Advent-Christmastide-Ordinary Time
December 2018 – March 2019
Year C
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Founding Editor – Russell Hardiman
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Another liturgical year begins and we look forward to new things and old things, that is the beauty of the arrangement of liturgical time – it makes sense for human beings who live in the world!

One of the things to look forward to is the Australian Academy of Liturgy Conference that will be held from 15-18 January 2019 at The University of Notre Dame Australia on our Fremantle Campus. The theme of the conference is “The Art of Liturgy” which of course will have some astounding depth to enjoy. One of the treasures to be opened will be the Heritage Edition Volume Six of St John’s Bible which the University has on loan for twelve months. The original work is the first hand scribed and hand illuminated Bible for 500 years and has been completed at St John’s in Collegeville Minnesota as a work of the Benedictine monastery. The Heritage Edition is the same size as the original which is on vellum and is magnificent. It is available at the University for viewings and bookings for groups so please look at our website and it is on the events page. www.notredame.edu.au

A further exploration into liturgical art will be with Rev Peter Blackwood who is an iconographer and will be sharing his icons and experiences with those who gather for the conference. Linked to the conference are two special events; the launch of the theme for the 2020 Mandorla Art Award by Archbishop Kay Goldsworthy, the Anglican Archbishop of Perth and a second event that will be of great interest to those who have used Pastoral Liturgy for many years – the opening of the Russell Hardiman Library. As founder of this journal and a major contributor to the study of liturgy in Australia, Fr Russell amassed a huge library before he retired with Alzheimer’s Disease. He bequeathed this library to The University of Notre Dame Australia and the special collection of liturgical material will be housed in a library dedicated to his memory and honour. In this issue there is a call for papers for the conference and we hope that some of our readers will be able to submit an application using the information in the advertisement.

Art cannot be ignored and real art requires real artists to have been part of the process. Our book review in this issue deals with aspects of liturgical art through the eyes of Aidan Nichols OP. A statement from the Australian Catholic Bishops’ Conference ‘And when churches are to be built…’ contributes important information for the Australian Church which offers a very practical solution and is a good companion to Nichols’ work.

Australia is also preparing for a Plenary Council in 2020. This too is an important activity of our Church and the results of this consultation with the whole Australian Catholic community will be binding on us so we encourage everyone to take part at their community level. As a community under immense strain following the Royal Commission into sexual abuse it is timely for our Church to closely examine what we will offer the world.

In this issue there is a slightly different format for the expert contributions on Christmas. Professor Gerard Moore draws our attention to the damage done to Australian people and how our liturgy can encompass this terrible reality at what should be such a joyous time. Can our homilists really accept the challenge that he offers?

We have two formation articles that we hope will be interesting. The first is by Vincent Restifo, a Masters student at Notre Dame, who came with me to Jerusalem for Easter 2018 and where we had the pleasure of studying John’s gospel with Scott Lewis SJ. This paper on the issue of bread, wine and presence is a result of that study. The second article is by Jolanta Szymakowski who is now studying for her PhD in Melbourne but was long associated with this journal and helped Fr Russell in the final years of his editorship. She is also a liturgical musician and seeks to clarify some of the issues that come with Christmas music.

As is our norm, we have a ritual prepared for the lighting of Advent wreath candles with reference to the readings of Year C.

May the beginning of your liturgical year be beautiful and lead you to a deeper understanding of the Incarnation.

Dr Angela McCarthy
As we begin a new liturgical year and enter into the anticipation of the Season of Advent and the celebration of the joy of God coming amongst us in the birth of Jesus, it is also a time when our secular year is coming to an end. Holidays are on the horizon! Certainly this is something that many, including myself, look forward to. For all those who contribute, support and read Pastoral Liturgy throughout the parishes and communities within Australia and overseas I express my thanks for all you do. I pray that God may bless you and all your families and friends throughout these sacred seasons of the Church’s year. If you are going on holidays stay safe and take some time to re-create yourself. God’s Blessings.

Vincent Glynn

2019 Conference: The Art of Liturgy
15-18 January 2019
The University of Notre Dame Australia, Fremantle

CALL FOR SHORT PAPERS
The focus of the Conference is the Arts – as one expression of culture – and the role of, and the interplay between the Arts and worship. Various questions to be considered include:

What is the value of the Arts to our worship?
› What is the interplay between the two?
› How do we bring the Arts to our worship, and incorporate them in meaningful and valid ways?
› How do the Arts challenge those who come to worship?
› What can the liturgist learn from the artist?

The Council for the Academy welcomes submissions of short papers to be delivered at the conference. Please present a proposal (250-300 words) and include your full name, title, email address, telephone number, mobile phone number and mailing address. Please give the proposed paper a title, state its aim and indicate the area of relevance to the conference. Papers outside the scope of the conference theme may also be considered.


All proposals to be received by 1 December 2018.
Proposals to be sent by email to: Rev Chris Lancaster, AAL Secretary, liturgy.australia@gmail.com
Alexander Pope’s ‘An Essay on Man’ resonates with the phrase “Hope springs eternal”\(^\text{4}\). Such a statement is consistent with themes inherent to John 6. The forward-moving dimension of hope, connotations of springtime within which this discourse takes place, and access to eternal life all generate serious thought on the meaning of Jesus’ abiding presence. This paper begins, therefore, by introducing the exegetical elements of John 6:35-59. It briefly identifies some important structural, literary, and contextual components, concentrating on the statement “I am the bread of life”\(^\text{5}\) by which Jesus introduces a new meaning of bread. This essay then moves to explore how “presence”, as used by Jesus in this pericope, has a primary meaning that is neither sacramental nor Eucharistic. Its secondary meaning, however, remains integral to the practices of Catholic faith communities. Presence is subsequently considered through Coloe’s theses on the divine indwelling – “present within us” – but extended through the dynamic image of movement and progression such indwelling produces. By discussion on what may be termed a “realizing eschatology”, reflections on the models of sacrifice and community (a fundamental underpinning of “communion”) \(^{en \ route}\) to union with God is examined. The contributions offered by traditional eucharistic theology, notably their tangible and corporeal elements, will also feature regularly in this paper.

Traditionally attributed to Jesus’ beloved disciple, the origin of John’s Gospel suggests this apostle’s “authority” behind the text rather than his direct authorship, emerging from Ephesus around AD 90-110.\(^\text{6}\) Santa presents the twofold structure in John; the Book of Signs follows Jesus’ self-revelation to God’s people through signs that either lead them to faith or provoke repentment and rejection.\(^\text{7}\) Santa interprets John’s descending Christology as beginning with “a cosmic and universal assertion that becomes “flesh” in the person of Jesus at a specific time and place”\(^\text{8}\). These literary elements connect to dualistic and replacement/supersession themes, widely-acknowledged as unique to this Gospel. Contextual tensions between Johannine Christians and “the Jews” thus assume prominence.\(^\text{9}\) Perkins proposes:

>When the phrase “the Jews” has nothing to do with ethnic (Jewish as opposed to Samaritan, 4:22), religious, or geographical differentiation (inhabitants of Judea rather than Galilee, some of whom do believe in Jesus…), it is emblematic of unbelief. Explanations of disbelief are not grounded in the peculiarities of Judaism but in the fundamental oppositions of the symbolic world created by the Gospel.\(^\text{10}\)

Moloney further declares that this Gospel creates crisis rather than comfort:

>understood in the sense of the Greek word \textit{krisis} meaning a call to judgment, or decision. The Gospel is written to throw down the gauntlet to the reader: believe in God and the Word made flesh, as witnessed in Jesus and have eternal life, or perish. No middle course is possible.\(^\text{11}\)

Such pertinent contrasts and oppositions colour John’s Gospel strikingly, and substantially inform and flow into the forthcoming Bread of Life discourse.

A first point of note is Jesus constructing a new meaning of bread. Lewis argues that Jesus’ “I am” statement in John 6:35-59, set against its recurrent importance within John’s Gospel, “is more likely a divine predicate, indicating that the presence of Jesus is also the presence of God”\(^\text{12}\). Jesus is and has the presence of God within him already, and is entirely unperplexed to say so. A Johannine technique describes the “deliberate misunderstanding by Jesus’ protagonists … often turn[s] on a double meaning,”\(^\text{13}\) where “bread from heaven” becomes Jesus’ saving revelation. Brown connects the synonymous parallelism of “comes to me” and “believes in me”, whereby sharing in the knowledge of God “is to be drawn nearer to Jesus.”\(^\text{14}\) Manna had been anticipatorily interpreted in some Jewish circles “as signifying divine word or instruction”\(^\text{15}\). Moloney enhances this understanding via Jewish Wisdom motifs and Passover themes, so the new bread from heaven becomes “a new nourishment which perfects the old gift from heaven: the revelation of the Father in his Son”\(^\text{16}\). He extends this analysis by proposing this revelation as the goal of humanity’s searching and efforts; the impending “lifting up of the Son of Man will provide a food which will endure for eternal life”\(^\text{17}\). This gift is efficacious and once-and-for-all, hence, “true” bread (from the Greek: \textit{aláthinos}).\(^\text{18}\) It reflects contrast and continuation with Israel’s experience of the gift of manna, once given, surpassed by a gift God now gives.\(^\text{19}\)

Jesus has convincingly identified himself as the bread of life, nourishing all, with imperative attention on eating and drinking. Moloney states, very simply, that “bread is eaten”\(^\text{20}\). Lewis agrees, defining that:

>Jesus has life in him from the Father; the one consuming his flesh and blood will therefore have the same life… One must assimilate Jesus as one would food, allowing his life-giving presence to become the very fiber of one’s being.\(^\text{21}\)

Jesus presents his contestable, carnal image through a scholarly, midrashic, homiletic discourse\(^\text{22}\): “The shift from the more respectable verb “to eat” (Greek: \textit{phagein}) to another verb which indicates the physical crunching with the teeth (Greek: \textit{trógein}) accentuates that Jesus refers to a real experience of eating”\(^\text{23}\).
Moreover:

through a total absorption (trógein is again used) of the revelation of God made available through the bloody death of Jesus, believers will come to a mutuality where they live in Jesus and Jesus lives in them (v. 56). This mutual indwelling flows from the union that exists between the Father and his Son (v. 57).21

In the latter part of this excerpt, Jesus no longer speaks of "belief in me"; it becomes replaced by "the one who eats me"22. As Lewis asserts, "belief is about opening up and being assimilated into Jesus; belief into Jesus"23 and not a static object. Brown observes interestingly that in John 4, "Jesus spoke of giving the living water but did not identify himself with the water; yet he is the bread of life"24. These encounters, by which Jesus contrasts the former manna perishing and unable to provide enduring life, insist that the "true" bread "is defined not as food but as "bread from God," the one who comes to give life to the world"25.

Lewis sustains compellingly that, ultimately, the primary meaning of John 6 concerns Jesus' identity and mission. 26 It centres on "the broken body and spilled blood of Jesus that is given over in order to give life to and nourish the world"27. Other texts support such a view. John 13-17 suggests that "being nourished and sustained by Jesus, while including the Eucharist, does not exclude many other aspects of the Christian life" 28. Synoptic texts are also influential here. Mark 8 constructs Jesus as bread multiplied for others; Jesus is present to the disciples, who say they have no bread. In Matthew 16:11-12 Jesus makes clear "that he is not talking about bread but about teaching"29. In a profoundly intimate way, giving life to and nourishing the world sits at and as the heart of Christ's presence. Kelly writes:

Jesus, present in the power of the Holy Spirit, is a "commanding presence." He is not in the first instance a sacred reality contained in the bread and wine, but "the resurrection and the life" (Jn 11:25). His life-giving presence draws his disciples in every age in the self-giving existence represented in eucharistic symbolism.30

Secondary meanings of Christ's presence remain valuable in John 6. Irenaeus and Origen had inquired into Christ's universal saving presence. As O'Collins stresses, "Present now in a bodily, human fashion, he offered and offers new possibilities for mutual, interpersonal relationships"31. Kelly carefully notes that such analyses do not seek to weaken any theology of Jesus' real presence, but "to highlight its intimately personal character… In the time and space and opacity of our present existence, the eucharist draws us into the imagination of 'Christ in you, the hope of glory'"32. Traditional eucharistic theology has creative possibilities to present Jesus, the bread who gives life, as "the symbol of the church's desire to be a community of gift, living in thankfulness for what has been received from God (in creation and redemption)"33. Doing so has overarching liturgical relevance for adoration within the faithful's celebrations. Brown sustains that the templates of divine revelation (the "sapiental" interpretation) and also Jesus' eucharistic flesh are both "in the first part of the discourse (35-50) which refers primarily to revelation but secondarily to the Eucharist; the second part (51-58) refers only to the Eucharist"34. "Eating" appears repeatedly in verses 51-58, alongside references to hunger and thirst, but strangely this extract never mentions water.35 Brown tenders a captivating insight, that such a juxtaposition "is not impossible if the bread refers only to revelation… but it does make more sense if there is also a reference to the Eucharist, which involves flesh and blood and is both to be eaten and drunk"36. Christ's presence possesses various dimensions, each of which intrinsically vitalise one's profession of faith. Indeed, the word "presence" itself has an "indefinite variety of form and intensity… as a radically analogous term and reality."37

A noteworthy point of exploration is Christ's presence "within us", Johannine theology, following Schillebeeckx, "is essentially concerned with men and women living together with the man Jesus, the Son of man who came to dwell among us in the name of God"38. As Emmanuel, God-with-us, with renewed emphasis on the Johannine egó eimi "I am" statements, Jesus incarnates the presence of God among human communities by transferring Temple imagery. John's audience perceives the Jerusalem Temple as the overarching symbol expressing who Jesus is for them. "The Temple, as the dwelling place of God, points to the identity and role of Jesus… The imagery of the Temple is transferred from Jesus to the Christian community, indicating its identity and role"39. In particular, Coloe identifies the separation of flesh and blood in John 6, highlighting Jesus' sacrificial death for the benefit of those he loves, not as a sin offering. "We have here an example of Johannine irony in that the flesh-leading-to-death for Jesus, is the bread-leading-to-life for the world"40. The crowds fail to understand Jesus owing to their superficial, "fleshy" approach, which incidentally is of no avail.41 They pursue Jesus, seemingly aware of his presence in his signs; they "ate the loaves and were filled,"42 exhibiting John's replacement theme. Jesus, however, tests the disciples with apparent omniscience. Despite a somewhat defective and incomplete understanding, Peter's confession of faith in verses 68-69 makes apparent "that there are no other possibilities; Jesus alone has the words of eternal life… they trust him enough to know that their understanding will grow during their journey with him"43. Despite occasional incompetence and imperfections, the Christian community headed by Peter has grasped that "God's dwelling is to be found where Jesus is"44. Evolving from physical (Temple) to spiritual (community) living, Schillebeeckx remarks:

What was first expressed in terms of space must therefore be understood in a different way… Jesus does not live ‘somewhere’; he is ‘God dwelling among us’… Not on Mount Gerizim; not in Jerusalem nor even in Rome; not somewhere here or there; and not even everywhere in anonymous universality; not even in the localized abode of Jesus, whether still living in Palestine or after his death in heaven with the Father. He is simply present wherever people believe in Jesus and bear
witness to that belief, and wherever people form a 
‘community of Jesus’. God dwells where we admit 
him, where a community admits him and does so 
by believing in Jesus and following him in love for 
their fellow human beings.

The spatial and temporal progression produced by the 
indwelling presence of God in Jesus is fascinatingly 
composed geographically in John. In chapter 5, Jesus 
is in Jerusalem expounding a provocative discourse 
on Moses, eternal life, and divine love.49 There, he 
convicts the people of disbelief/unbelief because of 
their slavish adherence to the Law of Moses, their 
ironic “accuser”. Perhaps seeking redemption, or a 
self-serving “way out” to put weight to John’s sharp 
criticism of “the Jews”, the crowds follow Jesus 
into Galilee in John 6. “Crossing over” into Galilee is 
reminiscent of the Exodus liberation. They see God’s 
presence of God by multiplying bread and, later, 
apprehend Jesus walking on water as hearkening 
Genesis’ undertones of the Spirit of God hovering 
over the waters of Creation. Old Testament citations 
farther afield as John’s Gospel makes wide use of 
Jesus’ presence at the Jewish feasts.46 Moloney 
identifies that the time of year is Spring, moving out of 
and away from the deadness of winter.47 As Passover 
approaches, the author’s pointed use of a definite 
article for the mountain “may be a first hint that Jesus 
is adopting a position parallel to Moses who received 
the Law on a mountain”.48 The movement initiated 
by God’s indwelling “presence within us” ignites a 
profoundly eucharistic “movement within us”. Jesus 
commands his disciples to gather “the fragments 
(Greek: ta klasmatata) left over, that nothing perish 
(Greek verb: apoleo)” (v. 12).49 These fragments are 
meant to remain, unlike the manna in Egypt. “Jesus’ 
gift to people who come to him in search of bread … must not be lost, and the disciples are to see to its 
preservation… They are commissioned to care for 
the fragments that they may be available for future 
believers wishing to share from the bread which Jesus 
distributed”.50 The new and completed model of 
God’s saving work, signified by 12 baskets remaining, 
has been fulfilled by Jesus. Jesus feeds with bread, 
presuming but expanding the crowd’s “Jerusalem 
mentality” to a universal mindset reflecting his universal 
presence “within us” moves, inspires, and directs a 
believing community in this “realizing” eschatology. 
One may be drawn by Jesus’ invitation into a 
communion of life, Rübsam’s icon of Trinitarian love, and 
be placed at the table, “brining eschatology into the 
present as something already impinging on history”.51 
Coloe’s insight of John 6 is that the present-moment 
choice of belief or unbelief unites most fittingly with the 
corporeal participation in end-time realities … Wisdom/ 
Word has become flesh and it is this flesh, the humanity 
of Jesus, that is given for the life of the world”.52

The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council instructs 
on Christ’s manifold presence where the Eucharistic 
species are rich among many ways.53 The sacred 
liturgy, however, “does not exhaust the entire activity of the Church” but remains the source and summit of the Church’s missionary activity.54 These lessons appear 
to be only unfolding through ongoing, contemporary 
thetical reflection. Jesus’ self-gift of sacrificial love 
is presented in the Synoptics by the institution of the 
Eucharist, but in John as washing the disciples’ feet. 
This impression must be related, according to Kelly, as 
a gift that “transforms those who receive it. The love that 
gives itself calls into existence a community that must 
business itself in humble, mutual service”.55

Thus concludes the central thesis of this paper. In 
receiving the bread of life, understood beyond the literal, God’s revelation is brought forward, projected 
into an eternal movement of the transformative, 
divine indwelling such as of a spiritual springtime. 
While initially challenging long-held assumptions, 
such a theory encourages a truly eucharistic life 
that is sacramental, prayerful, meditative, active in 
loving-kindness, nourishing faith by contemplating 
Christ’s image in the Gospel and “being imbued 
with his imagination”.56 It affirms an entire “cosmology 
of Christian living”57, created in solidarity with the 
conditions of one’s everyday life:

This will require a fundamentally different 
understanding of what human being is and might 
be… To ‘become a liturgical being’, to practise the 
formation of a ‘Eucharistic self’, which understands 
never itself as living in response to gift, is not an aesthetic
stance but an ethical one. It means making concrete choices about food, work and politics under the rubric of thanksgiving, not in liturgy alone but in action.67

Kelly accurately considers that such a way of life today, akin to the crowd’s rejection of Jesus over the Bread of Life discourse, upsets and disturbs “our cultural fantasy worlds … The gift that only God can give is a shock to the taboos of a culture wary of love, and which is incapable of understanding the divine passion”68. Christians are reminded that St. Thomas Aquinas’ concept of transubstantiation “presented the eucharist first of all as a “sign” of God’s gift”69 through which Christ is present to the whole world. Humanity is challenged to take as the normative paradigm of reality not “those things which are outside each other … but those who are in one another”70. Hope for all things to be gloriously transformed into their ultimate reality, like the “true food” and “true drink” Jesus offers, “has effected a presence which St John typically describes as ‘Christ-in-us and we-in-Christ’”71.

6 From the poem, “An Essay on Man”. As a compilation of stanzas underscoring the poem’s “exisites”, the poem includes in relevant to the scope of this essay, such as that along the rhyming couplet, “The soul, uneasy, and confin’d from home / Rests and expatiates in a life to come”. In: Alexander Pope quotes,” Goodreads, 2018, https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/10692-hope-springs- eternal-in-the-human-breast-man-never-is.
7 cf. John 6:35.
9 Santa, The Essential Bible Handbook, 117. Here, Santa outlines chapters 1-12 as the Book of Signs, and chapters 13-20 as the Book of Glory.
10 Santa, The Essential Bible Handbook, 117.
11 Moloney notes that John 5-10 “responds to both pastoral and theological issues that had emerged within the Johannine community as its members gradually established their self-identity separated from post-war Judaism”. In: Francis J. Moloney, The living voice of the Gospel: the gospels today (Victoria: John Garratt Publishing, 2006), 277.
23 Scott M. Lewis, The Gospel according to John and the Johannine letters, 41-42.
24 Scott M. Lewis, The Gospel according to John and the Johannine letters, 39. This is agreed by: Pheme Perkins, “The Gospel according to John,” 962-981; and Francis J. Moloney, The living voice of the Gospel, 285. Raymond E. Brown also reflects on the Palestinian homiletic midrashim style in John 6; scholars such as Peder Borgen and Alleen Guilding identify the opening Scripture use, occasionally paraphrased, then recalled at the end of the homily. Some subordinate citation from the Writings or Prophecys may accompany and develop a text that uses the sedarti [that is, the synagogal cycle of Scripture readings]. Jesus incorporates some of these methods in a sermon used by contemporary synagogue preachers of his time. Under Guilding’s contentions, if John 6 “primarily represents the revelation that Jesus brings from above, then it is not unlike the knowledge of good and evil that the first man hungered after”. In: Raymond E. Brown, The Gospel according to John I-XII, 277-279.
27 Scott M. Lewis, Personal communication (24 March 2018).
28 Raymond E. Brown, The Gospel according to John I-XII, 274.
30 Scott M. Lewis, The Gospel according to John and the Johannine letters, 34. Perkins agrees that “this verse does not refer primarily to the ‘bread’ of the eucharist, but to Jesus’ word of revelation, on him the Father has set his seal”. In: Pheme Perkins, “The Gospel according to John,” 961.
31 Scott M. Lewis, The Gospel according to John and the Johannine letters, 41.
33 Raymond E. Brown, The Gospel according to John I-XII, 274.
38 Raymond E. Brown, The Gospel according to John I-XII, 272.
39 The setting is Galilee, preceded by the redactor with the multiplication of the loaves, and “the transition between the two scenes (vs. 23) highlights the eucharistic impact of the multiplication”. In: Raymond E. Brown, The Gospel according to John I-XII, 274.
40 Raymond E. Brown, The Gospel according to John I-XII, 274.
41 Gerald O’Collins, Rethinking fundamental theology, 299.
44 Mary L. Coloe, God dwells with us, 25.
45 Cf. John 6:56b.
47 Scott M. Lewis, The Gospel according to John and the Johannine letters, 42.
48 Edward Schillebeeckx, God among us,” 190.
50 Moloney elaborates: “Israel’s celebration of its great feasts recalled the great moments of God’s saving intervention in the history of God’s people in a way that made God present to the Jewish community celebrating the feast and to the nation as a whole”. In: Francis J. Moloney, The living voice of the Gospel, 277.
53 Early Christian authors use the verb “to gather” to speak of the gathering of the faithful for Eucharist, and “the fragments” is the term used for the eucharistic fragments. In: Francis J. Moloney, The living voice of the Gospel, 290.
55 Marcie Lenk, Personal communication, 02 April 2018. Lenk also outlines in this communication that Chapters 1-9 of this text are about a time when there was a Temple and its connected sacrifices, where Chapter 10 is written as if there were a Temple (an idealisation, understanding that there presently is not, but imagining that there will be again).
56 John Dunnill, Sacrifice and the body, 35.
57 John Dunnill, Sacrifice and the body, 203.
58 “Jesus is the bread of life for those servants of Yahweh who believe in the one that Yahweh has sent. In this (realized) eschatological context Jesus speaks of himself as the Son of Man”. In: Raymond E. Brown, The Gospel according to John I-XII, 273.
60 Raymond E. Brown, The Gospel according to John I-XII, 276.
61 Mary L. Coloe, God dwells with us, 171-178.
63 Mary L. Coloe, Dwelling in the household of God, 100.
65 Second Vatican Council, Sacrosanctum Concilium, 9.
66 Second Vatican Council, Sacrosanctum Concilium, 10.
67 Anthony Kelly, Eschatology and hope, 184.
69 Anthony Kelly, Eschatology and hope, 182.
70 John Dunnill, Sacrifice and the body, 206.
71 John Dunnill, Sacrifice and the body, 209.
72 Anthony Kelly, Eschatology and hope, 185.
73 Anthony Kelly, Eschatology and hope, 187.
75 Gerald O’Collins, Rethinking fundamental theology, 302.
Parish musicians are in great demand as Christmas approaches. Christmas pageants, Nativity plays, carols evenings, Reconciliation services as well as the Christmas Masses all involve musicians. Add to that the wealth of Christmas music that is available, and it is easy for the liturgical musician to feel overwhelmed. This article offers an approach to simplify the selection of Christmas songs - a subset of Christmas music – by suggesting Christmas songs fall into one of three categories. The Christmas events and celebrations are also described, drawing out their different functions. Suggestions for matching the Christmas songs and the Christmas celebrations and events are offered.

**Christmas Songs – by theme**

One approach for categorising Christmas songs considers the overall theme or mood of the song. Three possible categories of Christmas songs are:

(i) songs about infant Jesus/baby Jesus,
(ii) songs about embodied presence and
(iii) songs about the holiday of Christmas.

### 1. Songs about the infant Jesus

These songs are about aspects of the story of the birth of Jesus, focusing on the infant Jesus. The song lyrics mention, for example, angels, shepherds, donkeys, crib, stars, Mary, Joseph, lullabies as well as the infant Jesus. Most Christmas carols fall in this category.

Song examples include: Angels we Have Heard on High, Hark! The Herald Angels Sing, Silent Night, What Child is This?, God Rest You Merry Gentlemen.

Other songs in this category may only tangentially or even not at all mention the infant Jesus but focus on another aspect of the birth event. Examples of these songs include O Little Town of Bethlehem, The Holy and the Ivy, I Saw Three Ships, and Good King Wenceslas.

### 2. Songs about embodied presence

There are four different Gospel Readings for the four Christmas Masses, and the birth of Jesus is described in three of the four. The fourth, the Gospel of the Mass during the Day does not mention the birth of Jesus at all. Instead the Gospel is taken from the prologue of John, declaring “the Word was made flesh, he lived among us” (1:14). This Gospel emphasises Incarnation rather than a birth, presence rather than a historical event. Songs that do not focus on the birth of Jesus, but instead focus on the Divine taking human form and this new presence of God in the world as well as the synthesis of matter and spirit, form the second category of Christmas songs – embodied presence.

Songs in this category are less well known and include Our God Is Here (Chris Muglia), Cry Out with Joy (Josh Blakesley), as well as Christmas songs such as He Came Down (John Bell), and God of Heaven (David Delgado).

### 3. Songs about the holiday of Christmas

The remaining Christmas songs tend to fall into this category. Songs such as these rarely mention Jesus, and instead focus on the trimmings and the secular celebrations of Christmas - Santa, being good, what people want for Christmas, family, Christmas trees, bells, tinsel, wishing everyone a merry Christmas, snow, mistletoe.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infant Jesus</th>
<th>Embodied presence</th>
<th>Holiday</th>
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<tr>
<td>Angels we Have Heard on High</td>
<td>Our God is Here</td>
<td>Santa Clause is comin’ to town</td>
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<td>Hark! The Herald Angels Sing</td>
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<td>God of Heaven</td>
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Table 1 Examples of Christmas Songs in three suggested categories – Infant Jesus, Embodied Presence, Holiday

With Christmas songs grouped into categories based on their themes and foci, the next step is to similarly examine the various Christmas events - pageants, nativity plays, carol evenings, the Christmas Masses and the periods before and after each Christmas Mass. These events’ themes, foci, and timing (does the event take place during Advent, or after 17 December or on Christmas Day or later) will also be examined.
Christmas Events

1. Christmas Pageants
Parish musicians may be invited to participate in Christmas pageants. Christmas pageants are a celebration of all things Christmas often heralding the arrival of Father Christmas/Santa and could include a street parade with floats, bands, choirs, a coming together of different community groups, fundraising stalls, a nativity scene as well as singing, dancing, costumes and dramatisations. Christmas pageants are an opportunity to develop community - around a Christmas theme. Christmas pageants thus tend to be organised by community groups such as schools, both Christian and non-Christian, and councils.
Musically, anything goes, and songs from all three categories can be sung, although songs about incarnation are much less frequently sung.
Christmas pageants are typically held during Advent.

2. Nativity Plays
The nativity play is more static than a Christmas pageant and stages the story of the birth of Jesus. As well as building community, nativity plays allow for a large number of people to participate. In a school, for example, roles can be found for everyone in a class or year group. Nativity plays are thus popular with schools and church groups.
A nativity play may also form part of a Christmas Mass, especially one with a children/family focus.
Musically, songs from the first category are ideal for nativity plays since they both have the same focus - baby Jesus. However, it is also possible to interrupt the flow of the nativity play and insert moments of reflection or opportunities for songs from the other two categories.
School nativity plays are typically held during Advent while the students are still at school. As noted by the editor, nativity plays tend to amalgamate all the aspects of the Christmas story from the three Gospels, missing an opportunity to explore the differences in the versions.

3. Carols evenings
The secular community has embraced carols evenings as is evidenced by Carols By Candlelight and Carols in the Domain. Massed choirs, school choirs, community-based choirs and soloists present an evening of musical performance, sometimes together with a re-enactment of the Christmas story (even including camels) and often with an appearance by Santa.
Musically, anything goes, and songs from all three categories can be sung.
Carols evenings are typically held during Advent.

4. Christmas Masses, Christmas songs and pastoral issues
Song choices at Christmas time are often made for pastoral reasons. One pastoral reason may be that it is parish tradition, that parishioners have 'always done Christmas this way'; so, for example, parishioners expect that there will be half an hour of Christmas carols before each Christmas Mass. A second pastoral reason recognizes that many who are present at a Christmas Mass are irregular or non-church goers, so, for example, including some favourite carols fosters participation. However, there is a third pastoral reason that is less explicitly considered – those for whom a baby is not a blessing.
Women and men in our parishes have been touched by miscarriage, infertility, unwanted pregnancies, abortions or not finding a partner with whom to start a family. This could make Christmas a difficult time. Christmas does need to present the birth of Jesus, as this is a key aspect of the doctrine of the Incarnation – Jesus is both fully human and fully God. However, Christmas, or the Feast of the Incarnation, is greater than simply the birth event. Incarnation also includes presence, God is with us, the interaction between matter and spirit, what does it mean for God to have taken on human flesh and lived among us as a man? Expanding the focus of Christmas beyond the birth event to other aspects of Incarnation allows people for whom a baby is not blessing to also taste some good news.
This is similar to how we celebrate birthdays of people. Christmas is sometimes described as Jesus' birthday, yet in our everyday lives when we celebrate the birthday of a friend, we tend not to dwell on the birth event, but celebrate who she is now, how he has impacted and influenced us, we recall her achievements, and look to his future. At Christmas, celebrating Jesus' birthday, we also can celebrate who Jesus is to us, how he has impacted and influenced us, reflecting on Incarnation more fully. When choosing Christmas songs, bear in mind that not every song has to be about Jesus birth.

5. Christmas Masses
Increasingly the Christmas Mass has extended into two parts - the Mass itself and typically a half hour of carols before or after Mass. Let's consider the half hour of carols first.

Before a Christmas Mass
Some parishes schedule perhaps half an hour of Christmas carols before Mass, while others sing carols after Mass. Sometimes Advent Carols are sung before Mass instead of Christmas Carols. The function of this musical half hour is not liturgical - the music typically sets a mood to evoke a Christmas spirit.
Irregular and non-church goers may expect to sing carols before mass as this is often what is shown in TV programs such as Midsomer Murders and Poirot. However, there are alternatives to singing carols before a Christmas Mass. Before the Midnight Mass at the Vatican, for example, is an active period with times for silence, reflection, readings, waiting and listening to the chant of a cantor.
Let us now prepare ourselves for this time of prayer in an atmosphere of silence and recollection. We will celebrate together the Office of Readings. Before the start of Mass we will hear the proclamation of the announcement of the Lord’s birth in the chant of the ancient text of the Kalenda. This proclamation will remind us that Christ, Redeemer of humankind, is truly the centre of the universe and all history. The Kalenda Proclamation is one of many Christmas rituals available in the Catholic tradition. The General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours also states it is appropriate to have the Office of Readings as part of a solemn vigil before the night mass of Christmas. In considering what mood to set before Midnight Mass, for example, creating a reflective mood is a valid alternative to creating a participative, festive, carol sing-along mood. Engaging the parish’s Liturgy Committee in a frank and informed conversation about the function of this period before a Christmas Mass could open up creative and fruitful approaches to ‘setting the mood’. For example, this could be the ideal time to play recordings of Christmas music sung in other languages for parishioners of non-Australian ethnic background, recordings of instrumental Christmas music or recordings of any other appropriate music. Songs in the second category could also be included for those who find a focus on birth and babies difficult. Another alternative for this period before Mass is to evoke a ‘Christmas spirit’ that supports or echoes the Mass that follows. For example, it would be incongruous to sing ‘Silent Night’ or songs about waiting for Jesus before the start of the Christmas Day Mass since it is no longer night and Jesus has already arrived. Similarly, perhaps songs sung before the Midnight Mass might not pre-empt the message of the Gospel and joyously sing of reindeer and angels but instead honour the Incarnation rather than a birth. This is made flesh, he lived among us” (1:14). The Gospel of John 1:1-18 instead describes how “the Word was made flesh, he lived among us” (1:14). The Gospel emphasises Incarnation rather than a birth. This is where songs about the embodied presence (the third category described earlier) can enhance the liturgy, supplementing Christmas Carols.

At the Mass during the Night
Midnight Mass squarely celebrates the birth of Jesus, and the light that breaks through the darkness, revealing God’s grace and glory. Luke’s Gospel presents a far more extensive account of the birth of Jesus. Christmas carols are ideal music for this Mass, but not every song sung during the Mass needs to be Christmas carols. For example, David Haas’ ‘Blessing Prayer’ at the Preparation of the Gifts could be used to shift the focus away from ‘Christmas’ and highlight the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

At the Mass at Dawn
The Gospel for the Mass at Dawn continues Luke’s Gospel from Midnight Mass to describe the visit of the shepherds to the manger. Jesus is here, and it is the first dawn of a new age. We are filled with wonder.

At the Mass during the Day
Finally, the Gospel of the Mass during the Day does not mention the birth of Jesus at all. This Gospel, John 1:1-18 instead describes how “the Word was made flesh, he lived among us” (1:14). The Gospel emphasises Incarnation rather than a birth. This is where songs about the embodied presence (the third category described earlier) can enhance the liturgy, supplementing Christmas Carols.

Children’s choirs are convened and children participate in the readings or enact a nativity play. The dissonance between the sense of waiting in the Vigil and the boisterous family activities are pastorally resolved by not using the Vigil readings at all and instead using the readings from Midnight Mass.

The Vigil Mass is in a liminal space where “Tomorrow the wickedness of earth will be destroyed: The Saviour of the world will be our king” (Gospel Acclamation) but the Saviour has not yet arrived. A challenge for the musician is to use songs and music that honours this impending sense of glory and salvation rather than hymns that already proclaim the arrival of Jesus. Such songs are scarce.

The Christmas Mass
As described in the Ordo, the four Masses of Christmas or the Nativity of the Lord are the Mass of (i) Vigil, (ii) Midnight, (iii) Dawn, and (iv) Day. Each Mass focuses on a different facet of the Christmas event, and each Mass thus has its own Gospel, readings and prayers. This provides scope for musical variety.

At the Vigil Mass
Matthew’s gospel at the Vigil Mass lists Jesus’ genealogy, and focuses not on Mary, Jesus, angels, a crib, but on Joseph. Only at the end do a few words succinctly state that Joseph’s wife “gave birth to a son; and he named him Jesus.” (Matt. 1:25). The sense of waiting is captured in the Entrance Antiphon: “Today you will know that the Lord is coming to save us, and in the morning you will see his glory.”

The sense of waiting evoked by the readings and prayers of the Vigil Mass can be at odds with how the Vigil Mass is often celebrated in Australia, where the Vigil Mass is the children’s mass or the family mass.
Summary

With all the Christmas events and celebrations taking place before Christmas time, there is a risk that for the liturgical musician, Advent becomes a *rehearsal* for Christmas rather than a *preparation* for Christmas. A musician may feel pressured to engage in Christmas events such as a school pageant or parish carols evening during Advent despite misgivings about how these events resonate with the waiting spirit of Advent. Suggestions for the liturgical musician at this time are:

1. Choose how you want to be involved during Advent and Christmas. If it is important for you to embrace and imbue your spirit with a sense of preparation and waiting during Advent, then let your parish know that you will not be available for Christmas events before Christmas Time.

2. Recognise that not every Christmas event is liturgical – sometimes the event is entertainment. If you are in an entertainment space – go for it!

3. Engage your Liturgy Committee in conversation about the carols sung before mass. Recognise the different facets of the Christmas event described by each Mass and consider which Christmas songs enhance those facets – think about the three categories of Christmas songs. Consider carols from the countries of your parishioners who were born overseas. Consider periods of reflection and reflective music. Consider also broadening music selections to beyond just the birth event of Jesus to include other aspects of the Incarnation, especially for those for who a baby is not a blessing.

The Christmas repertoire of music for is very broad, reflecting different aspects of Christmas. Not every Christmas event has to be exclusively about Christmas carols, and have to be sung regardless of musical or liturgical merit. A close reflection on the liturgies and readings at Christmas Time shows there is scope for a great variety of music.

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2 http://www.vatican.va/news_services/iturgia/documents/ns_riturgia_archive_en.html


5 *Ordo*
Even though this book has been published for some time now, it is timely to review it considering the Australian Academy of Liturgy conference, (mentioned in the editorial of this issue and to be held at The University of Notre Dame Australia Fremantle Campus), will be held in January at Notre Dame Fremantle with the theme “The Art of Liturgy”. Nichols’ book explores many aspects of the arts that are the vehicles through which the Liturgy becomes a time and a place of revelation for the worshipping Christian.

The title for the book of essays is taken from a Wesleyan hymn and expresses Nichols’ position that the Liturgy is the principal context in which we learn how to wonder, and how to be awe-filled and lost in our praise.

The first three chapters explore the work of three major contributors to the Catholic Intellectual Tradition and Liturgical Theology: St Thomas Aquinas, Romano Guardini and Joseph Ratzinger.

St Thomas and Nichols are both part of the Dominican Order and Nichols appreciates his capacity to understand signs when he says “The Liturgy is a pattern of signs and symbols which speak to our senses of the spiritual realities they seek to represent” (3). This understanding of the nature of the experience where we use our senses to receive and from there understand our spiritual reality is intrinsic to the unfolding heart of the Liturgy. We are created in God’s image as sensitive and sensuous human beings who receive an understanding of divine realities not only through our intellect but through our capacity to feel and it is the arts that engage that part of human nature and bring the sense of the divine to the fore. Later in Chapter One Nichols carefully attends to St Thomas’ treatment of the Liturgy and Sacraments because this is where the priesthood of Christ becomes so fruitful. As we become fully engaged in the sacramental action we are drawn into the symbols themselves through the intentional opening of our senses to the art that carries the symbols. This engagement with Christ leads to our sanctification.

In Chapter Two Nichols links two great minds who contributed to the Second Vatican Council; Romano Guardini and Joseph Ratzinger. In 1918 Guardini wrote On the Spirit of the Liturgy which was then echoed in 1999 by Ratzinger’s work Introduction to the Spirit of the Liturgy. The connection is certainly not coincidental and Nichols gives a clear history of each of these great men and the way in which their theologies come together. They both relied on “the same sources for their work: the Bible, the Fathers, and the high mediaeval divines for theology, while for philosophy they rely on the ancient Greeks and a wide-lens scanning of the subsequent history of culture and thought” (25). Guardini’s development was influenced by the Benedictine community of Maria Laach and particularly, one of the monks, Dom Odo Casel.

These names of course are foundational to what we call the Liturgical Movement which formed much of the theology that underpins the changes brought to the Liturgy by the Second Vatican Council. Nichol suggests that Ratzinger’s later work is what Guardini’s ground breaking work might have looked like if he had listened more carefully to some of the Benedictine’s who critiqued On the Spirit of the Liturgy.

Chapter Three explores the Eucharistic Theology developed by these great thinkers and the way in which the Mass is celebrated in living out the reforms of Vatican II. It is not always successful in a parish context and might benefit from the integration of earlier practices and a more thorough view of our liturgical history. However, always keeping in mind that perfection belongs to God alone.

Part Two of Lost in Wonder examines four settings of the rites that we celebrate: architecture, icons, sacred art and music. Each of these has a profound way of capturing the senses and enabling the human creature to be open to experiences of the divine. When discussing sacred architecture in Chapter Four Nichols describes considerable conflict in the post-conciliar Church about the way in which the ‘assembly’ is to be symbolised and placed within the sacred structure. Extremes have been experienced where the new architecture is remote from beauty and becomes a practical expression of the secular culture. This of course is problematic, but using forms that do not enable the reforms of the Liturgy can be just as problematic. There is still much to be done to really understand what is the best way to gather the four elements that make up the presence of Christ in the Liturgy: the Person of the Priest, the Word, the Eucharistic Species and the People of God who gather to sing and pray (SC 7).

Chapter Five examines the place of icons in Liturgy. This I find to be particularly interesting as his examination of Russian icons is very good. In the Western Roman Church there is limited expression through icons and at times an iconoclastic position is taken. Nichols takes the position that much can be learned from the way the Russian Orthodox Church was able to theologise and saturate the culture with images that were able to enlarge the senses and deepen a spiritual relationship within the Liturgy. Nichols suggests that the use of holy images in the home, the domestic Church, is worth encouraging.

Chapter Six centres on Paul Claudel’s approach to sacred art. Again, this is an area where there is much contention within our communities. Some of our local churches are devoid of art altogether and instead rely on pious images and statues that have never been touched by artist but yet attempt to do the same work as real art. The incarnational core of Christianity has enabled our art to be representational whereas other faiths cannot allow images of God. For Christianity,
the incarnational is experienced in the sacramental and each of these is drawn into the other by the sensory experience. Where this experience is rich and the deepest senses are stimulated, the human conversation with the divine becomes a reality and we learn of God through this lived experience.

Chapter Seven provides a theological perspective on Church music. Nichols concludes that there are three principles that must be pre-eminent. The Liturgy mirrors divine action and so music must firstly be receptive to that divine impulse and the creative product must ensue from that impact. Secondly, ‘art music’ is going to have a ‘mystic character’ which will lift the hearts of the faithful and so the work of a choir of excellence will be necessary. This of course is an ideal that can only be achieved where the resources are available. When such resources are not available, well led music by a trained cantor and competent accompanist can do much to open the hearts of the faithful as they pray and sing in the Liturgy and become the Body of Christ.

Part Three of Nichols’ work holds the conclusions that he draws around what art and Liturgy can give to each other and what the Church can derive from that experience. Nichols speaks of the principle of artistic beauty and the principle of artistic truth (178). When these combine to enrich the experience of the beauty of the crucified and risen Christ then the spiritual health of the Church will be improved. As a final comment it is worth noting that this book was written in the context of the new English translation of the Roman Missal. While that continues to cause some controversy, the different views on what is truly beautiful and leads us to God will be lived out in the experience of the local Church. The hope that the latest translation in its closer adherence to the Latin editio typica will restore beauty to the Liturgy will continue to be disputed.

Glory to God in the highest.