health and aged care, education, social services, dioceses, the finance and investment sectors. It is focused on eradicating modern slavery from operations and supply chains via a comprehensive risk management program.

For more information on the work of the Anti-Slavery Taskforce, go to: www.sydneycatholic.org/solidarity-and-justice/anti-slavery or contact Alison Rahill at Alison.rahill@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9307 8464

Resources

- The Archdiocese of Sydney's Justice and Peace Office can assist parishes and communities in formation and training for social outreach and engagement in issues of justice and peace. For more information, go to www.justiceandpeace.org.au or contact Fr Peter Smith at peter.smith@sydneycatholic.org or 0408 613 709

Strategy 13 (continued):

Evangelise through Catholic Social Teaching and Works of Mercy

Action 2

Each parish can **review its involvement in the life of the wider community**, and where possible share its facilities and resources with other community groups as appropriate (e.g. disability support, addiction support, bereavement support, seniors', migrant/refugee, and play groups).

Resources

- Some parishes form social justice groups to ensure they maintain awareness and action on these issues. The Archdiocese of Sydney's Justice and Peace Office has produced a booklet *Towards a Social Justice Group* on the purpose of such groups and how to establish them in your local community www.justiceandpeace.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Justice-Peace-Office-Ministry-Resource-2015.pdf
- The Justice and Peace Office also offers workshops on forming and running a social justice group as well as providing formation on Catholic Social Teaching. For more information, go to www.justiceandpeace.org.au or contact Fr Peter Smith at peter.smith@sydneycatholic.org or 0408 613 709
- Work with CatholicCare to convert under-utilised property in the parish to support social housing including accommodation for people with disabilities, those at risk of homelessness, migrants and refugees. For more information, contact Cathy Hammond at cathy.hammond@catholiccare.org or 13 18 19

Action 3

Parishes can **reach out and visit the housebound, those who are sick, and those in nearby nursing homes, hospitals, prisons and detention centres**, promoting these ministries of mercy and accompaniment as an expression of faith and the mission of the parish.

Resources

- For more information and support to build a team of trained volunteer chaplain assistants, contact CatholicCare at www.catholiccare.org/community-services/chaplaincy-services or email Fr Peter Carroll MSC at peter.carroll@catholiccare.org or 13 18 19

Action 4

Each parish should **coordinate and promote practical support to those in need**, e.g. food banks, soup kitchens, a volunteer meal service, St Vincent de Paul Society visits, domestic and family violence assistance, fertility and pregnancy counselling and support.

Resources

- The St Vincent de Paul Society offers help for a range of issues such as addiction, disability, domestic and family violence, finances, food, emergency housing and homelessness. To connect with your local St Vincent de Paul Society conference, visit www.vinnies.org.au/findhelp#!nsw
- Support those services offered in our local parishes, such as those below, and consider whether such a service is needed in your own parish:
 - St Canice's Kitchen in Darlinghurst www.stcanice.org.au/canice-kitchen
 - St Patrick's Breakfast at Church Hill www.stpatschurchhill.org
 - The Kindness Cupboard at Mary Immaculate Parish, Waverley www.catholicweekly.com.au/kindness-cupboard-shows-a-lot-of-heart
 - Manna Foodbox Project at Our Lady of the Rosary Parish, Fairfield www.facebook.com/OLRFairfield/photos/a.914288222002102/2788038114627094
- For fertility and pregnancy counselling and support contact:
 - CatholicCare at www.catholiccare.org/family-and-Individual-services or 13 18 19
 - Pregnancy Help Australia 24/7 Helpline www.pregnancyhelpaustralia.org.au or 1300 139 313
 - Life Choice www.lifechoice.org.au
 - Diamond Women's Support www.diamondwomen.com.au or 1300 851 592
- For assistance with domestic and family violence contact:
 - Mary's House, a domestic violence refuge in northern Sydney; more information at www.maryshouse.org.au
 - Our Lady of the Way, crisis accommodation for women aged over 55 years old at www.vinnies.org.au/page/Find_Help/NSW/Housing/Our_Lady_of_the_Way
- Organisations supporting migrants and refugees:
 - Jesuit Refugee Service provides services, food, accompaniment and advocacy for migrants and refugees in the community www.jrs.org.au/about-us

Action 4

- St Francis Social Services works to uphold the dignity of each person by providing support and advocacy to empower people who are vulnerable and includes the House of Welcome initiative to support refugees and asylum seekers www.stfrancis.org.au
- Other initiatives focused on helping the vulnerable in our community:
 - Matthew Talbot Hostel, accommodation for homeless men https://www.vinnies.org.au/page/Find_Help/NSW/Housing/Matthew_Talbot_Hostel
 - Youth Off the Streets, an organisation to assist homeless and at-risk youth www.youthoffthestreets.com.au
 - St Francis Social Services supports and advocates for disadvantaged young people and their families through their ‘Centre 360’ www.stfrancis.org.au

Parishes can **respond generously to appeals for aid to the poor and disadvantaged**, expressing a faith commitment to social engagement and the service of charity.

Resources

- The Archdiocese of Sydney’s Charitable Works Fund (CWF) supports agencies that help thousands of people every year. These agencies offer comfort to people in crisis, provide advocacy, training and better access for the disadvantaged, support people in their faith development and train our future priests. The CWF supports Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, CatholicCare, chaplaincy services to universities, hospitals and prisons, the Ephpheta Centre for the deaf and hard of hearing, our seminaries, and the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (i.e. the ministry of catechists). Parishes can promote their work and invite donations, drawing on resources available at www.ourfaithourworks.org/cwf
- To fundraise and volunteer for CatholicCare activities that assist the most vulnerable in our society, visit www.curocareforchange.org.au or contact Thomas Ng regarding the CURO program at thomas.ng@catholiccare.org or 13 18 19

Action 5

Sydney parishes can **partner with parishes in developing countries** through agencies such as PALMS and Catholic Mission. Parishes and communities can also support the work of Caritas and Aid to the Church in Need.

Resources

- Palms Australia www.palms.org.au. Contact palms@palms.org.au or (02) 9560 5333

Action 6

Action 6

- Catholic Mission www.catholicmission.org.au. Contact admin@catholicmission.org.au or 1800 257 296
- Aid to the Church in Need www.aidtochurch.org. Contact info@aidtochurch.org or 1800 101 201
- Caritas www.caritas.org.au. Contact questions@caritas.org.au on 1800 024 413

Strategy 14:**Improve Communications for Evangelisation****Action 1**

Be sure to create and regularly maintain a **database of parishioner contacts** or parish ministry contacts including emails and phone numbers. The ability to communicate with parishioners regularly is essential to building community; it is also important should regular face-to-face communication be disrupted as experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Good communication is essential to the proclamation of the Good News. As much as possible, parishes should aspire to **adopt new technologies that can help to share the Gospel in attractive and effective ways**. Invest time in training leaders and staff members who have, or are aspiring to have, responsibility for communications, such as the production of bulletins, design and upkeep of websites, social media, electronic newsletters, communications apps, and other media.

Resources

Action 2

- Communications and media workshops will be offered by the Communications and News Media, Digital and Design and *The Catholic Weekly* teams of the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation, on areas of need as identified by parishes. These quarterly workshops for clergy and lay leaders can include advice and training on skills such as parish photography, the creation of simple news story for sharing on parish websites and social media, advice and guidance on how to respond to media enquiries, tips for the best uses of social media and other means of improving parish communications. To submit suggested areas of training or assistance to support your parish communications or media needs, contact Michael Kenny at michael.kenny@sydneycatholic.org or on 0438 046 406. To receive advanced notice of all workshops, sign up to the *Go Make Disciples* newsletter at www.gomakedisciples.org.au

Action 2

- In the second half of 2021, the Communications teams of the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation will make available to parishes a parish handbook specifically on communications and media promotion. This will include an overview of ways in which parishes can engage digital and printed media for mission, resources and tools to engage to promote an event or occasion, and ideas for engaging the community in parish activities through design and marketing. For information and advice, contact Peter Rodrigues at peter.rodrigues@sydneycatholic.org or on 0409 608 271

Each parish should **establish and/or develop a website** that is easy to navigate and regularly reviewed so that at least the following are available to visitors online. This website should include:

- a vision that describes the fundamental inspiration, evangelising identity, purpose and aspirations of the parish community
- a welcome message from the parish priest
- details of the parish team with contact details
- an accurate list of contact details for the parish team, ministry and prayer groups operating within the parish
- an up-to-date listing of Mass and Reconciliation times (including special Feast Days and Solemnities)
- a page specifically for Catholics considering a return to the Church as well as for enquirers or newcomers to the faith
- the most recent parish bulletins for reading and download
- an online parish calendar and connected social media that is updated and used to promote events in the life of the parish, deanery and Archdiocese and to connect with their local community
- other relevant forms, including parish registration, sacramental preparation, planned giving, and expressions of interest in ministry, prayer and outreach groups
- links to online faith resources, Archdiocesan agencies and services, parish or school childcare services, local Catholic schools, and to neighbouring parishes
- an ability to submit prayer requests and acknowledgement of receipt of these requests
- photos of joyful and attractive events in the life of the parish

Resources

- Contact the Communications team within the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation for help in developing your website via Michael Kenny on 0438 046 406 or cathcomm@sydneycatholic.org

Action 3

Strategy 14 (continued):**Improve Communications for Evangelisation****Action 4**

Share initiatives, events and positive stories about your parish community that can help to inspire and encourage others in discipleship and evangelisation.

Resources

- The Sydney Centre for Evangelisation's Communications and News Media team and *The Catholic Weekly* team will continue to engage with parishes and invite the sharing of stories, for promotion and awareness via *The Catholic Weekly*, social media platforms of the Archdiocese and the broader media. To share your local parish stories, contact Ben Conolly at benjamin.conolly@sydneycatholic.org or on 0423 151 666

Action 5

Invest time in ensuring that parish staff and leaders learn more about **promoting parish events effectively in your local community**.

Resources

- The Sydney Centre for Evangelisation's Digital and Design team can provide Sydney parishes with templates for typical parish event promotions, working together with each parish to suggest ways in which to streamline and enhance their promotion of events through tools and resources available for such parish communications. This team can also provide advice on the design of parish bulletins, and direct parishes to websites for photos and clipart and the like. For information and advice, contact Peter Rodrigues at peter.rodrigues@sydneycatholic.org or on 0409 608 271





Step 4: Act

In deciding on and then taking these actions forward, the parish priest can work together with the Parish Pastoral Council or relevant ministry leaders to create action groups, sub-committees or a team for evangelisation, established for a definite duration. These groups should ideally include at least one member of the Parish Pastoral Council, to ensure alignment with the wider vision and planning of the parish as a whole, and lead and invite others into these efforts toward renewal.

Your parish can also consider forming a senior leadership team that can focus upon assisting in the ongoing practical strategies and decisions needed to implement the parish plan for evangelisation, which allows the Parish Pastoral Council to focus on the longer term future of the parish. Read more about the role of a senior leadership team to bring the vision of the parish into reality in this Mission Plan's chapter on Leadership.

Looking for Support?

Established by Archbishop Fisher OP in 2020, the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation dedicates itself to the support of parishes, migrant chaplaincies and other Eucharistic communities in their fidelity to the person and mission of Jesus Christ.

Charged with the development and implementation of our Archdiocesan Mission Plan, *Go Make Disciples*, our teams work together with the priests, parishes and communities of Sydney, with the conviction that the encounter with Jesus Christ changes lives.

As well, we believe that every parish and offer Eucharistic community is a true sign and witness to the presence of Christ, a people gathered around the Word and sacraments where faith is nurtured into discipleship and enters the world through words and deeds. In this way, every parish, migrant chaplaincy, and ecclesial movement is a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit who keeps us faithful to Jesus in the present and sends us out to share His Good News with boldness.

Whether through assisting local communities in the work of parish renewal, accompanying the newly engaged in their journey to marriage, or sharing the Good News in Sydney through digital media and communications, our staff are committed to serving the spiritual needs of a changing city and suburbs and to supporting the call to discipleship that is made to all.



SYDNEY CENTRE *for*
EVANGELISATION

The work of the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation is exercised through the following teams:

- 1 **The Parish Renewal Team** supports parishes that are seeking to renew their communities as places of encounter with the living Christ and centres of evangelisation and outreach in love and mercy. The team does this principally by providing practical support for parishes and other Eucharistic communities seeking to engage strategies for spiritual and structural renewal outlined in this Archdiocesan Mission Plan, *Go Make Disciples*. For support, contact the team at parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9390 5330.
- 2 **Sydney Catholic Youth** serves the commission of Christ to “go make disciples” with young people of the Archdiocese, walking with them toward an ever-deeper encounter with Jesus in the midst of the Church for the transformation of the world. For support, contact the team at info@sydneycatholicyouth.org or (02) 9307 8152.
- 3 **Life, Marriage and Family** provides parish-based marriage and family support, supporting, guiding and building up a culture of life, marriage and family within parishes, migrant chaplaincies and deaneries. For support, contact the team at steven.buhagiar@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9307 8480.
- 4 **Communications and News Media** promotes the message of the Gospel through sharing the value and good works of the Catholic Church, inviting an awareness of and relationship with Christ and His Church. For support, contact the team at michael.kenny@sydneycatholic.org or 0438 046 406.
- 5 **Digital and Design** creatively responds to the call to invite people into an encounter with Jesus, embracing traditional and digital media to ensure this Good News reaches the People of God and the wider community. For support, contact the team at creative@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9390 5327.
- 6 **The Catholic Weekly** serves the Church by disseminating news, information and stories to inform and assist the daily lives of Catholics, their families and parish and migrant communities. For support, contact the team at peter.rosengren@catholicweekly.com.au or (02) 9390 5327.
- 7 **The Mustard Seed Bookshop** stocks a range of resources that support all aspects of evangelisation. Explore their resources for your parish in the ‘Parish Renewal’ section on the bookshop website at www.mustardseed.org.au or in-store at 133 Liverpool Street, Sydney. Contact the team at bookshop@mustardseed.org.au or (02) 9307 8350.



Foundation 2

LEADERSHIP

Introduction

The gifts He gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ”.

Ephesians 4:11-12

Leadership is foundational in our continuation of Jesus’ mission today and an essential part of the cultural change required if parishes are to be renewed and become centres of missionary discipleship. In these times of change and challenge for faith, leadership for mission will involve the ability to influence, serve and move people toward an embrace of Jesus’ Great Commission to make disciples and to the work of building God’s Kingdom.

Leadership was central to the ministry of Jesus. Amidst the teeming crowds seeking out His help, Jesus still took the time to gather a group of leaders around Him: forming, correcting and inspiring them; calling them into deeper discipleship; helping them to understand what impeded their leadership; and creating a culture of leadership as service. Jesus expressed compassion for people who did not have leaders (Mark 6:34), was critical of those who exercised their leadership without a spirit of service (Matthew 20:25), who failed to use their position to lead people to God (Matthew 23:4-13; Luke 11:52) or who used their power to serve their own status (Matthew 23:6-7).

Discipleship and Leadership

To encounter Christ and become His disciple means to be given a mission to lead others to Him. This pattern in Scripture is unmistakable: those who experience a profound encounter with God are then given a mission to lead others to God. St Peter encounters Jesus in the miraculous catch and is called to follow Him and become a “fisher of men” (Matthew 4:19). Likewise, St Paul has a blinding encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus and is then called into God’s service in such a profound way that he proclaims “[w]oe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!” (1 Corinthians 9:16).

The grace of discipleship is not merely a gift for ourselves. It is given to us to be shared with others through our participation in God’s mission, to reconcile the world to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:19). Leadership is for every disciple.

The Role of Leaders

Leaders in parish life are called to **discern and present a compelling vision** of how the parish can cooperate with the Holy Spirit to continue Jesus’ mission today and call others to bring that vision to life. Parish renewal and transformation will remain a theory unless we have clear and consistent leadership that communicates and inspires the engagement of the whole community in Christ’s mission.

Leaders will also **recognise, call forward and enable the expression of various gifts or charisms** given by the Holy Spirit in the community of faith. They will also seek to discover the natural talents, God-given gifts and experience of parishioners in order to invite them into appropriate forms of service in the parish. As the First Letter of St Peter affirms, “whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 4:11). Just as Jesus develops and builds up the twelve disciples, leaders of mission seek to identify and equip other leaders in the Christian community who serve the Gospel. Parishes are impoverished when we do not get to know the gifts of our

Sebastiano Ricci,
The Miraculous Draught of Fishes, c. between 1695 and 1697
Gift of the Matilda R. Wilson Fund in memory of Matilda R. Wilson

people, discern proper opportunities for them to serve, affirm and encourage the gifts we see in them, personally invite them into service, and provide them with the ongoing formation, accompaniment and support they need to serve well. When parishioners are encouraged to lead out of their God-given strengths, the whole community thrives.

A further call of leadership is to **make concrete plans to bring the vision of the parish to reality**. With a passion for the renewal of our parishes in service of Jesus' mission, parish leaders consult, prayerfully discern, and decide on priorities, make plans and draw together diverse gifts toward the accomplishment of the parish vision. Mission-oriented communities that seek to broaden and deepen their outreach require leaders who work together in a spirit of co-responsibility and mutuality.

Forms of Leadership

There are many forms of leadership in our Eucharistic communities. These forms of leadership do not compete with one another, for each operates within its proper sphere and, united by the Spirit, they work together to build up the Body of Christ.

The **priest** is responsible for the oversight, pastoral care and pastoral planning of one or more parishes. He leads the parish or faith community, teaches the Catholic faith, sanctifies through the sacraments and other rites of the Church and, in union with the **bishop**, builds up the communion of the Church. Practically speaking, the priest leads the pastoral planning of the community and, with his lay collaborators, identifies and implements the priorities of mission in the local area. With the authority of their bishop, **deacons** assist in preaching the Gospel, assisting at Mass, in pastoral governance, and in carrying out the service of charity.

There is also the leadership of **lay men and women**, and sometimes **consecrated men and women**, who serve alongside their pastor in parish ministries, some of whom coordinate the



service of others. All the baptised who seek to incarnate the Gospel in their lives, relationships and wider community exercise a form of Christian leadership through the authority of a holy life of discipleship which witnesses to Christ and leads others to Him. Pope John Paul II reiterated this teaching, found in *Lumen Gentium*, on the responsibility of the laity:

“...when we become aware that we share in Christ's triple mission, His triple office as priest, as prophet and as king, we also become more aware of what must receive service from the whole of the Church as the society and community of the People of God on earth, and we likewise understand how each one of us must share in this mission and service”¹

Today, lay people also lead and help direct many pastoral works (e.g. Parish Pastoral Councils, Parish Finance Committees, choirs, St Vincent de Paul Society conferences, prayer groups, catechetics, sacramental preparation), as well as Catholic preschools, schools and universities, hospitals and healthcare facilities, welfare services and much else besides.

The Importance of a Leadership Team

St Paul reminded us that that no one person has all the gifts that are needed for the flourishing of the Christian community, but that there are **many parts that contribute to the growth of the whole body** (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). A leadership team can be a critical support to both clergy and lay leaders as they seek to lead change and foster a missionary culture within parish life. Building a leadership team models Jesus’ own ministry, bringing others into the dignity of the service for which they were made, and enriching the parish and beyond with the many talents, vocations and charisms that God has gifted to His people.

Healthy teams are characterised by relationships of mutual trust, in which leaders identify and work together as a team, embrace shared values that unite the team, remain focused on a clear and compelling mission, have clearly defined roles and responsibilities, encompass diverse gifts, and are committed to growing and changing together.

Moreover, leadership can be expressed in many ways according to the gifts of the individuals. God calls people as different as St John the Baptist, the Prophet Jeremiah, St Peter, St Francis of Assisi and St Mary of the Cross MacKillop and, in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, their “hidden self” grows strong so that they lead others to Christ (Ephesians 3:16).

¹ Pope John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis* 18.

Strengthening the Foundation of Leadership

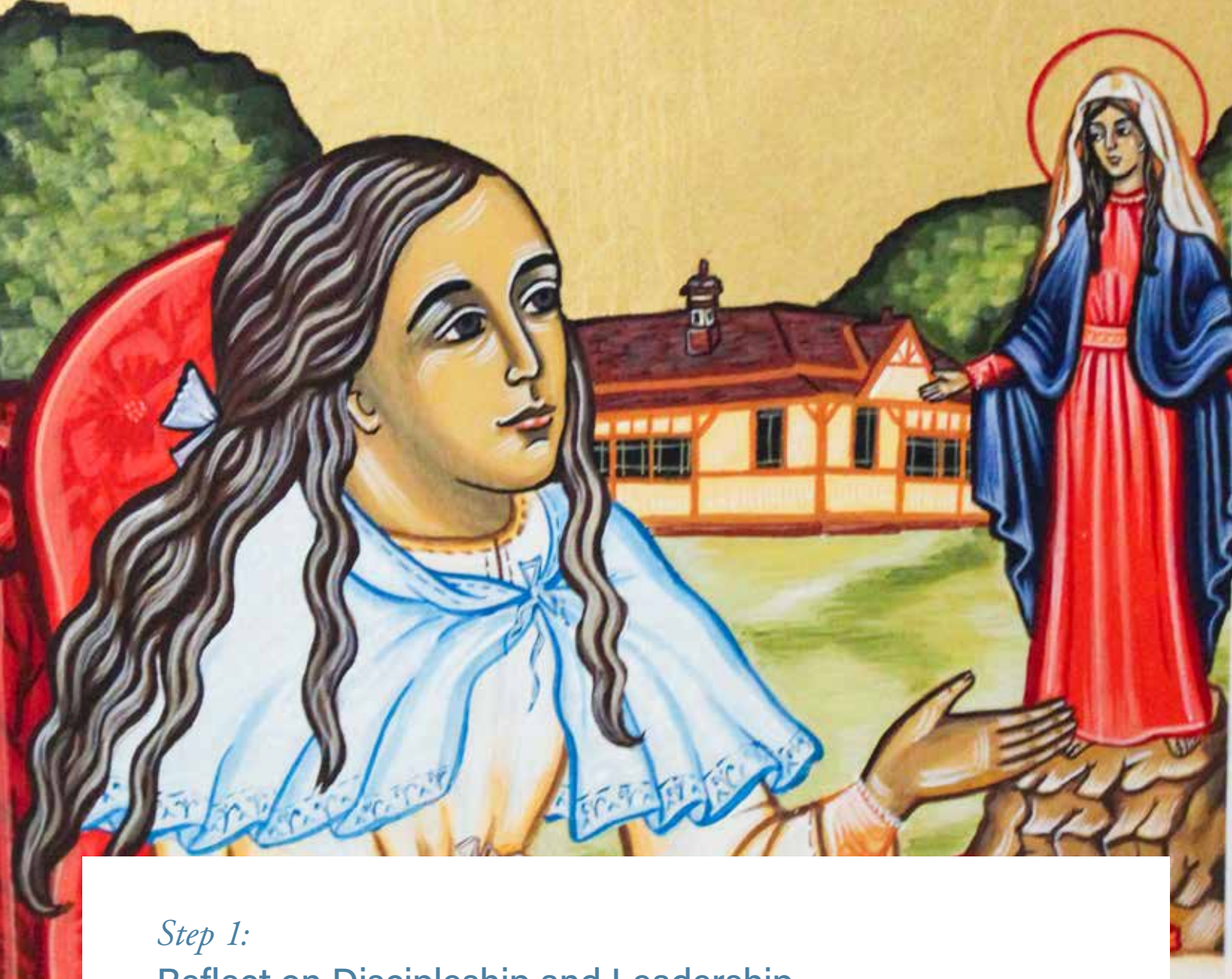
If communities of missionary disciples are built on a strong foundation of leadership, this means the mission to lead others to Christ should be central to our identity as communities of disciples, and be reflected in the priorities and actions of our community. We strengthen the leadership in our parishes when we help people discover their gifts and charisms, discern and commit to the mission to which they are called, and give them opportunities to grow as leaders.

Below is a four (4) step process which your community may choose to undertake to **reflect** upon the place of leadership in your identity as a community of disciples, **review** how that identity is being expressed in the actions and priorities of your community, **discern and decide** how God might be calling your community to strengthen that foundation, and take particular **actions** with the help of the support and resources outlined in this Mission Plan.

This four step process can be led by the parish priest with his parish leadership team or through attending a *Parishes for Mission* day offered regionally and online by the Parish Renewal Team within the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation. These days will provide leaders with formation in mission, strategies to assess and strengthen foundations for mission, and practical ways to create and implement a vision for the community. For more details, visit www.gomakedisciples.org.au or contact the Parish Renewal Team on (02) 9390 5330 or at parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org.

Marcantonio Raimondi,
Saint Paul Preaching in Athens, After Raphael, c. 1517–20
Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1917





Step 1:

Reflect on Discipleship and Leadership

1.1 To be a disciple is to be a 'fisher of men'. The following are biblical accounts of disciples as they experience an encounter with God and are called into leadership. The parish priest and leadership team can reflect together on one or both of these encounters and calls:

- St Peter's encounter and call in Luke 5:1-11 and John 21:15-19
- St Paul's encounter and call in Acts 9:3-19

Questions for reflection:

- a. What word or phrase struck you?
- b. Did these passages offer any insight on discipleship and mission?
- c. How do you think these disciples felt about Jesus' call to mission?
- d. You might share your experience of encountering Jesus and your call to mission.
- e. What insights did these biblical accounts offer to you about leadership?

*Step 2:***Review Leadership in Your Parish**

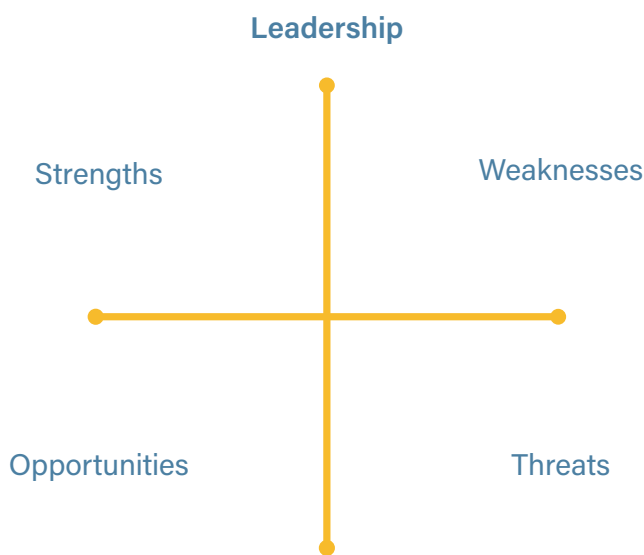
2.1 There are many tools and resources that can assist your parish team, Parish Pastoral Council, ministry group leaders and parishioners to grow in their leadership and co-responsibility in God's mission. The first practical tool is to evaluate the model of leadership in your parish. Spend some time reflecting upon leadership in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Consider whether your parish sees leadership as a part of the identity of the parish community and expresses it through their actions and priorities. Using the questions below as a tool, consider whether your parish's understanding of leadership is similar or different to that modelled by Jesus.

- Jesus chose leaders to bring others to Himself, calling them to be “fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19). Do we see the primary role of leadership in our parish as leading others to Christ and how does the practical exercise of our leadership express this purpose?
- Jesus washed His disciples' feet and told them they should do the same (John 13:15). How do we model and promote a servant leadership that makes disciples and leaders of others?
- Jesus gathered a leadership group around Him and spent time forming them. Do we have a leadership group that undertakes formation for mission and works with our priest to implement the vision of our parish? How can this culture of collaboration and formation be established or strengthened in our parish?
- At the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus encouraged His leaders to take initiative, to “give them something to eat yourselves” (Matthew 14:16) in cooperation with Him. How are our leaders encouraged to take appropriate forms of initiative in cooperation with their pastor and in order to respond to needs and for evangelisation?
- Jesus spent considerable time forming His leaders. He helped them to go deeper in their own discipleship (Matthew 16:24-25) and to understand things that were impeding their leadership (Matthew 17:19-20). He also corrected them when they were wrong (Matthew 16:23) and created a culture of service, critiquing the influence of ego, power and status (Luke 9:46). How do we provide ongoing formation for our leaders to grow in Christ-centred leadership?

- Jesus saw particular gifts in people and called them into particular service; consider St Peter and St Paul. Do we discern the gifts and charisms of particular people and call them into leadership?
- Jesus provided feedback to His leaders and prized a healthy culture among His disciples. Do we have a culture of providing charitable and constructive feedback to leaders, both formally and informally, in service of the excellence and health of our relationships with and service of our people?
- Jesus draws others into service. St Paul proclaimed that there are many parts that contribute to the body of Christ. Do our leaders seek to make leaders of others, actively seeking out others who would like to be part of the mission of the parish, inviting, encouraging and supporting their active contribution?

By undertaking this exercise with your parish team or parish groups, you can begin to identify ways in which your leadership model can grow closer to the model we find in Scripture. It can assist to identify areas of growth and changes that will strengthen your parish community for mission and the development of leaders.

2.2 Carry out a SWOT analysis on how your parish forms and supports leaders.



After you have reviewed this, consider the following:

1. What current strength in leadership formation can our parish most easily build upon?
2. What current weakness in leadership formation would be the easiest one to fix?

3. What is the greatest opportunity in leadership formation we could seize upon with the least amount of time and resources?
4. What is the most immediate or greatest threat we need to address for leadership formation to grow and renew our community?

2.3 Review how your leaders identify volunteers.

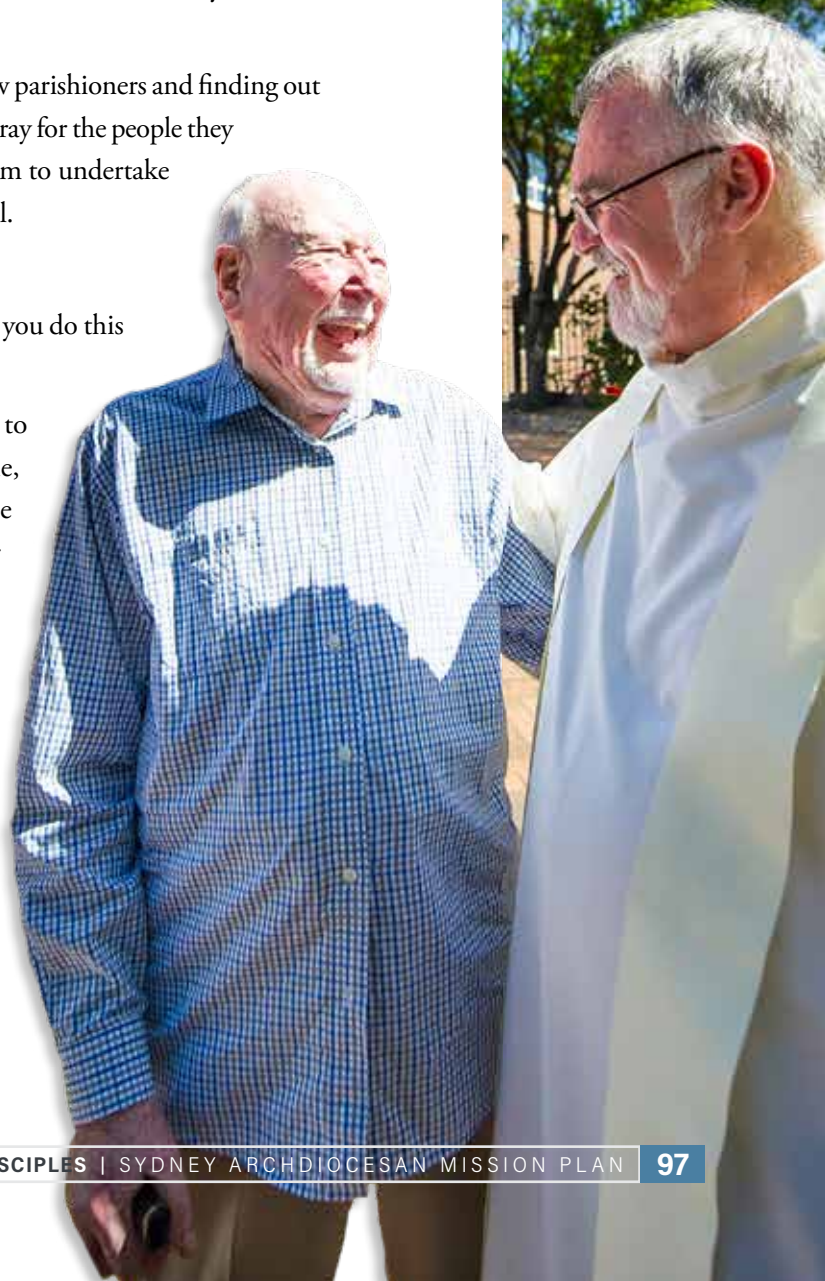
An important part of leadership is to identify the gifts of others, invite them to serve, and support them to grow in their service. How does your parish identify volunteers for ministries? We can reactively seek people out when others leave a ministry or pastoral work, often through announcements or the parish bulletin. However, we are invited by the Church to more closely attend to people's God-given gifts and natural skills, inviting them to exercise ministries and pastoral care that align with their capacities rather than their mere availability.

Sometimes people have extraordinary gifts, charisms, skills and talents but they do not necessarily have the confidence to step forward. We often find this situation in Scripture – individuals who are called by God but who do not always feel assured at the outset.

Parish leaders should spend time getting to know parishioners and finding out what gifts they have been given. Leaders should pray for the people they come to know and, at the right time, invite them to undertake something specific that relates to this gift or skill.

Tips for asking people to volunteer:

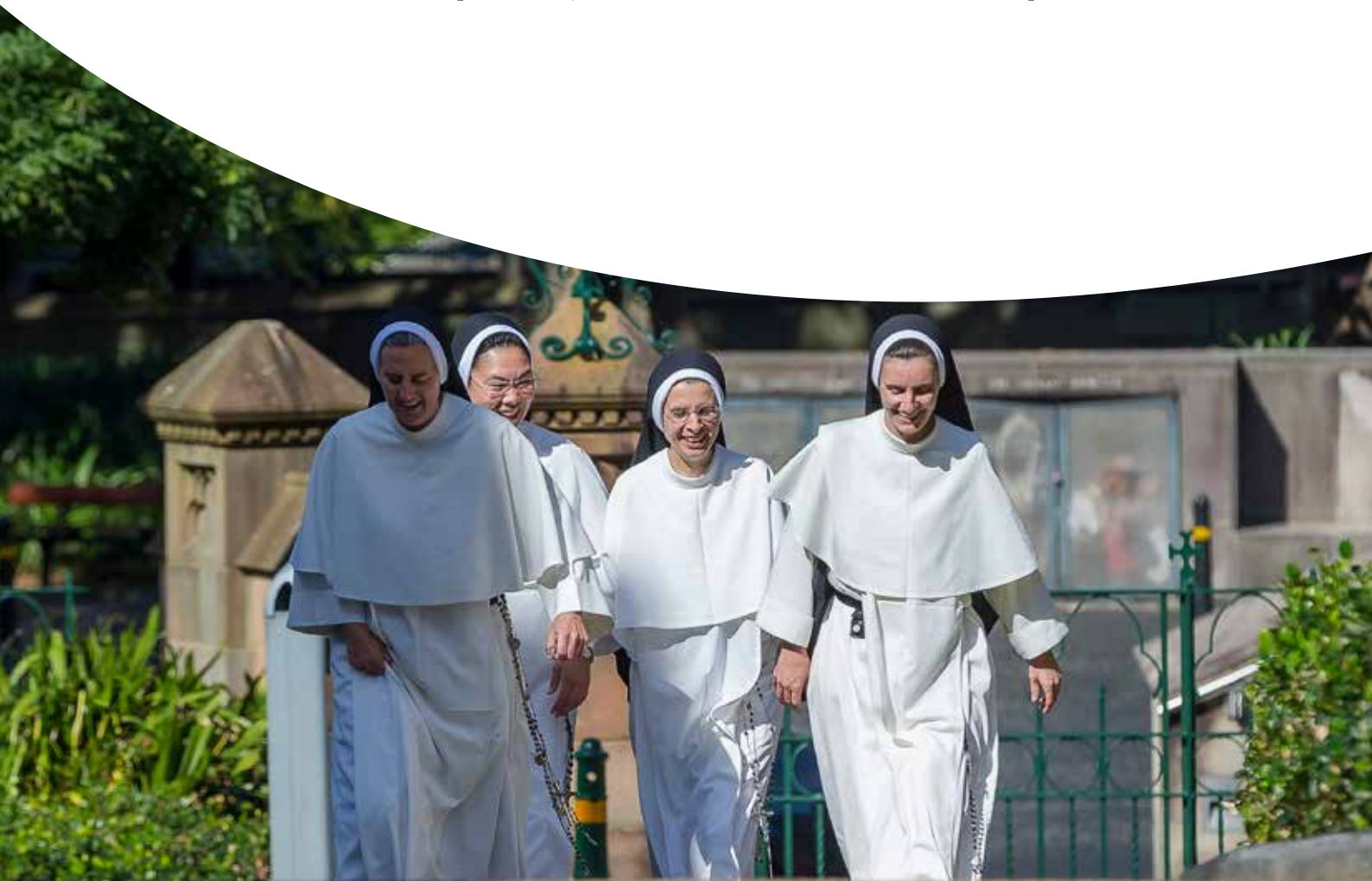
- It is important to pray for the person when you do this and to want whatever is best for them.
- In a healthy community, it is important to develop genuine relationships with people, getting to know them, and discerning the right time to invite them into service rather than only inviting them to serve without familiarity with their story or context.
- Do not ask casually but be quite deliberate in inviting participation. You might share with the person that you have noticed that he or she has a particular gift or skill for some time. Ask if he or she would consider using that gift or skill in the parish and explain more about the team he or she could assist.



Sometimes it can be important to affirm the gifts of others more than once because many people do not realise how gifted they are or have the confidence to contribute immediately.

- If a person is shy, he or she might feel embarrassed if asked to serve in the presence of others or without warning. It is best to pick a time and a setting that you think will make the person comfortable to listen to you and consider his or her involvement.
- The timing of an invitation can be important. If a person has a lot of stress or pressure in life, this might not be the right time to ask him or her to serve. It is important not to be concerned if the person cannot serve immediately as he or she may serve in the future.
- When inviting people to serve, allay their concerns about the level of commitment involved. Exactly what will be the time commitment in this particular task or service? Are they open to trying this task or form of service once to see if it is right for them? The more prepared we are in making such invitations and providing assurance, the more fruitful our invitations to leadership and service are likely to be.

Many people respond well to being asked in this way because we are giving them the courtesy of treating them as individuals and really seeing their gifts. This imitates the personal way in which God calls individuals to serve in Scripture.



Step 3:

Discern and Decide how to Strengthen Leadership in Your Parish

- 3.1 By now, you should have a clearer sense of the place that leadership holds in your community's sense of identity as disciples and how that foundation is currently being expressed in the actions and priorities of your community. The next step is to discern and decide how God might be calling your particular community to strengthen its leadership for mission.
- 3.2 As shared on page 61, discernment is a process of not simply choosing some good thing, but of trying to listen carefully to what God is asking you to do in a given situation. Resources for a group discernment process are available at www.gomakedisciples.org.au, or the Parish Renewal Team can facilitate the conversation for you at a **Parishes for Mission** day. For more details, contact the team on (02) 9390 5330 or at parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org
- 3.3 Some things to consider in your initial conversation include:
 - a. What is our model of leadership and how could it be improved?
 - b. Do we offer formation to our leaders?
 - c. The role of leaders is to create and communicate a vision for mission, call forth the sharing of charisms and other gifts for the building up of the community, and create a plan to implement the parish vision. What steps could we take to enhance this essential work of leaders?
 - d. Which of the strategies below is God calling us to implement so we develop and strengthen leadership in our parish or Eucharistic community?

Your parish or other community may already be doing many of the good things outlined. However, there will also be actions that your community can take up to strengthen leadership as a foundation of your identity as a parish. Many of these actions will also be applicable to migrant chaplaincies, shrines and ecclesial movements in the Archdiocese of Sydney.

Strategy 1:

Create a Parish Vision and Plan

The parish priest should work collaboratively with a Parish Pastoral Council and ministry leaders to develop **a clear parish vision and a plan to implement that vision**, taking into account the local needs of the parish and wider community as well as Jesus' vision for making disciples and the five foundations of His life and ministry (i.e. evangelisation, leadership, community, formation and worship).

The purpose of a Parish Pastoral Council is to promote and support the evangelising mission of the parish, working in collaboration with the parish priest or duly appointed administrator to foster the spiritual and pastoral life of all the Christian faithful. The Parish Pastoral Council enables the members of the parish community to fulfil their baptismal calling to share in Christ's mission and to connect their needs and their strengths with the parish's plans for the future.

It undertakes this planning in consultation with the parish community, attending to the mandate of the Gospel, the communion of the parish with the Archdiocese, and by studying the pastoral realities of the parish and the wider community. Through a process of dialogue, the Parish Pastoral Council then provides recommendations to respond to the spiritual and material needs of all God's people and to take forward the vision of the parish. Resources to assist in this planning and to develop the vision of the parish are available from the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation.

A parish vision describes what a community seeks to be and where it is headed. It also shares clear expectations that anticipate God's movement and growth in all those who become a part of the community of faith (e.g. "Saint Benedict Parish is a healthy and growing faith community that brings people to Christ, forms disciples and sends them out to transform the world. Every member is committed to worship, to grow, to serve, to connect and to give").

Once formed, this vision should be communicated and sustained by leadership through preaching, by investing this vision in key people of influence in the community (e.g. the parish team, Parish Pastoral Council and ministry leaders), by consistent communication in the ministries and works of the parish, and allowing this vision to shape practical decisions and priorities of the parish.

Strategy 1 (continued):

Create a Parish Vision and Plan

A parish pastoral plan can be developed by the priest(s) of the parish together with the Parish Pastoral Council, taking into consideration the elements below:

- the vision or purpose for which the parish exists
- the pastoral reality of the parish, what we know about its people, demographics, Mass attendances, the wider community and the current commitments and resources of the parish (helpful data is available from the National Centre for Pastoral Research at <https://ncpr.catholic.org.au> while parishes can engage with other studies and surveys including the five-yearly National Church Life Survey at www.ncls.org.au)
- the priorities that will best enable the parish to accomplish its mission
- the strategies that will assist these priorities to come to life
- the specific actions the parish can take to accomplish its strategy, when these actions are to be taken, who can best take them forward, and how the effectiveness of these actions can be reviewed and measured

Resources

- The Parish Renewal Team will facilitate *Parishes for Mission* days during which leadership teams can receive formation in mission and begin to develop a vision and implementation plan for their parish. For more details, contact the team on (02) 9390 5330 or parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org
- Sample parish plans and related resources are also available at www.gomakedisciples.org.au

Strategy 2:

Implement the Vision

Action 1

The parish priest together with the Parish Pastoral Council or relevant ministry leaders can decide to **create sub-committees or action groups** to take forward each of the five priorities or those identified to be most central to the discipleship and growth of the community. It is recommended that these sub-committees or groups include at least one member of the Parish Pastoral Council to ensure alignment with the wider vision and planning of the parish as a whole.

Action 2

The parish priest might decide to **create a senior leadership team**, leading out of a team that works collaboratively in the implementation of the parish pastoral plan. While the Parish Pastoral Council focuses on the longer-term pastoral plan of the parish, a senior leadership team complements parish staff as key advisors to the priest, assisting in the ongoing practical strategies and decisions needed to implement the plan. Senior leadership teams generally meet weekly in order to address the current need for decisions and practical action. The senior leadership team consists of four to six members and is chosen by the parish priest. It might include assistant priests, parish staff and/or lay leaders whom the parish priest can confidently work well with and who have gifts that complement and enrich those of the parish priest.

Resources

- For tips in creating a senior leadership team, see Chapter 12, *Divine Renovation: Beyond the Parish* by Fr James Mallon, available at the Mustard Seed Bookshop (02) 9307 8350 or www.mustardseed.org.au



Strategy 3:

Provide Formation for Leaders

Action 1

The parish can **invest in key leaders through leadership retreats** where leaders can be affirmed, supported, listened to, equipped and encouraged. This might involve a morning of prayer and reflection that gathers all parish ministry leaders and potential leaders of ministries together, unpacks the parish vision, gathers feedback, enables leaders to speak to and learn from one another, and to learn about some aspect of leadership. Parishioners or external speakers can be engaged to share the leadership principles and insights that they have acquired through family or work life or by their experience in the Church or pastoral ministry.

A leadership retreat can also be dedicated to parish staff or Parish Pastoral Council members, to enable prayer and to build up the collaboration and unity of key leaders and advisors in the mission of the parish.

Resources

- Leadership retreats will be coordinated by the Parish Renewal Team for the benefit of parishes including input from experienced Church leaders and Catholic partner organisations. For more information on leadership retreats, contact the Parish Renewal Team on (02) 9390 5330 or parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org

Action 2

Parishes may also **support lay leaders to undertake the 'Foundations of Missionary Leadership' course made available through the Areté Centre**, a work of the Missionaries of God's Love. This course equips those in pastoral and ministry leadership with the skills needed for the Church's mission in the world today, by bringing together sound theological knowledge coupled with the dynamic and life changing encounter with the living God. Areas of formation include the spirituality of missionary leadership, theological foundations for mission in the Australian context, ministerial leadership theory and praxis, electives and a supervised ministry placement to develop methodology and skills for ministry. For more information, visit www.aretecentre.org/courses.

Resources

- Parish priests who are committed and interested in sending at least two parishioners to the course should contact Elizabeth Arblaster at elizabeth.arblaster@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9390 5307 for information about potential subsidies on offer

Strategy 3 (continued):

Provide Formation for Leaders

Leaders in parish life can develop and strengthen a culture of strengths-based ministry and co-responsibility by inviting parish staff, ministry leaders and groups to **identify their strengths via an assessment tool** such as APEST, the Clifton StrengthsFinder survey, 'Called and Gifted' workshops or similar.

When we better understand our strengths and weaknesses, we can lean into and apply our strengths with more intentionality in service of the parish and its mission. We can also then look to complement and work with the strengths of others in areas where we may not be as gifted. This self-assessment process can lead to the development of well-rounded parish and ministry teams, as well as assist in our recruitment of new leaders and volunteers who can bring gifts and abilities we need to enable our community to flourish. We can better understand our leadership and that of others through the lens of Scripture, specifically St Paul's letter to the Ephesians, "[e]ach of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift ... The gifts He gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:7, 11-12).

Resources

- **The APEST assessment tool** is an inexpensive way of gaining insight into the type of leadership that motivates or is expressed by leaders in your community, whether that be of the apostle whose strength is to extend and transmit the Gospel, the prophet who corrects and challenges the dominant assumptions of our culture, the evangelist who recruits others to the Gospel cause, the shepherd who focuses on the protection and spiritual maturity of God's flock, or the teacher who understands and explains. This self-understanding can encourage new learning and enables leaders to work out of their gifts while aware of their limitations and the complementary strengths of others. We need the exercise of all the charisms for the Church to be healthy. The APEST assessment tool is available at www.5qcentral.com/product/apest-vocational-assessment
- Another tool for the assessment of strengths among parish leaders is the **Clifton StrengthsFinder** tool. This assessment uncovers which talents and strengths leaders rely upon to build relationships, think strategically, execute plans, and influence others to accomplish goals. This knowledge can enable parish leaders to be fruitful by doing what they naturally do best and can positively impact on the way they lead in community life. Both a 'Top 5' StrengthsFinder test as well as the complete 34 StrengthsFinder test are available at www.gallupstrengthscenter.com

Strategy 4:

Discern Charisms and Natural Gifts

Action 1

Invite your parish team, leaders and groups to discern their charisms. The discernment of charisms or supernatural gifts is also essential to Christian leadership and can be supported by a tool such as the **‘Called and Gifted’ process**, made available by the Catherine of Siena Institute. Charisms are special abilities given to all Christians by the Holy Spirit and exercised in the service of God. The ‘Called and Gifted’ process lays the foundation for the beginning of discernment by way of accessible workshops on the critical role of charisms in the life and service of lay Catholics and the ordained, and in the life of the parish. A guide to the signs and characteristics of charisms and a spiritual gifts inventory are included in the process to aid the discernment of these gifts.

Resources

- Information, resources and an online version of ‘Called and Gifted’ are now available at www.siena.org/called-gifted. For orientation and associated resources, contact the Parish Renewal Team on (02) 9390 5330 or parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org, which can coordinate these opportunities in collaboration with the Catherine of Siena Institute. A modest fee to the Institute applies

Action 2

Members of families and groups of friends know the talents, gifts, and experience that each has. When we want to achieve something together or need assistance of some kind, we will often seek out the help of the people who are gifted in our area of need. Similarly, **our parish leaders are called to better know the gifts of their people**, to seek out and encourage their use for evangelisation and the growth of Christ’s mission. Our parishes are filled with talented readers, musicians, communications specialists, people who excel in hospitality, teaching, the arts, strategists, planners, accountants, finance experts, lawyers, mentors, tradespeople, and graphic designers. Gifts and experiences such as these can be engaged for God’s glory and mission **through inviting and raising leaders**. Some of these gifts are not being exercised in our parishes because they have never been invited or called forward, named or identified.

Resources:

- See details on recruiting volunteers effectively in paragraph 2.3 on page 97

Strategy 5:

Engaging the Parish Pastoral Council

As **Parish Pastoral Councils are recommended for each parish of the Archdiocese**, any parish without one is to consider establishing one as soon as possible. A Parish Pastoral Council enables the members of the parish community to fulfil their baptismal calling to share in Christ's mission and to connect their needs and their strengths with the parish's plans for the future.

New Parish Pastoral Councils are to draw up their own statutes with resort to the advice of Archdiocesan guidelines, available for download at www.gomakedisciples.org.au. Established Parish Pastoral Councils should revisit their statutes and discuss their practice to ensure the Council operates effectively in investigating pastoral situations, reflecting on them, drawing appropriate conclusions, and recommending strategic actions to the parish priest.

Parish Pastoral Councils are to be separate and distinct from, but collaborate with, Parish Finance Committees that are mandatory in the Archdiocese. Each Parish Finance Committee should look to the parish priest and Parish Pastoral Council for a pastoral plan and clear priorities, while the parish priest and Parish Pastoral Council should look to the Parish Finance Committee for sound financial guidance, to ensure adequate finance for agreed pastoral priorities, and other resources needed to develop and implement the parish plan for mission.

The Parish Pastoral Council is key in working with their priest to undertake the pastoral planning process in which the current situation is reviewed and a long-term vision for the parish is developed. The senior leadership team then implements this vision.

Resources

- Work with your Parish Pastoral Council to establish a vision for your parish using the 'reflect, review, discern and decide, and act' process in this plan, or attend a ***Parishes for Mission*** day run by the Parish Renewal Team; for further details contact the team at parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9390 5330
- Develop a greater understanding of the role of the Parish Pastoral Council, its purpose, membership and best practices through the following:
 - *Handbook for Parish Pastoral Councils* by Cecilia Anning. Available at no cost from www.evangelisationbrisbane.org.au/shop/free-resources
 - *Making Parish Councils Pastoral* by Mark F. Fischer
 - *Four Ways to Build More Effective Parish Councils: A Pastoral Approach* by Mark F. Fischer and Mary Margaret Raley

Strategy 6:

Engaging the Parish Finance Committee

Parishes may want to invest in greater formation for both their leaders and parishioners concerning the Catholic tradition of ‘**stewardship**’, which is the responsibility to care for and use prudently our temporal resources for the sake of mission.

Resources

- Fr Michael White and Tom Corcoran's book *Church Money: Rebuilding the Way We Fund Our Mission* is a helpful resource focused on the financial health of Catholic parish life. It outlines principles for matching parishioners' commitment to the mission of the parish with financial support, strengthening the stewardship of resources already received, outlines the relationship between discipleship and money, and provides practical ways of raising givers in the parish. This will be of interest to pastors, financial managers and accountants, finance and parish council members, donors and potential donors and anyone interested in the financial health of their parish. To order a copy from the Mustard Seed Bookshop, visit www.mustardseed.org.au or call (02) 9307 8350
- *Making Stewardship a Way of Life: A Complete Guide for Catholic Parishes* by Andrew Kemberling and Mila Glodava. A practical guide to developing a stewardship program for Catholic parishes
- *Catholic Stewardship: Sharing God's Gifts* by Colleen Smith. This booklet can help parishioners to understand the need to grow as stewards, and how Catholics can give of their time, money and abilities to build up God's Kingdom
- To order copies from the Mustard Seed Bookshop, visit www.mustardseed.org.au or call (02) 9307 8350
- A summary of the U.S. Bishops' Pastoral Letter on stewardship *To Be a Christian Steward* is available at www.usccb.org/committees/evangelization-catechesis/stewardship



Strategy 6 (continued):

Engaging the Parish Finance Committee

Action 2

The **Parish Finance Committee** assists the parish priest to ensure parish budgeting is transparent and, with the support of the Archdiocesan Development and Fundraising Office, investigates ways for the parish community to be financially sustainable and invest in spiritual renewal. This might include fundraising, growing contributions through technology (e.g. ‘tap and go’ donations) and online giving, and reviewing income from parish facilities and properties with the support of the Archdiocesan Property and Infrastructure team.

Resources

- For more information regarding fundraising, email Michael Mendieta at fundraising@sydneycatholic.org or phone 1800 753 959
- For support on ‘tap and go’ donations, contact the Parish Support and Development Team at parishsupport@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9390 5233

Action 3

The Parish Finance Committee might **coordinate a ‘Stewardship Sunday’**, or similar, once per year during which parishioners are encouraged to make an ongoing financial commitment to the parish. At the same time, parishioners can be invited to consider ways of contributing their gifts to the parish mission, by such means as giving their time and strengths to the implementation of parish priorities, ministries, or Christian outreach in the wider community.

Resources

- For formation in stewardship and fundraising, contact the Archdiocesan Development and Fundraising Office at fundraising@sydneycatholic.org or phone 1800 753 95

Action 4

Parishes can ensure that parishioners are made regularly **aware of the needs and financial health of the parish** and the impact of their giving as stewards of the parish’s life and mission.

Resources

- The parish priest can request an overview of their parish’s financial health through the Parish Support and Development Team on (02) 9390 5233 or parishsupport@sydneycatholic.org

Strategy 6 (continued):

Action 5

Engaging the Parish Finance Committee

The Archdiocesan Development and Fundraising Office (DFO) now has a Fundraising Campaign Specialist (Parishes) to **identify prospective leaders within the parish, and empower them to assist with parish development, volunteer programs and fundraising initiatives**. This is part of the Parish Fundraising Program offered by the office.

Resources

- For more information, contact the Development and Fundraising Office at fundraising@sydneycatholic.org or call 1800 753 959

Strategy 7:

Callings to Leadership - Vocation

The parish should **facilitate awareness of and support for vocations** including those to married life, priesthood and consecrated life. Foster the vocations of young people by promoting the events and resources below in your parish bulletin, website and on social media.

Resources

- The Vocation Centre is the Archdiocese of Sydney's agency for the support of vocations. It does this by offering retreats to help people discern their vocation, convenes the Vianney Group which is a discernment support group for men, and also fosters vocations through its 'Vocations Roadshow' at schools, universities and youth events. For more information, visit www.vocationcentre.org.au or contact the Director of Vocations at vocations@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9307 8424. Sign up to the Vocation Centre's newsletter and promote their events in your parish bulletin
- Sumner House offers a year of live-in formation for young Catholic men of the Archdiocese of Sydney, to discern their vocation to marriage, priestly or religious life. The program of formation is based on the four pillars of spiritual, intellectual, human and pastoral formation as articulated within *Pastores Dabo Vobis* and this

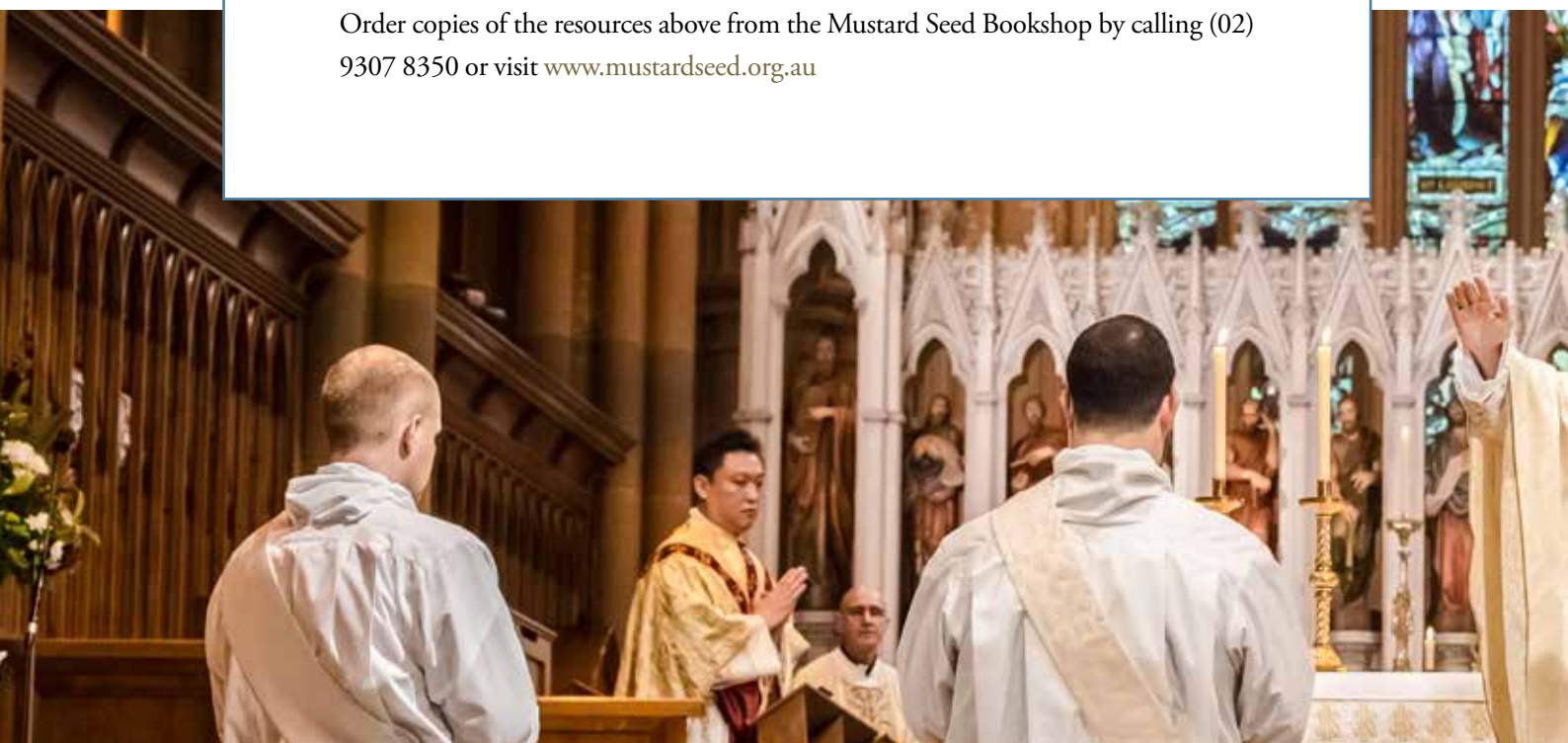
Strategy 7 (continued):

Callings to Leadership – Vocation

Archdiocesan Mission Plan. For more information, contact Sydney Catholic Youth at info@sydneycatholicyouth.org or on (02) 9307 8152. For more information on Summer House, visit www.sydneycatholic.org/directory/listing/summer-house

- For information about diocesan priesthood, visit
 - The Sydney Vocation Centre website www.vocationcentre.org.au
 - Diocesan Priest, a US-based site on the priesthood www.diocesanpriest.com
 - The National Conference of Diocesan Vocation Directors in the United States www.ncdvd.org
- Serra International is a group that encourages and supports vocations to priesthood, consecrated religious and the need for everyone to recognise their individual call to holiness. For information and resources for your parish, visit www.scanzspac.org
- The following documents and books can be used to help with vocational discernment:
 - *Christus Vivit* (Youth and Vocations Discernment) by Pope Francis
 - *The Meaning of Vocation in the Words of John Paul II*
 - *Gift And Mystery* by John Paul II
 - *Called to Life* by Fr Jacques Philippe
 - *Discerning the Will of God: an Ignatian Guide to Christian Decision Making* by Timothy M Gallagher, OMV
 - *Discernment – How can I learn God’s Will for me?* by Peter Kreeft

Order copies of the resources above from the Mustard Seed Bookshop by calling (02) 9307 8350 or visit www.mustardseed.org.au



Strategy 8:

Encourage Collaboration Between Leaders

The parish should **consider opportunities where collaboration of leaders and ministries** would bring mutual benefit (e.g. the collaboration of parish youth groups with catechists reaching out to state schools, collaboration of youth ministers and sacramental coordinators, group meetings of parish choirs and musicians for formation and training).

Strategy 9:

Develop New Leaders

Parishes can examine opportunities to **ensure the development of new leadership** within the parish and its ministries, encouraging present leaders to recruit, accompany and provide opportunities for others to engage in service and leadership. A plan for leadership succession could include the changeover of Parish Pastoral Council members, with approximately half of the Council invited to serve a second term while new members are recruited to bring fresh insight to the council's planning.

Other ministries of the parish should also consider how they might identify and develop new leaders, including the skills and competencies to ensure the ongoing vitality of their ministries and outreach.

Resources

- See details on recruiting volunteers effectively in paragraph 2.3 on page 97

Action 1



Strategy 9 (continued):

Develop New Leaders

Action 2

In many areas of secular life and also within some ministries of the Church, **leaders exercise roles for a designated term** before these responsibilities pass to someone else. This has advantages for it provides a leader with a focused period to accomplish a particular vision, allows leaders to dedicate themselves for a time before a period of renewal, and facilitates fresh ideas and approaches by opening opportunities for new leadership.

Although our parishes adopt this practice in relation to some roles – such as the term of a priest’s appointment to a parish or a Parish Pastoral Council’s appointment for a specific term – in many parish ministries people have been leading or coordinating a particular ministry or service almost indefinitely. This can have detrimental effects on both the person serving and for the parish being served. There is wisdom in creating a culture in which existing leaders are encouraged to accompany, train and make way for new leaders for the vitality and growth of parish life.

Action 3

Provide formation for aspiring leaders.

Resources

- Sydney Catholic School’s ‘Program for Emerging and Aspiring Religious Leaders’ (PEARL) can be opened to members of parish leadership teams. The program is underpinned by research on Leadership from Stanford University, Harvard Graduate School of Education and Cornell University. The scriptural underpinning is from Hebrews 13: 7-8, “[r]emember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever”. The program is delivered over four days (although it can be done in three). Broadly, the days have the following themes: Day 1 - The Call to Leadership, Catholic Culture and Identity; Day 2 - Religious Leadership, Teaching and Program Delivery; Day 3 - Prayer and Liturgy; Day 4 - Religious Leadership Forum (typically with guest presenters). For more information, contact David Ivers, Sydney Catholic Schools, on (02) 9568 8212 or david.ivers@syd.catholic.edu.au

Strategy 10:

Grow Leadership in Social Justice and Works of Mercy

Establish a group specifically dedicated to issues of social justice as a way of developing leaders in the community who can advocate for Christian witness through practical actions.

Resources

- The Archdiocese of Sydney's Justice and Peace Office offers workshops on forming and running a social justice group as well as providing formation on Catholic Social Teaching. For more information and support, contact Fr Peter Smith at peter.smith@sydneycatholic.org, on 0408 613 709 or visit the website www.justiceandpeace.org.au/home/resources/social-justice-groups-resources
- The Justice and Peace Office has also produced a booklet *Towards a Social Justice Group* on the purpose of such groups and how to establish them in your local community www.justiceandpeace.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Justice-Peace-Office-Ministry-Resource-2015.pdf
- The Justice and Peace Office offers training on specific social justice issues that can equip leaders to raise awareness of these issues with others, and provide opportunities to integrate important works of mercy into their daily discipleship, in imitation of Jesus. For more details on the training offered by the Justice and Peace Office, contact Fr Peter Smith at peter.smith@sydneycatholic.org, on 0408 613 709 or visit the website www.justiceandpeace.org.au/home/resources/social-justice-groups-resources



Strategy 11:

Develop Youth Leadership

The Sydney Catholic Youth (SCY) team within the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation works with parish and school youth leaders to **equip them with the skills, capacity and support to influence others by witness, proclamation and service**, including in their parish and professional life.

Resources

- The following courses have been developed by SCY to support youth leaders:
 - ‘A Builder’s Guide for Evangelisation’ – a course designed to help youth leaders begin a youth ministry within a parish
 - ‘Thresholds for Discipleship’ – drawing from the book *Forming Intentional Disciples* by Sherry Weddell, this training is offered to youth leaders to assist them in identifying the key signs of discipleship in teenagers in order to support their relationship with Christ
- SCY offers the following gatherings as an opportunity to support youth leaders:
 - Monthly ‘Upper Room’ gatherings – support the spiritual growth of youth leaders to ensure they are serving from a place where they themselves feel spiritually nourished
 - Sydney Catholic Youth’s Evangelisation School – this annual week-long intensive experience provides formation, community, and opportunities for prayer, to assist leaders to deepen their own spiritual lives and grow in understanding of and commitment to their baptismal call to evangelise
- Encourage young people of your parish to attend events that can contribute to their formation as leaders. These events include the Archbishop’s Leadership Camp for Year 11 Students, the SCY Leaders Formation Course, Youth Alpha training and support
- SCY offers one-on-one meetings for youth leaders to help them understand youth ministry in their local context, set attainable goals to understand what growth and success look like, identify leadership pathways, look at succession planning and provide pastoral support to encourage ongoing spiritual growth and formation
- For more information regarding these resources and events, or to organise training and support for your parish, contact Sydney Catholic Youth at info@sydneycatholicyouth.org or on (02) 9307 8152
- Sydney Catholic School’s Youth Ministry Coordinators’ Retreat can be opened to youth ministers working in parishes. For more information, contact Dr Robert Haddad, Sydney Catholic Schools, on (02) 9568 8116 or robert.haddad@syd.catholic.edu.au

Strategy 12:

Catechist Training and In-Service Gatherings

To help parishioners learn how to lead others to Jesus, invite catechists and parents to attend Catechist training (face-to-face or online) and in-service gatherings where the Gospel is shared, and tried and tested evangelising techniques are presented.

Resources

- The Archdiocese of Sydney's Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) provides training and support for those taking up this important ministry. For more information and resources, visit www.ccd.sydneycatholic.org or contact your Parish SRE Catechist Coordinator who is supported by a Deanery CCD Faith Education Officer





Step 4: **Act**

In building up and exercising leadership in the parish, the parish priest can work together with the Parish Pastoral Council or relevant ministry leaders to create action groups, sub-committees or a team for developing leadership, established for a definite duration. These groups should ideally include at least one member of the Parish Pastoral Council to ensure alignment with the wider vision and planning of the parish as a whole, and can lead and invite others into these efforts towards renewal.

As discussed in this chapter, you could also consider forming a senior leadership team that can focus upon assisting in the ongoing practical strategies and decisions needed to implement the plan, which allows the Parish Pastoral Council to focus on the longer-term pastoral plan of the parish.

Supporting Leadership in our Archdiocese

In the commitment to developing and strengthening leadership in Sydney, the Archbishop also commits to the formation and support of our clergy and lay leaders who work together to build up the life and mission of our parishes and Eucharistic communities.

Clergy Support

As shepherd of the faithful, the leadership of the parish priest is critical to the renewal and growth of parishes and faith communities. Practically, the people look to the parish priest for leadership as he proclaims and teaches the Gospel, celebrates the sacraments, and develops and communicates vision with others to grow the community in discipleship and to make disciples of others. If the effort towards parish renewal and evangelisation takes place without the leadership and support of the parish priest, it will not be seen as a priority within the parish.

As the primary leader of the parish's life and mission, it is imperative that our priests receive the assistance, training, resources and infrastructure to live their vocation and its responsibilities well with ongoing spiritual nourishment, professional support and accountability to the community and mission they serve.

With the assistance of Clergy Support and the Ongoing Formation of the Clergy Committee in the Archdiocese, the Archbishop's 'Ten Point Plan for Clergy Support' provides a structure for the provision of additional support for clergy over coming years. These points of focus seek to engage the four dimensions of clergy formation as expressed in Pope John Paul II's *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (1992) – the human, spiritual, pastoral and intellectual.

- Continuing clergy formation, including liturgical, pastoral-educational and spiritual meetings of the Archbishop and presbyterate, clergy conferences, study workshops and sessions for reflection in common, safeguarding and other seminars (e.g. study of *Integrity of Ministry*, *Integrity in Service of the Church*, *the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards*), higher degree studies in theology and other disciplines, theological and formative reading, and professional development (e.g. ACU management courses).
- Spiritual formation for clergy including prayer, meditation, spiritual reading, an annual retreat and individual spiritual days, and the frequent personal practice of the Sacrament of Penance. Spiritual direction will also assist the priest to conform more perfectly to Christ, assisting clergy to grow in intimacy with God and to live more deeply the consequences of this relationship.
- Pastoral, clinical or professional supervision is mandatory for active bishops, priests and deacons in Sydney, with at least six one-hour sessions (or equivalent) of professional supervision per year. This confidential supervision seeks to support the ethical and pastoral practice of the minister.

- Periodic appraisal by way of a systematic process of self-reflection, supported by appropriate persons and resources, to enable personal awareness, professional development, ministerial effectiveness and personal fulfilment.
- Priestly mentoring with the opportunity for more experienced clergy (or sometimes laity) to give example, feedback and advice to seminarians on placement, the newly ordained, the newly arrived or clergy encountering difficulties in some respect.
- Psychological counselling for support in the case of significant stress, anxiety, depression, trauma, addiction or a personality or behavioural disorder, and as an opportunity to take responsibility for health and personal growth.
- Physical sabbatical for rest and recreation, refocusing and recharging. Every so often, a longer sabbatical is recommended as extended time away from normal ministry for personal and priestly ministry. This will principally take the form of a formal course of study, which might be integrated with a pilgrimage and other means of renewal.
- Cultural induction including acculturation programs for the systematic welcome and induction of newcomers to the pastoral and ordinary life of Sydney. This can include formation in the ways of Australian culture, customs and pastoral practice.
- Supportive oversight can include mutual accountability by way of priestly fraternities, attendance at deanery meetings, clergy conferences, the meeting of regional bishops, episcopal and general vicars, and the Archbishop with individual clergy or the whole body of clergy. The Council of Priests, Council of Deans, College of Consultors, Episcopal Visitation of parishes and chaplaincies, less formal visits by regional bishops, the *Ad Clerum* and other official correspondence from Chancery are additional forms of support.
- Responsible self-care recognises the priest or deacon himself as the person primarily responsible for his own ongoing formation and care, including by way of prayer and devotions, physical exercise, good diet, hygiene, health checks, recreation, friendships, cultural experiences and so on. The Archdiocese seeks to encourage and facilitate these by specialist input on dimensions of self-care, comprehensive health checks at St Vincent's Hospital, or assessments by nutritionists or psychologists, and the services of the Chancery (e.g. Parish Support and Development, Office for Safeguarding and Ministerial Integrity, Retired Priests Care).

In addition to the above, housing and other provisions for serving and retired clergy are to be regularly assessed and reviewed, with accommodation to be attentive to the spiritual and living needs of priests as well as their stage of life and ministry. While recognising many priests have lived independently for many years, this review can consider for the future the feasibility of presbyteries with both private and common areas for more than one priest.

The development of a culture of vocations to the priesthood, permanent diaconate, and religious life is also significant with this development to be led by the Vocations Office in collaboration with parishes, religious and communities. The development

and promotion of Sumner House, Lidcombe, a centre of discernment and pastoral accompaniment for young men considering the priesthood or married life, is to continue. For more information on Sumner House, see www.sydneycatholic.org/directory/listing/sumner-house.

Support of Lay Leaders

Complementing the leadership of clergy in our parishes and communities are lay men and women who lead various parish ministries, coordinate the service of others, and exercise the responsibility to share in the mission of the Church on the basis of their baptism and faith.

With the assistance of the agencies of the Archdiocese, the following are recommended to ensure opportunity for the development of leadership among the lay faithful:

- Continuing promotion of theological studies and formative opportunities for lay men and women available through institutes and universities, including Australian Catholic University, University of Notre Dame, the Catholic Institute of Sydney, as well as local and national conferences and seminars on evangelisation (e.g. the Proclaim conferences, the Summer School of Evangelisation, iWitness, among others).
- Coordination by the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation of visiting speakers and leaders in evangelisation for the education and formation of lay ministers as opportunities arise and in partnership with organisations such as the Catherine of Siena Institute, Divine Renovation, Alpha Australia, menALIVE, and Parousia Media, among others.
- Archdiocesan consideration of forms of support for the development of Catholic leadership in media, law and politics in partnership with other groups and institutes.
- Ongoing training for parish staff in professional practice, including training in the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, pastoral administration and the ministry of outreach.
- Enhance the availability of parish training for lay ministers in processes of evangelisation including Alpha in a Catholic Context and the development and leadership of small groups.
- Ongoing recruitment of student leaders by the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) and Sydney Catholic Schools for the ministry of Special Religious Education in State schools.
- Development of links between universities, university chaplaincies (including staff, students and alumni), local parish communities, including parish youth ministries, and regional initiatives of evangelisation and formation.



Foundation 3

COMMUNITY

Introduction



Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul”.

Acts 4:32

As seen in the life and ministry of Jesus, the disciples are called to live and grow within a community. It is from this living communion of faith that they are sent into the wider world, to share the Good News of Jesus Christ through their words and deeds.



Discipleship and community are inextricably connected for while discipleship of the Lord begins and continues with a personal and intimate encounter with Him, it is never individualistic or private. Accordingly, our Catholic faith places a strong emphasis on communion in worship, beliefs and Christian action, on the communion of saints that is the Church on earth and in heaven, and on the spiritual, human, pastoral and intellectual benefits of doing things together.

The importance of community for our human flourishing and spiritual life is unmistakable. We all have a basic human need for community and it is essential for every other good – for our personal relationships and families, for the care of our health and the vulnerable, for education in truth, formation in morality, and for the transmission and integral development of life itself.

“In His ministry, Jesus expresses His desire and concern for the unity of human society”.



Parable of Lazarus, Vybor Bronnikov

What is more, many people in today’s world crave community. From mothers of young children to seniors, from teenagers and families to new migrants, from people of faith to those who profess no belief at all, we all desire and seek out a sense of belonging and solidarity with others. The isolation and social disconnection many have experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions have only intensified this deep longing.

In His ministry, Jesus expresses His desire and concern for the unity of human society. In His farewell discourse He prays “that [we] may all be one” (John 17:21). The common life for which Jesus prays here is not merely a collection of individuals but **a true communion marked by charity**: “[b]y this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

In Christ as one body, the disciples are called by Jesus to be united as agents of justice and reconciliation, in communion with one another as witnesses of healing and hope, and of one mind and heart as preachers of God’s mercy and love in the midst of a scattered and divided world. In this, the Church is called to reflect the life of the Trinity as a communion of persons, to be the home of those who believe in Jesus Christ, but also a witness to the source of the unity of the entire human family.

This witness to a communion of persons includes the **‘domestic church’**, our families, which are more important than ever before as a home of faith. As Pope Francis describes, the parish is a ‘family of families’ and the renewal of family life is a precious gift for the Church in our time and for society as a whole.¹ The parish is also a **‘community of communities’**, gifted with various groups of belonging shaped by ethnicity, culture, spirituality, needs and capacities. Each is to be encouraged and enabled to contribute their particular gifts to the vitality of the parish as a whole.²

¹ Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* 202.
² Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 28.

When we experience the joy of being in Christ together as a parish, migrant chaplaincy or Eucharistic community, it deepens our spiritual commitment to evangelisation, to sharing that joy of belonging in Christ with others. **Community can draw people into the journey of discipleship** when they experience meaningful relationships in which they are known and loved, and they can be inspired to ‘go out’ to share this joy of belonging in Christ with their neighbour.

Community, then, is central to the gift of discipleship and the responsibility of evangelisation. It encourages us to deepen the experience of communion for those who belong to the parish, as well as those who do not yet know that their home is with us.

Parishes as Communities for Mission

As local communities gathered around God’s Word and the Eucharist, parishes are privileged locations of grace and central to the missionary life of our Archdiocese.

Our parishes are not merely venues for the reception of spiritual goods, but are living communities that nourish us to holiness and challenge us beyond a privatised or inward-looking faith. They are centres of encounter with Jesus Christ through the sacraments, prayer, catechesis, pastoral care, Christian outreach and many other experiences that build up the Church’s life and take the Good News of Jesus into the wider community. We know that a sure sign of a healthy community is that we want others to become a part of our communion and other people want to become a part of us, experiencing our parishes as places of welcome and growth.

In relation to the renewal of our parishes, Pope Francis has proclaimed, “[t]he parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community. While certainly not the only institution which evangelises, if the parish proves capable of self-renewal and constant adaptivity, it continues to be ‘the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters’”.³

³ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 28.

As we experience change in the way people live, work and worship in Sydney, we must call upon and cooperate with the Holy Spirit as the agent of authentic renewal in our parishes. As communities of the baptised, **our parishes are enriched by different charisms** given by the Spirit that renew and build up the Church. These gifts are given not for ‘safekeeping’ but to be channelled into an evangelising mission that ensures the community reaches out to others with creativity and boldness.

As we aspire to widen our outreach, we are called to **re-envision the borders of our communities** not as spaces where identities and relationships end, but rather as spaces where we can continue to grow through encounter and outreach with one another. We are being called to build up local communities of care where our parishes and schools, early childhood centres, aged care facilities and other centres of pastoral life work together to make disciples and advance the Kingdom of God in our midst. We are also called to recognise and respond to new mission territories, such as the ‘digital continent’ where many people experience relationship and community, seek out groups of belonging, search for answers to their questions, and are waiting to encounter Jesus Christ.



Strengthening the Foundation of Community

Our conscious decision to place the Great Commission at the centre of our identity and action in Sydney means discerning and enacting new ways to strengthen our parishes as flourishing Eucharistic communities, making disciples, and inviting others to enter into this way of life. Such a commitment should be reflected in the priorities and actions of our communities.

There are many **qualities that characterise the communities Jesus is calling us to be**. Among these are a shared vision or purpose in the Gospel, a strong sense of trust, belonging and interpersonal relationship within the community, forgiveness, communication, shared values, projects and lives, the contribution of different gifts, as well as openness to others including newcomers. Parishes are encouraged to strengthen community by taking steps to grow in these qualities for they are essential to their life and mission.

Below is a four (4) step process which your parish or chaplaincy may choose to undertake to **reflect** upon the place of community in the life and mission of Jesus, **review** how the importance of community expresses itself in your priorities and activities, **discern and decide** how God might be calling your community to deepen and grow, and take particular **actions** with the help of the support and resources outlined in this Mission Plan.

This four step process can be led by the parish priest with his parish leadership team or through attending a **Parishes for Mission** day offered regionally and online by the Parish Renewal Team of the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation. These days will provide leaders with formation in mission, strategies to assess and strengthen foundations for mission, and practical ways to create and implement a vision for the community. For more details, visit www.gomakedisciples.org.au or contact the Parish Renewal Team on (02) 9390 5330 or at parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org.

“...our identity and action in Sydney means discerning and enacting new ways to strengthen our parishes as flourishing Eucharistic communities, making disciples, and inviting others to enter into this way of life”.



Flevit super illam,
Enrique Simonet, 1892

Step 1: Reflect on Community in Jesus' Life and Mission

1.1 Begin with a reflection on the place and nature of community in the evangelising ministry of Jesus and in the mission of the early Church:

- “I pray for them; I am not praying for the world but for those you have given me, because they belong to you: all I have is yours and all you have is mine, and in them I am glorified... I pray not only for these, but for those also who through their words will believe in me. May they all be one. Father, may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me. I have given them the glory you gave to me, that they may be one as we are one. With me in them and you in me, may they be so completely one that the world will realise that it was you who sent me and that I have loved them as much as you loved me” (John 17:9-10, 20-23).
- “The faithful all lived together and owned everything in common; they sold their goods and possessions and shared out the proceeds among themselves according to what each one needed. They went as a body to the Temple every day but met in their houses for the breaking of the bread; they shared their food gladly and generously; they praised God and were looked up to by everyone. Day by day the Lord added to their community those destined to be saved” (Acts 2:44-47).

- “Be at peace among yourselves. And this is what we ask you to do, brothers; warn the idlers, give courage to those who are apprehensive, care for the weak and be patient with everyone. Make sure that people do not try to take revenge; you must all think of what is best for each other and for the community. Be happy at all times; pray constantly and for all things give thanks to God, because this is what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:14-18).
- “Let us keep firm in the hope we profess, because the one who made the promise is faithful. Let us be concerned for each other, to stir a response in love and good works. Do not stay away from the meetings of the community, as some do, but encourage each other to go; the more so as you see the Day drawing near” (Hebrews 10:23-25).

The following questions may help you reflect:

- a. What struck you in these readings?
- b. Which aspects of these communities would encourage you in your discipleship?
- c. What qualities of community do you notice in these readings?
- d. Are there qualities that you hope could grow in your own community?

1.2 In addition to this, it can be helpful for individuals to then reflect upon their own personal experience of parish community. This can be a personal exercise, undertaken in quiet prayer, which can be fruitful for the parish priest, the Parish Pastoral Council, ministry leaders and parishioners. Questions that might assist this prayer and reflection include:

- a. Do I know the parishioners with whom I form this community? Do I know their names, background and stories? Do I know anything about their lives, their joys and sorrows?
- b. Is it easy to speak to other parishioners about my experience of Jesus and faith, or request prayers for my concerns?
- c. Would I consider any parishioners to be my friends, and do I feel that I have a place in the parish community and a genuine contribution to make?



Step 2: **Review Community Life**

2.1 As communities, we can review the state of our efforts in building up a quality of communal life that fosters discipleship and dedicates itself to evangelisation, what is working well and what needs some attention. In the same way as for other foundations of parish renewal, a way of assessing the quality of community life is to conduct a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis (or ‘SWOT’). Again, this exercise can be completed by your parish team, Parish Pastoral Council, a hospitality or welcome team or ministry groups in your community to reflect on the potential for the growth of community in your local context.

Once completed, the resulting information will help your parish or group to identify areas for response and enable it to choose practical actions to grow as a community.

This tool is designed to get the conversation started in your local community and can also be applied to the other priorities of disciple-making – evangelisation, leadership, formation, and worship.



Once this brainstorming has taken place, and a list of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to evangelisation is recorded, it is then possible to identify specific areas within each for response. No parish can be expected to address all these areas of concern at once. The following questions will assist your parish or community to focus on practical areas where it can best begin to renew its efforts to strengthen community life:

- a. What current strength in community can our parish, chaplaincy or movement most easily build upon?
- b. What current weakness in community would be the easiest one to fix?
- c. What is the greatest opportunity in community we could seize upon with the least amount of time and resources?
- d. What is the most immediate or greatest threat we need to address for the life of our community to grow and be renewed?

2.2 Parishes can also engage a tool called the ‘Membership Engagement Survey’ from Gallup. This survey measures the engagement of parishioners, understood as the degree of belonging each member has in his or her local faith community. This engagement impacts upon the level of ownership parishioners have for their mission and ministries, their willingness to invite others to participate in parish life, their experience of spiritual growth, and their service within and financial giving to the local community. Engagement and belonging are the soil upon which spiritual fruit in the parish is borne.

While this survey is not inexpensive, it has been used by growing Catholic parishes and communities to understand their people’s spiritual and practical engagement with community life, and to plan more effectively to bring about renewal and accomplish their vision.



Step 2: (continued)

Review Community Life

Resources

- The 'Membership Engagement Survey' from Gallup can be accessed online at www.gallup.com/products/174866/faith-member-engagement.aspx

2.3 Another practical way in which your parish can review its mission is to know those in the local community, beyond regular Sunday worshippers.

In seeking to reach out intentionally to people outside the Church, the parish can consider those who form the 'mission field' for the community. Have a conversation with your leadership team to identify who is in your region, their needs and who your community should be focused on reaching. You might consider the demographic information and local trends that are shaping your community, the age and spiritual background of those you are seeking to reach, their current life stage, and the key questions they are asking. You can then intentionally shape your parish strategies of invitation, welcome, enquiry, community and formation with this group in mind.

Resources

- The parish can access social data on the community (e.g. parish profiles available from the National Centre for Pastoral Research at <https://ncpr.catholic.org.au>) and also draw on local experience and knowledge. These sources of information can assist your parish to identify opportunities for outreach that reflect the demography and needs of the community, as well as to enhance initiatives of evangelisation and community-building already in action.



The Wedding Feast at Cana,
Paolo Veronese, 1563

Step 3: Discern and Decide

- 3.1 Steps 1 and 2 have given a strong sense of the place of community in the life of the disciple, and also the strengths and weakness in your own community life. The next step is to discern and decide how God might be calling your parish, chaplaincy or movement to strengthen its community.
- 3.2 The priest can lead his parish or leadership team through a process of prayerfully listening to the promptings of the Holy Spirit as received through reflection on the Gospel, through personal and communal prayer, and as emerge from the circumstances of the parish. Resources for a process of group discernment are available at www.gomakedisciples.org.au. Alternatively, priests seeking to strengthen their parish's foundations for mission are also welcome to engage in this process by attending a *Parishes for Mission* day and bringing their parish leaders with them. These days will be offered regionally and online by the Parish Renewal Team. For more details, contact the team at (02) 9390 5330 or email parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org.
- 3.3 As part of your discernment, consider the list of strategies below to strengthen the foundation of community and actions to implement each strategy. You are encouraged to choose those actions that allow you to best respond to your local circumstances, with relevant support and resources also listed to assist implementation.

Again, your parish or community may already be doing many of the good things outlined below. However, there will also be actions that your community can take up to further build up the life of your parish and invite others into community.

Strategy 1:

Get to Know the Parishioners

Action 1

Each parish should **develop a census for the whole parish** to ensure it has up-to-date information about parishioners in order to support planning for pastoral care and outreach, and to engage them with opportunities for evangelisation and formation.

Resources

- Undertake a parish census. You can find a basic census tool at www.gomakedisciples.org.au
- Undertake a National Church Life Survey in your parish to evaluate the culture within your parish by surveying those attending Mass over a given weekend. The data is analysed and can be used to identify areas of strength and need for growth. For more information and an outline of costs involved, visit www.ncls.org.au/planning/church-life-survey

Action 2

Review the Social Profile of your parish with data collated from the Australian Census, which takes place every five years. The data reported in these profiles reflect responses of people within the parish boundaries who identified themselves as Catholic in the Census. This data can provide insight into the demographic characteristics of a parish community.

Resources

- For more information, contact NCPR at ncpr@catholic.org.au or (02) 6201 9812 or visit the website www.ncpr.catholic.org.au/2016-parish-social-profiles/sydney



A family participating in the blessing of their car at St Christopher's Parish, Holsworthy

Strategy 2:

Share Lives and Faith

Action 1

The parish can seek to build bonds between new and existing members by organising **whole of community events** such as feast day celebrations, parish picnics, and family and school holiday activities.

Action 2

With appropriate permissions, each parish could develop strategies to **acknowledge significant milestones and anniversaries** amongst its members (e.g. baptisms, confirmations, marriages, anniversaries of death) to sustain connections and build communion in parish life.

Action 3

The parish can foster meaningful connections between parishioners by **facilitating a range of small groups**, with the importance of small groups explained and promoted, and leaders called forth and equipped for these gatherings.

A great place to start a small group culture in your parish, and receive training and support to run it successfully, is the Alpha program. The Parish Renewal Team has a full-time Alpha Parish Development Coordinator to support you to establish and run an Alpha group. The principles you learn to run this group can then be applied to other small groups in the parish. Often those who attend Alpha continue to be involved or lead other groups, as part of a discipleship pathway, and there are many good programs or approaches mentioned below which can be engaged.

Whether through participating in Alpha, Lenten or Advent groups, family or youth groups, or forming groups focused on Scripture, a Church document or book, people value opportunities to share their lives, learnings and the ways in which Christ is working in them through the Holy Spirit. Small groups open opportunities for shared meals, prayer, and time for fellowship and spiritual testimony.

Those who approach the parish for the Sacraments of Initiation or Marriage could also be invited to participate in a small group of prayer, learning or service.

Resources

- The Alpha series can be used as a resource to introduce and foster community through small groups. For assistance, contact Tania Rimac on tania.rimac@sydneycatholic.org or on (02) 9390 5338

Action 3

- Staff within the Parish Renewal Team are available to help you identify the best resources for your parish groups and support you in establishing a group. The Parish Renewal Team can also help train leaders to facilitate small groups effectively. For assistance, contact the team at parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9390 5330
- The Diocese of Wollongong has produced a helpful format for small groups through its 'Faith Circles' initiative. See www.dow.org.au/media-resources/faith-circles for more details and to download materials
- Franciscan University, Steubenville has a helpful guidebook and resources on 'Discipleship Quads' at www.steubenvilleconferences.com/discipleship-quads
- Small groups can use a range of different resources that assist their people to enter more deeply into the experience of discipleship, the understanding of faith and the joy of Christian community. These resources include programs on Scripture such as 'The Bible Timeline' (www.ascensionpress.com/collections/the-bible-timeline-the-story-of-salvation) and various programs on the Catholic tradition, the Mass, discipleship, and evangelisation from Word on Fire (www.wordonfire.org)
- The 'Called and Gifted' program can help people discern what their charisms are and how they can be used to serve the community in the mission of the Church. Workshops are available. For more information, go to www.siena.org

Action 4

Some parishes have developed social and spiritual connections between families and individuals in parishes by **establishing family groups**.

Resources

- The Passionist Family Group Movement aims to build Christian community through the development of extended families between members of the parish. The family group can provide an extended family for all who wish to belong – married, single or divorced, young, older and so on. For more information, visit www.pfgm.org or email family@pfgm.org or phone Annette and Tony Guterres on 0412 759 912

Action 4

- Schoenstatt Family Groups regularly develop seminars, retreats, and different conferences with subjects related to education and marriage. During these events, time is also devoted to strengthening and cultivating family relationships. For more information, contact Sr. M Elizabeth Foley ISSM at Schoenstatt Mulgoa on (02) 4773 8338 or Steven Buhagiar, Life Marriage and Family team, in the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation at steven.buhagiar@sydneycatholic.org

Strategy 3:

Offer a Welcoming Liturgy

Action 1

During liturgy, the priest can extend hospitality by **welcoming visitors and guests**, introducing himself and any other priests, deacons, and servers, explaining the parts of the Mass when appropriate, communicating welcome and reassurance to those present, including parents of young children and children with special needs, inviting people for a blessing if they are unable to receive communion, and inviting people to hospitality and small groups available within the parish.

Action 2

Parishes might provide **projected or printed versions of the Order of Mass** and hymns at liturgies to encourage and support unity and active participation in worship, while also encouraging people to learn the Ordinary of the Mass.

Strategy 4:

Identify and Follow-up Newcomers

Action 1

Each parish can develop strategies to **identify newcomers to parish life and ministry groups and invite registration**. Welcomers and parishioners might be encouraged to look out for new faces at Masses and parish events, to introduce themselves and invite registration; there might be occasional invitations at Mass from priests or parishioners, inviting newcomers to register and to get to know their clergy and fellow parishioners; 'new parishioner' registration cards can be available at events and any new names submitted to the parish office and/or welcome coordinators.

Strategy 4 (continued):

Identify and Follow-up Newcomers

Parishes can develop and review on an ongoing basis **'follow-up' processes** within the parish to keep newcomers connected to parish life.

This could include a monthly or quarterly 'newcomer Sunday gathering' or 'welcome coffee hour' following Mass (facilitated by a welcome coordinator or parish hospitality team) or parish BBQ to foster integration and ongoing participation in parish life.

Consider personal outreach, or a letter from the parish priest or welcome coordinators, in days following registration and provision of welcome packs if not already received; a roster of welcomers to visit new parishioners in their homes with parish packs and other information and resources for faith; periodic letters or social media from parish group leaders inviting the involvement of newcomers in ministries and activities of the parish (e.g. as catechists) and in parish groups; a visit from parish clergy. A review of the personal information collection notice included in parish registration may be required to permit ongoing correspondence between the parish and its members about events, programs and initiatives on offer.

Strategy 5:

Create Welcoming Resources

Parishes can assemble and periodically update parish **welcome packs or kits** providing information related to the parish and parish staff, details of Mass times, Confession and regular devotions, parish prayer cards and other Catholic prayers, ministry group and pastoral care contact numbers, parish registration cards, a census form or similar to encourage belonging, and invitational cards to call forth expressions of interest in ministry or groups of the parish. Parishes can make **welcome packs** available at significant evangelising moments including parish Masses, sacramental programs, Alpha, RCIA, youth gatherings and events, baptisms, marriages and funerals, Christmas and Easter Masses.

Resources

- Go to www.gomakedisciples.org.au for a sample welcome pack which can be adapted to your parish

Strategy 6:

Welcome People

Action 1

Parishes might form a **welcome and hospitality team** and appoint welcome coordinators, ensuring there are trained welcomers (volunteers) for Masses, with a presence at church entrances and exits, to welcome and greet all parishioners on arrival, provide material related to the liturgy and parish life, identify newcomers and potentially gather their details when practicable.

Resources

- Listen to *The Rebuilt Parish Podcast* episodes 19-21: Creating a Culture of Hospitality at <https://rebuiltparish.podbean.com/page/3>

Action 2

Parishes can provide **welcome initiatives after parish Masses** to ensure newcomers and others experience hospitality throughout the length of their visit (e.g. tea, coffee, an invitation to connect with key leaders to learn how to take the next steps in their spiritual growth).

Action 3

Parish teams together with welcome coordinators and teams can **ensure welcome efforts and initiatives are re-energised** and especially focused in weeks leading up to Easter and Christmas for all those who return to church at these times (e.g. promotion of times of Masses, Confession and carol events through schools, local press, letter box drops and mail outs). These initiatives can be undertaken in collaboration with neighbouring or partnering parishes, making known all options available during these seasons.

An essential part of welcoming people is inviting them to experience a deeper belonging to the parish community and an opportunity to a renewed encounter with Jesus. Key calendar events such as Easter and Christmas are an ideal opportunity to do this.



Strategy 7:

Build Community Through a Common Commitment to Justice

Communities are strengthened by sharing a common purpose, and life-giving communities look outwards. **The desire to work for social justice can build community** and also reinforce the social implications of our faith in Jesus Christ.

Resources

- For the many ways in which your parish can work as a community on issues of justice including housing affordability, care of creation, justice for asylum seekers and refugees, inclusion of people in our communities who are living with disability, and working conditions for poorer workers, visit the Archdiocese of Sydney's Justice and Peace Office via www.justiceandpeace.org.au or contact the team on (02) 9307 8465 or jpoinfo@sydneycatholic.org

Strategy 8:

Welcome and Support Migrants and Refugees

Each parish, with the advice of migrant chaplaincies, can engage parishioners who may be able to assist with **translation** and/or the **integration of migrants and refugees into community life**, whether that be in the school, parish or in the wider community.

Resources

- For support and more information, contact the Catholic Immigration Office on immigration@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9390 5923

Parishes might develop an **annual multicultural or international Mass** in the parish, encouraging the sharing of traditions and different languages in liturgy, followed by a light supper or similar (e.g. on Pentecost Sunday or Migrant & Refugee Sunday)

Resources

- For assistance with translations or integration of traditions and languages, contact the Catholic Immigration Office on immigration@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9390 5923

Action 1

Action 2

Strategy 8 (continued):

Welcome and Support Migrants and Refugees

Parishes should reflect on other **ways in which the cultural and faith traditions of migrant families can enrich the parish community** and its life (for example, attention given to feast days significant to migrant communities, recalling the faithful witness of all the nations, participation in festivals or devotions particular to those communities, creating opportunities for storytelling).

Resources

- For support, contact the Catholic Immigration Office on immigration@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9390 5923

Celebrate the **World Day of Migrants and Refugees**, a day established by the Holy See.

Resources

- Every year, the Archdiocese of Sydney celebrates the Archdiocesan Multicultural Mass at St Mary's Cathedral which gives thanks to God for the gift of the many cultural groups that enrich our nation and our Church. For further information, contact the Catholic Immigration Office on immigration@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9390 5923
- The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office provides a helpful resource kit for parish and other community gatherings, available at www.acmro.catholic.org.au
- The Holy See's Office for Migrants and Refugees also provides a range of resources including a kit for the celebration of this day, available at www.migrants-refugees.va/resource-center/world-day-of-migrants-refugees-2020

Action 3

Action 4



Strategy 9:

Welcome and Support the Elderly

Action 1

Parishes should review and strengthen parish hospitality to aged Catholics, especially the **provision of transport services** to and from liturgies and events in parish and diocesan life.

Action 2

Each parish can review the strength and effectiveness of **pastoral support and care for the aged**, including those in private, nursing and retirement homes, and other facilities. Special consideration should be given to the access of the aged and infirm to the sacraments and Christian companionship.

Resources

- CatholicCare is leading a project to care for the elderly through a broad-based Seniors Ministry. This ministry would create a community of care in parishes that assists people to plan for their progress through older age, provide compassionate support for people and their families and friends through to the end of life, seek to treat people as they get older with the dignity that they deserve, to overcome the loneliness that can emerge as they get older and facilitate people staying connected with community and to enable them to age and die in a state of grace. Parishes can access the Seniors Ministry by contacting Cathy Hammond on 0427 960 918 or 13 18 19 or via email at cathy.hammond@catholiccare.org
- As a registered home care provider, CatholicCare is available to help parishioners through the 'My Aged Care' process, assisting them to access funds to help people remain living at home. CatholicCare provides services that parishioners can access as occasional, short-term or round-the-clock care from their professional, locally-based staff. From complete 'Home Care Packages' to a helping hand at home, CatholicCare can assist throughout the assessment process and tailor services to ensure they are meeting needs. For information about home care packages, visit www.catholiccare.org/senior-services. To arrange for a home care specialist to visit a parishioner's home, parishes can call 13 18 19. To book a presentation for more information, please contact Deborah Absalom on 13 18 19, 0438 494 518 or email deborah.absalom@catholiccare.org

Strategy 10:

Minister to the Homebound

Each parish can review the strength and effectiveness of **pastoral support to those who find it difficult or impossible to be part of community worship** and other gatherings. Every effort should be made to ensure those who are homebound, dislocated or isolated know that they are valued, loved and cared for by the local parish community.

Resources

- Parishes can work with CatholicCare to create a team of trained volunteer chaplain assistants, reaching out to prisoners and those post-prison, the homeless, the aged, the sick and the dying. To find out more, visit www.catholiccare.org/community-services/chaplaincy-services or contact Fr Peter Carroll MSC on 13 18 19 or via email peter.carroll@catholiccare.org

Strategy 11:

Care for Children and Families

Communities can **appoint and train Parish Safeguarding Support Officers (PSSO) or Chaplaincy Safeguarding Support Officers (CSSO)**. These safeguarding supports can be found in over 120 of our parishes and in over six of our chaplaincy communities. The Safeguarding Support Officers help support and assist the parish priest and migrant chaplains to meet their safeguarding obligations and missions within the parish community. Parishes and chaplaincies that have a Safeguarding Support Officer have found it easier to meet safeguarding compliance within their community.

Resources

- For further information regarding Safeguarding Support Officers, please contact the Safeguarding Office on (02) 9390 5811 or email safeguardingtraining@sydneycatholic.org

Strategy 11 (continued):

Care for Children and Families

Parishes can access and use the following **resources developed by the Safeguarding Office** that help inform and educate the children, young people and communities of the Archdiocese about the different characteristics of safeguarding.

Resources

All the safeguarding resources below are available for free download via the Safeguarding Office page www.sydneycatholic.org/safeguarding-and-child-protection or call (02) 9390 5811

- The ‘Rights and Responsibilities’ charter, postcard and poster is for children and young people of the Archdiocese. It informs them about their rights within the Archdiocese as well as their responsibilities in ensuring their rights are upheld
- ‘The Caring Code Journey’ has been developed into a game format to help inform children aged between 5-12 years of age that for every action there is a reaction that could affect themselves as well as others around them. ‘The Caring Code Journey’ is a useful resource in helping children identify safe behaviours
- The ‘Someone Will Listen to You’ card has been designed specifically for children. This card helps children to identify three trusted adults with whom they can talk if they ever have any concerns or worries
- The ‘Listening to You’ card is a resource for adults within the Archdiocese to help direct them and advise them on how to raise any concerns or to provide feedback they may have with their parish priest
- ‘The Safeguarding Journey’ poster provides children and young people with information about how they can help build a safer environment for all children and young people, and an awareness of what child abuse is and of their right to be safe and how to seek help from a trusted adult. All children and young people have the right to be safe, to feel safe and to be respected
- The ‘Behaviour Code for Young People’ poster helps young people carry on the mission of Jesus within the Archdiocese of Sydney by informing the young people aged 13-17 years about the behaviour that is expected of them whilst participating within any ministry of the Archdiocese

Action 2

Parishes can support the commitment to safeguarding by engaging members of their community to complete the ‘**Safeguarding and Child Protection Induction Training**’. Induction training equips individuals with knowledge of safeguarding and child protection requirements as well as basic knowledge of what it means to be a proactive safeguarding parish.

Action 3

Action 3

Resources

- Safeguarding Induction training can be completed either online (register via this link <https://forms.gle/14hDdVDgjwCs9eyJ8>) or by a trained Parish Safeguarding Support Officer or trained Chaplaincy Safeguarding Support Officer. For more information about safeguarding training, contact the Safeguarding Office on (02) 9390 5811 or email safeguardingtraining@sydneycatholic.org

Action 4

CatholicCare offers **support and care to children and young people** including services relating to adoption and foster care, child disability services, and youth pregnancy and parenting support. To access further information, visit www.catholiccare.org/children-and-youth-services. For further information on foster care and adoption, visit www.familyspirit.org.

Action 5

CatholicCare supports parishes to **help families who are struggling**. CatholicCare offers advice and advocacy to families in navigating the social services landscape, and assisting them to find the help they need. To find out about the services CatholicCare offers, go to www.catholiccare.org/catholiccare-learn-more/sydney-parishes and www.catholiccare.org/family-and-individual-services or call 13 18 19.



Celebration after the
Multicultural Mass

Strategy 12:

Care for the Suffering and Vulnerable

Action 1

Parishes should offer (or collaborate with another to provide) a **grief or bereavement group** for all those in community who have experienced loss (including widows, widowers and those who have suffered miscarriage or neo-natal loss).

Resources

- CatholicCare Sydney in conjunction with Catholic Cemeteries is also available to assist parishes with grief and bereavement support through a 'Grief Care' service. They offer seminars and community formation, as well as a Grief Care newsletter. For more information, visit www.catholiccemeteries.com.au/grief-care. Counselling is also available by calling CCareline on 13 18 19
- MacKillop Family Services' 'Good Grief' program provides evidence-based change and loss education programs to support children, young people and adults to understand their experience and attend well to their grief. For more information, visit www.mackillop.org.au/institute/good-grief

Action 2

Parishes can engage the support of CatholicCare in **the development of communities of care where collaboration is enhanced between the parish and charitable services** such as the St Vincent de Paul Society, aged care facilities, early childhood centres, primary and secondary schools, seniors' ministry and other forms of social support and outreach.

Resources

- Parishes can work with CatholicCare to create a 'community of care' via one or more of the following initiatives: Families Ministry, Seniors Ministry and/ or Social Housing. To find out more, contact Cathy Hammond on 0427 960 918, on 13 18 19 or via email cathy.hammond@catholiccare.org. For further information, see www.youtube.com/watch?v=ykCq--rXnBU&feature=youtu.be
- CatholicCare has launched a campaign to enable people in parishes to financially support services that address some of society's greatest challenges – homelessness, loneliness, addiction, disadvantage and crisis. To find out more about supporting these programs financially, visit www.curocareforchange.org.au or contact Thomas Ng on 0412 612 228, on 13 18 19 or via email at thomas.ng@catholiccare.org

Strategy 12 (continued):

Care for the Suffering and Vulnerable

- CatholicCare's Parish Volunteer Program was established as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. With over 40 parishes and over 150 parish volunteers involved, the program provides practical and financial assistance to people in need during lockdown and beyond. By calling 13 18 19, anyone in the community can connect with local parish volunteers who can help with shopping, errands or a regular friendly chat over the phone. For your parish to get involved in this program, or to access financial support for parishioners affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, please contact Cathy Hammond on 0427 960 918, on 13 18 19 or via email cathy.hammond@catholiccare.org

Strategy 13:

Welcome and Support People with Disabilities and Special Needs

Parishes might review parish activities and facilities to ensure **access, welcome and resources for parishioners and visitors with disabilities or special needs** as integral members of our parish communities. For example, clear signage within and around churches and parish buildings, the accessibility of parish offices, sanctuaries, halls and meeting rooms, the availability of hearing loops within the church, the size of written texts used in the church to cater for the vision impaired, opportunities for ministry training and formation to enable full participation of all in parish life.

Resources

- The Archdiocese of Sydney's Justice and Peace Office offers formation on a range of justice issues. For formation in Catholic Social Teaching regarding members of our communities with disabilities and special needs, visit www.justiceandpeace.org.au or call (02) 9307 8465
- Helpful resources, including the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference's document *Celebrating the Sacramental Life from Birth to Death: Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with People with Disability*, are available online at www.catholic.org.au/csldb

- CatholicCare can assist parishioners with disabilities by providing NDIS support coordination, meaningful work opportunities, and educational programs to help build practical skills and qualifications. Parishes can support CatholicCare's CentaCare Industries by employing CentaCare workers for parish gardening, cleaning, packing, assembling and shredding. To find out more about CatholicCare's disability services, visit www.catholiccare.org/disability-services or call 13 18 19

Strategy 14:

Build Community for Youth

Engage and **work together with youth to build up a sense of belonging and welcome**, networking them with one another, in a culture of support, formation and service in the parish and beyond. Consider some of the following initiatives.

- Host regular events for young people, such as pizza or movie nights, worship nights or Adoration, where they can build and develop friendships together and share their experience of the Christian life
- Provide young people with responsibility for serving and building up the parish community by hosting various events such as BBQs or parish picnics, morning teas or movie nights and forms of missionary service

Resources

- The 'Youth Group Starter Kit', developed by Sydney Catholic Youth, was created for and is available to parish priests, migrant chaplains, ecclesial movement leaders, parish teams and youth leaders to establish youth ministry in their parish or faith community. This kit is available online at www.sydneycatholicyouth.org
- For support with building community for young people in your parish, to establish or develop a youth ministry, or help with any of the initiatives listed above, contact Sydney Catholic Youth at info@sydneycatholicyouth.org or on (02) 9307 8152

Strategy 15:

Build the Relationship between Parishes and Schools

Action 1

Host gatherings, such as a morning tea, for **students in Catholic Special Religious Education and their families**, and invite them to the parish youth group, retreats, formation opportunities or other gatherings in the life of the parish.

Resources

- For support in coordinating such events of outreach, contact your local Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) Faith Education Officer or the CCD Parish Catechist Support office at office@ccdsydney.catholic.edu.au or on (02) 9307 8330

Action 2

Invite Special Religious Education Catechists to give their students a start-of-year letter, with a parish bulletin and an **invitation to Mass and sacramental preparation programs**, to take home to their parents/carers.

Resources

- Note that providing public school students with any printed material must be done in accordance with NSW Special Religious Education Procedures. For more information and support in this communication, contact the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) Parish Catechist Support office at office@ccdsydney.catholic.edu.au or on (02) 9307 8330

Action 3

Inform your Special Religious Education Catechists about **events for youth in the region** and ask them to invite students from the public schools.

Resources

- Again, this must be done in accordance with NSW Special Religious Education Procedures. For more information and support in issuing such invitations, contact the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) Parish Catechist Support office at office@ccdsydney.catholic.edu.au or on (02) 9307 8330



Strategy 15 (continued):

Build the Relationship between Parishes and Schools

Action 4

Invite **Catholic students in public schools to participate in sacramental preparation retreats** together with students of Catholic schools.

Resources

- For guidelines surrounding this, including permissions for students allowing them to be absent from school (should the retreat fall on a school day), contact your local Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) Faith Education Officer or the CCD Parish Catechist Support office at office@ccdsydney.catholic.edu.au or on (02) 9307 8330

Action 5

Students in public schools attending Catholic Special Religious Education can be invited to **join local Catholic schools** in their pilgrimages to World Youth Day, Australian Catholic Youth Festival and other national events.

Resources

- Contact Glen Thompson at Sydney Catholic Schools on (02) 9568 8140 or glen.thompson@syd.catholic.edu.au

Strategy 16:

Engage with the Wider Community

Action 1

Parishes can consider **events and opportunities in the wider community** in which the parish can express its faith to others (e.g. Relay for Life events, the St Vincent de Paul Society Winter Sleep-out, Clean Up Australia Day, local sporting events and community festivals and markets).

Strategy 16 (continued):

Engage With the Wider Community

Action 2

Consider running **workshops that serve the wider community** such as offering a homework centre, new migrant welcome centre, seniors' gathering place, workshops on fatherhood, motherhood and parenting, careers evenings for young people, or various mentoring programs.

Resources

- To discuss opportunities and relevant speakers and resources, please contact the Parish Renewal Team on (02) 9390 5330 or parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org

Action 3

Consider having a **parish open day** or join together with the school to facilitate such a day together. Hospitality can be offered via a BBQ or coffee cart with information packs for visitors, opportunities for prayer, tours of the parish church and grounds, an introduction to an upcoming parish program or formation opportunity such as Alpha. Parishes can also engage the local community in this way by their creative and regular presence at local markets.

Action 4

Consider the needs of your wider community and what your parish could do to work toward the common good. While the needs of your local community may be unique, some examples of parish responses are listed below, drawn from the experience of growing Catholic communities.

Resources

- Communities with a high unemployment rate or social issues could offer mentoring or accompaniment by select parishioners who are able to offer relevant advice or practical support or connections
- Study programs or assistance can be offered for high school students or newly arrived adults in your parish. For example, English classes could be provided for those with a Language Background Other than English (LBOTE)
- Coordinated responses could be arranged with St Vincent de Paul Society conferences and other social needs or justice groups within the parish or deanery

Strategy 16 (continued):

Engage With the Wider Community

Action 5

Build a relationship with your Members of Parliament and local councillors by inviting them to events such as significant parish anniversaries, affirming the role of the parish in the life of the local community.

Action 6

Invite other religious leaders in your area to a morning tea hosted in your parish, to build relationships in the wider community and even collaborate toward common works and on common issues in the local community.

Strategy 17:

Create Accessible and Hospitable Environments

Action 1

Parishes should **review opening hours of the parish church** or churches taking into account the desire for prayer during the day and early evening (this may involve a review of security measures to enable longer hours of prayer within the life of the community).

Action 2

Mass, Confession and devotional times should be made prominent on parish bulletins, with these same details made visible on parish noticeboards and/or church signs, and on the parish website.

Action 3

Parishes might review and ensure **adequate and clear signage** throughout the parish grounds and facilities, to allow visitors and newcomers in particular to find their way to church buildings, parish halls, car parking, and amenities with ease.

Action 4

Parishes should ensure church grounds and facilities are **clean, tidy and easily accessible**. This ensures newcomers and existing parishioners feel welcome.

Strategy 18:

Fundraise for Community Needs

The Archdiocesan Development and Fundraising Office can help you to raise funds that could enhance initiatives to improve the experience of community in your parish such as the purchase of a mode of transport for parishioners who cannot drive, a coffee van for hospitality, or other items that could assist with parish welcome, hospitality and outreach.

Resources

- For more information regarding fundraising, please email fundraising@sydneycatholic.org or phone 1800 753 959

Strategy 19:

Improve Communications to Create Community

Parish welcome material, parish registration forms, and accurate and up-to-date parish information can be made **available online** via a parish website and through appropriate social media, with maintenance and periodic review of content by parish team members or nominated parishioners.

Resources

- The Communications team within the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation can provide support for your website and strategies for social media outreach. For more information, contact Michael Kenny on 0438 046 406 or cathcomm@sydneycatholic.org

Strategy 19 (continued):

Improve Communications to Create Community

Action 2

Parishes can **engage or improve their use of many new technologies that support communication** and so build community. These include livestreaming, WiFi, and other audio-visual and online communications tools.

Resources

- The Digital and Design team of the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation can provide assistance and guidance to parishes on livestreaming solutions, improving WiFi coverage, simple technical assistance, and best practice in audio-visual and online outreach. For assistance, contact Mike Lynch at mike.lynch@sydneycatholic.org or on 0413 000 330

Action 3

All tools that can support good communications aid the building of community. One simple tool is a **concise and personalised electronic newsletter** sent each week from the parish priest and providing material such as a brief spiritual reflection for the week ahead, a link to the Sunday readings, and an invitation to parishioners to various parish gatherings and spiritual formation. Engaging such digital tools keeps the parish and parishioners in touch during periods of absence, can be a blessing for the housebound, and makes parish communications more resilient during disruptive events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The parish bulletin could also be attached to such a newsletter if desired.

Resources

- The Sydney Centre for Evangelisation's Digital and Design team can provide Sydney parishes with assistance in setting up commonly used templates for electronic newsletters and provide, on request, training in their use. For more assistance, contact Peter Rodrigues at peter.rodrigues@sydneycatholic.org or on 0409 608 271



Step 4: Act

In deciding and then taking these actions forward, the parish priest can work together with the Parish Pastoral Council or relevant ministry leaders to create action groups, sub-committees or a team for building community life, established for a definite duration. These groups should ideally include at least one member of the Parish Pastoral Council to ensure alignment with the wider vision and planning of the parish as a whole, and can lead and invite others into these efforts toward renewal.

You could also consider forming a senior leadership team that can focus upon assisting in the ongoing practical strategies and decisions needed to implement the plan, which allows the Parish Pastoral Council to focus on the longer term pastoral plan of the parish. Read more about the role of a senior leadership team in bringing the vision of the parish into reality in the chapter on Leadership.



Foundation 4

FORMATION

Introduction



Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you”.

1 Peter 3:15

In the Scriptures we see in the life of Jesus that the formation of His followers to grow in discipleship and enter into His mission is central.



Through His words and deeds Jesus teaches His disciples how to interpret Scripture (Luke 24:25-27), how to pray (Matthew 6:5-14) and to be attentive to the interior life (Mark 7:14-23).

He also teaches His Apostles vigilance in the spiritual life (Matthew 24:42-44; Mark 13:33; Luke 12:40), about the moral life (Matthew 5:21-29), the importance of forgiveness (Mark 11:25), and how to respond pastorally in mission (Mark 2:15-17; Matthew 9:10).

Our conscious decision to place the Great Commission of Jesus at the centre of our parishes' identity and action means discerning and enacting new ways to provide Christian formation that will enable our communities and parishioners to grow in Christ as missionary disciples. Formation of our hearts, minds and wills sustains the journey of faith by enabling us to know Christ better and live our discipleship more fully.

The process of evangelisation is rarely instantaneous or momentary but more often a gradual and lifelong process of conversion to Jesus Christ as a disciple on mission. To be a disciple is to be a learner who sits at the feet of Jesus, grows in faith and understanding over time, and is sent to witness and convey to others the truth of God's love in Christ: “[a]lways be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15).



Joseph von Führich,
Der Gang nach Emmaus
c. 1837, The Yorck Project

Again, the *kerygma* or ‘Great Story of Jesus’ is at the heart of Christian formation. This is the proclamation of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection as the revelation of God’s saving love and mercy. Pope Francis notes, “[w]e must not think that in catechesis the *kerygma* gives way to a supposedly more ‘solid’ formation. Nothing is more solid, profound, secure, meaningful, and wisdom-filled than that initial proclamation. All Christian formation consists of entering more deeply into the *kerygma*”.¹

This formation in the Gospel also takes place **in the context of Christian community**, as we are accompanied by others on the journey with Christ, formed by ongoing encounters with Christ in His Word and sacraments, shaped by the witness and testimony of others, enriched by a life of prayer and daily spiritual practices, and by living Jesus’ mission in service to the needy.

It is by a culture of ongoing formation in local parishes and communities that people grow in their faith in Christ and are equipped to share His person and message with others, becoming theologically literate and spiritually well-formed.

Types of Formation

Jesus spent a great deal of time forming the people who followed Him: discussing moral and social issues; teaching them how to pray; explaining the disciples’ duties to God and ‘Caesar’; instructing them on how to be in community together, how to serve people on the margins and witness to the mercy of God, to challenge social structures and to relate to people outside their community; healing disciples of their own wounds; and offering His friendship.

There are four kinds of formation Christian disciples need: human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral.

- **Human formation** is about helping the disciple grow into a mature adult who has the virtues necessary to live his or her life to the full. Human formation can involve engaging psychology, habits and the virtues. These are important for discipleship and evangelisation as virtuous lives lead to holiness which draws others to its source, Jesus Christ.
- **Spiritual formation** helps the disciple to enter into the apprenticeship of prayer in which he or she experiences

¹ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 156.

true personal conversation with God, and introduces the disciple to traditions that can deepen this encounter such as retreats and pilgrimages. The spiritual nourishment of the disciple is essential to the mission of evangelisation for, “[t]o proclaim fruitfully the Word of the Gospel one is first asked to have a profound experience of God”.²

- **Intellectual formation** develops the faculty of reason that complements the gift of faith: they are “like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth”.³ Catechesis and intellectual formation are essential in the Christian life including the study of Scripture and Tradition, growing knowledge of Catholic theology, and drawing also on other disciplines including philosophy, literature and the arts. It can deepen and enhance the disciple’s encounter with Jesus in Word and sacrament, deepen his or her discipleship, and provide resources when discipleship becomes demanding. When evangelising, reasonable explanations can remove intellectual barriers to people encountering Christ, as well as dispelling fallacies about the Catholic faith.

“...to know His ‘mystery’, the kingdom of God proclaimed by Him, the requirements and promises contained in His Gospel message, and the paths that He has laid down for anyone who wishes to follow Him”.

As Pope John Paul II shared, “[w]ithin the whole process of evangelisation, the aim of catechesis is to be the teaching and maturation stage, that is to say, the period in which the Christian, having accepted by faith the person of Jesus Christ as the one Lord and having given Him complete adherence by sincere conversion of heart, endeavours to know better this Jesus to whom he has entrusted Himself: to know His ‘mystery’, the kingdom of God proclaimed by Him, the requirements and promises contained in His Gospel message, and the paths that He has laid down for anyone who wishes to follow Him”.⁴

- **Pastoral formation** is about how the disciple carries out the particular evangelising mission to which he or she is called, building up the body of Christ. Pastoral formation helps the disciple become adept in engaging others and inviting them into an encounter with Jesus through persuasive communication, sensitivity to the other, and insights into the dynamics of conversion.

² Pope Benedict XVI, *Ubicumque et Semper*, 21 September 2010.

³ Pope John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio* 1.

⁴ Pope John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae* 20.



Discipleship Pathway

If conversion is a process and not instantaneous, then communities seeking to ‘make disciples’ can benefit from putting clear steps in place for people to walk and follow, **a path of discipleship through which people can grow**. As shared in the chapter on evangelisation, a ‘discipleship pathway’ identifies how we are seeking to provide opportunities that can help people to move through a process of spiritual conversion and maturity in our community. Formation is an important part of this pathway.

This means clearly communicating what people can do to grow in relationship with Jesus and the pathway in the parish that will help them grow in this relationship. For example, a pathway for parish evangelisation might begin with building up a culture of invitation in the community, and for people to be drawn into an encounter with the Gospel via an initiative such as Alpha or ChristLife, which explores life and the Christian faith. Following this initial encounter, participants can then be encouraged to join the organising team for such a course, or otherwise join a small group in the parish to connect more deeply with others in community and enter into deeper formation. They might join a small group Bible study in order to deepen the faith they have discovered. As a next step, the parish might then encourage participants to commit to active mission in the form of service to others; for example, to become involved in a parish ministry or share their God-given talents in social outreach to the wider community.



Taking Steps to Strengthen Formation in our Communities

In supporting the formation and apprenticeship of the entire Christian life, parishes and communities can strengthen the formal ways in which the faith of disciples is enhanced and continuing formation is made accessible.

Below is a four (4) step process which your community may choose to undertake to **reflect** upon the place of formation in your identity as a community of disciples, **review** how that identity is being expressed in the actions and priorities of your community, **discern and decide** how God might be calling your community to strengthen that foundation, and to take particular **actions** with the help of the support and resources outlined in this Mission Plan.

This process can be led by the parish priest with his parish leadership team. Alternatively, priests seeking to strengthen their parish's foundations for mission are also welcome to engage in this process by attending a *Parishes for Mission* day and bringing with them their parish leaders. These days, offered regionally and online, will provide leaders with formation in mission, strategies to assess and strengthen foundations for mission, and practical ways to create and implement a vision for the community. For more details, visit www.gomakedisciples.org.au or contact the Parish Renewal Team at parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org or on (02) 9390 5330.

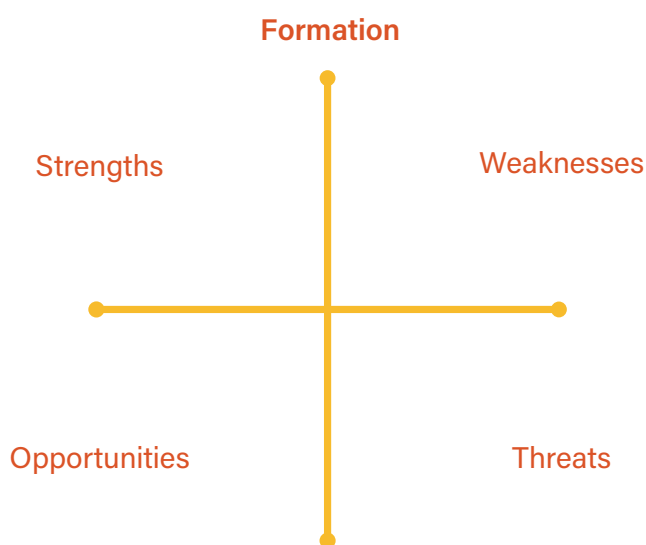
Step 1: Reflect on Formation

- 1.1 We should begin with a reflection on the place of formation in the life and ministry of Jesus and the early Church. This reflection can include the following examples of Jesus' formation with His disciples:
 - Jesus provided intellectual formation to the disciples on the road to Emmaus by explaining to them how to read Scripture (Luke 24:13-35)
 - Jesus offered His disciples spiritual formation by teaching them how to pray (Luke 11:1-13)
 - Jesus provided human formation to His disciples by teaching them about the meaning of marriage (Mark 10:6-12)
 - Jesus provided pastoral formation, demonstrating service at the heart of leadership when He washed the feet of His disciples (John 13:1-17)

Step 2:

Review Formation in your Parish

2.1 Again, a basic way of assessing the quality of formation in your community is to conduct a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis of the formation currently undertaken in your parish, chaplaincy or movement. This exercise might be completed by your parish or leadership team, Parish Pastoral Council, RCIA, adult faith formation or other ministry groups as they seek to accompany people to maturity in Christ.



Once this brainstorming has taken place, and strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to formation in the parish have been named, it is then possible to choose specific areas for response. No parish can be expected to address all of these concerns at once. The questions below will assist your parish to focus on areas where it can begin to practically strengthen and renew its dedication to formation of the Christian life.

1. What current strength in the area of formation can our parish most easily build upon?
2. What current weakness in formation would be the easiest one to fix?
3. What is the greatest opportunity in the formation of our people we could seize upon with the least amount of time and resources?
4. What is the most immediate or greatest threat we need to address in the formation of people as disciples on mission?

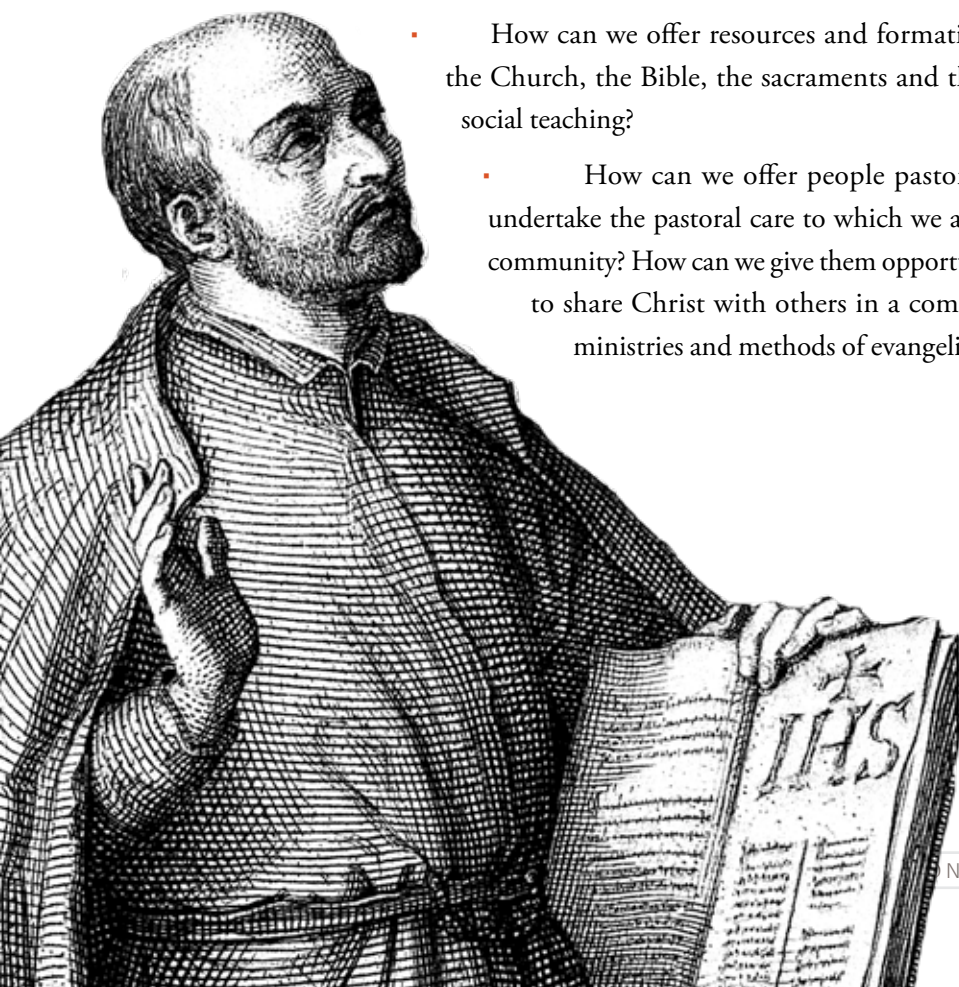


2.2 The questions below will also assist the conversation about formation within your parish, chaplaincy or community:

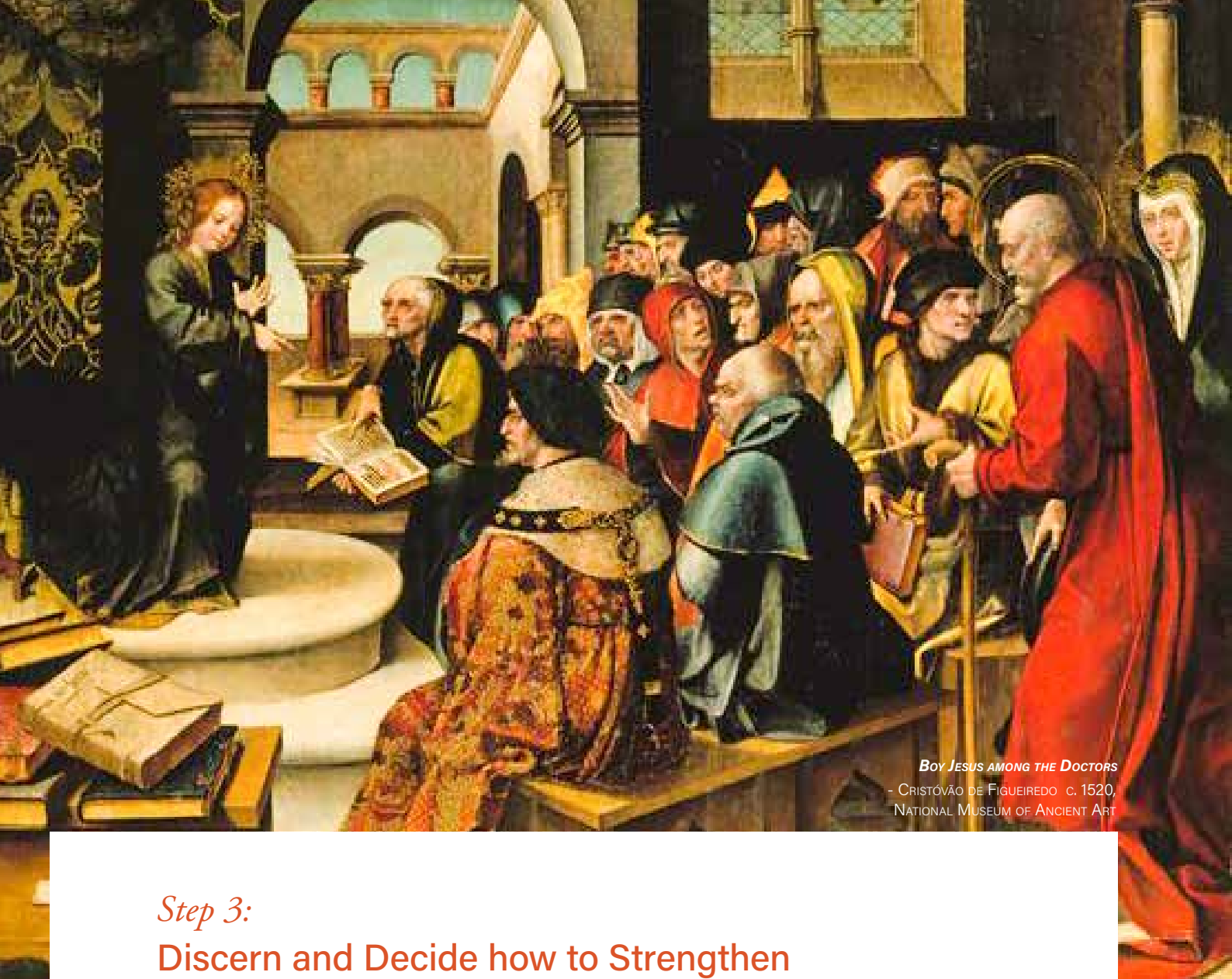
- Reflecting on the various opportunities for faith formation in your parish or community, which do you think warrants further attention so that the ‘Great Story of Jesus’ or *kerygma* is better or more deeply known?
- What are the small groups of formation that can be intentionally grown to promote and encourage a culture of learning in the wider parish community (e.g. Lenten, Advent, Scripture study groups)? How might these existing groups form part of a discipleship pathway in your community or be connected to other dimensions of parish life (e.g. as an opportunity for growth and community following RCIA)?

2.3 In keeping with the four kinds of formation Christian disciples need, consider whether your parish can offer any of the below to assist with such formation for the people in your community:

- How can we offer resources and formation on human sexuality, mental health, relationships, healthy psychology, and issues such as addiction? Can we ensure parishioners have access to counselling, formation programs, literature and services concerning these issues?
- How can we provide people with spiritual formation by offering experiences and opportunities by which they can learn to pray, deepen their prayer life, discover new ways to pray, and access the great schools of prayer and traditions such as *lectio divina*? How can we introduce parishioners to the great schools of spirituality that offer us centuries of wisdom on deepening our relationship with God, such as the Ignatian, Carmelite, Benedictine, and Marist traditions? Can we offer retreats and coordinate pilgrimages for the growth of our people?
 - How can we offer resources and formation on understanding the teachings of the Church, the Bible, the sacraments and the Mass, moral theology, and Catholic social teaching?
 - How can we offer people pastoral formation on how to discover and undertake the pastoral care to which we are called in our parish and in the wider community? How can we give them opportunities to develop skills and competencies to share Christ with others in a competent and attractive way through our ministries and methods of evangelisation?



Saint Ignatius of Loyola.
Engraving by Friedrich Ludy after
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BOY JESUS AMONG THE DOCTORS
- CRISTOVÃO DE FIGUEIREDO c. 1520,
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ANCIENT ART

Step 3:

Discern and Decide how to Strengthen Formation in your Parish

- 3.1 By now, you should have a clearer sense of the place that formation has in your community and how this aspect of our identity as a Church is currently being expressed in the actions and priorities of your community. The next step is to discern and decide how God might be calling your particular community to strengthen its foundation of formation.
- 3.2 Discernment is not a process of simply choosing some good thing, but of trying to listen carefully to what God is asking us to do in our situation. Resources for a process of group discernment are available at www.gomakedisciples.org.au. Alternatively, the Parish Renewal Team within the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation can facilitate this conversation and process of discernment for you at a *Parishes for Mission* day. For more details, contact the team at parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org or on (02) 9390 5330.
- 3.3 Some things to consider in your conversation include:
 - a. What formation needs do we sense in our community?
 - b. Are there any particular areas of formation that need more attention than others?
 - c. Which of the strategies below is God calling us to implement to strengthen formation in our community?

Your parish or community may already be doing many of the good things outlined. However, there will also be actions that your community can take up to strengthen formation for discipleship as a foundation of your identity as a parish. Many of these actions will also be applicable to migrant chaplaincies, shrines and ecclesial movements in the Archdiocese of Sydney.

Strategy 1:

Establish a Small Group Culture

Providing formation in a small group context can be particularly effective because it means that **formation can take place in a more personal environment** in which all participants have a chance to ask questions and share ideas.

Small groups are vital to our growth because discipleship is not only about how we learn and grow as individuals but how we learn and grow together.

Small groups can be initiated in a parish-wide approach or by one person deciding to intentionally begin formation with others in their life. These groups provide a more intimate experience of Christian community and enable a depth of relationship through a more intense sense of belonging.

Resources

- A good way to start a ‘small group culture’ in your parish, where people can experience formation, community, and receive comprehensive training on how to lead a small group, is through the Alpha series. For more information about Alpha, contact Tania Rimac in the Parish Renewal Team at tania.rimac@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9390 5338. If you would like to establish a small group without implementing Alpha, contact the Parish Renewal Team at parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9390 5330
- A helpful small group resource, including a leader’s guide, is ‘Faith Circles’, available from the Catholic Diocese of Wollongong at www.dow.org.au/media-resources/faith-circles
- Another Catholic approach to small groups is the ‘Discipleship Quad’ resource from the Franciscan University, Steubenville, involving groups of four people who journey together as disciples through weekly gatherings of fellowship, learning and ongoing conversion. A guidebook can be downloaded for free at www.steubenvilleconferences.com/discipleship-quads as well as tips for launching such groups, templates for invitations and follow up by email, and guidance for small group coordinators

Strategy 2:**Provide Intellectual Formation**

Continuing the small group format from Alpha, **offer ongoing formation using quality Catholic programs.** These include the series listed below.

Resources

- Word on Fire has produced outstanding series about the Catholic faith that can be used by parishes as formation including *Catholicism*, *The Mass*, *The Sacraments*, *The Mystery of God: Who He is and Why He Matters*, *Untold Blessings: Three Paths to Holiness*, *Conversion: Following the Call of Christ*, and *The Saints*. For more information and online access, visit www.wordonfire.org or purchase DVDs at www.mustardseed.org.au
- The St Paul Centre for Biblical Theology and Dr Scott Hahn have produced a range of biblical studies which can be accessed via streaming or DVD and are accompanied by a leader's guide for small group discussion. For more information, visit www.stpaulcenter.com
- Jeff Cavins has produced an 8-week course as an introduction to Scripture called 'Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible: The Bible Timeline'. This resource is available from Parousia Media at <https://store.parousiamedia.com/> or (02) 9651 0375
- Dr Brant Pitre has produced some outstanding biblical talks that focus on outlining the continuity of God's salvific plan in the Old and New Testaments. He offers series such as *The Origins of the Bible*, *The Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* and *A Biblical Explanation of the Mass*. Talks can be purchased and streamed at www.catholicproductions.com/collections/brant-pitre/digital-video?sort_by=created-descending
- Sycamore offers a range of free evangelisation and formation courses about the Christian faith and its relevance for life today. Sycamore is a tool for primary evangelisation but can also form part of a wider program of faith formation, catechesis or sacramental preparation. These courses are designed to be used in small groups. Each session in the courses involves a short film and time for discussion. For more information, see www.sycamore.fm
- 'Formed' by the Augustine Institute is a website that provides access to thousands of movies, children's programs, e-books, audio and parish study programs. Subscriptions available for individuals or parishes. For more information, go to www.parousiamedia.com/formed

Action 1

- ‘Evangelium’ offers a series of PowerPoint presentations on the Catholic faith based on the structure of the Catechism. Leader and participant guides are included. These resources can be used for RCIA or in a range of adult faith formation contexts. Available at www.mustardseed.org.au or (02) 9307 8350
- For assistance in establishing small groups for a formation series in your parish, contact the Parish Renewal Team at parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9390 5330

Promote **Catholic podcasts**, which provide intellectual formation in the Catholic faith.

Resources

- *Episcopal Podcast* with Most Reverend Richard Umbers, Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney. In the context of a fortnightly informal discussion with co-hosts and guests, this podcast brings awareness to the riches that constitute the Christian intellectual tradition, including philosophy, theology, history, the sciences, languages and the arts. Listen at <https://the-episcopal-podcast.captivate.fm>
- *This Catholic Life* with Peter Holmes is a show about ordinary Catholics having a relaxed, informal, and genuinely searching conversation about current issues, the challenges and hardships of contemporary life. Listen at www.thiscatholiclife.com.au
- *Pints with Aquinas* with Matt Fradd explores the teachings of St Thomas Aquinas and their relevance to life today in a conversational manner. Listen at www.pintswithaquinas.com/episodes
- *The Word on Fire Show* with Bishop Robert Barron is a weekly podcast exploring faith and culture. Listen at www.wordonfireshow.com/category/podcasts
- *Clerically Speaking* with Fr Harrison Ayer and Fr Anthony Sciarappa. Two Catholic priests discuss matters of faith in an informative and entertaining manner. Listen at www.clericallyspeaking.com
- *The Fr Mike Schmitz Catholic Podcast* looks at faith, pop culture, and headline reflections. Fr Mike Schmitz is the director of youth and young adult ministry for the Diocese of Duluth. Listen at <https://thefrmikepodcast.fireside.fm>

Action 2

Strategy 2 (continued):

Provide Intellectual Formation

Promote subscriptions to written and audio **commentaries and reflections on Scripture**. Follow the links provided to sign up for these resources.

Resources

- *Daily Scripture Reflections* with Bishop Robert Barron
www.dailycatholicgospel.com/sign-up-daily-gospel
- *Bishop Barron's Sermons* podcast reflecting on the Sunday Gospel www.wordonfire.podbean.com
- *Scripture Reflections and Commentaries* by Fr Brendan Byrne SJ available at <https://www.australiancatholics.com.au/edition/scripture-reflections-and-commentaries>
- *Sunday Bible Reflections* by Scott Hahn
www.stpaulcenter.com/studies-tools/sunday-bible-reflections

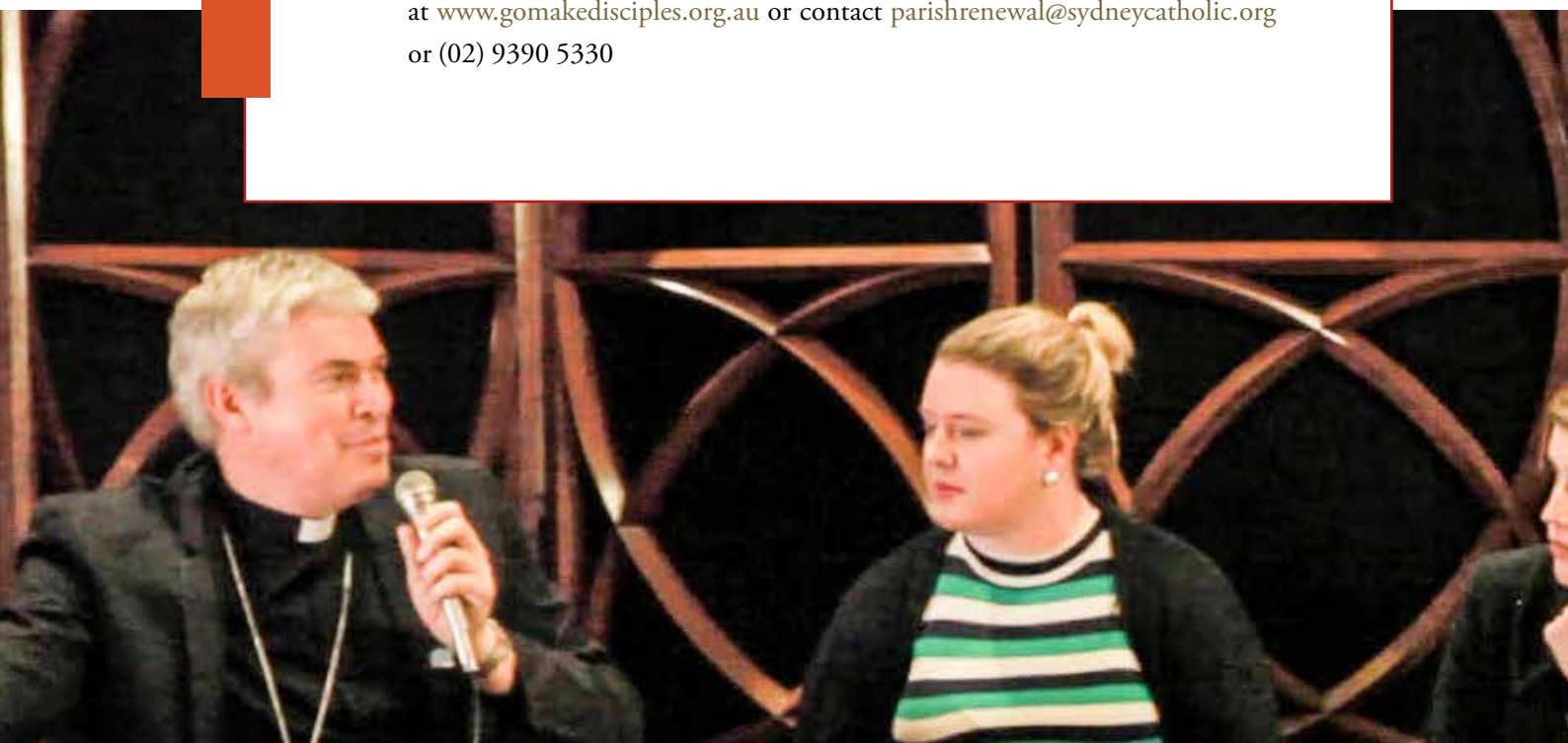
Attend **formation on a range of Scriptural, theological and pastoral topics** through the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation.

Resources

- Throughout the year, the Parish Renewal Team within the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation will host short courses and stand-alone talks on a range of topics drawing on the best speakers and thinkers in the Archdiocese and beyond. Guest speakers will include Fr James Mallon, Sherry Weddell, Dr Mary Healy, George Weigel, Prof Hayden Ramsay, Peter Holmes, Fr Jacques Philippe and others to be announced. For more information, sign up to the *Go Make Disciples* newsletter at www.gomakedisciples.org.au or contact parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9390 5330

Action 3

Action 4



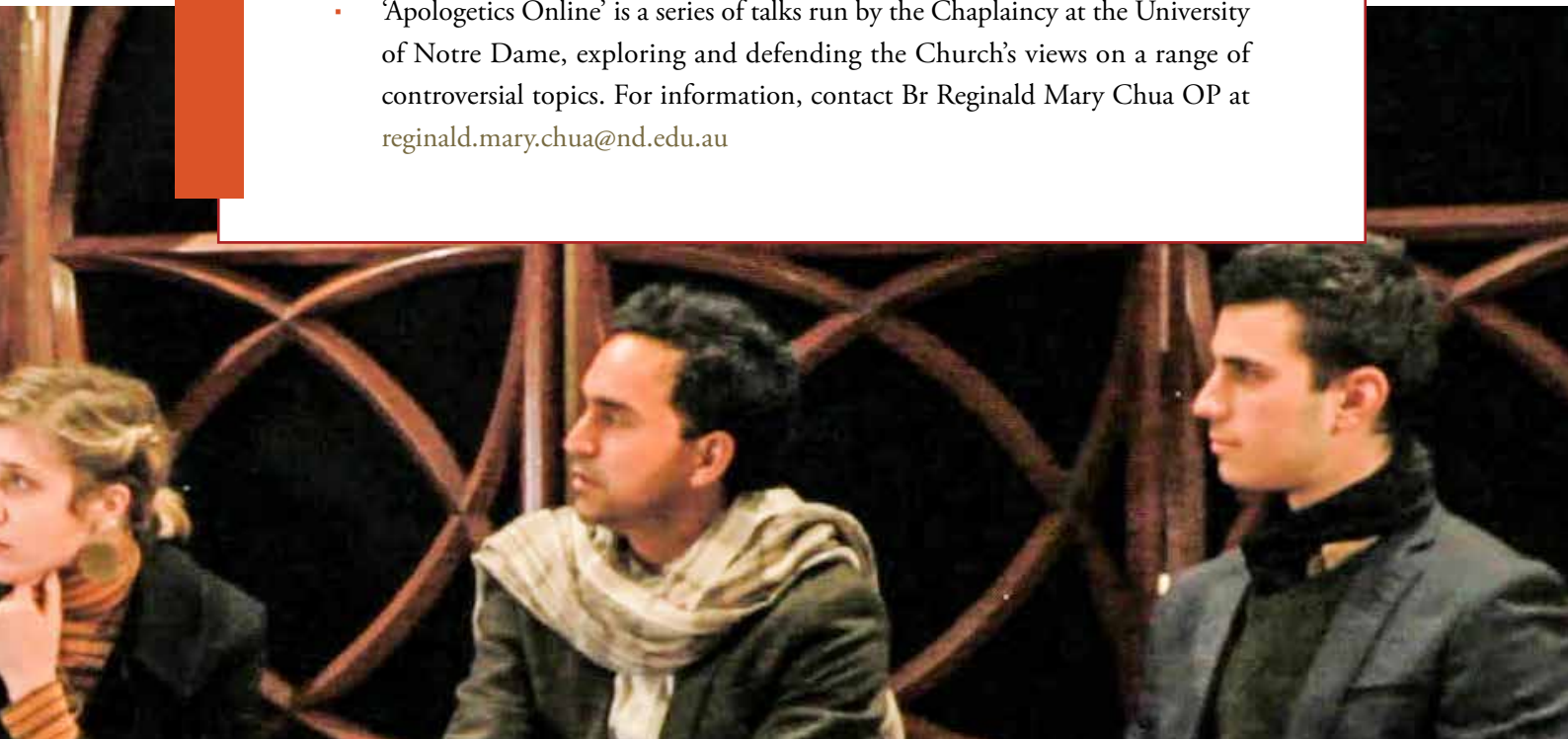
Strategy 2 (continued):

Provide Intellectual Formation

Promote attendance at **events focused on formation** around a range of topics offered by outstanding Catholic speakers and partner organisations in the Archdiocese.

Resources

- ‘The Bishop’s Blend Breakfast Series’ for young professionals, an initiative of Bishop Richard Umbers. Email bishopsblend@sydneycatholic.org
- ‘Scholarship at the Cathedral’ is a series of public lectures at St Mary’s Cathedral bringing together intellectuals from different backgrounds and interests to share and seek truth together on matters of faith and reason. For more information, visit www.satcathedral.org
- The Archdiocese of Sydney’s Justice and Peace Office can provide parishes and communities with formation on Catholic Social Teaching. For more information, visit www.justiceandpeace.org.au or contact Fr Peter Smith at peter.smith@sydneycatholic.org or 0408 613 709
- The Notre Dame Institute for Ethics & Society runs ‘QndA’, which draws politicians, priests and professors of different faiths and traditions to Notre Dame to thrash out (what should be) the hot issues of the day. It is about faith and reason in action. For more information, visit www.notredame.edu.au/research/institute-for-ethics-and-society/public-engagement/qnda or email qnda@nd.edu.au
- ‘Theology on Tap’ is a monthly event held by the Chaplaincy of the University of Notre Dame. Currently in its 12th year, people from all walks of life get together for a bit of food for thought and theology on tap. For more information, contact the Chaplaincy at sydney.chaplaincy@nd.edu.au
- ‘Apologetics Online’ is a series of talks run by the Chaplaincy at the University of Notre Dame, exploring and defending the Church’s views on a range of controversial topics. For information, contact Br Reginald Mary Chua OP at reginald.mary.chua@nd.edu.au



Strategy 2 (continued):

Provide Intellectual Formation

Start a **book club to encourage spiritual reading and formation** with the aid of classics and engaging texts in the Christian spiritual life. Popular authors include Dr Peter Kreeft, C.S. Lewis and Fr Jacques Philippe. Some other titles recommended as a starting point and available through www.mustardseed.org.au include:

Resources

- On human formation: *Virtuous Leadership* by Alexandre Havard; *The Virtue Driven Life* by Benedict J Groeschel; *Non-Violent Communication* by Marshall B. Rosenberg; *Father Elijah* by Michael O'Brien
- On pastoral formation: *The Wounded Healer* by Henri Nouwen, *Divine Renovation* by Fr James Mallon, *Forming Intentional Disciples* by Sherry Weddell
- On spiritual formation: *Searching for and Maintaining Peace, Thirsting For Prayer or Nine Days to Rediscover the Joy of Prayer* by Fr Jacques Philippe; *Saints A Closer Look* by Thomas Dubay SM; *Story of a Soul* by St Therese de Lisieux; *An Introduction to the Devout Life* by St Francis de Sales
- On intellectual formation: *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis; *The Twelve Apostles* by Pope Benedict XVI; *Because God is Real* by Peter Kreeft; *Walking with God* by Jeff Cavins and Tim Gray



Strategy 3:

Provide Spiritual Formation

Complementing the liturgy and the sacraments of the Church, parishes should consider **forms of prayer and spiritual growth** in the parish including the practice of *lectio divina*, the meditative reading of Scripture, alone or with others; Eucharistic adoration; the Divine Mercy devotion; novenas; rosary groups; intercessory prayer; spiritual reading; and days and times of recollection. For more on each of these forms of prayer, visit the websites below.

Resources

- *Lectio divina*, an ancient practice of prayer with Scripture is explained at www.jamberooabbey.org.au/prayer/lectio-divina-praying-with-the-sacred-scriptures
- A Holy Hour can be made before the Blessed Sacrament, with resources on how to pray during this time of Eucharistic Adoration available at www.gomakedisciples.org.au
- The Liturgy of the Hours (sometimes known as the Prayer of the Church or the Divine Office) is a tradition of praying the psalms, other Scripture and writings of the Church Fathers at intervals throughout the day. Prayers for each day can be found at www.universalis.com/Australia
- Novenas can be prayed for various intentions seeking the intercession of saints; a number of novena prayers are available at www.ewtn.com/catholicism/devotions/novenas-75
- A guide to praying the Rosary is available at www.mycatholic.life/catholic-prayers/the-most-holy-rosary

Integrate the forms of prayer mentioned above into **parish team meetings and meetings of groups** within the parish, encouraging a culture of prayer in all the pastoral life and works of the community.

Resources

- Contact the Parish Renewal Team for a copy of prayers and blessings that can be used for this purpose in your community at parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9390 5330

Action 1

Action 2

Strategy 3 (continued):

Provide Spiritual Formation

Action 3

Organise parish retreat days which can provide an opportunity for spiritual formation of leaders and other parishioners, and can be seasonal or thematic. These days can include a time of shared prayer, input and reflection time, group discussion and spiritual conversations that encourage leaders in their baptismal vocation and the mission of the community they serve.

Resources

- The Parish Renewal Team will offer regional retreat days for parishes of Sydney. For more information, contact parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9390 5330
- Retreat centres offer retreat programs, silent retreats and spiritual direction. Centres in and around Sydney include:
 - Benedict XVI Retreat Centre at Grose Vale www.benedictxvicentre.org.au
 - Benedictine Abbey at Jamberoo www.jamberooabbey.org.au/retreats
 - St Mary's Towers Retreat Centre at Douglas Park www.towersretreat.org.au
 - St Joseph's Retreat Centre at Baulkham Hills www.stjosephscentre.org.au
 - Mt Carmel Retreat Centre at Varroville www.mtcarmel.com.au
- *The Catholic Weekly Retreat Guide* is an annual guide to retreat venues and events. Visit www.catholicweekly.com.au/retreats-magazine-2019
- The Cursillo Movement offers retreat weekends. Visit www.cursillo.asn.au or contact Fr Graham McIntyre for more information regarding upcoming offerings on (02) 9602 1083

Action 4

Organise a pilgrimage together. This can be undertaken locally, to Mary MacKillop Place or Eileen O'Connor's tomb at Coogee, overseas to a significant Christian site such as the Holy Land or St Peter's Basilica in Vatican City, or an ancient Christian pilgrimage such as the Camino in Spain.

Resources

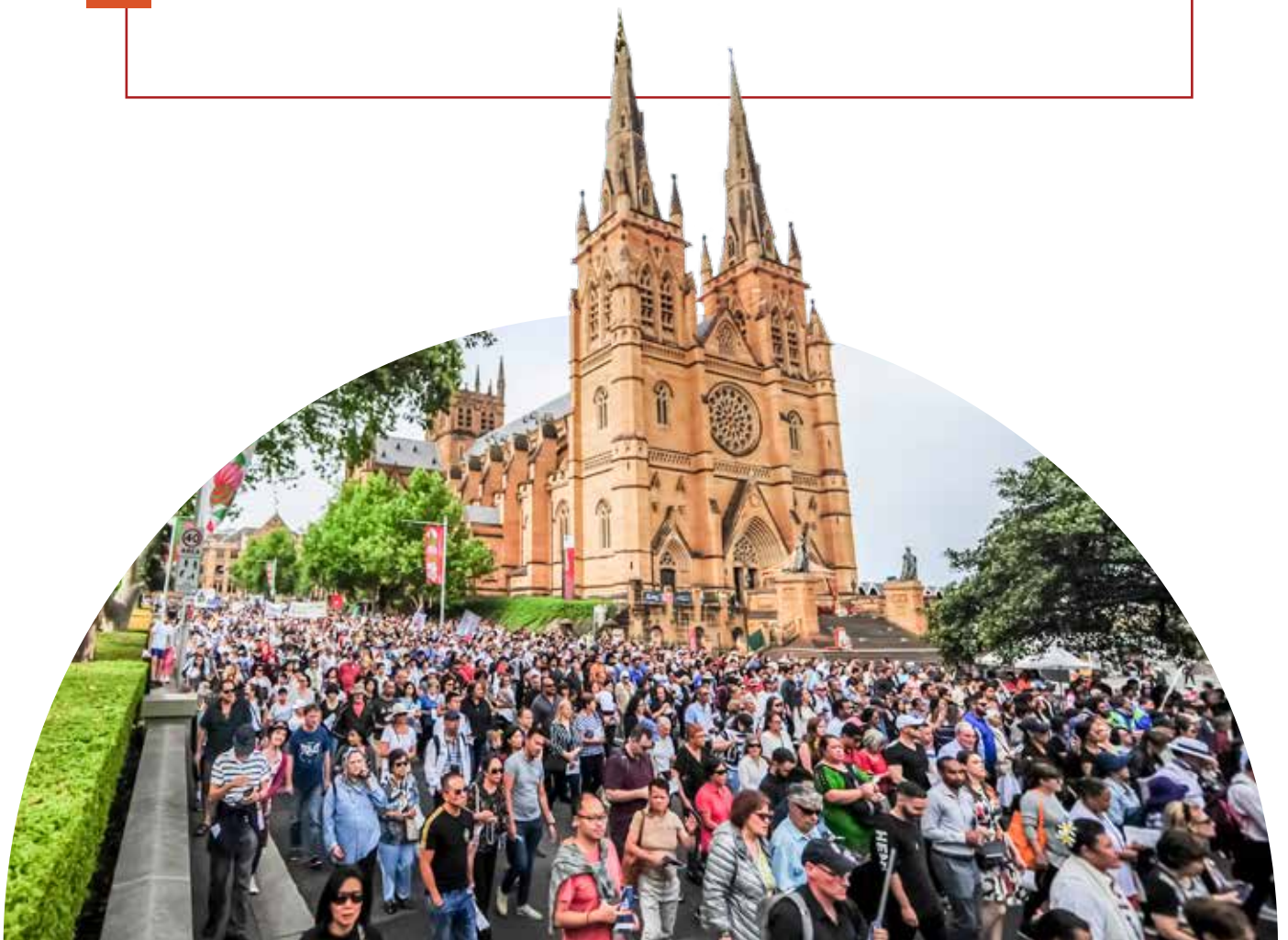
- Join the Archdiocese of Sydney's annual 'Walk with Christ' pilgrimage on the Feast of Corpus Christi. For information, sign up to the *Go Make Disciples* newsletter at www.gomakedisciples.org.au

- Make a pilgrimage to a local shrine. “Going on pilgrimage to the shrines is one of the People of God’s most eloquent expressions of faith ... In the shrines, indeed, our people live out their deep spirituality, that piety which has for centuries shaped the faith with simple but very meaningful devotions”.⁵ The Shrine is the “house of forgiveness, where each person meets the tenderness of the Father who has mercy on all, excluding none”. There are a number of shrines in our Archdiocese, such as:
 - Shrine to Our Lady of Mt Carmel, Waterloo. The church was established by Archbishop Polding in 1859. Interestingly, Archbishop Polding’s ship had been caught in a storm off Fremantle and he had promised to build a church on the highest hill he could find and dedicate it to Our Lady of Mt Carmel in exchange for their safety
 - The Church of St Peter Julian in Haymarket is a Shrine of Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. The Blessed Sacrament Fathers sought permission to provide Exposition and the Sacrament of Penance at this shrine www.stpeterjuliansydney.com/about-us
- Other important places of pilgrimage within the Archdiocese include:
 - The tomb of Australia’s first saint, Saint Mary of the Cross MacKillop who tirelessly served the poor and marginalised in Australia. For more information, go to www.marymackillopplace.org.au. To organise a visit to MacKillop Place, contact Deborah Cho, Central Events Coordinator, at event.bookings@mmp.org.au or (02) 8912 4814
 - The tomb and museum of Servant of God Eileen O’Connor at Coogee. Eileen O’Connor suffered from chronic spinal tuberculosis and was unable to stand or walk for most of her life. She co-founded Our Lady’s Nurses for the Poor which performs a unique ministry of care for the sick, poor and disadvantaged. Eileen died at 28 years of age. The cause for her canonisation has been opened by the Vatican’s Congregation for the Causes of Saints. For more information about visiting Our Lady’s Home at Coogee, the Feast Day Mass and prayers held annually on 10 January, or to book an appointment to visit, contact Monica O’Connell on (02) 9665 6331
 - The Cathedral Church and Minor Basilica of the Immaculate Mother of God, Help of Christians (known locally as St Mary’s Cathedral) is the Cathedral church of the Archdiocese of Sydney www.stmaryscathedral.org.au/about-us

⁵Pope Francis, General Audience, 21 January 2016.

Action 4

- St Patrick's Catholic Church at Church Hill is an important parish in the history of Sydney. According to tradition, St Patrick's is the site at which Catholics prayed before the Blessed Sacrament during a period in which the Catholics of Sydney had no priests. Today, the Marist Fathers continue their ministry of mercy by offering Mass and the Sacrament of Penance frequently for the many people who visit the parish www.stpatschurchhill.org
- Parishes may like to consider participating in the Parish Support Pilgrimage Scheme, offered by Rome Pilgrimages in the Archdiocese of Sydney. Embarking together on a pilgrimage to Rome, and staying at Domus Australia, is a great way for individuals within parishes to strengthen relationships, deepen their interior life, and journey with other parishioners as they learn more about our Catholic faith, history and tradition. This program also raises funds to assist with parish programs and development. For more information regarding the Parish Support Pilgrimage Scheme, visit www.romepilgrimages.com or contact pilgrimage@sydneycatholic.org or 1800 753 959
- Pilgrimages to places such as the Holy Land and the Camino Santiago de Compostella can be arranged through Harvest Journeys. For more information, send an email via the website www.harvestjourneys.com or call 1800 819 156



Strategy 4:**Provide Human Formation**

Action 1

Counselling can help people with the many issues they face in relationships, parenting, ageing, disabilities, addictions, domestic violence and mental health. Parishes can help their parishioners grow by promoting **access to these services**.

Resources

- CatholicCare have professional and compassionate teams for counselling, education, emotional support and practical strategies. They help individuals, couples and families through life's testing times. Consider referring your parishioners to them when needed. For more information, visit www.catholiccare.org
- CCareline is a free and confidential helpline for counselling, relationships, parenting, ageing, disabilities, addictions, domestic violence and mental health. CatholicCare's CCareline team is the first point of contact for people to access help. The caring team of professional advisors assist people over the phone with a wide variety of needs, and direct them to the services they require. CCareline is open 8am-6pm Monday-Friday. For more information or to access these services, visit www.ccareline.org or call 13 18 19

Action 2

Provide various forms of human formation on **parenting and family life**.

- CatholicCare may be able to provide a Family Support worker in the parish to work with vulnerable families referred by the parish priest and others. Vulnerabilities within families can emerge for a variety of reasons and from a range of sources, including developmental challenges with children, addictions, domestic and family violence, mental health issues and marriage difficulties. Parishes can discuss the extension of a service such as this to their community by contacting Cathy Hammond at cathy.hammond@catholiccare.org or 0427 960 918
- CatholicCare offers fertility and pregnancy help for couples, families and young mothers who need practical support and drug-free fertility options. CatholicCare also offers free and confidential support to pregnant women, their partners and families, and accompanies younger mothers in locations around Sydney in their HOPE Program. For information about the HOPE program, visit www.catholiccare.org/family-and-Individual-services/fertility-and-pregnancy/hope-bondi. For information on fertility and pregnancy support, visit www.catholiccare.org/family-and-Individual-services/fertility-and-pregnancy



Strategy 4 (continued):

Provide Human Formation

Action 3

Provide formation and support concerning **the meaning of human sexuality**.

Resources

- The Life, Marriage and Family team, of the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation offers formation in Theology of the Body. For information about courses and resources, contact Steven Buhagiar at steven.buhagiar@sydneycatholic.org or 0415 600 290
- ‘Strive 21’ is a free online 21-day porn detox program created by Matt Fradd and Covenant Eyes. This course requires ‘accountability partners’ and can be run in a small group context. For more information, contact Steven Buhagiar in the Life Marriage and Family team at steven.buhagiar@sydneycatholic.org or 0415 600 290

Strategy 5:

Provide Pastoral Formation

Action 1

Equip leaders and parishioners to **integrate Christ-centred witness testimony** into the works and outreach of the parish. Hearing stories often about how people have encountered Christ, how this encounter has changed their lives, and how the Lord answers prayers and intervenes in circumstances is formative for those who hear this witness, encouraging growth and expectation of God’s movement in one’s own life.

The preparation of such testimonies can include a broad background on the personal journey to discipleship, the catalysts for change in this spiritual development, a focus on what made this conversion of life possible, inclusion of Scripture or stories that had particular meaning during this process, a description of the change experienced following a commitment to Christ and the influence of the Church community in this itinerary. Once a complete testimony is composed, this can be edited to a shorter version fit for use in suitable forums (e.g. during sacramental preparation, in small groups, RCIA, youth groups, or other key parish touchpoints).

Resources

- Refer to the chapter on Evangelisation on page 69 within this Mission Plan for a list of resources for developing and sharing personal witness

Strategy 5 (continued):

Provide Pastoral Formation

Sending your community members **to workshops and retreats on evangelisation** can help them to grow their understanding and practical skills to carry out the mission to which they have been called with sensitivity, insight and impact. The Parish Renewal Team will offer reflection days and workshops on the theology and practice of evangelisation that will assist with pastoral formation.

Resources

- ‘Ananias Training’ is a training course to equip Catholics to accompany others on their faith journey to enter into a personal relationship with Jesus. For information, visit www.siena.org/ananias. For orientation and associated resources, contact the Parish Renewal team on (02) 9390 5330 or parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org, who can coordinate these opportunities in collaboration with the St Catherine of Siena Institute. A modest fee to the Institute applies
- ‘Called and Gifted Training’ offers a process of formation to assist lay, religious and ordained apostles to discern their own charisms for the building up of the parish community and the Church. For orientation and associated resources, contact the Parish Renewal Team who can coordinate these opportunities in collaboration with the St Catherine of Siena Institute at parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9390 5330. A modest fee to the Institute applies

Action 2

Offer pastoral formation to parishioners to be **volunteer chaplain assistants** to assist those in hospital, prisoners and those reintegrating into society, the homeless, the aged, the sick and the dying.

Resources

- CatholicCare can assist parishes in the training of volunteer chaplains. To find out more, visit www.catholiccare.org/community-services/chaplaincy-services or contact Fr Peter Carroll MSC at peter.carroll@catholiccare.org or 13 18 19

Action 3

Consider sponsoring some of your ministry leaders to attend the **Areté Centre for Missionary Leadership** course, ‘Foundations of Missionary Leadership’ which provides formation in the theology and practice of mission. For information, visit www.aretecentre.org

Resources

- For further details, refer to the chapter on Leadership within this Mission Plan on page 103

Action 4

Strategy 5 (continued):

Provide Pastoral Formation

Provide **formation to all serving in liturgical ministries**, including lectors and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

Resources

- The Archdiocese of Sydney’s Liturgy Office can help parishes establish liturgy teams and assist with other liturgical needs. For more information, visit www.liturgy.sydneycatholic.org or contact the team at liturgyassistant@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9307 8360

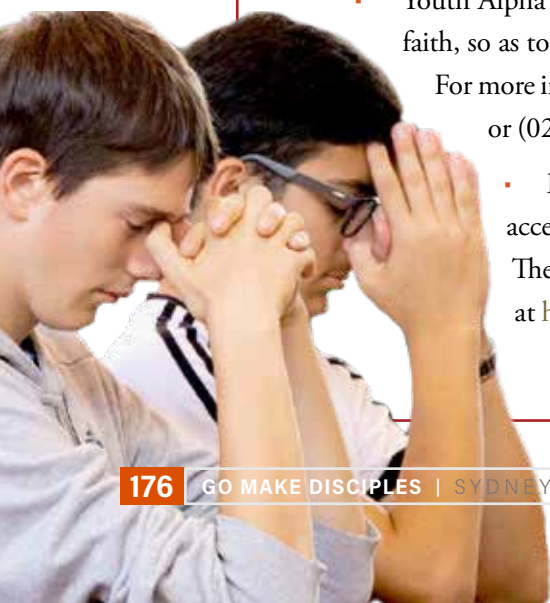
Strategy 6:

Provide Formation for Youth

The Sydney Catholic Youth (SCY) team is available to support your parish in building up young people, in faith and understanding by providing **resources, tools, programs and processes to mature young people in discipleship** and knowledge of our Catholic faith. Consider encouraging the youth of your parish to participate in the opportunities for formation below.

Resources

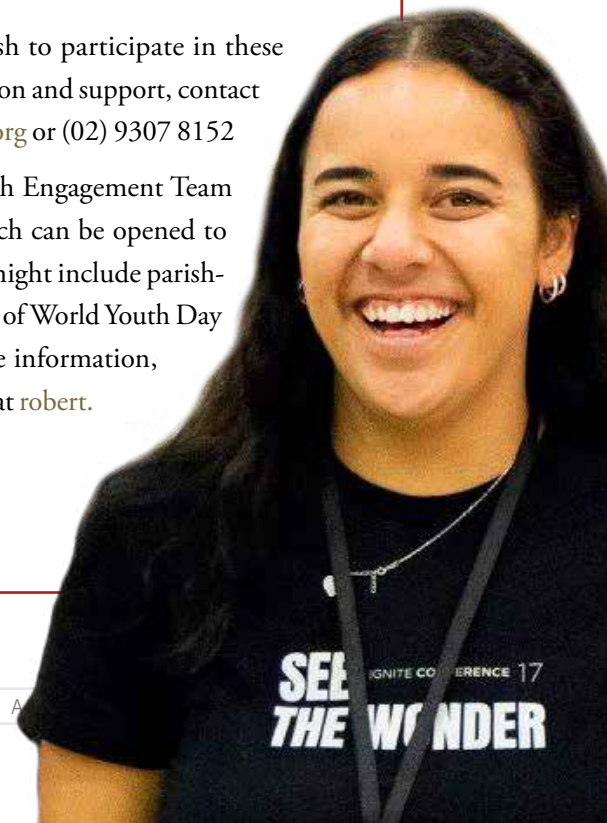
- Sydney Catholic Youth’s annual ‘Evangelisation School’ brings together young people from parishes around the Archdiocese of Sydney for formation in the areas of evangelisation, leadership, community, faith and worship. For more information, contact Sydney Catholic Youth at info@sydneycatholicyouth.org or (02) 9307 8152
- Youth Alpha is designed especially for young people, in the basics of Christian faith, so as to develop and nurture a relationship with Jesus and with each other. For more information, contact Tania Rimac at tania.rimac@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9390 5338
- Establish evenings of intellectual formation with material that is accessible to young people, such as ‘Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible: The Bible Timeline’ series. The resource is available from Parousia Media at <https://store.parousiamedia.com> or (02) 9651 0375



Strategy 6 (continued):

Provide Formation for Youth

- LifeChoice, together with the Life, Marriage and Family team and Sydney Catholic Youth, provides training for young adults in the areas of human life and sexuality, and the political realities in which the Church engages. For more information, visit www.lifechoice.org.au or contact the team via the online form at www.lifechoice.org.au/contact
- Provide workshops for young people on how to discuss matters of faith, and how to prepare and deliver a personal testimony. As a follow-up, young people can be mentored by the Sydney Catholic Youth team to provide formation for their peers in formation initiatives in the parish
- Sumner House offers a year of live-in formation for young Catholic men of the Archdiocese of Sydney to discern their vocation to marriage, priestly or religious life. The program of formation is based on the four pillars of spiritual, intellectual, human and pastoral formation as articulated within *Pastores Dabo Vobis* and this Archdiocesan Mission Plan. For more information, visit www.sydneycatholic.org/directory/listing/sumner-house or contact Sydney Catholic Youth at info@sydneycatholicyouth.org or (02) 9307 8152
- The Australian Catholic Youth Festival (ACYF) takes place every second or third year, and brings together youth from across the country for a shared and joyful experience of Christian discipleship. The Festival provides formation in various areas of the Catholic faith, given by bishops, priests, religious and lay leaders. For more information, contact Sydney Catholic Youth at info@sydneycatholicyouth.org or (02) 9307 8152
- Consider sponsoring young people from your parish to participate in these Archdiocesan and national events. For more information and support, contact Sydney Catholic Youth at info@sydneycatholicyouth.org or (02) 9307 8152
- Sydney Catholic Schools' Mission & Identity Church Engagement Team offers youth ministry nights for school students which can be opened to the youth of parishes or deaneries. For example, this might include parish-based formation and follow up sessions for participants of World Youth Day and the Australian Catholic Youth Festival. For more information, contact Dr Robert Haddad, Sydney Catholic Schools, at robert.haddad@syd.catholic.edu.au or on (02) 9568 8116



Strategy 7:

Provide Formation for Children

Parishes can ensure that they provide **opportunities for children to grow spiritually** by teaching them to spend time in conversation with God.

Resources

- Some parishes may seek to engage with **Catechesis of the Good Shepherd**, a religious formation program for children aged 3 to 12 years that focuses on the child’s relationship with God and assists the child as he or she learns to follow Christ, the Good Shepherd. A typical session includes prayer, a presentation on Scripture or the liturgy, and time for children to work with materials from the presentation and ponder the mysteries presented. For more information, visit www.cgsaust.org.au
- ‘Beating Around the Burning Bush’ is a Facebook page created by the Communications team in the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation, dedicated to posts designed to teach children about the saints. For details, visit www.facebook.com/BeatingAroundTheBurningBush
- Establish a Children’s Holy Hour. For further information, visit www.therealpresence.org/eucharst/pea/children.htm
- Participate in the ‘One Million Children Praying the Rosary’ initiative. For further details, visit www.aidtochurch.org/one-million-children

The **catechesis of children in state schools** can be encouraged through recruitment efforts throughout the year. This includes promotion of the ministry and leading catechists in Special Religious Education (SRE) through bulletins and parish communications, with university students and retirees, appealing also for catechist assistants who can accompany and transition into catechist teachers over time, and personal invitation to engage parishioners in the formation of Catholic children and families in state schools. Other initiatives to support such formation could include parish prayer cards for student recipients of SRE, collaboration with local youth ministries for the purpose of recruitment of student or young adult catechists, and conversation around volunteer retention.

Action 1

Action 2



Action 2

Resources

- The Archdiocese of Sydney's Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) provides training and support for those taking up this ministry. For more information, resources and support visit <https://ccd.sydneycatholic.org> or contact your Parish SRE Catechist Coordinator who is supported by a Deanery CCD Faith Education Officer, or contact the CCD Parish Catechist Support office at office@ccdsydney.catholic.edu.au or (02) 9307 8330
- The Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) Sydney offers further formation for catechists with an online series of videos on matters of Catholic faith. For access to these videos, visit the CCD Sydney YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/channel/UCpE0VVfzuzE9F12ngh-9KXA

Action 3

Promote and create access to **print and digital faith formation resources** for children on prayer, the Bible, the saints, Mass, and virtues among other themes.

Resources

- Access a range of children's books, parenting resources, and DVDs at www.mustardseed.org.au
- View the CCD Curriculum Support resource list online at <https://ccd.sydneycatholic.org/curriculum-resources-tweeting-with-god>
- 'Catholic Central' has created a collection of short videos for young people on topics of Catholic faith and spirituality. The videos are informative and entertaining. Visit www.catholiccentral.com or view videos on their YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/channel/UC2kkKDrNirE5VR9JoWbDyiA

Action 4

Parishes can review and strengthen the way that they provide **formation for parents and children** to prepare them well for reception of the sacraments.

Resources

- For support and resources including the Archdiocesan Sacramental Program, contact the Sacramental Life and RCIA Coordinator within the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation at becomingcatholic@sydneycatholic.org or on (02) 9307 8477

Strategy 8:**Provide Formation on Marriage, Parenting and Family Life**

Parishes can support the **formation of couples for and in marriage** through marriage preparation courses, and ensure awareness of marriage counselling services that are available.

Resources

- The Archdiocesan Marriage Preparation Course, 'Of Life and Love', is conducted twice a year in March and October by the Life, Marriage and Family team within the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation. For more information, contact Steven Buhagiar at steven.buhagiar@sydneycatholic.org or 0415 600 290
- The Messy Family Project is a ministry dedicated to Catholic parents and families, offering advice for Catholic families in their marriages and raising children of various ages. For more information, visit www.messyfamilyproject.org
- Marriage preparation is offered by the Marriage Resource Centre and associated SmartLoving courses. For more information, visit www.smartloving.org/engaged or email info@marriagerc.org
- CatholicCare also offers marriage preparation, marriage enrichment and counselling services. For more information, visit www.catholiccare.org/family-and-individual-services/counselling-and-relationships/marriage-and-relationship-education or phone 13 18 19
- Conferences such as the 'Renaissance of Marriage' conference can also be engaged as an opportunity for local communities, to support and sponsor married couples for attendance and enrichment. For more information, visit www.marriageresourcecentre.org
- Fire Up Ministries provides speakers and courses focused on restoring marriages and family life, through teachings centred on Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body. For more information on their offerings in parishes, visit www.fireupministries.com
- CatholicCare is leading a project to establish a 'marriage catechumenate' for the support and enrichment of married life. This ministry will look to engage multiple programs and organisations and is to include Sydney Catholic Schools, university chaplaincies, marriage preparation providers and the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation. For further information, and updates, contact Meredith Lemos at meredith.lemos@catholiccare.org or 13 18 19
- The Culture Project offers formation for young adults and presentations to schools concerning life, marriage and family issues and can also provide this formation to young people in our parishes. For more information, visit www.thecultureproject.com.au

Strategy 8 (continued):

Provide Formation on Marriage, Parenting and Family Life

Parish and school leadership can discuss **opportunities for parent formation** in Parish Pastoral Council meetings or other planning forums. This can include common formation on themes such as motherhood and fatherhood, Christian parenting, marriage enrichment, faith formation, prayer and healing, work and family life, mental health, pornography and other social concerns relevant to family life and young people.

Resources

- Sydney Catholic Schools (SCS) Adult Faith Formation team provides Scripture study and other formation events such as tours of St Mary's Cathedral for parent-parishioners with students in SCS schools. Contact Dr Robert Haddad, Sydney Catholic Schools, at robert.haddad@syd.catholic.edu.au or (02) 9568 8116
- Parishioners are invited to attend the myriad of opportunities Sydney Catholic Schools Family Educators offer parents, carers and families, to encounter their faith and strengthen their relationship with Jesus. These events, forums, activities and initiatives are often advertised in parish bulletins. Such opportunities include but are not limited to:
 - Parent retreat days that are open to parents and parishioners
 - Guest speakers regarding parenting and family well-being
 - 'Sacramental Craft' which are faith-based craft activities for all parents to celebrate feast days and sacraments
 - Parent pilgrimages and excursions to places such as Mary MacKillop Place, The Abbey at Jamberoo, and Rookwood and Woronora Cemeteries for the Stations of the Cross devotion
 - Collaborative outreach with St Vincent de Paul Society conferences to assist with different appeals, prepare food for Vinnies Night Patrol, Gift of Bread Program, visit nursing homes, and offer other opportunities for community service
 - SPaR (Stop, Pray and Reflect) are 10-15 minute gatherings offered to parents following the morning school drop off that provide an opportunity for prayer, community, and spiritual support
 - Playgroup/toddler activities give grandparents and carers an opportunity to connect with other members of the school and/or parish community, with the support and resources of the Family Educators

Action 2

For more information on the above, contact Dr Robert Haddad, Sydney Catholic Schools, at robert.haddad@syd.catholic.edu.au or (02) 9568 8116. Alternatively, call one of Sydney Catholic School’s Church Engagement Education Officers on (02) 9568 8419 or email Elsa Manu (elsa.manu@syd.catholic.edu.au), Mouna Roche (mouna.roche@syd.catholic.edu.au) or Bernadette Bridle (bernadette.bridle@syd.catholic.edu.au)

Action 3

Families can also nurture a culture of faith formation in the home through **family prayers and traditions** (e.g. grace at meals, bedtime prayers), spiritual reading and conversation, through the presence of Christian music in the home and car, the stories of the saints, and by creating dedicated prayer spaces in the home, replete with crucifix, baptismal or other candles, rosary beads, holy cards, children’s prayer drawings or other items that create a sacred space and focal point for family prayer.

Resources

- CathFamily is an Australian website that provides resources, activities and support for Catholic families. For information and family activities, visit www.cathfamily.org/about

Action 4

The **Family Educator program** also supports the evangelisation, formation and wellbeing of parents and families, building relationships with school and parish families and engaging them in the life of faith. Initiatives, events and activities offered by Family Educators and communities include parent gatherings for prayer, opportunities for outreach, parent art sessions and prayer boxes in preparation for the sacraments, reflection mornings, and playgroups among others.

Resources

- For numerous ideas and strategies for family formation in faith, visit <https://reonline.sydcatholic.schools.nsw.edu.au>

Strategy 9:

Provide Formation for Men

Take steps to support the **spiritual growth and formation of men**. This can be supported by the groups and organisations below which can assist your parish in this vital outreach within our Church.

Resources

- The Archdiocese of Sydney's Maximus Men's Group gathers online to share faith and conversation at www.facebook.com/maximusmensydney. For more information, contact Steven Buhagiar, Life Marriage and Family team, at steven.buhagiar@sydneycatholic.org or 0415 600 290
- MenALIVE is a leading national Catholic ministry to men that offers resources, retreats, conferences and events such as the 'Father Factor series' that can be promoted and run for men in both parishes and schools. For more information, visit www.menalive.org.au or contact the team at mail@menalive.org.au or (07) 3367 1402
- Australian Catholic Men's Fellowship. For more information, contact Steven Buhagiar, Life Marriage and Family team, at steven.buhagiar@sydneycatholic.org or 0415 600 290
- Schoenstatt Men's League is an independent diocesan association of married and unmarried men within the Schoenstatt movement. For information, contact Jim Jankiewicz on 0432 487 927
- Alpha for Men. For more information or support on this program and application to men's ministry, contact Tania Rimac at tania.rimac@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9390 5338
- The 'Fathers of St Joseph's' men's group works toward the restoration, revitalisation and redemption of fatherhood in order that it may become what it has been created to be: an efficacious icon that directs the human family to God the Father. For more information, visit www.fathersofstjoseph.org or contact Steven Buhagiar at steven.buhagiar@sydneycatholic.org or 0415 600 290
- 'Strive 21' is a free online porn detox program. For more information on this program, contact Steven Buhagiar, Life Marriage and Family team, at steven.buhagiar@sydneycatholic.org or 0415 600 290
- 'Exodus 90' is an online ministry centred on prayer, asceticism, and fraternity that men can begin at any time of the year. For more information, visit www.exodus90.com or contact Steven Buhagiar, Life Marriage and Family team, at steven.buhagiar@sydneycatholic.org or 0415 600 290

Strategy 10:

Provide Formation for Women

A number of groups and movements offer **opportunities for Catholic women** to come together for friendship, support and formation in the Catholic faith. Encourage participation in some of the events and programs below for women within your parish and those looking for community and formation.

Resources

- The Dominican Sisters of St Cecilia offer retreats for women. For more information, visit www.facebook.com/dominicansistersaustralia or contact Sr Cecilia Joseph OP at sydney@op-tn.org
- Catholic Women's Mentoring offers a program by which women share resources, knowledge, and networks as companions and mentors, encouraging each other in their faith journey. For more information, visit www.catholicwomensmentoring.org.au or contact info@catholicwomensmentoring.org.au
- 'Leadership for Mission' program is a joint initiative of Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, Catholic Mission and the Australian Catholic University. Open to Catholic women aged between 25-35, this two-year, part-time program invites participants to grow in leadership in their chosen field. For more information, visit www.nce.catholic.org.au/events/leadership-for-mission or contact Sharon Brewer at mission@nce.catholic.org.au or 0466 013 534
- 'Sisterhood' is an initiative that seeks to provide a place of formation and support for women of all ages through regional small groups, retreats and events, national conferences, and resources. For more information, visit www.sisterhood.org.au or contact Karen Doyle at kd@choicez.com.au or 0499 877 833
- 'The Genius Project' is a community and resource platform for Catholic women of all ages and stages of life who want to discover their unique gifts and mission and live the fullness of who God created them to be. It offers online courses, live virtual events, a membership site and a weekly podcast especially for Catholic women called 'The Genius Project', which can be found on all major podcast platforms. For more information, visit www.geniusproject.co or contact Karen Doyle at karen@geniusproject.co or 0499 877 833
- The 'Women's Advent Retreat' day is offered every year by the Chaplaincy at University of Notre Dame Australia. The day sees many women gather at the Broadway campus for Mass, a time for reflection and Reconciliation, lunch, morning and afternoon tea, and inspiring talks. For more information, visit www.notredame.edu.au/community/Ministry-Chaplaincy/sydney-ministry or contact the Chaplaincy at sydney.chaplaincy@nd.edu.au

Strategy 10 (continued):

Provide Formation for Women

- The Anima Women's Network aims, with an Antipodean voice, to educate and connect Catholic women, ministries, organisations and businesses who are bound together with promoting love, dignity, a culture of life and the feminine genius. For information, visit www.animanetwork.org
- The Catholic Women's League (CWL) is a charitable member organisation that aims to unite Sydney's Catholic women and coordinate with each other ways to support different groups and charities. Each year, CWL fundraises for a project and coordinates their own community and parish-based initiatives. For more information, visit www.cwlsydney.org.au or contact the team at cwlsydney@sydneycatholic.org
- The 'Good Samaritan Study and Mentoring (SAM) Leadership Program' provides an opportunity for Catholic women aged 30 years and over to receive mentoring and financial support while pursuing theological studies. For more information, visit www.goodsams.org.au/2020/10/20/study-and-mentoring-leadership-program-focuses-on-womens-gifts or email samleadership@goodsams.org.au

Strategy 11:

Provide Formation in Catholic Social Teaching

An encounter with the poor and marginalised is always an encounter with Christ. To grow in this area of our discipleship is to give witness to the mercy of Jesus Christ and continue His mission today to the poor, the marginalised and the vulnerable. Parishes can **engage formation in the area of justice, peace, ecology and development** as guided by Scripture through Catholic Social Teaching.

Resources

- The Justice and Peace Office can assist parishes and communities in formation and training, providing information and resources on a range of social issues, support to and networking of social justice groups and projects, offering workshops and speakers while working in collaboration with other agencies, dioceses and commissions. For more information, visit www.justiceandpeace.org.au or contact Fr Peter Smith at peter.smith@sydneycatholic.org or 0408 613 709



Strategy 12:

Engage with Communities of Formation

Promote the various **communities, movements and prelatures** in the Archdiocese of Sydney, that provide a place of formation and community for their members, each according to their own charism. Some of these groups provide formation outside their group as a means of outreach.

Resources

- The Neocatechumenal Way is a community which was formed in Madrid in 1964 and is dedicated to providing a path for those seeking initiation into the Catholic faith, as well as ongoing formation to the already baptised, to discover or more deeply appreciate the meaning of their Baptism and grow in maturity in the faith. For more information, visit www.neocatechumenaleiter.org/en or contact information@neocatechumenaleiter.org
- Disciples of Jesus Covenant Community is a charismatic community of disciples with a mission of evangelisation who live a common life of prayer, sharing and service. For more information, visit www.dojcommunity.com or contact dojsscommunity@gmail.com
- The Emmanuel Community originates from France and its mission is to offer a path to all, to answer the call to holiness and proclaim Jesus in the world today. For more information, visit www.emmanuelaustralia.com.au or contact emmanuelcommunitysydney@gmail.com
- Opus Dei is focused on living everyday tasks of work, family life, social relationships in a manner which serves God and others, while sharing the message that all are called to holiness. For more information, visit www.opusdei.org/en-au or contact info.au@opusdei.org
- Dominican Tertiaries are a community of lay men and women who seek to deepen their relationship with Jesus, by living their daily life in accordance to the Dominican way supported by the four pillars of continual prayer, study, common life and preaching the Good News to all those they meet. For more information, visit www.op.org.au/about-the-dominicans/the-dominican-family/the-lay-fraternities-of-st-dominic
- Verbum Dei Missionary Fraternity is a community of men and women who seek to build the Kingdom of God through prayer, witness and the Ministry of the Word. For more information, visit www.verbumdeiaustralia.com or contact verbumdeisydney@gmail.com

Strategy 12 (continued):

Engage with Communities of Formation

- The Legion of Mary seeks to increase the personal holiness of its members, foster a deeper devotion to Mary and undertake apostolic works such as visitation of families and of the sick. For more information, visit www.legionofmary.org.au or contact info@legionofmary.org.au or (02) 9660 6131

The above are but a handful of the many communities, movements and prelatures in the Archdiocese of Sydney that enrich and provide formation for the faithful.

Strategy 13:

Provide Formation for Catechumens

Parishes should ensure a **Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)** process is in place, at least in adjoining parishes, to accompany enquirers, those beginning the journey of Christian initiation as well as candidates.

Resources

- Contact the Archdiocese of Sydney's Sacramental Life and RCIA Coordinator within the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation for support and resources at becomingcatholic@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9307 8477
- The National Centre for Evangelisation, which recommends resources including *Call and Response: An Introduction to the Christian Faith* and *At Home with God's People*. For more information, visit www.nce.catholic.org.au/the-resource-centre/the-resource-centre-index/becoming-a-catholic-rcia
- The Christian Initiation Australia Network shares the vision and promotes the practice of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) through sharing ideas and challenges. For more information, visit www.cianetwork.net
- 'Evangelium' covers the basics of the Catholic faith over 24 sessions or topics. A participant's book, leader's guide and CD-ROM are also available which can assist RCIA teams, especially in the period of the catechumenate. For more information, visit www.evangelium.co.uk or order this resource at www.mustardseed.org.au or call (02) 9307 8350

Strategy 13 (continued):

Provide Formation for Catechumens

Action 2

Each parish should review and plan for opportunities for newly baptised adults or those recently confirmed to undertake **mystagogia** (post-baptismal formation) in the parish, including opportunities for ongoing catechesis and spiritual formation, community in small groups, experiences of group and personal prayer, and active participation in parish ministries, outreach and service.

Resources

- For more information about small group formation, refer to the discussion on page 163
- For support, resources and ideas regarding mystagogia, contact the Archdiocese of Sydney's Sacramental Life and RCIA Coordinator within the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation at becomingcatholic@sydneycatholic.org or on (02) 9307 8477

Strategy 14:

Provide Formation in Mission

A number of formation programs are also available from Catholic Mission for those working in parishes, providing theological **formation for mission**, mission formation workshops and learning experiences open to parishes and Parish Pastoral Councils, pastoral associates, family educators, clergy and religious.

Resources

- For resources and programs available, visit www.catholicmission.org.au/for-parishes



Step 4: **Act**

In building up formation in the parish, the parish priest can work together with the Parish Pastoral Council, action groups, sub-committees or a team for formation, established for a definite duration. These groups should ideally include at least one member of the Parish Pastoral Council to ensure alignment with the wider vision and planning of the parish as a whole, and can lead and invite others into these efforts toward renewal.

As discussed above, you could also consider forming a senior leadership team that can focus on assisting in the ongoing practical strategies and decisions needed to implement the plan, which allows the Parish Pastoral Council to focus on the longer-term pastoral plan of the parish.



Foundation 5
WORSHIP



While they were eating, He took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it He broke it, gave it to them, and said, ‘Take; this is my body’. Then He took the cup, and after giving thanks He gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, ‘This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God’”.

Mark 14:22-25

Worship is the primary purpose of the Church, the source and summit of all else the Church does.



Worship is also foundational for parishes seeking to be faithful to Jesus’ mission, for in worship we do as Jesus invited His disciples to do: give praise to the Father by the Son in the Holy Spirit and entrust our lives to God’s care.

Our conscious decision to place the Great Commission, the command to ‘make disciples’, at the heart of our identity and action means discerning and enacting new ways to strengthen our worship of God.

Worship, both public and private, is intimately connected with our love for God and also what is right and just to give to Him because of His ‘worth’. Indeed ‘worth-ship’ is the ancient root of ‘worship’. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains:

‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your strength’ (Deuteronomy 6:5). The first commandment summons man to believe in God, to hope in Him, and to love Him above all else. ‘You shall worship the Lord your God’ (Matthew 4:10). Adoring God, praying to Him, offering Him the worship that belongs to Him, fulfilling the promises and vows made to Him are acts of the virtue of religion which fall under obedience to the first commandment. The duty to offer God authentic worship concerns man both as an individual and as a social being.¹

¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2133-2136.



Encounter and Evangelisation

In worship we encounter the Lord who is “always present in His Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations”²; in the sacrifice of the Mass, in the Blessed Sacrament, in the Word proclaimed and in the priest. Christ is always present “when the Church prays and sings”.³ We also encounter Christ in the personal worship we carry out in the ‘secret’ of our ‘private room’ (Matthew 6:6).

There is an essential dynamic between the contemplation of and encounter with God in worship and the active mission of the Church:

“Action relies upon contemplation for its fruitfulness; and contemplation, in its turn, as soon as it has reached a certain degree of intensity, pours out upon our active works some of its overflow. And it is by contemplation that the soul goes to draw directly upon the Heart of God for the graces which it is the duty of the active life to distribute”.⁴

This dynamic is experienced most profoundly in the Eucharist.

The Sacraments and Discipleship

The Great Commission given by Jesus as He ascended to the Father was four-fold in its mandate to the Church: to evangelise so as to make disciples (“go out to all the world preaching the Gospel”, “go and make disciples of all nations”); to sacramentalise that discipleship (“baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”); to catechise those disciples (“teach them to obey everything I commanded you”); and to memorialise His presence with us (“remember that I am with you always...”) (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:18-20). In this, we see the intimate connection between the initial disciple-making encounter with the Lord, the sacraments which follow upon this, and the further teaching that is elicited by these encounters.

² Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7.

³ Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7.

⁴ Dom Jean-Baptiste Chautard OCSO, *The Soul of the Apostolate*, 1946/1962.

The Eucharist

As our primary act of worship, the celebration of the Eucharist brings us into an encounter with Christ who in His Great Commission promised to be with us always. The Eucharist draws us into the mission of evangelisation, as we are sent forth from the Mass to bring Christ to the world and invite others to encounter Jesus, and so experience the fullness of communion with Him and His Church.

As Pope Benedict XVI has affirmed, “[t]he love that we celebrate in the sacrament is not something we can keep to ourselves. By its very nature it demands to be shared with all. What the world needs is God’s love; it needs to encounter Christ and to believe in Him. The Eucharist is

thus the source and summit not only of the Church’s life, but also of her mission: ‘an authentically eucharistic Church is a missionary Church’”.⁵ It is primarily by the witness of our lives, our actions, words and way of life that the Christ we encounter in the sacred mysteries becomes present to others, as the gift of the very presence, love and outreach of God.

“The love that we celebrate in the sacrament is not something we can keep to ourselves. By its very nature it demands to be shared with all. What the world needs is God’s love; it needs to encounter Christ and to believe in Him. The Eucharist is thus the source and summit not only of the Church’s life, but also of her mission: ‘an authentically eucharistic Church is a missionary Church’”.

Indeed, active and intentional discipleship is the soil in which the Eucharist bears its intended fruit, as shared by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, “[t]he sacred liturgy does not exhaust the entire activity of the Church: it must be preceded by evangelisation, faith, and conversion. It can then produce its fruits in the lives of the faithful: new life in the Spirit, involvement in the mission of the Church, and service to her unity”.⁶ It is when we have been evangelised and moved to the personal, conscious and active decision to follow Jesus in the midst of the Church that the grace of the sacraments is received most fruitfully and the abundant charisms, vocations and gifts that God seeks to bring about in us become manifest in our individual lives and in the life of our parishes and communities.

This intentional discipleship – the personal, conscious and active decision to follow Jesus – is also an important part of fruitful participation in the liturgy and is an expression of ‘active participation’, expressed as a spirit of conversion, an examination of one’s life, the fostering of one’s interior life, and a commitment to mission, for “there

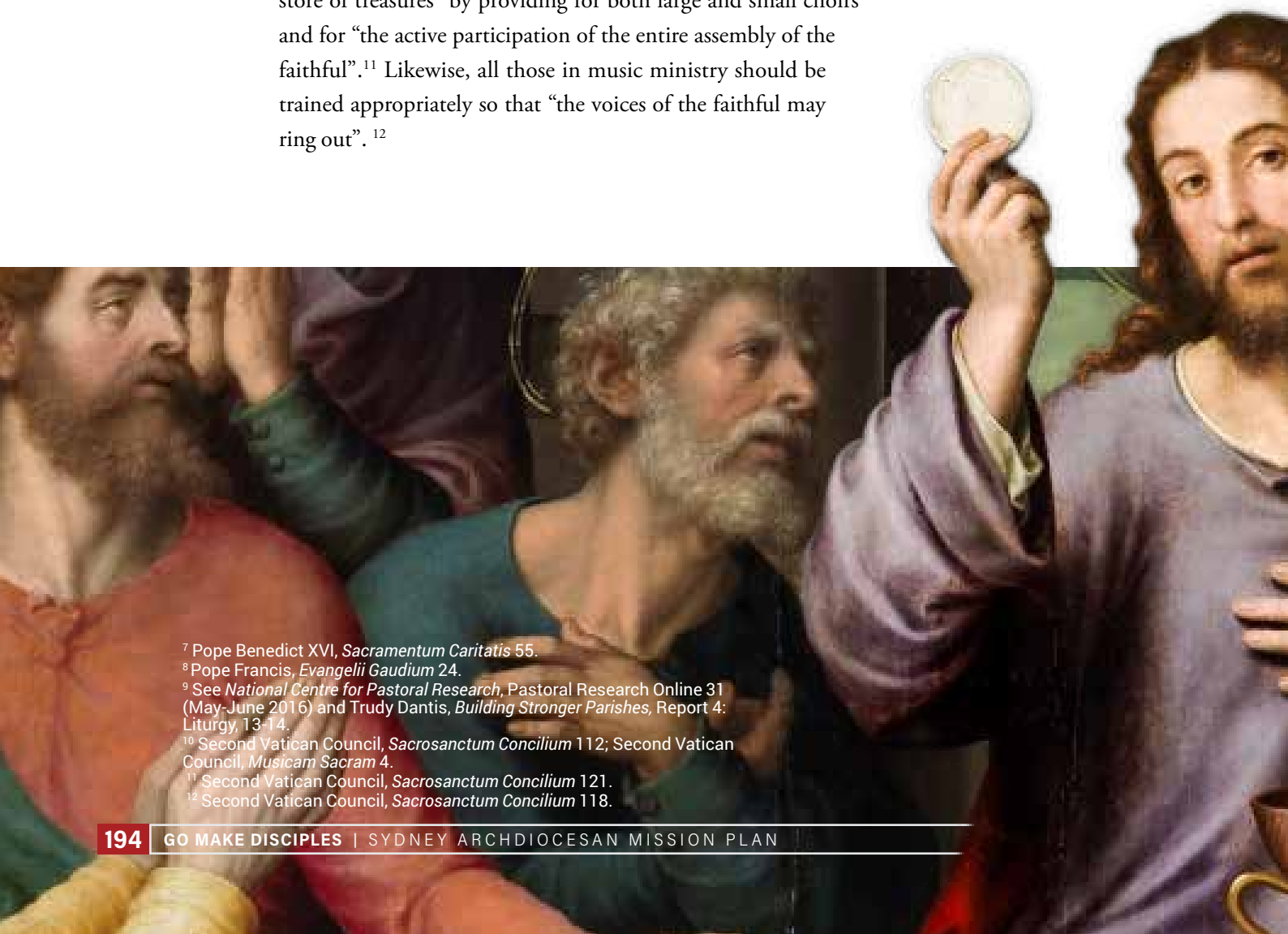
⁵ Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis* 84.

⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1072.

can be no *actuosa participatio* [active participation] without an accompanying effort to participate actively in the life of the Church as a whole, including a missionary commitment to bring Christ's love into the life of society".⁷

The **invitation, beauty and solemnity of the liturgy** form an integral part of our evangelising mission as Pope Francis declares, "Evangelisation with joy becomes beauty in the liturgy, as part of our daily concern to spread goodness. The Church evangelises and is herself evangelised through the beauty of the liturgy, which is both a celebration of the task of evangelisation and the source of her renewed self-giving".⁸ For this reason the **'homilies, hymns and hospitality'** in the celebration of the Eucharist are critical to the engagement of the liturgical assembly and the transformative encounter with Christ at the heart of the Mass. National surveys bear this out, with music and singing being important elements of church worship for Mass attenders of all ages while engaging homilies are an integral dimension of strong parishes.⁹

Sacred music in the form of Gregorian chant, sacred polyphony, sacred music for organ and popular sacred music has an evangelising power when it "adds delight to prayer, fosters unity of minds, or confers greater solemnity upon the sacred rites".¹⁰ Composers today should "cultivate sacred music and increase its store of treasures" by providing for both large and small choirs and for "the active participation of the entire assembly of the faithful".¹¹ Likewise, all those in music ministry should be trained appropriately so that "the voices of the faithful may ring out".¹²



⁷ Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis* 55.

⁸ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 24.

⁹ See *National Centre for Pastoral Research, Pastoral Research Online* 31 (May-June 2016) and Trudy Dantis, *Building Stronger Parishes, Report 4: Liturgy*, 13-14.

¹⁰ Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 112; Second Vatican Council, *Musicam Sacram* 4.

¹¹ Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 121.

¹² Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 118.

Preaching is fundamental to the mission of the Church as it is by the faithful proclamation and teaching of the Word of God that Christ becomes known. In the Liturgy of the Word, and especially the homily, the faithful are exhorted to receive God's Word and put it into practice. The Sunday homily is a powerful tool of evangelisation and conversion, as a "heart-to-heart communication" through beauty, goodness and truth.¹³ Pope Paul VI observed that many parochial communities live and are held together through the Sunday homily when it is "simple, clear, direct, well-adapted, profoundly dependent on Gospel teaching and faithful to the magisterium, animated by a balanced apostolic ardour coming from its own characteristic nature, full of hope, fostering belief, and productive of peace and unity".¹⁴

In the richness of our Catholic tradition, our worship of God also includes the preparation to encounter Jesus in the Eucharist through the Sacrament of Penance, the regular practice of Eucharistic Adoration, and forms of personal and communal prayer including devotions that raise our hearts and minds to God.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains that "[t]he Lord Jesus Christ, physician of our souls and bodies, who forgave the sin of the paralytic and restored him to bodily health, has willed that his Church continue, in the power of the Holy Spirit, his work of healing and salvation, even among her own members".¹⁵ One of the means by which the Church continues the healing of her own members is the **Sacrament of Penance**. This is essential to the spiritual path of the disciple for the Sacrament restores us to God's grace and joins us with Him in an intimate friendship.¹⁶ Among the many spiritual effects of the Sacrament of Penance is "an increase in spiritual strength for Christian battle"¹⁷ which is essential not only for deepening discipleship,



¹³ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 142.

¹⁴ Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 43.

¹⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1420.

¹⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1468.

¹⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1496.

but for the powerful witness to others of the change brought about by a relationship with God.

The practice of **Worship of the Blessed Eucharist Outside Mass (“Adoration”)** draws disciples into a more intimate encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist and thereby leads to greater fruitfulness of mission. The act of Adoration prolongs and intensifies all that takes place during the liturgical celebration itself. Indeed, “only in Adoration can a profound and genuine reception mature. And it is precisely this personal encounter with the Lord that then strengthens the social mission contained in the Eucharist, which seeks to break down not only the walls that separate the Lord and ourselves, but also and especially the walls that separate us from one another”.¹⁸

The spiritual writer Fr Jacques Philippe also explains the important role that the worship of God in **prayer** has in receiving the grace of the sacraments:

*“There is no spiritual progress without contemplative prayer... The testimony of the saints is unanimous on this point.” He goes on to explain: “Now, some people might object that sanctifying grace also – indeed, mainly – comes to us through the sacraments. This is true, but without a life of prayer even the sacraments will have only a limited effect. Yes, they will give us grace, but that grace will remain unfruitful in part because the ‘good soil’ it needs is missing”.*¹⁹

¹⁸ Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis* 66.

¹⁹ Fr Jacques Philippe, *Time for God*, 24-25.







ANGELS PLAYING MUSIC

- HANS MEMLING, c. 1480s

PHOTOGRAPHER: RIK KLEIN GOTINK/LICENSECC0

Strengthening the Foundation of Worship

If communities of missionary disciples are built on a strong foundation of worship, this means adoration of God the Father in Jesus and through the Spirit should be central to our identity, and this should be reflected in the priorities and actions of our community. We strengthen worship in our communities when we attend to deepening the encounter of our public and private worship.

Below is a four (4) step process which your community may choose to undertake to **reflect** upon the place of worship in your identity as a community of disciples, **review** how that identity is being expressed in the actions and priorities of your community, **discern and decide** how God might be calling your community to strengthen this foundation, and take particular **actions** with the help of the support and resources outlined in this Mission Plan.

This can be led by the parish priest with his parish leadership team and liturgical committee, or through attending a *Parishes for Mission* day offered regionally and online by the Parish Renewal Team within the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation. These days will provide leaders with formation in mission, strategies to assess and strengthen foundations for mission, and practical ways to create and implement a vision for the community. For more details, visit www.gomakedisciples.org.au or contact the Parish Renewal Team on (02) 9390 5330 or at parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org.

Step 1: Reflect on Worship

1.1 Our worship should draw us into relationship with the Father, in Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit. As this is our goal, and the aim of our worship, it may be helpful to reflect on the relationship of Jesus with the Father:

- The Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-8)
- Jesus' Farewell Discourse (John 17:6-8, 20-26)

Questions for reflection:

- a. What word or phrase struck you?
- b. Did this offer insight on Jesus' relationship to the Father?
- c. How do you think the disciples felt as they witnessed these events?
- d. What insight does this offer you about worship?

Step 2: Review the Various Aspects of Worship in Your Community

2.1 There are a variety of resources you can draw upon to review how aspects of your worship can be enhanced to lead people to a deeper encounter and relationship with Jesus. The questions in paragraphs 2.2-2.5 below can help your parish leaders and relevant ministry teams to examine what is working well and what can be strengthened, so that the worship in parishes gives glory to God and nourishes the discipleship of our people.

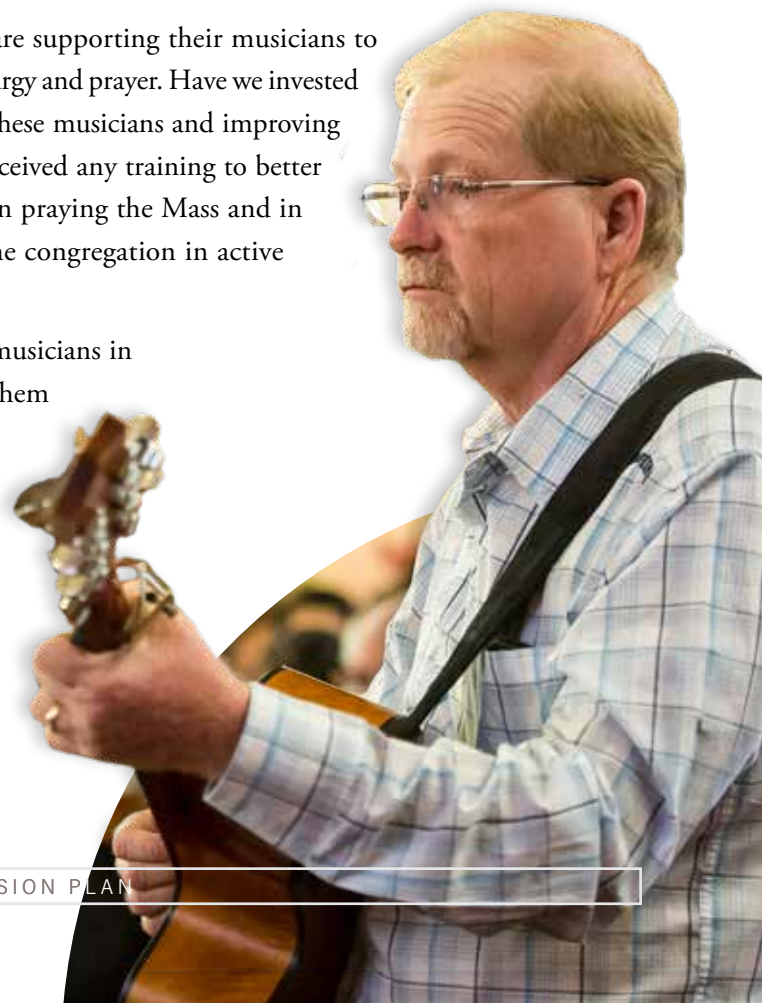
2.2 Review the use of sacred music in your parish worship. This sacred music leads us into deeper prayer, raising our hearts and minds to God, and stirring and expressing our grateful reverence. As it speaks to people at all stages of life and faith, music can also be powerful in pre-evangelisation, during initial proclamation where it can be a form of proclaiming the Gospel, as part of initiatory catechesis, and in nourishing the faith of maturing disciples.²⁰

- a. What are the ways in which sacred music is growing and strengthening the faith of people in our local community?
- b. Do we cultivate active participation by singing the parts of the Mass such as the entrance rites, the acclamation of the Gospel, and prayers during the Eucharistic Liturgy (for example, the 'Sanctus', the final doxology and the Lord's Prayer, among others)?

²⁰ Sherry Weddell, *Forming Intentional Disciples*, 181.



- c** Does the music in our liturgy help people to pray? For example, what is being expressed through the words of the hymn, and how are we encouraging appropriate periods of silence in the liturgy to help people reflect and pray?
- d** Does the sacred music in our parish help people to enter more deeply into the Mass by reflecting and enhancing the readings of the day?
- e** Does the sacred music in our parish encourage congregational singing by, for example, being set in a key that people can sing and being of a style that people can pray with?
- f** Is our music of a good standard? Is it beautiful? At times it can be uncomfortable to ask these questions as often we do not want to criticise generous volunteers. However, one way to honestly assess the quality of our music is to ask: 'If I wanted to reach out to someone and invite him or her to Mass, would our music encourage and nourish that person because of its beauty?'
- g** The desire for beautiful sacred music also invites other questions, such as 'Are our musicians technically proficient? Do we have the type of musicians we need for the genre of music we are playing? Does the sound system enhance or detract from the music? Do the musicians know how to lead the parts of the Mass as well as having knowledge of a good range of hymns that suit the liturgical seasons and can express the beauty of the liturgical actions?' Parishes need to know and draw upon the Church's rich musical patrimony and not rely merely on those composed in the 1970s and 1980s. More recent, better sacred music, as well as older hymns, can be drawn upon.
- h** Parishes can also consider how they are supporting their musicians to improve the music as it supports the liturgy and prayer. Have we invested any parish resources into supporting these musicians and improving their musical repertoire? Have they received any training to better understand the role of sacred music in praying the Mass and in their important role in supporting the congregation in active participation in the Mass?
- i** Do we work to identify the talented musicians in our parish and personally appeal to them (and not through general bulletins or notices alone) to serve in this important ministry?



2.3 Review the welcome and hospitality of your parish. The welcoming and hospitality of a parish communicates and embodies the presence, love and reconciliation of Christ who reaches out to all people.

- a** In what ways does the parish seek to welcome parishioners and visitors at liturgy?
- b** As well, how does the parish seek to welcome non-Catholic relatives and friends who gather for funerals, weddings, baptisms and other sacraments of the Church? Do we appropriately support the active participation of newcomers and visitors by placing some of the parts of the Mass in print or on screen?
- c** How do we welcome the penitent to the Sacrament of Penance and place people at ease, including with music or in other ways in the Second Rite of Reconciliation? How do we also welcome and celebrate Baptism, First Holy Communion, Confirmation, Masses in schools, children's liturgies, the seasons of the year, and mark parish and liturgical feasts with welcome, care and beauty?
- d** If a new person came (or came back) to our parish, would anyone notice? What would we do, or could we do, to welcome that person? If a regular attender stopped coming would anyone notice? What would or could we do to inquire into his or her welfare and ensure we communicated that he or she was missed?
- e** Is our parish environment easy to navigate? Can visitors easily find parking, the entrance of the church, a text to follow along with, a warm welcome from the parish, parents' rooms and bathrooms, literature on Mass times and parish activities, and invitations to connection, community and spiritual conversation?
- f** A part of Christian hospitality is creating a beautiful environment in which people can gather and feel welcomed. Is our church beautiful? Is the church including the sanctuary free of unnecessary clutter? Is the church kept tidy and clean? Are our church and our parish properties in good repair?

“A part of Christian hospitality is creating a beautiful environment in which people can gather and feel welcomed. Is our church beautiful?”



Charles Poësson
The Predication of Saint Peter, c. 1642

2.4 Review the homilies. St Paul’s Letter to the Hebrews proclaims, “[t]he Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

- a. In our liturgies as well as beyond, how do we communicate God’s Word and its ability to change lives?
- b. Do our homilies invite our congregations into deeper discipleship with Jesus by teaching important elements of Christian discipleship and suggesting practical steps we can take to deepen this personal relationship with Jesus in the midst of the Church?
- c. On the topic of homilies, Pope Francis requested from our priests that despite the busy-ness of parish life, “I presume to ask that each week a sufficient portion of personal and community time be dedicated to this task, even if less time has to be given to other important activities”.²¹ In planning the week, is enough time being allocated to preparation of the homily? If the ordained minister is short of time, what can be done to help him so that this time becomes a focus of each day and week?
- d. Do we invest in our priests’ and deacons’ preaching by ensuring that they have the time and funds to participate in workshops and other formative activities through which preaching can be constantly renewed and enhanced?
- e. Can the preaching be clearly heard and received by the assembly?

²¹ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 145.

- 2.5** A practical evaluation tool to review the foundation of worship in your community is to consider how much practical support, time and priority the community gives to worship.
- a.** Are there any paid staff whose role explicitly includes support of worship? (This does not include the priest leading your community, an assistant priest or deacon).
 - b.** How much of the annual parish budget is spent on worship and the support of worship such as the formation of leaders and volunteers in liturgical ministries? Do we have funds to support this foundation for parish renewal?
 - c.** Of the ministries and groups in our parish or other Eucharistic community, how many of them are specifically engaged in supporting worship?
 - d.** Do we have any formation for our people on essential aspects of worship such understanding the Mass, deepening our appreciation and commitment to regular participation in the Sacrament of Penance, Adoration, and private prayer?
 - e.** Do we offer the Sacrament of Penance at times and for a duration that encourages and enables people to attend? Are people catechised on the sanctifying grace of Penance and encouraged to encounter the mercy of Jesus in this Sacrament? Do we increase the offering of Penance during penitential seasons such as Lent and Advent?
 - f.** Do we offer any formation for those involved in liturgical ministries including lectors, extraordinary ministers of communion, altar servers, acolytes, and musicians? Do we have funds available to invest in staff or programs who offer such formation?
 - g.** Do we have a Liturgy Committee to coordinate our worship together with the parish priest and other clergy?
 - h.** Do we take time and effort to discern which parishioners have talents and charisms for these liturgical ministries and invite them into this important service?





Step 3:

Discern and Decide

- 3.1 By now, you should have a clearer sense of how worship is expressed in the actions and priorities of your community. The next step is to discern and decide how God might be calling your particular community to strengthen its foundation of worship.
 - 3.2 We recall that discernment is about prayerfully separating good things you *are* called to do at this time from good things you are *not* called to do at this time. It involves gathering information and then, through prayer and discussion, making a decision about what you discern God is calling you to do. This involves being detached enough from your own plans and opinions that you have the freedom and docility to listen and respond to the Holy Spirit.
- Your parish or community may already be doing many of the good things outlined. However, there will also be actions that your community can take up to strengthen worship as a foundation of your identity as a parish. Many of these actions will also be applicable to migrant chaplaincies, shrines and ecclesial movements in the Archdiocese of Sydney.

Strategy 1:

Provide Formation for Volunteers in Liturgical Ministries

Provide formation for all those involved in liturgical ministries to help them to understand, in their minds and hearts, what they are doing. This includes formation for lectors, Extraordinary Ministers of Communion, musicians, acolytes and altar servers.

Resources

- The Archdiocese of Sydney's Liturgy Office is available for advice and formation in all areas of the liturgical life of the Archdiocese. Workshops can be provided on request, particularly in the areas of liturgical ministries or in any other area of liturgical education. For assistance, contact liturgyassistant@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9307 8360
- An excellent series of brochures is available from the Archdiocese of Melbourne on the following ministries: *The Reader of God's Word; Leading the Liturgy of the Word with Children; Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion During Mass; Ministry of Communion to the Sick; Ministry of Priest Celebrant; Commentators and Readers of Prayers of the Faithful; Ministry of Cantor and Song Leader; Ministry of the Sacristan; Ministry of Pastoral Visitation; Ministry of Preaching the Homily; Ministry of Liturgical Environment; Ministry of Serving at Mass; Ministry of Parish Music Coordinator; and Ministry of Parish Master of Ceremonies.* To order brochures, visit www.cam1.org.au/evangelisation/News/NewsView/Article/21496/Liturgical-Brochure-Series#.X6PCXmgzZaR or contact Proclaim: The Office for Mission Renewal, Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne, on (03) 9926 5761 or mission@cam.org.au. Alternatively contact the Parish Renewal Team on (02) 9390 5330 or parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org



Strategy 2:

Establish a Liturgy Team

Each parish can **establish a liturgy team, committee or similar** if not already in place, bringing together appropriate parish team members, music ministers, youth representatives, and other suitable lay leaders. The work of this liturgy team or committee is to include the preparation, coordination and the periodic evaluation of the beauty and solemnity of the liturgy, and the organisation of formation for liturgical ministers. This liturgical committee could also be represented on the Parish Pastoral Council.

Resources

- The Archdiocese of Sydney's Liturgy Office can help parishes establish liturgy teams and assist with other liturgical needs. Contact the Liturgy Office at liturgyassistant@sydneycatholic.org, on (02) 9307 8360 or visit the website www.liturgy.sydneycatholic.org



Strategy 3:

Provide Beautiful, Inspiring and Appropriate Liturgical Music

Action 1

Musicians require formation in their ministry. They need spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation to understand the Mass more deeply, and the purpose of their ministry; they also need to be aware of how to choose appropriate music and widen their repertoire of hymns, as well as how they can hone their technical skills.

Resources

- Arrange for your musicians to attend a liturgical music formation workshop in your area provided by the Parish Renewal Team within the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation in liaison with the Liturgy Office. Contact the Parish Renewal Team on (02) 9390 5330 or parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org
- Parishes and other faith communities can engage with the conferences and resources of the Australian Pastoral Ministries Network, which promotes religious music in service of the Church in Australia, with a special focus on the use of Australian composition. For more information, visit www.apmn.org.au or contact Chris Janssen at secretary@apmn.org.au or 0410 345 367

Action 2

Consider combining with a number of nearby parishes to **employ a liturgical musician** to help support the liturgical music in your parish by coordinating practices, putting music in an appropriate key, widening the repertoire, and helping with the preparation of significant feasts and holy days. By combining with other parishes, local communities can defray the costs of such support. Parishes can also consider making an appeal in their community for financial support for this expertise, as there may be individuals who feel called to support this endeavour.

Resources

- The Archdiocesan Development and Fundraising Office can offer support in making financial appeals for particular ministries and works of your parish. For more information regarding such fundraising, email fundraising@sydneycatholic.org or phone 1800 753 959
- The Archdiocesan Parish Support and Development Team can provide parishes with recruitment support such as clear job descriptions, and contract and remuneration advice for roles. For more information and support, contact the Parish Support and Development Team at parish.support@sydneycatholic.org or on (02) 9390 5233

Strategy 3 (continued):

Provide Beautiful, Inspiring and Appropriate Liturgical Music

Action 3

Consider how the parish can **identify new musicians to contribute to this important ministry**. Instead of only making general appeals for volunteers, it can be worthwhile to take the time to discover the musicians in your parish, invite them personally to be part of the ministry, address any concerns they might have, and underline the importance of this ministry in the worship and discipleship of the parish community. Sometimes it can be helpful to create smaller groups that can serve on alternate weeks, so that different leaders can bring their gifts to the enrichment of the liturgy. Some parishes also designate a Sunday when parishioners are invited to nominate ways that they may be able to volunteer and support the parish – musicians should be included in the list of volunteers invited.

Action 4

Provide formation in mission to the leaders of your music ministries.

Resources

- Invite the leaders of your music ministry to be part of forming your parish vision at a *Parishes for Mission* day, or include them in any leadership formation you provide in the parish through the initiatives identified in the chapter on Leadership. For example, encourage them to attend the Areté Centre for the ‘Missionary Leadership’ course discussed on page 103

Action 5

Assess the sound equipment in your parish. Do you have the right microphones and speakers? Does music distort through the speakers? Is the music too loud or too soft? Are there poor acoustics or ‘deaf spots’ in the church? Does your church have a hearing loop?

Resources

- For support regarding parish sound equipment, contact the Parish Support and Development Team at parish.support@sydneycatholic.org or on (02) 9390 5233



Strategy 3 (continued):

Provide Beautiful, Inspiring and Appropriate Liturgical Music

Parishes should **engage sacred music** that corresponds to the solemnity of the occasion, provides for the active participation of the assembly, lifts the heart toward God, and expresses the prayer of those assembled. The lyrics, composition and performance of this sacred music should relate to and illumine God's Word and saving action. Great importance should be attached to the use of singing in the celebration of the Mass, with due consideration for the culture of peoples and abilities of each liturgical assembly. Live music is always preferred to recorded music, noting that the human voice and the organ are the Church's two favourite instruments. Consider investing in resources that can help you with the range of sacred music available to your musicians.

Note: It is necessary to comply with copyright requirements for using and streaming liturgical music.

Resources

- *Catholic Worship Book II* which can be ordered from www.mustardseed.org.au
- Liturgia, available at www.liturgybrisbane.net.au
- LiturgyHelp, available at www.liturgyhelp.com
- For a list of recommended songs approved by the ACBC, go to <https://catholic.org.au/nlmc/recommended-hymns-and-songs-approved-by-the-acbc>



Strategy 4:

Offer More and Varied Opportunities for Worship

Action 1

Offer regular Adoration in your parish. Many parishes offer this in conjunction with the Sacrament of Penance so that parishioners can encounter the love and mercy of God in the Blessed Sacrament as well as in the sacrament of forgiveness.

Resources

- For prayers and related resources, visit <http://www.therealpresence.org/eucharst/link/e-pea.html>
- The Liturgy Office of the Archdiocese of Sydney can offer support for fostering other celebrations of prayer that prepare for and harmonise with the Sacred Liturgy. For more information, contact the team at liturgyassistant@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9307 8360

Action 2

Review the times and availability of the Sacrament of Penance. Where this Sacrament is only offered once a week, consider the people who might be excluded from attending due to work and family obligations and consider making additional times available. For example, many people can be excluded from attending when the Sacrament is only offered on a Saturday morning.

If the Sacrament is not well frequented, you might consider raising awareness and opportunities during Lent, provide catechesis on Penance, and survey the parishioners on when would be a good time to offer this Sacrament or why they are not attending.

Coordinate confession times with surrounding parishes and advertise these so penitents have maximum opportunity to participate. Consider doing and advertising confessional swaps or getting a visiting confessor so that parishioners who feel awkward confessing to their parish priest have another option from time to time (e.g. the Second Rite of Reconciliation).



Strategy 4 (continued):**Offer More and Varied Opportunities for Worship**

Without diminishing the role of the priest as the leader of the community's worship, each parish can **provide formation for lay people in leading prayer** within parish groups and ministries as well as open opportunities for experiencing different ways of prayer.

Resources

- 'Faith Circles' is an initiative of the Diocese of Wollongong for small groups to meet weekly to pray with Scripture. For more information and downloadable resources, visit www.dow.org.au/media-resources/faith-circles
- Sycamore offers a short course in prayer and the spiritual life. Videos and additional resources are available at no cost at www.sycamore.fm/pathways/b-formation-pathways/how-to-pray
- Consider including some other forms of prayer in your parish that can be led by individuals or small groups:
 - *Lectio Divina* ('divine reading'), a form of prayer with Scripture. For a step-by-step guide, visit www.jamberooabbey.org.au/prayer/lectio-divina-praying-with-the-sacred-scriptures
 - Liturgy of the Hours. For the full text, visit <https://universalis.com/Australia>
 - Novenas. For a comprehensive list, visit www.ewtn.com/catholicism/devotions/novenas-75
 - The Rosary. For prayers and scriptural reflections, visit <https://mycatholic.life/catholic-prayers/the-most-holy-rosary>

Action 3

Action 4

Review the opportunities for personal and group prayer beyond the liturgy of the Mass including Eucharistic Adoration, the Rosary, the Divine Mercy devotion, *Lectio Divina*, the Angelus, novenas, and Christian Meditation, fasting and penances, praise and worship, among others.



Strategy 4 (continued):

Offer More and Varied Opportunities for Worship

Action 5

Make available **introductory resources on prayer and spirituality as well as devotional items** for purchase within the parish, in collaboration with Catholic booksellers and retailers.

Resources

- Resources on prayer and devotional items are available at the Mustard Seed Bookshop (www.mustardseed.org.au), Pauline Books and Media (www.paulinebooks.com.au), St Paul's Publications (www.secure.stpauls.com.au), and Church Stores (www.churchstores.com.au)

Action 6

Consider a commitment to at least **one Holy Hour each week to pray for vocations**, including to the priesthood, consecrated life and married life.

Resources

- The Archdiocesan Vocation Centre is available for advice and resources for promoting such an initiative. For more information, go to www.vocationcentre.org.au or contact the Vocation Centre at vocations@sydneycatholic.org or on (02) 9307 8424

Action 7

Offer a **retreat day** or reflection half-day to **help people to learn to pray** or deepen their prayer life.

Resources

- Support for this can be found through the Parish Renewal Team in the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation. Contact the team at parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9390 5330



Strategy 5:

Invest Time in Preparing for Feast Days

Every act of worship is important but feast days relating to your own parish are a particularly special time to rejoice, to reflect on the identity of your parish and on what your patron means for your mission. Such days provide the community with a chance to meet, pray and celebrate together. **Take extra time to prepare the music, readings, homily, and hospitality**, and decorate the church, so that this feast day has a great significance for all people within the parish and is known by those beyond the parish as a form of invitation and evangelisation.

Strategy 6:

Organise a Procession

Processions give testimony to the joy and beauty of the Christian life. They have a wonderful evangelising influence on both those who are active and involved in the procession as well as those who witness them. They are a way of giving praise and also allowing the wider community to witness a beautiful, creative and joyful demonstration of Catholic life. Many parishes and ethnic groups in Sydney already hold processions on the feast day of their parish's patron, or some other saint who is significant to the community. They can also be held on a significant Marian feast such as Our Lady Help of Christians who is the patroness of Australia, or another significant solemnity such as on the feast of Corpus Christi, Christ the King or Palm Sunday.



*HEALING AND PROCESSION
AGAINST THE PLAGUE IN 1604*

- ONBEKEND VLAANDEREN, c. 1480s
PHOTOGRAPHER: DOMINIQUE PROVOST
CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

Strategy 7:

Provide Formation in Worship

Provide the faithful with good formation concerning the Mass, the Sacrament of Penance, Adoration, sacred music, and prayer so that they can grow in discipleship.

Resources

- The Archdiocese's Liturgy Office provides formation and support for clergy and laity in the theology and practice of the Sacred Liturgy. For information, contact liturgyassistant@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9307 8360
- Word on Fire ministry has produced a number of outstanding series on worship including *The Mass*, *The Sacraments*, *Untold Blessing: Three Paths to Holiness*, *Conversion: Following the Call of Christ*, and *The Eucharist*. For more information, visit www.wordonfire.org or purchase DVDs at www.mustardseed.org.au
- Dr Brant Pitre has created an excellent resource, *A Biblical Explanation of the Mass*. His talks can be streamed online at https://catholicproductions.com/collections/brant-pitre/digital-video?sort_by=created-descending
- At the St Paul Centre for Biblical Theology, Dr Scott Hahn has produced a range of biblical studies, including on Scripture and the Mass, which can be accessed via streaming or DVD and are accompanied by a leader's guide for small group discussion. For more information, visit www.stpaulcentre.com
- Sycamore provides series on a range of topics, and these can be used to provide formation for small groups. The resource is adaptable with optional modules, and covers topics including sacramental preparation. Sycamore resources are free of charge. For more information, see www.sycamore.fm



Strategy 8:

Provide Liturgical Resources

Action 1

Liturgical resources can be shared and exchanged between parish liturgical teams or committees and Religious Education Coordinators in associated schools, including approved liturgical music and the interchange of school and parish choirs as suitable and opportune. The liturgical and musical expertise of our schools can be a pathway for parents into the life of our parishes.

Action 2

Encourage preparation for and full participation in the Mass by **making available the revised Weekday and Sunday Missals** for use or purchase, and/or **publishing the readings in the parish bulletin**. The **Divine Office**, available in hardcopy and online, is also to be made available for prayer.

Resources

- Missals and the Divine Office are available for purchase from the Mustard Seed Bookshop, at www.mustardseed.org.au
- The Daily Readings and the Divine Office are available online for free on the Universalis website, at www.universalis.com

Action 3

Invest in a **subscription to a liturgical resource** that assists in the preparation of liturgies.

Resource

- ‘Liturgia’ is an excellent tool for accessing liturgical texts and preparing liturgies, with associated booklets and PowerPoint presentations. It provides resources for preaching, music suggestions, liturgy preparation tools, and texts for every liturgy of the year. For more information, visit <https://www.liturgia.com.au/for-parishes> or use the contact form at <https://www.liturgia.com.au/contact-us>

Strategy 9:**Improve Homilies**

Consider ways of prayer and planning that can assist in the **preparation of homilies**.

Resources

- Some ordained ministers may find it helpful to prepare homilies with the assistance of a preparation group, inviting four or five trusted priests and/or laity with whom they can work easily, to pray and reflect on the Scriptures and to be closely attuned to the ordinary experiences, questions and concerns of parish or community members
- Pope Francis provided extensive instruction on preaching in *Evangelii Gaudium* because “so many concerns have been expressed about this important ministry, and we cannot simply ignore them”. Spend time studying Pope Francis’ word on preaching so that it might further strengthen worship in the community: www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html
- Homilies are prepared by prayerful reading and listening to the Scriptures that enables the homilist’s interpretation in the light of faith. This preparation includes close study of the text, consultation of Scripture commentaries and homiletic aids, clear composition of the homily with due emphasis on the life of Christ, review, and practice of its delivery. It is important to be attentive to the context and lived realities of those to whom the Word is preached. Ordained ministers who do not have sufficient time to prepare due to other demands might consider whether they need additional staff, or to delegate some tasks in order to invest more time in preaching
- The Holy See’s Congregation for Clergy provides homily notes for each Sunday of the year at www.clerus.va/content/clerus/en/biblioteca.html

Strategy 9 (continued):**Improve Homilies****Action 2**

Seek constructive feedback from parishioners who will, in charity, be honest, so as to improve preaching in the Mass and within the life of the community.

Action 3

Create a way in which parishioners can freely report any difficulties in hearing the preaching or the music that supports the community's worship, such as via a member of the parish liturgy committee. It is important to assess the quality of sound systems and ensure there is a 'T loop' installed. PowerPoint slides can be used with prudence if parishioners struggle with hearing or understanding the homily.

Strategy 10:**Create a Culture of Hospitality****Action 1**

A culture of hospitality at every level is vital to parish renewal, **including at Mass and other liturgical celebrations** where people are gathered and newcomers can be welcomed. Parishes are encouraged to consider layers of welcome, extending from the car park, to church entrances and inside the church, as shared in the chapter on Community on page 137.

Action 2

A number of **practical actions for welcome and hospitality** are also suggested in the chapter on Community including parish welcome packs, projected or printed versions of the Order of Mass to support participation, and welcome initiatives following Masses to enrich the experience of welcome and Christian belonging.

Step 4: **Act**

In building up our worship and union with Christ, the parish priest can work together with others such as those involved in liturgical ministries or the Liturgy Committee to support the encounter with Christ, for those who regularly participate and those who can be invited to rediscover the beauty of meeting Christ in the celebration of His mysteries and in practices of prayer and devotion.







STRUCTURAL RENEWAL FOR MISSION

Introduction



No one puts new wine into old wineskins; if he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins”.

Luke 5:37-38

In order to support our parishes in carrying out the mission of Jesus now and in the years ahead, we must review together the pastoral life and structures of our communities as we seek to make disciples in a time of unprecedented change in Sydney.

Like Christians of every generation, we are called to spiritual revitalisation and to new ways of organising ourselves for God’s mission. In our Archdiocese, the ‘new wine’ of spiritual renewal and ‘new wineskins’ of structural renewal must work together if we are to foster flourishing Eucharistic communities that evangelise, that is, call and form disciples.

We recognise that if we only change the structures of our parishes, without spiritual renewal, the decline of vulnerable communities may continue apace, only on a larger scale. However, without revisiting our structures – the way we are organised for God’s mission – some parishes may lack the people and resources for sustainable and effective missionary outreach or indeed to be viable in the future, with the consequence that some people will be denied outreach from the Church.

The goal of structural and spiritual renewal is to ensure that our communities are faithful to the person and mission of Jesus, truly mission-oriented and better connected with one another, sustainably resourced to reach out to those yet to hear the message of the Gospel, and plan to be there for generations yet to come.

Indeed, Pope Francis insists that ecclesial renewal must be shaped by “a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s

customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelisation of today's world rather than for her self-preservation".¹ It is this mission of evangelisation that shapes the process of discernment and decision-making about parish structures in the Archdiocese of Sydney.

Hence, this Archdiocesan Mission Plan recommends both practical actions for the spiritual renewal of parish life as well as a process for the assessment and development of renewed structures which will be necessary in some cases.

1. Gifts for Mission

The cornerstone of our community is God who invites us to share in His divine life and blesses us with abundant gifts that we can freely offer in service of His mission. These gifts include His presence and relationship with us, the sanctifying grace of the Eucharist and other sacraments, His word in Holy Scripture, and the many gifts of and within our communities, to name but a few.

Of God's many gifts for His mission of evangelisation, there are at least three gifts of parish life that ought to shape our structures for mission:

- a. The primary wealth of our Eucharistic communities is the **communities** themselves and the gifts of our people, clergy, religious and lay men and women: their lives, natural talents, charisms, vocations, faith, experience and time. The community's participation in the sacramental life of the parish, and in the provision of pastoral care and outreach, is essential to the life of the parish and its capacity to undertake mission in the wider community. The gathering of a parish, migrant chaplaincy or ecclesial movement is a spiritual gift for the world as people pray in common, witness to and draw others into the Christian life.
- b. Another vital gift for mission is the **temporal resources** that parishioners past and present have contributed to our parish communities. These temporal resources include the property and buildings, savings, income and other financial resources of the parish. These resources support pastoral care and missionary initiative, the training and employment of essential staff, maintenance of adequate facilities for the present and future generations, material support for our priests and seminarians, and financial support for the wider life of the Church and apostolates to those in need.
- c. A third gift essential to mission is our **personnel**, that is the clergy, paid staff and regular volunteers who support them. Each parish and Eucharistic community gathers around their priest who serves as the community's pastoral leader. Some communities are also blessed with a deacon who builds up the community in a number of ways including through the preaching of the Gospel and the ministry of charity. Paid staff include parish secretaries, pastoral associates, bookkeepers, cleaners, housekeepers, and other staff who not only perform essential tasks for the life and

¹ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 27.





THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS
- ANDREY NIKOLAEVICH MIRONOV, c. 2013, CC BY-SA 4.0

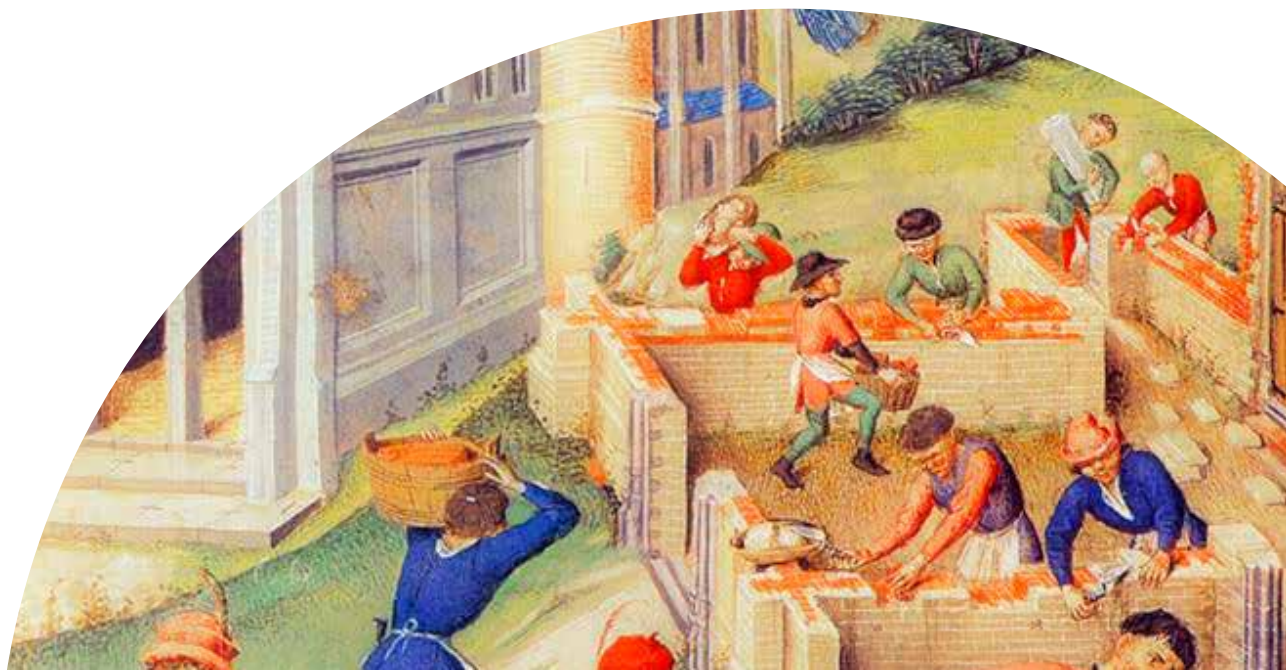
mission of the parish but enable our priests to undertake the essential pastoral ministry for which they are ordained. Regular volunteers include the lay leaders of many parish groups and ministries. These clergy, staff and volunteers are integral to the life and mission of our communities.

2. Stewardship of Our Gifts for Mission

All Christians are called to be stewards of the gifts that God has given us, employing them effectively for the good of others, “[a]s each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace” (1 Peter 4:10). Such stewardship calls us to consider how the gifts of our communities, temporal resources and parish personnel are cared for and placed in fruitful service of discipleship and evangelisation.

In planning for the future of our parishes, it is important to avoid two extreme positions that can be taken with regard to these resources. One is to place too much emphasis and reliance upon them, as if more money, employees and bureaucracy were the answer to every problem. The other is to treat community participation, temporal resources and personnel needs as irrelevant to mission, as pertaining only to the ‘business world’ and characterising their proper employment as evidence of a lack of trust in divine providence. Neither of these positions is proper to the Christian view. The model of our relationship with temporal resources and other gifts in the context of Christ’s mission is the prudent and balanced one we find in Scripture.

In relation to temporal resources, Scripture warns us that money cannot be our master (Matthew 6:24) or the object of our love, for love of money is “the root of all evils” (1 Timothy 6:10). Temporal resources have to take their proper place in a hierarchy of values, with our focus being upon gathering “treasures in heaven” not “treasures on earth” (Matthew 6:19-20). God expects us to take care of the vulnerable and therefore the hoarding of wealth for private use at the expense of others is both folly and evil (Matthew 6:19; James 5:1-6; Luke 16:19-31).



In the New Testament, the generous use of temporal resources for mission is witnessed by the poor widow with her mite (Mark 12:41-44) and the churches of Macedonia in their help to others (2 Corinthians 8:1-5). The Acts of the Apostles also speaks positively of the early Christians who placed their temporal resources wholly in service of mission:

There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made to each as any had need (Acts 4:34-35).

Providence is also a strong theme throughout the New Testament and we are advised not to “worry” about possessions (Matthew 6:25-34).

Nevertheless, this does not exempt us from the responsibility of exercising good stewardship of all gifts, including temporal resources. It is a practice that Jesus praises in the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30). Jesus also tells His disciples to be faithful in small things – even “unrighteous mammon” – in order to be entrusted with great things (Luke 16:1-13). He exhorts us to be “wise as serpents and innocent as doves” in mission (Matthew 10:16) and to use reason to “count the cost” of everything that will be needed for mission (Luke 14:28).

All gifts from above need to be managed well and used wisely. No one wants a parish to be improperly focused on resources, yet proper attention must be given to the stewardship of them because mission demands people and resources to carry out God’s work.

Part of the work of *Go Make Disciples* is to assist parishes that are experiencing a decline in community participation, are lacking in temporal resources for mission, and/or lacking personnel that can support their growth and outreach, so they can enter more fully into the mission to which Christ calls them.



3. Resources for Mission in Sydney: Our Current Situation

In its commitment to evangelisation, *Go Make Disciples* is concerned with the potential and capacity of our parishes to undertake the mission of Jesus now and into the future. During the ‘Parish 2020’ process, data was assembled which included an examination of the access that parishes have to these three essential resources for mission now and in the years to come.

a. The Situation Regarding Community for Mission

We have assembled data pertaining to our communities, particularly data showing trends in participation: Mass attendance trends over 20 years, participation in the sacraments, and broader demographic trends that affect worshipping patterns across the Archdiocese. While there are some exciting opportunities for growth in some regions of our Archdiocese, we also see decline in key indicators of community participation and engagement in others.

The Number of Census Catholics

Between 2011 and 2016 there has been a decline in the overall number and proportion of people in Sydney who identify themselves as Catholic:

- The number of people who identified as Catholics has declined by 17,286 to 594,145
- The percentage of people who identify as Catholic has declined by 3.3% to 24.2%²

Community Participation as Indicated by Mass Attendance Numbers and Rates

In Sydney, the average Mass attendance rate in 2016 was 15.7%. This is higher than the national average of 11.8%. However between 2011 and 2016, Mass attendance in Sydney declined by 5% (4,943 people).

Changes in attendance vary from parish to parish throughout the Archdiocese with some communities experiencing more significant rates of decline, some slight or no decline, while others have experienced growth in the same period.

² National Centre for Pastoral Research, *Diocesan Social Profile based on the 2016 Census, Archdiocese of Sydney and Diocesan Social Profile based on the 2011 Census, Archdiocese of Sydney*. Available at <https://ncpr.catholic.org.au>.

In respect of our communities it should be said that a large parish is not per se a flourishing parish, nor could it be said that a small parish must necessarily lack vitality and viability. However, where there has been significant decline in participation in the past decade or so, and demographic and attendance trends indicate this is likely to continue, parishes can become impoverished in their community life.

A parish with declining numbers of regular Mass-goers can experience a significant decline in the quality of community life, for this decline can affect the quality of worship, the ministries that are dependent upon lay leaders and volunteers, and sometimes impacts upon financial support of the parish.

Participation in Other Sacraments

There are also Catholics who are not sufficiently engaged in the life of the Church to attend weekly Mass but who nevertheless participate in sacraments such as Baptism and Marriage. Research reveals a fall across the Archdiocese, as elsewhere in Australia, in these two sacraments in recent years.

Participation in the sacraments can decline for a broad range of reasons: spiritual, economic, cultural, demographic, social, and personal.³ Where communities are experiencing persistent decline in numbers and rates of attendance, we need to consider action to stabilise and even enable such parishes to undertake mission with a greater pool of resources and people.

³ Pastoral Research Office, *Catholics Who Have Stopped Attending Mass* (2007).



b. The Situation Regarding Temporal Resources for Mission

Following the research of the past years, we now have a comprehensive picture of the temporal resources of each of our parishes. This information was brought together because consultations with our deaneries and parishes in Sydney revealed that many people were unacquainted with the state of temporal resources within their parish. This included a lack of awareness as to whether their parishes operated with a balanced budget and had sufficient funds for ministries, programs, facilities and paid staff to further enhance their mission.

While some of our parishes were found to have reasonable temporal resources to support this mission, it is clear that a number of parishes lack the material resources they need to grow their pastoral life, to try new things, and to take on new commitments that support outreach. The situation of these parishes will be discussed in the years ahead with the clergy and parish communities themselves, with a view to finding ways in which to improve this situation.

Effects of a Lack of Temporal Resources for Mission

Parishes lacking temporal resources for mission have insufficient resources to invest in an ongoing way in their pastoral life and activities. They can even struggle with basic matters that are essential to the ongoing life and mission of the parish. Although this situation manifests differently from one community to the next, such parishes may experience some or all of the following:

- a struggle to upgrade their facilities to better support their life and mission, and as a consequence church buildings, presbyteries and meeting spaces are not as suitable or in common use as they could be;
- little or no funds to invest in pastoral initiatives for their existing parishioners or for evangelisation beyond existing attenders (e.g. programs, resources, events and hospitality);



- an inability to cover large expenses that arise;
- a struggle to meet loan repayments for large expenses into the future;
- an increasing need to draw on their reserves or borrow more to cover their costs;
- a lack of preparedness for a change of conditions (for instance, during the COVID-19 crisis some parishes were at risk of running short of funds to cover their basic expenses);
- a declining capacity to support the coordinated mission work in which all of the parishes participate through the Charitable Works Fund, such as the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, the training of our seminarians, the Ephpheta Centre for the deaf and hearing impaired, the work of catechists, chaplains, and CatholicCare, to name just a few.

Aside from these specific impacts, a lack of temporal resources has broader repercussions for the culture of the parish: it can cause an instability that affects the current operations of the parish, restricts the scope of the parish mission, hampers aspirations within the parish to undertake outreach, impedes planning for the future, and leaves the parish vulnerable to unforeseen circumstances.

Some parishes have for many years now effectively been subsidised by other parishes or the Chancery. There will often be a case for doing this, especially in the short term (e.g. a new parish, a parish engaging in a development that has put it in debt, a parish engaging in important works for the whole diocese). However, this is obviously not sustainable for too many parishes or for too long.

The specific cause of this problem of a lack of temporal resources varies from parish to parish but, typically, such parishes may have less income than they would like, few or no prospects of increasing their income, declining attendance, low savings or cash at bank, increasingly burdensome operating costs, current or



SACRIFICE OF THE POOR WIDOW - FRESCO, OTTOBEUREN BASILICA
- PHOTO : JOHANNES BÖCKH & THOMAS MIRTSCH, CC-BY-SA-2.5

impending repair and maintenance or upgrade expenses, a lack of development opportunities, or a combination of these factors.

The Property and Infrastructure Team in the Archdiocese has been active in recent years and continues to be active in assisting parishes to consider developments that would yield a new income for their communities (e.g. an early childhood centre or housing development). Some parish priests, Parish Finance Committees and Parish Pastoral Councils have themselves identified such opportunities. Some have also been able to sell or lease assets (e.g. nursing homes, retirement villages, early childhood or other educational centres, land and buildings) and thereby unlock resources for other purposes. But for historical reasons, many parishes do not have the same opportunities.

The COVID-19 crisis has also had a serious pastoral and financial impact on our parishes during which communities have been deprived of income and simultaneously needed to find new ways to communicate, provide pastoral care, nurture community and reach out to others. New technologies have been required for the livestreaming of and registration for Masses, parish facilities have needed increased cleaning and maintenance, while collections have varied as face-to-face contact and giving has fluctuated because of restrictions on church attendance during the pandemic. Like domestic households, our Eucharistic communities need sufficient resilience around their temporal resources to be able to respond effectively to these kinds of unforeseen circumstances now and in the future, if we are going to undertake the mission of Jesus in creative and effective ways.

The reasons for this situation are no doubt complex, but as it stands today a good number of parishes struggle with declining revenue, declining attendance numbers, increased infrastructure and maintenance costs, ageing buildings, and ever-expanding compliance obligations which can put a strain on existing personnel. Remaining in this situation of precariousness indefinitely puts the parish at risk of not being a sustainable community for future generations.

It is important to affirm that simply because a parish lacks temporal resources, this does not mean it is not a valuable community and a place with immense pastoral value and exercising works of faith in difficult circumstances. All of our parishes are valuable communities in our Archdiocese and we desire that they have the support and stability they need for the future. However, we must also read ‘the signs of the times’ and not go into denial about the challenges we face, otherwise we cannot address them and ensure these communities have a vibrant future.

c. Our Situation Regarding Personnel for Mission

Another essential gift in our parishes is their ‘personnel’, that is, the priests of the community and the paid staff and regular volunteers who support them. These personnel ensure our parishes are organised and responsive to the needs of the community.

Paid Staff

Paid staff include parish secretaries who are often the first contact within the parish, pastoral associates and other coordinators of parish life who support and develop important ministries and parish volunteers, bookkeepers who support good stewardship of parish finances, cleaners who maintain our facilities so they are welcoming and hospitable environments, housekeepers who ensure a healthy and orderly environment for our pastors, gardeners who make our parishes beautiful and inviting, and business managers who assist stewarding the resources of the parish and ensure compliance with complex statutory obligations of the parish, among others.

Not only do these staff perform these essential tasks but their presence enables the priests of the parish to dedicate themselves to the pastoral ministry for which they were ordained: as a co-worker of the bishop to teach, to offer the Eucharistic sacrifice and prayer, and to lead the community. Paid staff such as pastoral associates, sacramental coordinators and catechist coordinators are often critical to the recruitment, guidance and support of the many volunteers with which parishes are blessed.

In these days of changing pastoral needs, escalating administrative and statutory compliance obligations, and the pressing need for a renewed and coordinated outreach in faithfulness to Jesus’ Great Commission, paid staff are no longer a luxury for parishes who can afford them but are essential to the effective mission of every parish.

In 2019, the reported staffing levels in parishes within Sydney were as follows, with some communities lacking roles that can support the growth and missionary outreach of parishes:

- More than half of parishes do not have access to the assistance of a paid pastoral associate, sacramental coordinator, catechist coordinator, music minister, or youth assistant, even on a part-time basis
- Almost three quarters of parishes do not have access to the support of a full-time secretary or similar administrative support
- Less than ten percent of parishes employ a business, operations, or parish manager

The reality today is that many of our parishes in their current structure have insufficient funds to employ and train the number of administrative and pastoral staff they would like to carry out their mission in a vibrant manner and to enable our priests to focus on their pastoral duties:

- In 2019, over half of our parishes did not have sufficient income to employ the full complement of staff that would better support a flourishing, medium-sized twenty-first century parish, that is:
 - a full-time secretary;
 - a pastoral associate for 3 days per week (for the coordination and support of volunteers in sacramental preparation, support of catechists, support of lay chaplains to hospitals and nursing homes and the like);
 - a paid youth leader 2 days per week, and
 - a bookkeeper 1 day per week.
- In 2019, over one quarter of our parishes did not have sufficient income to employ:
 - a parish secretary 3 days per week, and
 - a bookkeeper 1 day per week.



It may be the case that some parishes choose not to employ staff. However, when considering the demands of mission communities may need to review this position. A missionary culture in a parish includes personal welcome and timely responses to parish enquiries by phone throughout the day, keeping the parish office as open and accessible as possible to parishioners and others, the need for coordinated initiatives of evangelisation and formation for a flourishing community life, the formation and support of volunteers, the update of parish websites and other sources of pastoral information, pro-active outreach in the wider community, and provision for the needs of young people and the cultivation of adult discipleship. A lack of staff can severely impede mission, while the employment of staff can help the mission of the parish to flourish and grow.

Volunteers

Many parishes have in the past relied on volunteers for leading and running parish groups and ministries and many parishes still do today. This is precisely as it should be, for all the baptised are called to build up the Church's communion, the body of Christ, and engage their gifts toward this end according to their vocation.

However, during Episcopal Visitations and Deanery meetings, many parishes report great difficulty today in finding sufficient volunteers for ministries such as the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (catechists), the St Vincent de Paul Society, as counters, pastoral carers for hospital and nursing homes, for welcome and support outreach, RCIA, and other essential ministries and outreach activities. Often, the same people end up volunteering for several parish ministries and may be overused or unable to devote themselves as fully as they would like to one apostolate. Many of these volunteers are ageing and are not being replaced by new volunteers. A number of priests report that repeated recruitment drives yield little by way of new recruits.

Priests

The parishes in Sydney are blessed with many diocesan and religious clergy to lead our communities. The dedication and hard work of our priests to serve Jesus' mission as pastors, teachers, and leaders of the faithful is a great gift to our communities, a gift they offer with little 'human reward'.

The Archdiocese is committed to providing greater support for our clergy, as outlined in the Archbishop's 'Ten Point Plan for Clergy Support', as well as for lay leaders, the support of whom is discussed in the chapter on Leadership within this Mission Plan, pages 117-119.

To date we have not experienced the shortage of priests that many other dioceses have, though we cannot presume an increase in numbers in the future.

Over the next decade, the number of active priests in our Archdiocese is projected to remain stable while the average age of our priests will, in fact, fall slightly.

However, many parishes have fewer clergy than they once had or might like, as well as fewer ‘clergy hours’ than they might need. In part, this is caused by the increasing administrative complexity and compliance requirements faced by many organisations in the present day, a reality that also impacts upon the pastoral ministry of our priests. Many of our priests serve not only in the parish and associated schools but exercise other responsibilities. These can include serving on various advisory bodies within the Archdiocese, as chaplains for hospitals and migrant groups, and overseeing special ministries of the Church. The ageing of our priests and their varied gifts can also mean some priests are more suited to particular dimensions of parish ministry than others, impacting on their availability.

As Archbishop Anthony has commented, even if God suddenly graced us with 100 extra clergy, it would not necessarily be pastorally desirable to distribute them equally among our existing parishes; instead they would be distributed according to pastoral need. More likely, however, is a declining pool of clergy, as many religious orders with priests are declining in number and are likely to relinquish one or all of their parishes in coming years; and many other dioceses, more needy than Sydney, will be asking us to share some clergy with them.

As well, the present structures and boundaries of our parishes, many of which have been unchanged for decades, can create inequalities in the distribution of clergy across regions of the Archdiocese. As demographics shift throughout Sydney and new areas of urban growth and development emerge, it is vital that our Church and our priests are present where our people are. Some parts of Sydney are experiencing sharp declines in Catholic population (such as Lakemba whose Catholic population declined by almost one third from 2001-2016) while others have seen a sharp increase (such as Homebush which has experienced a threefold increase in Catholic population over the same period). As we look to the future, we must ensure our people, and not merely our buildings, guide where our many clergy serve, ensuring our personnel and structures respond to changing pastoral needs.

As well, we know that some parishes have lost close to three quarters of their Mass attenders over a period of 18 years (2001-2019), others have more than doubled their attendance, while a handful of parishes have increased the number of attenders, some by five-fold in the same period. The cause of changes in Mass attendance are complex and include factors such as changes in local demography, the age profile of the parish, and the pastoral practices of the community. All of these realities must shape decisions regarding the appointment of clergy and other personnel in the years ahead.

Having gained a clearer perspective on some of the challenges of our current situation and how the lack of resources can impede living out the mission of Christ, we can now take steps together to help our communities to flourish.

It is the intent of this plan for mission that parishes under consideration are helped to ensure their ongoing viability and to be able to live the mission of Christ more fully. Rather than wait until their resources become so depleted that a change in pastoral life or direction is no longer possible, these vulnerable parishes would be wise to act now while they still have the resources to make pro-active changes for mission. There are a range of steps communities can take to stabilise, strengthen and reinvigorate their life, including clearly understanding their available resources for mission and orienting these towards the five foundations for parish renewal as outlined in this Mission Plan.





4. New Structures for Mission

Renewal of our parishes will primarily take place through *spiritual renewal* in which we seek to cooperate with the Holy Spirit to deepen our own discipleship and find new ways to reach out and invite others to encounter Jesus. However, in some cases this spiritual revitalisation must be coupled with *structural renewal* since our structures should serve the mission of Christ rather than Christ's mission trying to fit into our unchanging structures.

It is important to recognise that our current structures can inhibit access to gifts and resources necessary for evangelisation: a thriving community, temporal resources and necessary personnel. In such cases we need to be open to new structures to carry out our unchanging mission in Christ.

Scripture offers us an array of insights into the relationship between the old and the new in our tradition. In putting the Good News into practice, we must bring forward treasures old and new that are capable of revealing Jesus in every age (Matthew 13:51-52).

Jesus' story of wine and wineskins perfectly illustrates the relationship between spirit and structure in our Christian lives (Luke 5:36-38). In our situation today, the 'new wine' of spiritual revitalisation and those fresh expressions of Christian life and community that the Holy Spirit is bringing forward need to find support in

‘new wineskins’ or renewed structures that can promote this life rather than inhibit it. Opening ourselves to the way in which we are organised for this new chapter of spiritual life depends upon our faith that God truly can “make all things new” (Revelation 21:5). It invites our abiding trust in the Holy Spirit, who has inspired renewal and change in our past, to now inspire new life and new structures for our future.

We recognise that such change in Christian life is never easy. However, as shared by St John Henry Newman, change is the principle of growth and “growth is the only evidence of life”.⁴ Indeed, it is this very capacity for change and renewal in the service of evangelisation that renders our parishes so perennial and important to the life of our Archdiocese:

*“The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community. While certainly not the only institution which evangelises, if the parish proves capable of self-renewal and constant adaptivity, it continues to be “the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters”. This presumes that it really is in contact with the homes and the lives of its people, and does not become a useless structure out of touch with people or a self-absorbed group made up of a chosen few.”*⁵

The structural change of our parishes is not for its own sake or to satisfy some grand blueprint for the future but to ensure the local parish has resources for this mission.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic we witnessed an outpouring of extraordinary creative power, commitment and passion from many of our clergy and parishes to ensure that our people had continued access to Christian community, prayer, and the sacramental presence of Christ. It is precisely this kind of adaptive spirit, creativity and courage in the service of Christ’s mission to which we are called as we look now to our future.

Principal Arrangements

Over the past years there have been various consultations with clergy and parishioners, episcopal visitations of parishes, and initial dialogue about parishes that may benefit from a renewal of their structures for mission. These first soundings have been helpful in charting the course ahead – with a clear recognition of the reality of change in our communities and the priority of evangelisation or outreach.

⁴ John Henry Newman, *Apologia pro Vita Sua* (1864).

⁵ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 28.

In the Archbishop's desire for communities to be better connected in this mission, and with the responsibility to ensure the vitality of our parishes for generations yet to come, at least **five principal arrangements** will be considered for communities in the years ahead – the collaboration of parishes, the twinning or clustering of parishes, the amalgamation of parishes, changes to parish boundaries, and the establishment of new parishes in areas of growth.

The goal is to ensure that our communities are faithful to the person of Jesus, truly mission-oriented, better connected with one another, and sustainably resourced to best serve their existing faithful and reach out to those yet to hear the message of the Gospel, and plan for generations yet to come.

- a. All parishes in the Archdiocese are encouraged to **informally collaborate with another**. Collaboration permits parishes, migrant chaplaincies and ecclesial movements to 'do more with less' by pooling funds, talent, time, meeting spaces and other resources. It enables communities to minimise duplication, hold common activity and initiate forms of outreach that they could not undertake alone. Over time, new relationships are formed between collaborating parishes and groups, and fresh possibilities for pastoral life and evangelisation can emerge that are not possible in isolation. As suggested by past consultation with clergy, this can include the engagement of youth ministers across more than one community and the gathering of larger cohorts or hubs of young people in faith. Families from different communities can be formed together in preparation for the sacraments we celebrate, combined formation days for ministry leaders and parish staff can be held, RCIA groups can meet in common regularly or occasionally, and common retreat days can be inaugurated. Parishes can pool funds to employ staff to assist with administration and compliance. Parishes can confer with each other and provide complementary rather than competing Mass times to provide parishioners and busy families with more choice. The same can be done for offerings of the Sacrament of Penance. In fact, this was the experience of the early Christians who shared their resources for mission and experienced the fruit of a greater diversity of gifts and charisms to support the work of God.

Collaboration can also take place at a deanery level through deanery-wide offerings such as retreats and formation days. It can also take place more locally through the parish groupings shared in this chapter, in which parishes with natural affiliations can be encouraged to work together. The Parish Renewal Team within the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation will be available to work with deaneries and parishes to support such collaboration, facilitating ideas for shared life and combined outreach.

Migrant communities can also collaborate and share resources to strengthen their mission. The Sydney Centre for Evangelisation will work with migrant

chaplains and the Catholic Immigration Office to support the activities of migrant communities and explore the possibilities for collaboration in mission.

- b. A twinning or cluster of parishes** involves two or more parishes entering into a recognised partnering arrangement in the life of the Archdiocese and being led by one priest. Each parish remains a distinct entity canonically and with regard to its patrimony.

Examples of twinned or clustered parishes already in existence include the ‘Catholic Community of City South’ which includes the parishes of Rosebery, Redfern and Waterloo, and ‘Sydney Harbour North’ which includes the parishes of Beauty Point, Clifton Gardens, Mosman and Neutral Bay.

The twinning or clustering of parishes should not be seen as an inevitable step to amalgamation; however, this process does not preclude it either. There are basically two possibilities for twinning envisaged in Church law. First, a priest is appointed parish priest of one parish and administrator of one or more other parishes. Along with the pastor, other staff may be appointed including: an assistant priest(s), a deacon and or a seminarian on placement. Secondly, the pastoral care of two or more parishes together can be entrusted to several priests jointly. One priest, however, is appointed the Moderator to direct joint action and is responsible to the Bishop. The other priests are co-pastors with the Moderator. Other staff may be appointed including: a deacon and or seminarian on placement. In both arrangements, laity may be appointed to assist the clergy such as: a pastoral associate, lay employees and or volunteers. The above provides the basic models for parish teams in twinning or clustering arrangements.

Such partnerships can support greater collaboration and vitality between two or more canonically separate communities. The associated priests, lay parish leaders and members of the communities will best discern the opportunities for cooperation and sharing of life over time. Often the communities will bring together those committees and ministries from their parishes that are working in the same pastoral area, for example their liturgy committees may become a joint liturgy committee. Bringing committees together has many advantages including uniting the gifts of the two committees, providing simplicity and clarity around the ministry, and making it practically easier for the parish clergy who then need attend only one meeting rather than two for the same ministry. Like all relationships, a new partnership or twinning of communities will take time to grow and mature into a new sense of possibility and shared mission.

- c. An amalgamation or merger of parishes** involves two or more parishes joining together to form a single parish. Amalgamations involve both civil and canonical processes. In most cases, two or more parishes are unified in a single parish. There have been a number of parish mergers in the Archdiocese over the past years, with



examples including Ryde and Gladesville, Enmore and Tempe, Earlwood and Clemton Park, Berala and South Auburn, and Rockdale and Arncliffe. North Sydney, Lavender Bay and Kirribilli communities also merged to create one parish, that of Our Lady of the Way. Occasionally a parish may decide to divide and join each of the two parts to different parishes. Amalgamation would very rarely involve the closure of any churches; rather each parish church involved in an amalgamation is more likely to remain available for worship.

As we now look to the future of the Archdiocese and its mission, it is proposed that other parishes be assessed for twinning or amalgamation, building upon the consultation of the past years of the 'Parish 2020' process and inviting fresh input into the process of discernment and decision with the three basic criteria outlined in this Mission Plan in view.

- d. **Changes to parish boundaries** may be necessary in some cases with the development of public infrastructure over decades, including motorways and roads, rendering some parish geographical boundaries incongruous. The 'Parish 2020' process has identified some potential boundaries for adjustment that will be considered by the Archbishop and advisory bodies.
- e. **The establishment of new parishes in growing areas.** As observed, the Catholic population is growing rapidly in some areas of Sydney and we must be prepared to respond to their emerging pastoral needs. Further growth is predicted especially in the west of the Archdiocese of Sydney and new parishes may need to be provided for these growing populations.

It is expected that some parishes that are currently stand-alone communities will look to twin with neighbouring parishes to ensure the sustainability and vitality of their mission, and some that are currently twinned may formally merge or amalgamate. Some new parishes may be established in the future. Other parishes of the Archdiocese will remain more or less as they are structurally, but may increase their collaboration to undertake mission more effectively. Even when a parish does not undertake a formal structural change, the need for spiritual renewal and mission remains if the future of these parishes is to be marked by growth rather than decline.

It is important to recognise that our parish configurations as we know them today in Sydney have not always looked this way. Our ancestors in faith made changes and took new paths to respond to the circumstances of their time and with a view to the future. So today must we. Adapting our parish structures to live Christ's mission more effectively and viably is a responsible act of stewardship for present and future generations. In humility, we also recognise that the structures of our time will not be set in concrete for perpetuity and future generations will need to make further changes to ensure our communities continue to be well resourced for the mission of Christ.

5. Processes for the Discernment and Implementation of New Structures

Through the 'Parish 2020' process the Archdiocese gathered information on the viability of parishes particularly having regard to essential resources for mission in the form of current and projected community participation, temporal resources and personnel as reported. This data will inform the following process for discernment, decision and implementation regarding any new parish structures for mission.

It is important to note that no decision by the Archbishop has yet been made regarding the twinning or merging of parishes, pending the process of parish assessment and discernment outlined in this plan for mission.

Informal Collaboration

All parishes are encouraged to collaborate with one another on pastoral initiatives and share resources. This Mission Plan identifies **groups of parishes that are encouraged to collaborate with one another**, as identified through empirical data as well as various advisory bodies including regional bishops, parish clergy, local deans and deanery groups, the College of Consultors, the Council of Deans, the Council of Priests, and the parish priests themselves. Some might collaborate with one neighbour in particular, others might collaborate with one or more on some matters and with other neighbours on other matters.

These groupings represent a starting point for collaboration, informed by consultation, and such groupings may evolve over the next decade to respond to changing pastoral needs and situations.

It is important to emphasise that these groupings identify parishes that could collaborate with one another. They do not indicate groups intended for twinning or merger, though some parishes within each grouping may need to contemplate change if they are identified as 'parishes under consideration' as outlined later in this chapter.

The groups suggested for informal collaboration are provided below:

Western Deanery (1)

Suggested Groupings for Informal Collaboration

Group A

Parish of
St Anthony, Austral

Parish of the Holy Spirit,
Carnes Hill

Parish of the Good
Shepherd, Hoxton Park

Group B

Parish of Our Lady of
Victories, Horsley Park

Parish of St John the
Baptist, Bonnyrigg/
Edensor Park

Parish of Mary
Immaculate, Bossley Park

Parish of Our Lady of Mt
Carmel, Mt Pritchard

Group C

Parish of All
Saints, Liverpool

Parish of St Therese,
Sadleir-Miller

Parish of St Francis
Xavier, Lurnea

South West Deanery (2)

Suggested Groupings for Informal Collaboration

Group A

Parish of
St Therese, Padstow

Parish of St Luke the
Evangelist, Revesby

Parish of St Patrick,
Revesby Heights

Parish of St
Christopher, Panania

Group B

Parish of St Gertrude,
Smithfield

Parish of Our Lady of the
Rosary, Fairfield

Parish of the Sacred
Heart, Cabramatta

Group C

Parish of
St Joseph, Moorebank

Parish of St Christopher,
Holsworthy

Group D

Parish of the Immaculate
Heart of Mary, Sefton
(*Central Deanery*)

Parish of the Sacred
Heart, Villawood
Parish of St Mary Queen
of Heaven, Georges Hall

Parish of Christ
the King, Bass Hill
(*Central Deanery*)

Central Deanery (3)

Suggested Groupings for Informal Collaboration

Group A

Parish of St John of
God, Auburn

Parish of St Peter Chanel
and St Joseph, Berala

Parish of
St Joachim, Lidcombe

Group B

Parish of
St Joseph, Belmore

Parish of
St Mel, Campsie

Parish of
St Michael, Belfield

Group C

Parish of St Dominic,
Flemington

Parish of St Martha,
Strathfield

Parish of St Anne,
Strathfield South

Group D

Parish of
St Jerome, Punchbowl

Parish of St John
Vianney & St Thomas
More, Greenacre

Parish of
St Therese, Lakemba

Group E

Parish of
St Brendan,
Central Bankstown

Parish of St Felix de
Valois, Bankstown



Concord Deanery (4)

Suggested Groupings for Informal Collaboration

Group A

Parish of Our Lady of the Assumption, Homebush

Parish of St Ambrose, Concord West

Parish of St Patrick, Mortlake

Parish of St Mary, Concord

Group D

Parish of St Patrick, Summer Hill

Parish of St Thomas of Canterbury, Lewisham

Group B

Parish of St Mark, Drummoyne

Parish of All Hallows, Five Dock

Parish of St Joan of Arc, Haberfield

Parish of St Fiacre, Leichhardt

Parish of St Columba & the Holy Souls, Leichhardt North

Parish of the Immaculate Conception & St Paul of the Cross, Dulwich Hill

Group C

Parish of St Vincent, Ashfield

Parish of St Francis Xavier, Ashbury

Parish of St Joseph, Enfield

Parish of the Holy Innocents, Croydon

Lourdes Parish, Earlwood
(*St George Deanery*)

Northern Deanery (5)

Suggested Groupings for Informal Collaboration

Group A

Parish of the Blessed Sacrament, Clifton Gardens

Parish of the Sacred Heart, Mosman

Parish of St Joseph, Neutral Bay

Parish of St Therese of the Child Jesus, Beauty Point

Parish of Our Lady of the Way, North Sydney, Kirribilli and Lavender Bay

Group B

Parish of St Charles Borromeo & Our Lady Queen of Peace, Ryde/
Gladesville

Parish of the Holy Name of Mary, Hunters Hill

Parish of St Michael, Lane Cove

Group C

Parish of St Kevin, Eastwood

Parish of St Michael, Meadowbank

Parish of St Therese, Denistone

Parish of St Anthony, Marsfield

Parish of the Holy Spirit, North Ryde

City Deanery (6)

Suggested Groupings for Informal Collaboration

Group A

Parish of St Augustine of Hippo, Balmain

Parish of St Joseph, Rozelle

Parish of St Brendan, Annandale

Parish of St Michael the Archangel, Stanmore

Group B

Parish of St Joseph, Newtown

Parish of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, Erskineville

Parish of Our Lady of the Southern Cross, Enmore

Parish of St Brigid, Marrickville

Group C

Parish of St Benedict, Broadway

Parish of St James, Forest Lodge/Glebe

Parish of St Bede, Pyrmont

Parish of St Joseph, Camperdown

Group D

Parish of St Joseph, Edgecliff

Parish of St Francis of Assisi, Paddington

Parish of Mary Immaculate & St Charles Borromeo, Waverley
(*Eastern Deanery*)

Parish of St Canice, Elizabeth Bay

Group E

Catholic Community of City South: Parishes of Rosebery, Waterloo, and Redfern

Parish of St Peter, Surry Hills

Group F

Parish of St Patrick, Church Hill

Parish of St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney

Parish of the Sacred Heart, Darlinghurst



Eastern Deanery (7)

Suggested Groupings for Informal Collaboration

Group A

Parish of
St Andrew, Malabar

Parish of St Agnes,
Matraville

Parish of St Michael,
War Memorial Catholic
Church, Daceyville

Parish of the Holy
Family, Maroubra

Parish of Our Lady of the
Annunciation, Pagewood

Parish of St Mary
& St Joseph,
Maroubra Bay Beach

Group B

Parish of Our Lady of the
Sacred Heart, Randwick

Parish of St Margaret
Mary, Randwick North

Parish of Our Lady of the
Rosary, Kensington

Parish of
St Brigid, Coogee

Parish of St Anthony of
Padua, Clovelly

Group C

Parish of
St Bernard, Botany

Parish of
St Therese, Mascot

Group D

Parish of Our Lady Star
of the Sea, Watson's Bay

Parish of St Therese,
Dover Heights

Parish of St Mary
Magdalene, Rose Bay

Parish of the Holy
Cross, Woollahra

Parish of
St Patrick, Bondi

Parish and Shrine of
St Anne, Bondi Beach



St George Deanery (8)

Suggested Groupings for Informal Collaboration

Group A

Parish of St
Declan, Penshurst

Parish of Our Lady of
Fatima, Peakhurst

Parish of
St Joseph, Oatley

Parish of
St Joseph, Riverwood

Parish of St Raphael,
Hurstville South

Parish of Mater Dei,
Blakehurst

Group B

Parish of St Thomas
More, Brighton-le-Sands

Parish of
St Finbar, San Souci

Parish of
St Gabriel, Bexley

Parish of St Mary
MacKillop,
Rockdale City

Group C

Parish of St Michael,
Hurstville

Parish of
St Bernadette, Carlton

Parish of
St Patrick, Kogarah

Group D

Parish of Regina Coeli,
Beverly Hills

Parish of Our Lady of
Fatima, Kingsgrove

Sutherland Deanery (9)

Suggested Groupings for Informal Collaboration

Group A

Parish of St Aloysius of
Gonzaga, Cronulla

Parish of Our Lady of
Fatima, Caringbah

Parish of Our Lady Star
of the Sea, Miranda

Parish of Our Lady of the
Way, Sylvania

Group B

Parish of St Catherine
Laboure, Gympie

Parish of St Patrick,
Sutherland

Parish of St Joseph,
Como/Oyster Bay

Parish of St John
Bosco, Engadine

Parish of the Holy
Family, Menai

Parishes Under Consideration

- a. From January 2021, the Archdiocese will examine approximately ten (10) ‘parishes under consideration’ in each year, that is, parishes whose situation suggests they would benefit from a twinning or merger of their communities with another due to declining community participation, poor access to temporal resources for mission, insufficient personnel for growth and outreach, or because they form a natural unit.
- b. As such, a ‘parish under consideration’ will be characterised by:

- i **A Significant and Ongoing Decline in Community Participation**

Some small communities are quite vital and sustainable, so the size of a community will not be the only consideration in decisions about parish structures. However, where the number or percentage of weekly Mass attenders in a parish has experienced significant decline in the past decade or so, and demographic and attendance trends indicate this is likely to continue, the pastoral life and outward mission of the parish can be at risk. It can be the case that some communities become so small as to become unsustainable. Declining participation in a parish can have a particularly negative impact on the recruitment of volunteers for vital aspects of its community life and mission. The age profile of current attenders and projected growth of particular suburbs are also relevant to this issue. Other trends indicating a decline in community participation include falling participation in sacraments such as marriages and baptisms. As a basic principle it is important that we do not let communities decline to the point that it is too late to strengthen or even sustain them.

The source of information regarding Mass count and demographic profile for our Archdiocese is the National Centre for Pastoral Research (NCPR), the principal research agency of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. The NCPR acquires significant amounts of data about Catholics from the five-yearly census conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, as well as carrying out and reporting the result of a National Count of Attendance through which attendances at all Masses across Australia are counted during the same period. As a social research agency, the information provided by the NCPR will ensure the robustness and objectivity of the data taken into account when proposing a new arrangement for a parish to ensure the sustainability of its life. Data concerning community participation is also sourced from the Parochial Returns provided by parishes on various aspects of pastoral activity including estimated weekend Mass attendance, episcopal visitation reports, feedback from regional bishops and local deans, agencies of the Archdiocese, College of Consultors, the Council of Deans and the Council of Priests.

- ii **A Lack of Access to Temporal Resources**

As outlined, a lack of access to temporal resources is defined as a parish with insufficient resources to invest in an ongoing way in their pastoral life and activities, and few or no

prospects of improving access to such resources.

As discussed, these parishes may experience a range of associated difficulties which impinge upon the scope of their mission, including a struggle to upgrade their facilities, little or no funds to invest in pastoral initiatives for current parishioners or outreach and evangelisation activities beyond this group, and an inability to meet large expenses, among others.

The analysis of temporal resources of our parishes takes into account its assets, income, and expenses. Other considerations which indicate a lack of temporal resources include the estimated repair and maintenance costs for a parish in the decade ahead, the capacity of a parish to support its priests, and the parish's potential to generate rental income through strategic property developments consonant with the missionary aims of the parish.

iii **Insufficient Personnel for Mission**

The availability and capacity of the priest given the particular pastoral needs of the parish, the access to paid staff needed for mission and the capacity of the parish to employ them, as well as the situation of the parish regarding volunteers will be considered through consultation with the relevant personnel and the Parochial Returns.

- c. In relation to each of the ten (10) parishes under consideration to be examined each year, the Archdiocese will first brief the parish priest or administrator, the relevant dean, and then other relevant stakeholders in the parish on their current situation of concern. These primary stakeholders of the parish include but are not limited to:
- the parish priest or administrator who is the chief pastoral planner of the parish;
 - the Parish Pastoral Council and Parish Finance Committee who are among his chief advisers;
 - the parish community who are the people of God and sign of Jesus' presence and mission;
 - the staff and regular volunteers of the parish who support the priest and are the 'backbone' of the parish;
 - local Catholic school principals who have a particular eye to the needs of our young people and their families;
 - other key stakeholders identified by the parish priest or administrator such as migrant chaplains whose community is associated with this parish; and
 - the Dean of the area in which the parish is situated.

d. Community feedback will be invited through a **pastoral self-assessment process**.

This process will:

- identify further information needed about the situation of the parish;
- explore the vision of the parish;
- examine how the current situation impacts on the community's ability to implement their vision;
- invite the community to share its hopes for mission; and
- begin to explore all the possible solutions to the situation faced by the parish, including any need for restructure such as twinning, amalgamation and/or parish boundary changes.

This process will provide an opportunity for feedback, help the parish clarify the way forward, and provide pastoral insights relevant to the discernment and decision of the Archbishop.

The process of pastoral assessment will be led by the parish priest as the primary pastoral planner of the community and overseen by the Parish Renewal Team of the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation.

e. Following the pastoral self-assessment, the priest and the parish community will then work closely with the Archdiocese's Parish Renewal Team and other relevant personnel over the ensuing months to investigate thoroughly all the possible solutions raised including the possibility of restructure, in order to identify a solution which will secure the parish's presence and missionary activity into the future.

During this process, a wide range of pastoral factors pertaining to key stakeholders and current commitments of the parish will be considered including institutional commitments such as local Catholic schools, local state schools, hospitals and nursing homes, migrant communities, social support services, or other needs of the faithful.

In relation to any restructure, the geographic proximity of parishes or other indicators which can point to natural partnerships in a given area will also be considered.

f. After consultation with the parish priest or administrator and the community, taking into account their interests and views, the Archbishop will also consult the Council of Deans, the Council of Priests and other advisers, and consider broader factors including the availability of clergy for ministry and any relevant longstanding or anticipated relationships with religious congregations, among other considerations. Following this, the Archbishop will confirm a decision regarding any restructure (for instance a twinning, merger, and/or boundary change).

- g. The period from review to decision will take approximately 12 months. There are some cases in which some of the steps outlined above have already taken place. There may also be rare cases where an emergency situation requires the process to be condensed or for it to be undertaken within an abridged timeframe. However it is anticipated that in most cases the process of community engagement and assessment will be as shared within this Mission Plan.
- h. The result of this process of discernment may mean some communities enter into a twinning or merger in the near future while others may do so in years to come when the conditions are right. These conditions might include a change of parish priest or when other circumstances come about to render renewal necessary.
- i. If the restructure involves an amalgamation of parishes or boundary changes, in addition to the consultation above, the Archbishop will also formally consult with the Council of Priests, and in some cases the Archdiocesan Finance Council. If the parish is entrusted to a religious order the provincial of that order will also be engaged. The Archbishop will then be able to issue a formal decree regarding any decision that has been made.
- j. Parishes that are not designated as ‘parishes under consideration’ may also need to take on new arrangements due to the needs of their neighbouring parish(es) as well as for the benefit of their own community. For example, a ‘parish under consideration’ may need to be amalgamated with a stronger and more viable parish next door. In these cases the Archdiocese will consult extensively with all the relevant priests and communities before any decision is made and this dialogue will be undertaken with the good of each of the local communities in view (for example, providing more volunteers, facilities, and other resources for mission).
- k. Once a decision is made by the Archbishop, a facilitated process between the communities will commence to work toward the implementation of that decision. This process will be offered by the Parish Renewal Team to support the priests and communities in addressing the practical and pastoral considerations related to bringing communities together under a new arrangement, as well as assisting the communities to discern and implement a common vision and accompanying strategies for their future. Recognising that structural



renewal will not be effective without the accompanying spiritual renewal of all aspects of parish life, in this pastoral planning process the Parish Renewal Team will invite the communities to engage the five foundations for parish renewal as articulated in this Mission Plan and support their initiatives through the resources of the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation.

6. Support for Review, Pastoral Assessment and Change of Structure

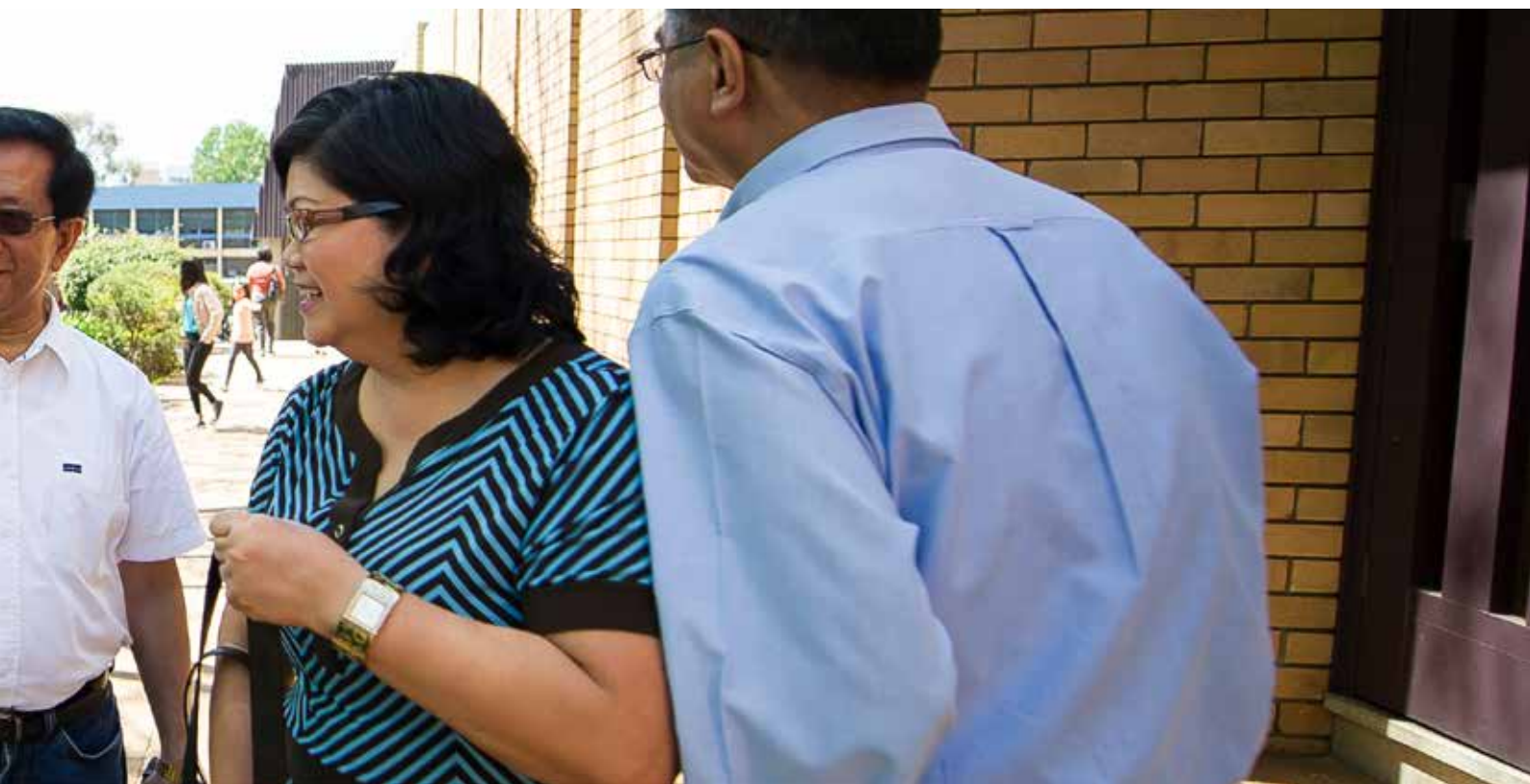
In his governance of the local community of faith and as primary leader of parish life and mission, the appointed parish priest or administrator will have responsibility for bringing the new arrangement into reality, in close collaboration with his lay leaders and the community.

The parish priest or administrator and the communities involved will receive ongoing support and accompaniment during the review process, and also during the process of twinning or merger if that decision is made, from the following support services:

- The **Parish Renewal Team** (whose purpose is the renewal of parishes through the implementation of the Archdiocesan Mission Plan) will provide the services of a **Parish Renewal Manager** and **Community Engagement Manager** to help:



- facilitate and accompany parish leaders and communities through processes of review, pastoral self-assessment, pastoral planning, and implementation of new structures for the support of mission;
- create opportunities to help parish leaders foster a culture of creativity and adaptation to new pastoral challenges, and empower communities to develop and embrace a vision of a flourishing parish life that is faithful to Christ's mission;
- facilitate dialogue and collaboration between communities in preparation for and implementation of parish partnerships, identifying, engaging and supporting key stakeholders to advance this process;
- provide data, including but not limited to Mass counts, personnel information, financial information, and qualitative data to inform decisions regarding proposals of parish partnerships and structural renewal in the service of evangelisation;
- provide and implement processes and resources to assist priests and parishes in implementing partnerships;
- provide processes by which parishes, individuals and communities can provide feedback on the partnership process; and
- connect parishes undertaking structural renewal with other priests who are experienced in such change to offer advice and accompaniment if needed.



- The Parish Renewal Team will also provide the service of **Parish Evangelisation Officers** to:
 - Assist parish leaders and communities with strategic pastoral planning focused on the evangelising mission for spiritual renewal;
 - Help parishes to implement strategies to strengthen their foundations as missionary communities: evangelisation, community, leadership, formation, and worship through the provision of resources, reflection days, workshops, training both regionally and online, and provide ongoing accompaniment, advice and problem solving.
- Other teams within the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation such as **Sydney Catholic Youth**, the **Life, Marriage and Family team**, and the **Communications team** will also be available to provide practical support to parishes undertaking structural and spiritual renewal, as outlined in the chapters on evangelisation, community, leadership, formation, and worship.
- **Other agencies of the Archdiocese** such as CatholicCare, the Liturgy Office, the Justice and Peace Office, the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, the Catholic Immigration Office, and the Development and Fundraising Office have offered to support parishes in implementing strategies for renewal and the primary forms of assistance that they are able to provide are outlined in this Mission Plan.
- **Specialists in parish finance and property** are available when needed to respond to questions pertaining to these issues. These supports can be accessed via the **Parish Support and Development team** which coordinates such assistance and provides parishes and communities with advice on administrative matters.
- Canon law support is available from the **Office of the Vicar for Canonical Affairs**.
- Support for communities undergoing review, and those being twinned or amalgamated, will also be provided by the **Regional Bishop, local Dean and Vicar General** in hearing feedback and communicating decisions.

With the desire for renewed fidelity to the mission of Jesus Christ in each of our Eucharistic communities, the increased collaboration of parishes within the Archdiocese, and new parish structures in some cases, will open new possibilities for the Gospel. The ‘new wine’ of spiritual revitalisation and the ‘new wineskins’ of parish configurations promise to inaugurate a new chapter for evangelisation in Sydney, prompting a fresh response to the mission of Jesus and the communities of Sydney in which disciples are called to be made.

Special thanks to photographers Giovanni Portelli, Alphonsus Fok and Patrick Lee. All photos and images have been used with permission or are in the public domain.



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