

Aspiring liturgist from regional NSW awarded ACU postgraduate scholarship

Former religion teacher Jonathan McCallum will use a liturgical studies scholarship to inspire young people to grow closer to God through the liturgy and the sacraments.

The 30-year-old from the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle is the recipient of the annual ACU Centre for Liturgy Postgraduate Scholarship, available for Master of Theological Studies students specialising in Liturgical Studies.

Born and bred in the Hunter Region, Mr McCallum has a background in youth ministry and previously worked as a high school teacher in Moree, Medowie and Adelaide.

As a mission formation leader for Catholic Schools Maitland-Newcastle, Mr McCallum is passionate about supporting schools to help young people grow a deeper appreciation for the liturgy.

Having worked in and with Catholic schools, Mr McCallum said young people had many misconceptions about the personal relevance of the liturgy.

“Sadly many young people assume the liturgy is irrelevant to their lives and can't meet them where they are,” Mr McCallum said.

“I believe liturgy that is prepared and celebrated well can evangelise young people and bring them closer to an understanding of God.

As part of his Masters, Mr McCallum is investigating how penitential celebrations can provide young people with opportunities for deeper conversion in their lives.

“I've witnessed many students who've come away from these experiences with a renewed and deepened understanding of who God is,” Mr McCallum said.

The newlywed saw the transformative power of the liturgy on a personal level when his fiancé was received into the Church last year.

“My wife was baptised and Confirmed into the Church at Easter, a month before we were married,” Mr McCallum said.

“I joked with her that she was trying to speed-run all the sacraments in a year.

“She grew up in Hillsong and attended non-denominational churches, but coming to church with me, over time her experience of the community of the Catholic Church, and the way Catholics worshipped, appealed to her as she could enter into prayer in a completely different way.”

Mr McCallum said liturgy was an “underappreciated jewel of the Church” but events like the World Youth Day and Australian Catholic Youth Festival proved young people craved communities of prayer and faith.

“When you look at how the Church prays, it embodies the classic Latin phrase - *Lex orandi, lex credendi*, the law of prayer is the law of belief,” he said.

“People forget that when we come together and pray, what we believe and who we are is not only articulated but actualised and made physical.

“I feel most part of the church when I'm together praying with others and offering our worship to God.

“Receiving this scholarship is a fantastic opportunity for me to continue cultivating a deeper appreciation for liturgy and the sacraments.”

Director of the ACU Centre for Liturgy Professor Clare Johnson congratulated Mr McCullum on being the eighth recipient of the liturgical studies scholarship.

“Jonathan has a clear passion for liturgical studies, and we're delighted to support his education with the ACU Centre for Liturgy Postgraduate Scholarship this semester,” Professor Johnson said.

“Encouraging promising young students of liturgy is a core part of the Centre's mission and Jonathan has demonstrated and continues to demonstrate excellent scholarly discipline and a keenness to apply his learning in school and parish settings.

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“His genuine personal interest in developing his knowledge and skills in this essential area of Church life heralds positive prospects for the emergence of a new generation of Australian liturgical scholars.”

Media Contact: Emilie Ng, 0475 963 606, emilie.ng@acu.edu.au