

Chrism Mass 20230403

I

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ, since May 2018, the Archdiocese of Adelaide has been on the journey of the Fifth Plenary Council, with the whole of the church in Australia. We have held our own two Diocesan assemblies in recent years, and now we are now establishing structures that will help us respond better to that basic question that has informed us, “What do you think God is asking of us at this time in Australia.” We also are joining the preparations for the Synod on synodality tone held in Rome this October and October 2024.

Vatican II spoke of how God, who spoke in the past, “*continues to converse*” with the church (*Dei Verbum*, # 8). Through these processes we are invited to enter more intensely into that divine-human dialogue.

Building on the good work of so many over many years, we now find ourselves in the third stage of the Plenary Council. After the preparation and celebration stages, we are in the **implementation** stage. In some sense it is less defined, because it is one that we must make our own. It is an invitation, to be together on the way, to commit ourselves to enter more intensely into that divine-human dialogue in the place.

II

Every sail needs a boat, every boat a direction and ocean, every direction a navigator. My role is to make sure that we as a Archdiocese, a community of communities, dwells deeply in communion, with God, the universal church and our local church.

I pray that it will be that there be one boat. The luxury of tags and labels is never helpful, for there is but one boat. We have Christ as our direction and course we have the mighty powerful wind of the Spirit behind us, and we seek to navigate the course together. Little surprise that the Archdiocesan coat of arms has a boat, as does my personal one as well.

My plea to each and every one in the Archdiocese is to enter into that journey, and enter into it together. We cannot count ourselves out of it.

Wherever you are; whatever your area of responsibility, as stewards of the mysteries of God we must take this task seriously.

III

In this implementation stage then, theoretically we could come up with ideal models and structures that support the work of mission, and thanks be to God, we have achieved a lot of this already. It is, if you will, like having a great boat, and this is necessary if we are to sail on towards the kingdom of God.

Yet if there is no driving force, no wind the, ship goes precisely nowhere.

In his book, *Prayer takes us Home*, which I know several of you have, if not read, Fr Gerhard Lohfink possess the question in chapter one of that book, “*To whom do we pray?*”

On a day when we gather as the God’s Holy People of this local church of Adelaide, this is always a good question, for part of the work of Lent is to help purify us in this regard.

He challenges when he says,

“Christians do not pray to God, they pray to God the Father or to Jesus Christ or to the Holy Spirit. Of course they believe in the one God and confess, with Israel, that there is but one God, but whenever they are praying to this God they address themselves to the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit.”

As always the liturgy is our best and greatest teacher. The high point of the Eucharist, the Eucharistic prayer has the same structure, it is addressed **to** God the Father, **through** Christ **in** the Holy Spirit.

This, Lohfink reminds us

“it is the obvious or hidden structural formula of all Christian prayers; it is the basic orientation of the whole liturgy, its fundamental movement: in the Holy Spirit, through Christ, to the Father.”

During Lent I have sought to reflect deeply on this pattern; to absorb it to attempt to live it more deeply.

The question, *To whom do we pray?*, presumes that we do pray. Prayer then is the indispensable breath of the Spirit that allows us to live *in the Holy Spirit, through Christ, to the Father*.

IV

As disciples of Christ we do not belong to the monotone of the culture of complaint, but, rather, to the polyphonic culture of gratitude as we ground our lives in and on the gift of the Eucharist.

I am wondering how many have actually read and absorbed Pope Francis' Apostolic letter *Desiderio Desideravi*, released on 29th June 2022, the Feast of Sts Peter and Paul?

Here Pope Francis looks at the most fundamental dimension of our Christian life: the liturgy, which Sacrosanctum Concilium describes as “*the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit* (SC # 14).” If you are looking for a place to ***sentire cum ecclesia*** (*Think and feel with the Church*), there is no better place to start than ***Desiderio Desideravi***.

Its purpose is simple, “*On the Liturgical Formation of the People of God.*” The Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments in the 29th June, 2022 *bollettino* provided a brief statement of intent for the document. It notes that *Desiderio Desideravi* is “*not an instruction or directory, but instead a meditation . . . which offers many ways to understand the beauty and truth of the Liturgy.*”

I do not intend to expand on it here, but if we are to enshrine in our lives a culture of gratitude and prayer, it must start with the liturgy. If we are to give life to all our structures that serve mission we must have a deeply eucharistic theology at its core. That is the challenge of a Eucharist such as this, to make the oils fruitful and our hearts thankful as a people who continual sing the praises of God. So the next question after, *To whom do we pray?* might well be *How do we pray?*
Answer: ***With thanksgiving in our hearts!***

Let me conclude with some words of the Mexican Poet and mystic Amado Nervo:-

Alone we are a spark, but in the Spirit we are a fire.

Alone we are only a string, but in the Spirit we are a lyre.

Alone we are only an anthill, but in the Spirit we are a mountain

Alone we are only a drop, but in the Spirit we are a fountain.

Alone we are only a feather, but in the Spirit we are a wing.

Alone we are only a beggar, but in the Spirit we are a King.

A blessed Holy Week to all, for God is Good, Good indeed.

