

Using social science to explain the congregation's role in *ars celebrandi*

How can the study of society and human behaviour be used to understand the role of the congregation in celebrating the source and summit of the Christian life?

An upcoming online public lecture hosted by the ACU Centre for Liturgy will explore this question in relation to the *ars celebrandi*, or art of proper celebration of the liturgy, from the perspective of the “liturgical user”.

Liturgical studies expert and Vicar General of the Diocese of Parramatta, Fr Peter Williams, will present *Ars Celebrandi: it's everyone's responsibility* on May 9 via Zoom

Ars celebrandi is a Latin term introduced by Pope Benedict XVI in his apostolic exhortation, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, which responded to the 2005 synod of bishops and coincided with the end the 2004 Year of the Eucharist.

In the exhortation, Pope Benedict XVI argued that the most effective way to foster the full, active, and fruitful participation of the faithful in the liturgy “is the proper celebration of the rite”, directing many of his thoughts to clergy.

However, Fr Williams believes there are some limitations to this explanation of the *ars celebrandi*.

“Pope Benedict XVI’s argument presumes that all participants in the liturgy (ministers and the faithful) have the same understanding of what participation means and what ‘proper celebration’ is, which is a rather large assumption,” Fr Williams said.

“People are strongly formed by the culture they inhabit on a daily basis and that cultural milieu finds expression in what is brought to the celebration of the Eucharist,” Fr Williams said.

“The thesis proposed in my online lecture on May 9 is that we can usefully employ the tools of the social sciences in understanding what influences are at play when people gather to offer public worship and how strongly those influences inform the *ars celebrandi*.”

ACU Centre for Liturgy Director, Professor Clare Johnson, said Fr Williams’ lecture would offer a fresh insight into how the People of God could celebrate the liturgy well.

“*Ars celebrandi* is the art of proper celebration of the liturgy, and though it has been commonly associated with how clergy preside at liturgy, it actually relates to how every participant in liturgy understands and enacts their role,” Professor Johnson said.

“Liturgy is what sustains the life of faith, and each aspect of it ought to reflect the mystery of faith we are celebrating.

“Fr Williams’ lecture will unpack this fascinating aspect of liturgy in a new and engaging way.”

Fr Williams was Director of Liturgy for World Youth Day Sydney, 2008 and was responsible for the preparation of the liturgical celebrations surrounding WYD and the Papal visit.

He was awarded an honorary doctorate from ACU in 2014 and teaches liturgical studies at the Catholic Institute of Sydney.

Register for *Ars Celebrandi: it's everyone's responsibility* online at acu.edu.au/publiclecturecf.

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