

Newsletter

apmn
australian pastoral musicians network



Prayer

Risen Christ,
you call us to be Easter people,
to carry the word "alleluia" in our hearts.
In the joy of your Resurrection,
renew our hope and deepen our faith,
that we may walk with you from Easter to Pentecost.
May our music and our song
be a witness to your love,
bringing peace, comfort, and light to the world.
Inspire all who prepare, lead, and serve in liturgy,
that their gifts may draw others closer to you.
Guide us in wisdom and creativity,
as we seek new ways to share your Gospel.
And may our lives proclaim with confidence and joy:
Alleluia is our song.

From the Editor

BETH DOHERTY



Dear APMN members,

“We are Easter people, and alleluia is our song.” These words, first attributed to St Augustine of Hippo and later popularised by Pope John Paul II, capture the spirit of this season beautifully.

One of our 2023 conference keynote speakers, Sarah Hart, echoes this message in her composition Hallelujah Is Our Song, co-written with Josh Blakesley, Sarah Kroger, and Trey Heffinger.

As OCP describes:

“With its mostly pentatonic melody and nostalgic lyricism, Hallelujah Is Our Song creates an upbeat Appalachian feel. Suitable for use during the season of Easter, this song sings of the joy of Jesus’ resurrection, the hope for eternal rest, and the peace of God’s healing love.”

Sarah Hart was also interviewed for OCP’s YouTube program The Commons, where she shares insights into the songwriting process and her inspiration. It is well worth a watch and listen: [Sarah Hart on The Commons](#)

This edition of the APMN newsletter comes a little later than we had hoped, so thank you for your patience. Our original intention was to provide recommendations for Lent and Holy Week. However, as life so often does, it became busy, and our focus has now turned toward the Resurrection and the journey to Pentecost.

While we have just celebrated the rise and fall, the ebb and flow of life reflected in the Easter Triduum, we remain mindful that our world still needs Jesus. Our world still needs song and music to accompany and deepen our liturgical journey.

In this edition, we are delighted to introduce a new column from esteemed liturgist Dr Jenny O’Brien titled “Ask Jenny.” In this space, she will respond to your questions about liturgy and music. We warmly invite you to write in—especially with the curly, complex, or obscure questions!

You will also find music recommendations for the Easter and Pentecost seasons, along with new releases from our Deputy Chair, Timothy Hart. We include a tribute from Angela Gorman to one of our founders, Rev Dr Russell Hardiman; we have suggestions for the Easter and Pentecost season from Fiona Dyball and Paul Mason, and we also begin an important conversation around AI in the liturgy, with insights from Fr Ricky Manalo and others.

As always, we would love to hear from you—your ideas, feedback, and suggestions for future content are most welcome.

Blessings to you all and may hallelujah be your song.

From the Vice Chair

TIMOTHY HART



The Paschal Rhythm of Transformation

By Timothy Hart - Vice Chair APMN

As we journey through the dawning light of Easter toward the fire of Pentecost, we find ourselves as a network in a space not unlike the disciples on the road to Emmaus. The familiar rhythms of our liturgical year provide a "knowing promise" that all will be well, yet in the practical work of pastoral music, we often feel the tension of the unresolved. We must walk the road through the confusion, the quiet growth, toward the eventual transformation.

Our 12-Month Strategy

Over the coming year, the APMN is committed to a strategic path that clarifies our identity and strengthens our connections. Our focus will be three-fold: we will review our Vision and Mission to ensure our foundation remains firm; we will develop a multi-faceted communication strategy to better serve our diverse community; and we will encourage the formation of local APMN group meet-ups to foster grassroots connection and support.

The Paschal Rhythm of Transformation

Our lives, and the collective life of the APMN, are inextricably entwined with the Paschal Mystery. As we embark on this new 12-month strategic plan, I am struck by how closely our goals mirror the movements of this holy cycle.

To move forward, we must first face our own Good Friday. This is the courageous act of naming our deaths—acknowledging the methods, mindsets, or familiar ways of working that no longer serve our mission. This is not a call to clear the way; we must still make space for the "golden threads" of our heritage—those sacred traditions we hope to cling to and retain as they continue to anchor and bless our work. It is a season of surrendering to our need to control the outcome and trust that even in the silence of the Garden, God is at work.



We then enter our Holy Saturday. As we embark on the deep work of reviewing our Vision and Mission, we find ourselves in a time of metamorphosis. This is the "chrysalis of promise," a period of quiet growth and internal reflection where no words are yet needed. Like the silent transformation within the tomb, this strategic work is an unfolding and becoming. It is the necessary stillness where our future identity is being knit together by the Spirit.

“...the liturgy—and the music that gives it breath—is the primary way we learn to love and heal a broken world...”

Our Easter Sunday arrives as we claim our births. This is the reception of new life—the "Paschal possibility" of breaking through the walls of the tomb to share our song in fresh, vibrant ways. It is the moment we stop looking back at the grave and start looking toward the horizon, finding a new language and ways to communicate with a world hungry for the hope we carry.

Finally, we look toward Pentecost, which represents the gift of the Holy Spirit who animates and empowers us to seek fullness of life. Our strategic focus on encouraging local meet-ups is an intentional call to foster grassroots connection and support, inviting the Spirit to breathe new life into the communities that already exist in our pews and choir lofts. It is an invitation for the fire of the Spirit to descend in local churches, schools, and halls, where music ministers gather to break bread and support one another.

As Rita Ferrone reminds us, the liturgy—and the music that gives it breath—is the primary way we learn to love and heal a broken world. By staying the course and singing our part in this Paschal story, we become a living sign of the "knowing promise" for others, listening for the voice of love that calls to us in the early morning and leading us all toward the light of a brand new day.

Peace and song to you all.

Ask Jenny

Q&A with APMN 2026 Theologian-In-Residence, Jenny O'Brien



Q. Liturgical Music and Devotional Music: What is the Difference?

A. When parish musicians come to choose music for the Sunday Eucharist they may find themselves being criticised for the hymns they select. 'This is not liturgical music, this is devotional music!' Well, how can we tell the difference?

In the first place, liturgical music is generally written for the specific purpose of being sung at a particular liturgy (most often the Eucharist). Clearly, settings of the Lord, have mercy, Gloria, Holy, holy, Acclamation of Faith, Amen and Lamb of God are liturgical music, as are settings of the Psalms and the Gospel Acclamation, but when we come to hymns we are in a different realm altogether.

Although the Church continues to hold Gregorian chant in high esteem, other kinds of sacred music are completely acceptable as long as they 'correspond to the spirit of the liturgical action and foster the participation of all the faithful.' (GIRM 41) These two phrases are key to understanding which hymns are most appropriate for use within the liturgy and which should be rejected. They must fit the liturgical action.

In the Catholic Church music always accompanies an action or enhances a text. Unlike many other Christian traditions, we do not simply 'sing a hymn' as a discreet element of the celebration. So, we give hymns labels like 'entrance hymn' or 'communion hymn' or 'hymn to accompany the Procession of Gifts'.

In each instance, the text of the hymn must be in harmony with the action it accompanies, and at the same time it must be within the abilities of the gathered Assembly who are to sing it. Hymns are not occasions for musicians to exhibit their prowess or technical skills but are SONG PRAYER.

They should be able to be sung easily by the congregation. This does not mean that they must be dull and boring. Far from it! The whole range of dynamic expression – including syncopation – can be used, but rhythms ought not be too complicated for ordinary people to sing and the pitch should not be too high or too low for people to be able to participate without too much difficulty. The tempo of the hymn will depend on several variables: content of the text itself; acoustics of the church building, age of the participants, style of music.

A really important point to take into consideration when choosing hymns for the Eucharist is to check the text carefully for a) theological correctness, b) good grammar, c) use of plural pronouns like 'we' and 'us.' Generally, hymns that reflect a community of faith rather than an individual are to be preferred, but that does not always mean that hymns that use 'I' must be rejected; a careful judgement needs to be made.

The second thing to check is the quality of the music itself. Is it worthy of being used to praise God and to enhance the liturgical action? Music does not have to be complicated from a harmonic point of view to be 'worthy', but it should not sound like what I call 'hurdy-gurdy' music. It must have a certain dignity that differentiates it from rock music or cabaret music or childish ditties.



Finally, check that this music can be sung by this congregation. The people should be able to join in the song with enthusiasm. Those who lead the song must not overpower the voices of the people but draw out their voices. Repetition of repertoire makes this possible, as people sing more confidently those hymns with which they are familiar. Probably a community might safely introduce between one and four new songs over the course of a year - anymore and there is the risk that the community will not join in.

Hopefully you will now have a good idea of what music is appropriate for use in the liturgy. The many other hymns that fall outside this category are what we would call 'devotional' rather than 'liturgical'.

Dr Jennifer O'Brien gained her Doctorate in Sacred Liturgy from Sant'Ansemo Pontifical University, Rome, and also holds Masters degrees in Theology and Religious Education. A liturgy educator, composer, musician, and consultant, she has served on numerous diocesan and national organisations. Jenny is currently the assistant editor of *Studia Liturgica* and a consultant for the National Liturgical Council. Jenny was honoured with a Life Member of the APMN in 2023 for her services to liturgical music in Australia. She remains active as an accompanist and cantor in her home parish in South Australia.



Singing Alleluia

EASTER TO PENTECOST

FIONA DYBALL



The great period of celebration from Easter to Pentecost gives us extended time to sing Alleluia, praising the risen Christ who lives in us and guides us into new life, unity and community. After the 40 days of Lent when our Alleluia was silent, the 50 days of Eastertide remind us that Alleluia is our song as a people who follow in the healing and compassionate way of our good and loving God.

Here are some hymns and sacred songs - both tried and tested old and memorable new - that sing Alleluia and may uplift your sung prayer (See also the Easter sections in hymnals, Eg. Catholic Worship Book II 347-371). As each community is different, no one size will fit all. These contrasting selections come from a range of our gifted Australian composers, and from across the worldwide tradition of the Catholic Church.

From Musicam Sacram (the Instruction on Music in the Liturgy, 1967):

9. In selecting the kind of sacred music to be used, whether it be for the choir or for the people, the capacities of those who are to sing the music must be taken into account. No kind of sacred music is prohibited from liturgical actions by the Church as long as it corresponds to the spirit of the liturgical celebration itself and the nature of its individual parts,[7] and does not hinder the active participation of the people.[8]

How will you sing Alleluia in your community over this season of Easter? Is there one or more pieces of music mentioned here that would support the participation of those who gather together in prayer?

*Alleluia, Alleluia, Give Thanks to the Risen Lord (Alleluia No. 1)
by Donald E. Fischel (Entrance Procession, Procession of the Gifts)*

YouTube: [Alleluia, Alleluia, Give Thanks to the Risen Lord](#)

Sheetmusic: CWB II 350, digital download OCP

[OCP Sheet Music Download](#)

Alleluia! Jesus is Alive! by Patricia Smith

Available from Willow:

<https://willowpublishing.com.au/product/alleluia-jesus-is-alive/>

Alleluia! Love is Alive by Steve Angrisano, Sarah Hart and Jesse Manibusan
YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0GdEPBSzbQQ>
Sheet music: OCP <https://www.ocp.org/en-us/songs/86395/alleluia-love-is-alive>

Alleluia! Raise the Gospel by Bernadette Farrell
(Entrance Procession, Recessional)
YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZQ1AGH_dIE
Sheet music: OCP
<https://www.ocp.org/en-us/songs/65075/alleluia-raise-the-gospel>

Alleluia! Sing to Jesus by Pritchard/Chatterton
(Entrance Procession, Recessional)
YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NpkGqbJd1Ug>
Sheet music: CWB II 449 or OCP
<https://www.ocp.org/en-us/songs/111/alleluia-sing-to-jesus>

Alleluia to the King by John Burland (Song of Praise/Thanksgiving)
YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_avwH_AJwY
Sheet music: <https://johnburland.net/product/arise/>

Easter Alleluia by Marty Haugen (from O FILII ET FILIAE; Entrance Procession)
YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZkCkLwNLUNM&t=3s>
Sheet music: CWB II 348 or OCP
<https://giamusic.com/resource/easter-alleluia-print-g3594>

Hallelujah Is Our Song by Sarah Hart
(Entrance Procession, Song of Praise/Thanksgiving)
YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bbgryIGz3YQ>
Sheet music: <https://www.ocp.org/en-us/songs/86821/hallelujah-is-our-song>

Jesus Christ, You Are My Life by Marco Frisina (Song of Praise/Thanksgiving)
YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cri2XbOhNTQ>
Sheet music: Catholic Worship Book II 523, digital download from OCP
<https://www.ocp.org/en-us/songs/66290/jesus-christ-you-are-my-life>

Let Hallelujah Be Our Song by Beth Doherty
(Procession of the Gifts, Song of Praise/Thanksgiving)
YouTube:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=li378f_uz4A&list=OLAK5uy_meKuE0pbyBkTH2XMFyN3Xc2GXVnmNKvVg&index=6
Sheet music: contact composer at elisabeth_doherty@hotmail.com

Regina Caeli (Chant, Eastertide Antiphon and Song of Joy)
YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j6WYpz6PPwA>
Sheet music: CWB II 405, free digital download:
https://archive.ccwatershed.org/media/pdfs/11/09/01/10-50-40_0.pdf

A Sanctuary of Song

THE STORY BEHIND THE SONG "HOSANNA"

The heavens over Adelaide opened up that night—a sheet of wet, persistent rain that typically sends everyone indoors to huddle. Yet, as one approached St Paul's Church at the Monastery in Urrbrae, the spiritual warmth radiating from within the gathered community brought a calm to the storm. Over 120 people had braved the elements, arriving early to share a humble meal of Paella and decadent donuts, all drawn by the promise of the "Night of Worship: Song and Story".

Under the dramatic, magenta and pink lighting that painted the high arches and stone columns, the church became a vivid sanctuary of song. It was here that one could witness the power of a shared worship experience built upon the diverse liturgical gifts of accomplished music ministers.

During this immersive evening, Catholic artist Timothy Hart led the congregation into a moment of profound creative collaboration. In a surprise move, the assembly collectively became "recording artists," laying down vocals in situ to be incorporated into his new release, "Hosanna". The atmosphere was electric as the room filled with the raw, organic resonance of over a hundred voices singing in chant together a cappella. This genuine moment of communal prayer was then met by the bright, chiming sound of Hart's electric guitar, transitioning the assembly into upbeat liturgical anthems that filled the sacred space with unmistakable joy.



While the narrative of "Hosanna" is inspired by the Gospel account of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, its life extends far beyond the rituals of Holy Week. Now that we have passed the Lenten season, the song remains a vital resource for the ongoing liturgical journey toward Pentecost and beyond. As noted by liturgist Dr. Jenny O'Brien, liturgical music must "correspond to the spirit of the liturgical action and foster the participation of all the faithful". "Hosanna" achieves this through a cantor-congregation dynamic and an intuitive, chant-like melody that encourages full and active participation.



The song is highly suitable for use as a Song of Praise after Communion, fostering an uplifting atmosphere that reflects the living unity of the Church. Its scriptural depth complements the heart of the Sanctus, echoing the Gospel truth that even if we were silent, "the stones would cry out". This lyric serves as a powerful reminder that all of creation—the stones, the rivers, and the faithful—are joined in a tireless, communal chorus of praise to the God who saves. By merging a modern contemporary sound with traditional liturgical forms, Hart has provided a reverent soundscape that feels both fresh and timeless for worshippers of all generations.

Watch & Listen:



[Sheet Music & Resources - linked here](#)

Timothy Hart is a creative leader in Australian Catholic ministry, specialising in music, liturgy, religious education, and faith formation. Timothy is widely known for composing anthems that capture the heart of the contemporary Church, including 'Joyful Generation' for the 2017 Australian Catholic Youth Festival. Timothy's ministry is dedicated to inspiring joy and hope while nurturing religious imagination and fostering authentic communal prayer.



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FOLLOW ON:



**TIMOTHY
HART**

A REFLECTION ON

Holy Spirit Music for Pentecost



PAUL MASON

Pentecost and the Sundays leading up to it is very focused on the importance of the Holy Spirit in our lives. In recent times since the Plenary Council in 2019 we are becoming more aware of the Synodal nature of the Church and the need to allow the Spirit to move us in making us one body.

The readings for Pentecost this year (A) are our starting point, as well as the readings in the Sixth and Seventh Sundays of Easter. The Liturgical Song Music Recommendations for Pentecost Year A provide a nine page summary of suitable "Holy Spirit" music for use in the Mass

<https://liturgicalsong.com/260524-Pentecost.pdf?downloadable=1>

Particularly notable are settings of Responsorial Psalm 104 by Australian Composers including Kathleen Boschetti, Percy Jones, Paul Mason, Anne Millard, Jenny O'Brien, Colin Smith, Patricia Smith and Christopher Willcock. The Sequence of Pentecost also has attracted the attention of Australian Composers, including Paul Mason and Patricia Smith

<https://willowpublishing.com.au/product/sequence-of-pentecost/>

"Hymns and Spiritual Songs," published by Liturgical Song, includes many Holy Spirit songs suitable for Pentecost, including:

"Power of the Spirit,"

"From Our Hearts,"

"Open Our Eyes,"

"O Holy Name,"

"We Are Called,"

and "Holy Spirit, Lord of Light (Pentecost Sequence)"

<https://liturgicalsong.com/catalogs/hymns-and-spiritual-songs/hymns-and-spiritual-songs-volume-1>

You can listen to "Power of the Spirit" here: <https://liturgicalsong.com/catalogs/cds/power-of-the-spirit>.

Michael Mangan's album "Setting Hearts on Fire" includes numerous Holy Spirit songs including "Hearts on Fire" and "Holy Spirit of Fire".

Among Timothy Hart's collection "Hearts of Courage" captures the Spirit of Australia and incorporates a petition to the Holy Spirit. And, "Sound of the Spirit", composed as a prayer for the synodal process, explores themes of listening to, and walking with the Spirit.

The National Liturgical Council

The National Liturgical Council (NLC) advises the Bishops Commission for Liturgy (BCL) in the promotion of the life and mission of the Catholic Church in Australia in the area of Catholic liturgical worship. The current Chair of the NLC is Dr Clare Schwantes from Liturgy Brisbane, and the Bishop Delegate is Archbishop of Adelaide Patrick O'Regan.

Established by the Australian Catholic Bishops, the NLC advises the BCL on matters related to the pastoral liturgical life of Australian Catholics, the publishing of liturgical texts, and the encouragement of liturgical education initiatives. The Council comprises eight appointed councillors with graduate qualifications and pastoral experience in liturgy or sacramental theology.

Its work is also supported by a number of highly qualified liturgical consultants from around Australia, including current Chair of the APMN Michael Mangan (QLD), APMN Executive member Paul Mason (NSW) and past NLC member Sophy Morley. Past members of the NLC also include APMN Executive member Angela Gorman (WA).

APMN National Executive member Fiona Dyball was appointed to a three year term on the NLC in November 2025. Fiona has been a member of the APMN National Executive since 2017 and also served on the National Liturgical Music Council (NLMC) with Paul Mason from 2016 - 2022.

Fiona currently serves as Music Leader at Immaculate Conception Catholic Parish in Hawthorn, Victoria and is also a Sessional

Academic at Australian Catholic University after a long career in secondary music and religious education in Catholic schools in Victoria. She has an extensive background in music, education and liturgy, and is currently completing her PhD on the sung Responsorial Psalm in the Australian context.

This will result in a research-based music resource of 30 new settings of Responsorial Psalms. Inspired by her mentor Sr Deirdre Browne CJ, Fiona loves working with people of all ages and has mentored many cantors and musicians in music ministry across Australia. She writes a regular column on music in Catholic worship for national publication Australian Catholics. Her music is published by Australia's Liturgical Song, and her articles on liturgy and music are available in a range of books and journals.

We also congratulate APMN Members Josie Ryan (NSW) and Elisabeth Fort (QLD) on being reappointed for a second three year term as members of the NLMC.

Resources:

From Catholic Australia

NLC: <https://www.catholic.au/s/advisory-body/a6U2e0000003uwEAA/national-liturgical-council>

NLMC: <https://www.catholic.au/s/advisory-body/a6U2e0000003v0EAA/national-liturgical-music-council>

The new NLC website:

<https://nlc.catholic.org.au>

Australian Catholics on Music Ministry:

<https://www.australiancatholics.com.au/author/Fiona-Dyball>

A Legacy of Liturgical Formation

**A Tribute to Rev Dr Russell Hardiman:
Foundation Sponsor of the APMN**

ANGELA GORMAN



Rev Dr Russell Hardiman was a foundation sponsor/donor for the launch of the Australian Pastoral Musicians Network early in 2010. His vision for Liturgical formation for the Australian Catholic Church following his experience of the Second Vatican Council in Rome, led to the publication of his journal Pastoral Liturgy in 1970. The journal continues to this day and can now be found on the University of Notre Dame Australia's Research Online portal at this link [Pastoral Liturgy | The University of Notre Dame Australia](#)

The article that follows is a reflection on my involvement with Fr Russell, and his impact on my journey.

My first memory of Fr Russell Hardiman was as a child visiting the Donnybrook Catholic Church where he was the Parish Priest. I remember his detailed sermons full of stories and humour. He always managed to make people laugh. This association grew into working with Russell on the Bunbury Diocesan Liturgy Committee in my late twenties. Fast forward to my post-graduate studies at Notre Dame University Fremantle, and once again I encountered Russell as a lecturer – teaching three wonderful units – Liturgy: Work of God and Work of God's People, Shaping and Celebrating Church Public Worship and Praying the Church's Year. I cannot underestimate how much I learnt in those three units, setting the

groundwork for what would become the launching of my life's dream of working in faith formation.

I have always felt drawn to liturgy, participating in weekly school liturgies in primary school and as a musician in Sunday Mass from an early age. It was a natural progression to university where I initially studied Education. The move to Theology and Liturgy was largely based on my desire to be better prepared for a life of pastoral formation ministry.

During my post graduate studies, Russell was a constant support and guide. Gently encouraging me to research more, to explain myself in more detail, to add to my reference list and to expand my bibliographies – always ready with a new book, article or journal from his own immense library of resources to support these suggestions. Russell believed in my passion, my dreams and in my gifts.

Shortly after my studies I launched my ministry business Shine Creations – offering workshops, retreats and faith formation sessions. Russell continued his support of my work by employing me to assist with the publication of the wonderful journal Pastoral Liturgy. I felt very honoured to be working on such an important journal for the Australian Catholic Church and beyond and to be the first student to have their writing published in the Journal!

My own faith and liturgical formation during this time was immense. More than this, Russell personally encouraged me in my composing (it was whilst working with him one day that I received the inspiration for the title track of my debut CD Holy Spirit Take Our Hand) and constantly put my name forward to others seeking workshops, speakers and anything he believed I could help with. Shine Creations became so busy that I had to decrease my work at the university. As soon as Russell heard about the concept for the formation of the APMN, he was interested and supportive. His substantial donation to the association was no surprise to me.

I attended conferences, workshops and seminars with Russell both in Australia and in the United States. With Russell's encouragement and connections, I successfully applied for an archdiocesan scholarship to fund my study trip to the US where I encountered liturgy at its best – from New Orleans, to Notre Dame University, Indiana and right up to Chicago, Russell put me in touch with many outstanding liturgists, pastors, colleagues and friends. The learning from this trip was immeasurable.

On a personal note, Russell was there to celebrate my marriage to Andrew, offering the Prayer of Blessing over the food at the reception. That moment is etched in my memory forever.

To return to the University for the Opening of the Russell Hardiman Collection at the University of Notre Dame Fremantle in 2019 was a great joy! A fitting tribute to a man who had given so much to the liturgical landscape of Australia and especially, Western Australia.



Angela Gorman, Russell, Dr Angela McCarthy (Notre Dame University, Fremantle) Dr Celia Hammond (Past Vice Chancellor of the University)



The crowd of friends, academics and family that gathered for the event.

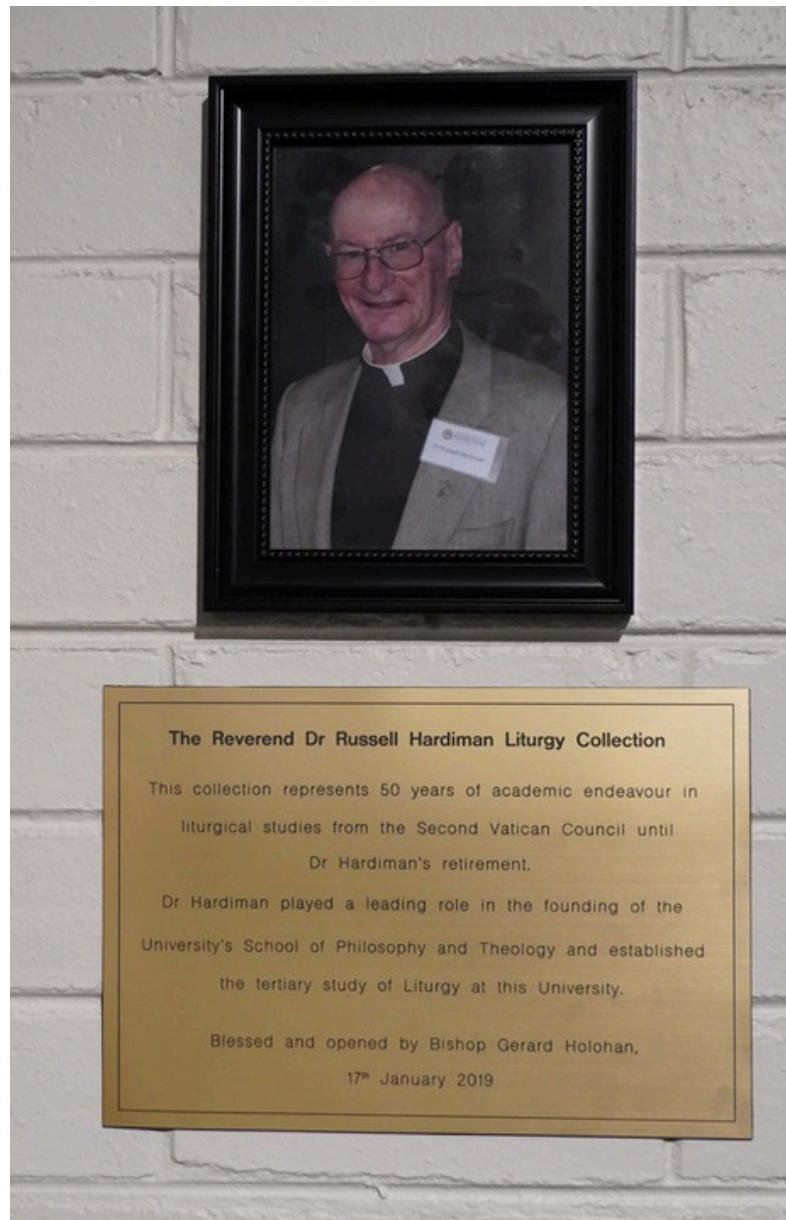


The Hardiman Family, together with the recipient of the Scholarship Sandra Wibawanta

It was a double blessing to attend the re-opening of this collection on Friday the 20th February this year - in the newly refurbished Michael Wright Library, where Russells entire liturgical library is held - partly in closed reserve, and partly in secured storage under archive conditions, thus protecting it into the future. Every edition of Pastoral Liturgy is housed in this secured storage section - from 1970 right up until the journal went online. It was indeed wonderful to re-connect with Russell's family, colleagues and co-workers from the University of Notre Dame and to share memories.

In addition to the incredible collection in the library, Fr Russell's legacy continues in the form of a scholarship for a student studying theology at the University. One of the scholarship recipients attended the re-opening. It was delightful to listen to her story and hear her gratitude upon receiving this financial gift.

Watching Russell's physical decline was sad. In one of my visits to him when he was unable to communicate well verbally, I began to sing. He immediately flashed that cheeky smile and raised his hand. It was such a joy to have that response. In my final visit to him, just days before he passed on from this world, I held his hand and said thank you. Thank you for all you have been in my life. Thank you for the legacy you have left for me and so many others. Thank you for the liturgical formation you instilled in me and your passion to help others grow in their liturgical understanding.



Thank you for paving the way for the Australian Church to embrace liturgical formation as a priority - I promise to continue your legacy as best I can. They are big shoes to fill.

Rest in God's everlasting peace my friend.

"If you would like to learn more about Notre Dame's Bequest Program, please visit Gifts in Wills and Bequests | Notre Dame or contact Clara on 0447 885 463 / bequests@nd.edu.au."

Footnote: My family now lives just a few houses away from where Russell grew up in Albany. I don't think that is a coincidence

We Need to Talk

BETH DOHERTY



Artificial Intelligence, AI, is becoming more and more sophisticated by the minute, and it's something we need to discuss in the Church music space.

A simple "Please write me a 200-word article about Catholic Liturgical Music" popped into ChatGPT yielded a wide-ranging and detailed response referencing Gregorian Chant and the Second Vatican Council.

AI draws from sources across the world wide web at ever-increasing speeds. It helped me in my liturgy planning recently, for example, when I asked for a list of suggested hymns for the Easter Triduum.

I of course also consulted trusted websites such as Paul Mason's Liturgical Song and Willow Publishing. Liturgy Help and OCP and GIA were also on the list, as well as members of the National Liturgical Council. This broad approach meant that our Easter ceremonies in my parish will be reverent and beautiful.

The Church is not behind the eight ball on this one either, in fact, the Vatican has in fact been very responsive and quick to take a measured and insightful position on AI.

The late Pope Francis wrote: "When used correctly, AI assists the human person in fulfilling his or her vocation, in freedom and responsibility."

This statement highlights a key Vatican principle: AI should support human dignity and freedom, not replace or undermine them. Another strong Vatican perspective comes from recent guidance:



"AI should serve people, not dominate them." Technology, such as AI can be an extraordinary gift to humanity, if it is used ethically and with human dignity at the fore, with an orientation toward the common good.

We want to hear from our APMN members about your own experiences of AI. What have you seen? What have you found helpful? Would you enjoy further training or upskilling around what potential AI has for both good and evil?

AI tools such as ChatGPT can be wonderful time savers for professionals who need to create content quickly, particularly for educators who can use it as a guide for lesson planning and to assist with consistency and administration tasks.

When I took my senior dog for a check recently at the vet, so that the vet could focus on the animal instead of taking notes, she asked my permission to take notes on the consultation using AI. I appreciated her checking, and I appreciated the creative and innovative use of technology to better serve my chihuahua princess.

In the scientific world, advances in AI can yield positive results as wide-ranging as improving food security in impoverished nations, advancing medical technology to control disease or as diagnostic tools, to higher predictability around extreme weather, climate change or natural disasters.

One of our keynote Conference presenters from our 2025 APMN/NLC conference Fr Ricky Manalo is at the forefront of these challenges, and urges clarity, generosity and discerned engagement with AI. At our 2025 APMN/NLC Conference, Ricky Manalo challenged us with this insight:

“The Church’s voice in AI ethics is not confined to what technology can do, but extends to the deeper question of who we are becoming through the technologies we create.”

He goes further, describing AI as a “theological frontier... challenging communities to hold ancient practice and emerging technology in faithful tension.”

And that tension is real.

What do we make of a composer who loses a songwriting competition to a fully AI-generated piece? How do we feel about AI-generated worship music being presented in a school assembly? What happens when prayers, retreats, and reflections are written entirely by AI?

These aren’t hypothetical questions—they’re already happening.

So where does that leave us? Perhaps with an invitation. Not to panic. Not to blindly embrace. But to engage—with clarity, curiosity, and discernment.

As Manalo reminds us: “The call is not to approach AI with fear or uncritical enthusiasm, but with discernment rooted in the human, relational, and spiritual heart of ministry.”

We’d love to hear from you. How are you using AI? What’s been helpful? What concerns you? And would you value opportunities to learn more?

Let’s start the conversation.

Email us at: elisabeth_doherty@hotmail.com or executive@apmn.org.au or comment on our Facebook page!

