

Lay ministers in rural NSW trained by ACU Centre for Liturgy

The Australian Catholic University (ACU) Centre for Liturgy travelled to Hay in western New South Wales where it successfully held a lay liturgical ministry formation program in the Wilcannia-Forbes Diocese on 1-2 June.

The two-day program was made possible thanks to a generous grant from one of the Centre's donors.

Liturgy is the official public worship of the Church. Accessing specialists in liturgy education and training can be difficult for Catholics in Australia's rural and regional areas.

To meet the need for formation, the ACU Centre for Liturgy's expert trainers Dr Jason McFarland and Ms Sharon Boyd organised the formation program to provide much needed training to lay liturgical ministers in the Diocese, who often have no access to such training and infrequent access to a priest.

The program focused on the underlying need to develop the skills required for effective lay liturgical ministry and leadership for those forms of liturgy that may be led by a layperson.

Specific topics included baptismal foundations for ministry, preparing and celebrating funerals, Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest, lay presiding at Morning and Evening Prayer, liturgical music with few resources, communion of the sick, and the ministry of Lector.

Dr McFarland and Ms Boyd worked collaboratively with local pastoral leaders to discern the most useful topics for the two-day program. A local funeral company provided resources for some of the training sessions.

"Reaching out to less well-supported parishes and dioceses is a key part of the Centre's work as it seeks to deliver practical professional training, development and formation in liturgy and the sacraments to liturgical practitioners in parishes, schools and dioceses across Australia," said ACU Centre for Liturgy Assistant Director Dr Jason McFarland.

"While the Centre's staff are located at ACU in Strathfield and Melbourne, its reach is national, and its staff are always willing to offer support and education to the Church in rural locations."

Wilcannia-Forbes Diocese Pastoral Worker Sister Elizabeth Young RSM said the program provided the rare opportunity for parishioners to receive formation from experts without leaving the Diocese.

"There are a number of small worshipping communities in this area that are unable to have a priest every Sunday. This formation allows leaders and facilitators from the lay faithful to exercise their baptismal call to ministry in a new way," said Sister Elizabeth.

"This workshop will build relationships and solidarity among lay leaders, giving refreshment to those who have had previous training, and inspiration and confidence for those who are new."

"Some lay leaders received training a while ago, and this program is an opportunity to update and consolidate their skills, so there is a stronger diocesan identity and sense of mutual support."

The ACU Centre for Liturgy is now seeking additional grants for future work in places like Wilcannia-Forbes where the need is great but resources are few.

One-hundred percent of such gifts will be applied directly to the Centre's essential formative education work in areas of need. The Centre also accepts endowments, pledges, bequests, and gifts in kind.

The ACU Centre for Liturgy operates within ACU's Office of the Vice President and works collaboratively with the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy to provide high-quality academic programs and research in liturgical studies, sacramental theology and the sacred arts. The Centre aims to facilitate liturgical formation at every level in the life of the Church in Australia.

Tax deductible donations can be made via the [Give Now](#) portal on the [ACU Centre for Liturgy](#) website.

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