

Risen Christ



Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year A

18 & 19 July 2026

The Catholic Communities of Our Lady Help of Christians, Eltham & St Francis Xavier, Montmorency



We acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation who are the traditional custodians of this land and pay our respect to the elders past, present and emerging.

Gospel: Matthew 13:24-43

Jesus put a parable before the crowds, 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. While everybody was asleep his enemy came, sowed darnel all among the wheat, and made off. When the new wheat sprouted and ripened, the darnel appeared as well. The owner's servants went to him and said, "Sir, was it not good seed that you sowed in your field? If so, where does the darnel come from?" "Some enemy has done this" he answered. And the servants said, "Do you want us to go and weed it out?" But he said, "No, because when you weed out the darnel you might pull up the wheat with it. Let them both grow till the harvest; and at harvest time I shall say to the reapers: First collect the darnel and tie it in bundles to be burnt, then gather the wheat into my barn."

He put another parable before them, 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the biggest shrub of all and becomes a tree so that the birds of the air come and shelter in its branches.'

He told them another parable, 'The kingdom of heaven is like the yeast a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour till it was leavened all through.'

In all this Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables; indeed, he would never speak to them except in parables. This was to fulfill the prophecy:

I will speak to you in parables and expound things hidden since the foundation of the world.

The, leaving the crowds, he went to the house; and his disciples came to him and said, 'Explain the parable about the darnel in the field to us.' He said in reply, 'The sower of the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world; the good seed is the subjects of the kingdom; the darnel, the subjects of the evil one; the enemy who sowed them, the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; the reapers are the angels. Well then, just as the darnel is gathered up and burnt in the fire, so it will be at the end of time. The Son of Man will send his angels and they will gather out of his kingdom all things that provoke offences and all who do evil, and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth. Then the virtuous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Listen, anyone who has ears!'



Reflection - Break Open the Word 2026

Like last week, we have Jesus' teaching about the kingdom of God in parable form, a section on the parable as revelation, and then an explanation of the (first) parable. Like last week, the shorter version of the reading is restricted to a single parable.

The major parable is about the weeds and the wheat. It speaks to us of the way the kingdom exists and grows in a hostile world. It requires of us patience and tolerance. The harvest will come and so too, at the end, judgement.

The second parable, the mustard seed, speaks of the small beginnings of God's kingdom, and of its growth into a mighty tree that provides shelter and a welcome for all. It is a parable of stark contrast. The parable of the leaven is similar. A small amount of yeast causes the whole lot of dough to rise.

While God's work in the world may be quiet and mysterious, it is irresistible and has a mighty effect. Jesus' parables unfold the mystery.

Finally, once again this week, a highly allegorical interpretation of the (first) parable is given. This makes it clear that the parable is about the Church. The people in the Church are not perfect, but a mixture of good and bad. The Church is the pilgrim people of God on the way to the kingdom. For the present, we need to be tolerant and accepting of all... the rest we leave to God's judgement.

The use of 'man' and 'woman' in the parables should not be changed.

*This parish has a commitment to ensuring the safety of children and vulnerable people in our community.
We support the recommendations of the Royal Commission into institutional abuse and pray for all the survivors.*



PARISH TEAM & INFORMATION

OUR PEOPLE & OUR CONTACT DETAILS



Parish Priest

Michael Sierakowski - Moderator

Michael.Sierakowski@cam.org.au

Parish Office

all correspondence to:
86 Mayona Road,
Montmorency Vic 3094
9435 4742

RisenChrist.Parish@cam.org.au

Kate Kogler:

Parish Secretary
Tue-Fri 9am-3pm

Peter Williams:

Safeguarding Officer
RisenChrist.ChildSafety@cam.org.au

Volunteers

Marisa Capuana: Various

Kerry Mash: Wed & Fri 10am-3pm

www.melbcatholic.org/risenchristparish

Facebook:

[Risen Christ Parish](https://www.facebook.com/RisenChristParish)

Risen Christ Parish Bulletin items:

RisenChrist.Parish@cam.org.au

Schools

Holy Trinity Primary School

Principal: Vince Bumpstead: 9431 0888

principal@htelthamnth.catholic.edu.au

www.htelthamnth.catholic.edu.au

Our Lady Help of Christians Primary School

Principal: Rudy Vail: 9439 7824

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St Francis Xavier Primary School

Principal: Jo Nolen: 9435 8474

principal@sfxmontmorency.catholic.edu.au

www.sfxmontmorency.catholic.edu.au

RECONCILIATION

available half an hour before
any weekday or weekend Parish Mass.

Risen Christ Parish Calendar of Events

Saturday 18

12:00pm Baptisms : Jax, Kye, Lincoln

Montmorency

6:00pm Mass & First Eucharists

Montmorency

Sunday 19

8:30am Mass & First Eucharists

Montmorency

10:00am Mass & First Eucharists

Eltham

Tuesday 21

9:30am Liturgy of the Word with Communion

Montmorency

10:00am Rosary

Montmorency

10:00am Craft Group

Montmorency

11:00am Prayer Shawl Ministry

Eltham

2:00pm Bethany Small Church Community

Montmorency

Wednesday 22

6:30am Meditation

Montmorency

9:30am Liturgy of the Word with Communion

Eltham

Thursday 23

9:00am Liturgy of the Word with Communion

Montmorency

10:00am Emmaus Small Church Community

Montmorency

10:30am ASRC Food Collection

Montmorency

2:30pm Meditation

Eltham

Friday 24

9:30am Liturgy of the Word with Communion

Eltham

Saturday 25

6:00pm Mass & First Eucharists

Montmorency

Sunday 26

8:30am Mass

Montmorency



Congratulations to all who celebrate their sacraments this weekend:

Saturday, 18th July, 2026

St Francis Xavier, Montmorency, 12:00pm

Jax Bunn

Baptism

Kye Bunn

Baptism

Lincoln Bunn

Baptism

St Francis Xavier, Montmorency, 6:00pm

Flynn McDonald

First Eucharist

Austin McParland

First Eucharist

Ethan Nealy

First Eucharist

Miller Stackpoole

First Eucharist

Sunday, 19th July, 2026

St Francis Xavier, Montmorency, 8:30am

Lewis Borg

First Eucharist

Nate Hawkins

First Eucharist

Our Lady Help of Christians, Eltham, 10:00am

Harley Potts

First Eucharist

Thanksgiving

Dear Parishioners,

Following is a list of ways in which you can give towards the running of our Parish (left to right):

A) EFTPOS terminals

B) scan the QR code (<https://bit.ly/45ifhRp>) & donate to any Parish finance campaign including Thanksgiving, Presbytery Offerings, baptisms etc

C) cash/coins in the collection baskets at each church

D) thanksgiving envelopes

E) set up payments from credit/debit cards/bank account

Thank you for your generous support,

Michael



Collections: 5 & 12 July 2026

Thanksgiving	Cash	\$1,804.00
	Electronic	\$9,739.67
Presbytery	Cash	\$1,841.00
	Electronic	\$225.00

Thanksgiving Offering

Month	Total
April	\$23,331.17
May	\$18,752.55
June	\$22,507.82



*Let us pray for all those who have gone
before us marked with the sign of faith ...*

For those in need of **healing**, remembering especially:

*Baby Margot Brady, Peter, Stephen Andrew, Des Arneson, Bill Boyce,
Penny Boyce, Maria Bredle, Vincent Cipolletta, Nora Edmond,
Pat Hosmer, Siobhan Lappin, Georgina Lynch, Mary Luttick,
Cindy & Ed Morrissey, Bernard Murray, Regina Roszczenko, Phil Rovtar,
Beth Scott, Audrey Tunks, Nicholas Turnbull, Jeanne Vanderwert,
Noel Vincent, Brian Witten*

For those who have **died** recently:

Edwinda Bacani, Glenda Clift, Antonietta Duviani, Richard Vaughan

For those whose **anniversaries** are at this time:

*Honorio Bacani, Matthew Bibby, Glenn McCormack,
Shannon Risson, Lino Zini*

To include an anniversary please contact Parish Office
9435 4742 or RisenChrist.Parish@cam.org.au.

Prayers of the Faithful for 19 July 2026 Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Leader: Lord, trusting in your kindness and mercy we pray before you today.

Knowledge and trust in the Lord bring confidence, strength and direction. We pray for the strength to be open, to trust, and to live with love in our hearts. We remember all those who have fled homes and communities, escaping disaster, violence or war, and all who are searching for direction and hope. May we feel the presence of God in our lives.

Let us pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer.

"Those who are just must be kind." Justice, kindness, mercy and compassion are inseparable. May we be instruments of God's peace within our homes, workplaces and communities. We pray for all leaders as they seek just, peaceful solutions to local and international conflict.

Let us pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer.

For strength in community. Like the tiny mustard seed, may our hearts, families and communities be places of warmth, welcome and inclusion - places where all people can grow and blossom, enriching our country with diversity, depth and creativity.

Let us pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer.

The harvest brings weeds amongst the good crop. As we work, live and pray amidst the troubles and difficulties of our lives, we take hope and strength from Jesus' constant, loving presence. We remember especially all those living with sickness and pain. May they feel the healing touch of God.

Let us pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer.

God knows what lies within our hearts. Let us trust in the Spirit to open our ears, to direct and inspire.

Let us pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer.

For those who have died recently, especially *Edwinda Bacani, Glenda Clift, Antonietta Duviani and Richard Vaughan* and for those whose anniversaries occur around this time, including *Honorio Bacani, Matthew Bibby, Glenn McCormack, Shannon Risson and Lino Zini*. May they rest in the love and peace of Christ.

Let us pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: Lord, confident of your presence in our lives, may we listen to your voice and spread your love. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen



Roster for week ending 19 Jul 2026

Armstrong, Miranda	E10:00
Boyd, Mary	PRYR
Connor, Anne	W6:00
Cotter, Anne	W8:30
Davidson, John	W8:30
Donnellan, Denice	E10:00
Drljo, Frank	CLNR
Dunell, Linda	ASE
Dunell, Linda	E10:00
Haines, Geoff	R10:00
Heyhoe, Margaret	C10:00
Kenny, Michael	W6:00
Lyons, Maria	H10:00
Mallia, Anthony	E10:00
Ryan Family	PRSE
Skipper, Patsy	CLNR
Volunteer please	H10:00
Volunteer please	H10:00
Volunteer please	H10:00
Williams, Peter	E10:00

Roster for week ending 26 Jul 2026

Bowyer, Darrell	ASRC
Bowyer, Rosemary	ASRC
Castellanos, Rodrigo	E10:00
Cotter, Anne	CLNR
Cseh, Ferenc	E10:00
Davidson, John	PRYR
Fitzgerald, Susan	H10:00
French, Jossie	W8:30
Furtado, Lorraine	C10:00
Haines, Jan-Marie	E10:00
Iliffe, Yvonne	E10:00
Kulkens, Mark	W6:00
Love, Philip	W8:30
Maynes, Phil	W6:00
Nolan, Kathleen	H10:00
Nolan, Mike	H10:00
Reardon, Kathy	ASE
Reischel, Marita	H10:00
Roy, Yvonne	E10:00
Scannell Family	PRSE
Wood, Gerard	CLNR
Zylstra, Diane	R10:00

ASE = Altar Society @ Eltham;
C = Commentator;
CLKR = PowerPoint Clicker @ SFX;
CLNR = Cleaner @ SFX; R = Reader;
E = Eucharistic Minister; H = Hospitality;
LoW-01 = Liturgy of the Word with
Communion @ SFX;
PRSE = Pilgrim Rosary Statue @ Eltham;
M = Music; W = Minister of the Word

Missionary Leadership

INTRODUCTION

The Melbourne Synod is an invitation to our local Church to listen attentively to the Holy Spirit and to discern how we are called to proclaim the Gospel more faithfully in our time and pace. The purpose of this synod is to help shape our evangelical and missionary priorities for the years ahead. This synodal journey will focus on three themes: Young Discipleship, Missionary Leadership, and Formation and Participation.

This paper has been prepared to assist with reflection on the theme of *Missionary Leadership*. As we reflect on this theme, we are encouraged to ponder: Where is the Holy Spirit leading our Archdiocese at this time? Whom are we being called to accompany in faith more intentionally? How might we reflect the face of Christ more clearly in our local Church?

This paper aims to foster a spirit of hope and imagination - trusting that, as we walk together, God is calling us into a future marked by faithfulness, renewal and deeper communion.

MISSION BELONGS TO THE WHOLE PEOPLE OF GOD

The mission of the Church belongs to the whole People of God. By virtue of baptism, every Christian is called to participate in the mission of Christ and his Church. Mission is not the responsibility of a few, nor is leadership reserved only for those who hold formal positions of authority. The call to missionary leadership belongs to all the baptised.

By baptism, each person is part of the Body of Christ and shares in his priestly, prophetic and kingly mission. Every baptised person is entrusted with gifts and charisms for the building up of the Church and the transformation of the world. Missionary leadership therefore begins with baptismal identity.

Leadership is exercised whenever people:

- live the Gospel authentically
- accompany others in faith
- witness to Christ in everyday life.

This understanding fosters a culture of co-responsibility, where clergy, religious and lay faithful work together in service of the Gospel. It reflects the heart of a synodal Church: walking, listening, discerning and participating together in Christ's mission.

Reflect:

What has been your experience of missionary leadership?

Share your experience via email:
synod@cam.org.au

LEADERSHIP AS PARTICIPATION AND WITNESS

While some members of the Body of Christ are called to formal leadership roles within the Church, all the baptised are called to lead through the witness of their lives. Missionary leadership is defined not by position but by participation in Christ's mission.

It is lived in

- homes and families
- workplaces and schools
- parishes and communities.

Missionary leadership invites all people to recognise that they have a role to play in the life and mission of the Church.

FORMING LEADERS

Missionary leaders do not seek to do everything themselves. Instead they:

- discern and recognise the gifts of others
- form and accompany new leaders
- equip the faithful for ministry.

A central task of leadership is to identify, develop and release the gifts already present within the community. Healthy Christian communities are marked by active participation, where people move from being consumers of a service to contributors, building up the community, from observers of community life to participants, and from recipients of ministry to missionary disciples.



MISSIONARY LEADERSHIP IN DAILY LIFE

Missionary leadership is expressed differently according to vocation and context. For some, it is exercised through formal roles in parishes, schools or Catholic ministries. For many others, it is lived in the ordinary circumstances of daily life:

- Parents lead as the first educators in faith accompanying their children and witnessing to the Gospel through family life.
- Families become primary places of evangelisation and discipleship.
- Educators, mentors and community members lead through example, encouragement, and witness.

Missionary leadership begins wherever people live their baptismal call with intentionality and courage.

The essential question is not simply 'Who leads?' but 'How are all the baptised equipped and encouraged to participate in Christ's mission?'

MISSIONARY LEADERSHIP IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES OF FAITH

For many years, much of parish life has understandably focused on sustaining ministries, maintaining buildings and preserving established ways of operating. While these responsibilities remain important, missionary leadership calls the Church to move decisively from maintenance to mission. As Fr James Mallon observes in *Divine Renovation*, 'The Church does not have a mission; the mission has a Church.'

Missionary leadership recognises that our structures, resources, ministries and governance exist to serve the mission of evangelisation.¹ This requires more than incremental change. It calls for a shift in culture: from preservation to renewal, from serving those who are already present to actively seeking those who are absent, and from waiting for people to come to us to intentionally going out into the world.

FROM WELCOMING TO INVITATIONAL COMMUNITIES

A welcoming community receives those who come. A missionary community goes further: it is intentionally invitational and:

- reaches out proactively
- builds relationships
- creates pathways for encounter with Jesus Christ.

Missionary leaders continually discern:

- How are we inviting people into relationship with Jesus?
- How are we helping people encounter Christ through the life of our communities?
- How are we forming disciples who can confidently share their faith?
- How are we equipping people to live the Gospel in their families, workplaces and local communities?
- How are our structures supporting mission, or hindering it?

PROCLAMATION, SACRAMENT AND ENCOUNTER

At the heart of missionary leadership is the kerygma: the joyful proclamation of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This joyful proclamation provides an

opportunity to engage people in their own encounter with the Lord Jesus.

In the Catholic tradition, this proclamation is inseparable from the Church's sacramental life. The Gospel is proclaimed not only through words but also through:

- liturgy and sacrament
- signs, symbols, rituals
- encounters that reveal God's presence.

Missionary communities ensure that their liturgies, ministries and parish life are places of encounter that lead people into deeper relationship with Christ and participation in the life of the Church. As Jesus reminds his disciples, 'You are the light of the world' (Matthew 5:14).

Missionary leaders help all the baptised recognise and live this calling.



TOWARD A MISSIONARY FUTURE

The future of missionary leadership depends not simply on recruiting more leaders, but on awakening, forming and sending the missionary leaders we already have.

This requires:

- intentional formation
- a culture of co-responsibility
- communities that call forth, support and sustain missionary disciples.

Missionary leadership is formed in baptism and expressed through participation, witness and shared responsibility. It calls every member of the Church to take an active role in Christ's mission.

By fostering missionary leadership at every level, the Church becomes more fully a synodal and missionary community - sent into the world to proclaim the Gospel and witness to Christ in word and action.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How do people in my community demonstrate missionary leadership?
2. What prevents people from becoming engaged in missionary leadership?
3. What three priorities to support missionary leadership could the Archdiocese pursue over the next five years?

NEXT STEP

Please provide your feedback by scanning the QR code or visiting: <https://melbcath.org/synod-missionaryleadership>



¹ *Evangelli Gaudium*, §27.

Pope Leo delivered a stark message to Spanish Catholics last week: if it is to bring the light of the Gospel to the world, the Church in Europe must change / By Austen Ivereigh

‘First love, then technique’

Whoever was elected pope last year would have leapt at the chance to mark the centenary of Antoni Gaudí’s death by inaugurating the final, central, Jesus Christ tower of his Sagrada Família basilica. But it was Leo XIV’s own choice to make his first trip to Europe an eight-day, 22-speech visit to Madrid, Barcelona and the Canary islands.

The idea for it was born in a meeting with the Spanish bishops last November, when they described to him the spiritual awakening and hunger especially of young people and the challenge the Church faced in responding, which the bishops were seeking to address in their new pastoral plan. Soon after, the Pope offered to help them connect with this young revival by a visit, and the plans snowballed.

Leo’s visit included the first address by a pope to the Cortes (parliament) in Madrid, an extraordinary national moment at the Sagrada Família, and a potently prophetic conclusion in Las Palmas and Tenerife, to spotlight the plight of migrants. But while it was about many things, the essence of Leo’s week was to platform a new *missio ad Europam*. It was to show how the Church in Europe needs to change in order to evangelise.

To see Leo beaming among great throngs of Spaniards was to be reminded of other days, when Europe was the Church’s heartland and the popes’ backyard. Francis deliberately broke with this. When he visited Europe it was often (23 countries, more than Benedict XVI) but briefly, for particular events, or to prioritise its peripheries: the Baltics, Corsica, or Marseille. At 76, he had finite time. He needed to challenge the neo-Christendom, clericalist mindset that is the slow death of Europe’s Church which long visits might have risked shoring up. So he spent his long apostolic journeys in Latin America, Asia and Africa, showing forth the missionary, synodal style and pastoral strategies of the Church where 70 per cent of all Catholics now live. By making his grand pastoral visits to those young, overflowing Churches, which mostly exist in cultural climates suspicious of and hostile to Christianity, he could help Europe embrace its own future as a missionary minority in a secular culture.



Pope Leo drew 80,000 faithful to the Santiago Bernabéu stadium in Madrid last week

Leo, the second pope for a global missionary Church, entirely shares Francis’ diagnosis of Europe, and his prescription of a missionary, synodal conversion. He made his first visit - after those he inherited from Francis - not to Europe or North America, but to Africa in April, taking in four nations over 10 days.

But after 13 years of the Francis turnaround, Leo sees signs, especially in Spain, that the old ecclesial centre is finally awakening, and he needs to encourage it. Leo intends to rebalance his predecessor’s strategy with longer pastoral visits to Europe: he will be in France for four days in September, for example, prior to his big Latin-American visit in November.

Spain was the obvious place to start this new mission. It is the European Church arguably most identified with the synodal, missionary reset Leo has made his own, reflected in the bishops he and Francis appointed. In turning Spain around, Francis had strong allies in Cardinal Juan José Omella y Omella of Barcelona and latterly Cardinal José Cobo of Madrid, a member of the bishops’ dicastery under Prevost.

For an example of how important the Spanish Church has become to the wider reform, take its years-long synodal overhaul of its seminaries.

Impressed, Francis in 2024 put Cobo in charge of reforming seminaries worldwide, to prepare priests for today’s missionary realities.

So what was, in Benedict’s time a defensive, clericalist hierarchy locked in culture-war battles with the liberal left looks very different now. As the papal visit showed, the bishops’ relations with public bodies are these days respectful and collaborative. Their fluid dialogue over the past eight years with Pedro Sánchez’s socialist government has led to five key agreements born of alignment on issues such as migration, the peace, equality, abuse and the challenge of AI. But it is in the Church itself that the shift is most visible. The bishops’ four-year pastoral plan, *Poneos en camin* (“Set out on the road”, Luke 10:3), published in April, is the fruit of a broad consultation concluding in discernment sessions by the bishops using conversations in the Spirit. Echoing the breakthrough Latin-American assembly of Aparecida in 2007 that led to *Evangelii Gaudium*, Francis’ 2013 road map for the Church, the document frankly faces the crisis of faith transmission - people no longer become Catholic through family and parish - that has led to the shrinking and ageing of the eight million of Spain’s 45

million population who attend Mass. ("In Spain the era is over ... in which we said: 'I am Catholic because I was born in Spain,'" the bishops say.)

But then, Aparecida-style, the bishops reject the temptation to batten down the hatches until the storm passes, saying this would be to betray Christ's mandate to evangelise, and abandon society to individualistic ideologies that breed polarisation and conflict. Their answer is a wholehearted commitment to the missionary conversion of *Evangelii Gaudium* and its call to evangelise, with synodality and discernment as the keys. Insisting that synodality and mission are inseparable, that to move into a missionary key without the synodal conversion of people and structures is a contradiction, the bishops endlessly quote the Synod Final Document, stressing Leo's call for its implementation this year, and have a dedicated website to enable it, full of practical courses and methods at every level. This stress on synodality as the key to missionary conversion is exactly that of Leo, who in *Magnifica Humanitas* says the Synod Final Document identifies the "key practices for missionary transformation". The Spanish bishops' response is an obvious contrast to that of the bishops of England and Wales, who have never responded as a body to the Final Document, or made mention of its implementation, which most Catholics in the UK are unaware of.

Leo came to encourage and embed this path of missionary conversion, paying special attention to the young, 600,000 of whom he led in prayer at a "festival of faith" in the Plaza de Lima, telling them how his years in Peru shoed him how "the Word of God can transform conflict into peace, can be a source of reconciliation, peace, and justice". At the Corpus Christi Mass in the Plaza de Cibeles the following day, he told a huge crowd of 1.2 million that Spain's historic Church was not a folklore museum to be visited but a school of faith for the building of a better society, and that the Eucharist was not just about "bringing out the monstrance, but of allowing ourselves to be brought out of our selfishness and indifference, of a comfortable, private faith, so as to respond to his invitation to conversion, to change our perspective, and to welcome his presence which transforms us and makes us builders of a new world."

The following day, Monday 8 June, saw the big public smash-hit: Leo's half-hour speech at the Cortes, greeted with an apparently endless (in fact, seven -minute) ovation. It deftly showed the power of faith to raise perspectives, transcending narrow ideologies in conflict by creating a

shared horizon of the common good rooted in human dignity. Specifically invited by the president of the deputies' chamber to help Spain to overcome its polarised politics, Leo's speech managed to do exactly that: both *El País* and *ABC* declared *Milagro en el congreso* ("Miracle in Parliament") the next day, a rare moment of consensus between the leading right- and left-wing dailies.

Yet when he highlighted the contribution of the so-called "Salamanca school" of sixteenth-century Dominican and Jesuit canon lawyers and theologians to an international moral order, Leo's message went far beyond Spain. At a time when "new worlds and immense possibilities were opening up in relations among peoples", the discovery and conquest of America also unleashed great greed for power and wealth. By creating a "legal and moral consciousness capable of remembering that authority always entails responsibility and that every human being must be recognised as a subject of rights and duties", the Salamanca theologians "became part of a broader consciousness, shared by the international community, which continues to ask itself how to build peace on the recognition of the person and not on the imposition of force"; Leo told the joint session of Parliament. He then linked that task to today's breakdown in the international order, and the challenge posed by artificial intelligence, calling for discernment to focus on "the place of the human person in our decision-making and on how the dignity of work, solidarity, social policy and the common good are today being addressed in new ways". In this task, he suggested, the Church and its institutions have a key social role to play in building a "culture of reciprocity" and the cultivation of conscience around "solid values" rooted in the God-endowed dignity of all.

Following that masterclass in evangelisation, Leo went on to the bishops' conference head-quarters. He encouraged to the "leave behind structures that do not help us, do not respond to our needs, or even lead us away from our goal". To help them move on from a static neo-Christendom model that was failing, he urged them to look to their past, to the task of evangelising vast swathes of Spain recaptured from the Moors, when they developed strategies that were then exported to the Americas. A key church witness now was to unity in diversity at a time of polarisation, creating "a communion capable of embracing the richness of the gifts, charisms and sensibilities that the Holy Spirit stirs up in the people of God". Then, aware no

doubt of European bishops making endless needy appeals to young men to become priests, he reminded them that "vocational ministry cannot be reduced to a mere pursuit of numbers: but "springs from living communities". In other words, look first to the life of your parishes, and where it is abundant, vocations will follow. (Cardinal Cobo of Madrid has spoken of a slight rise in the number of men entering the priesthood in the capital, along with an increase in baptisms.) And in the meantime, Leo stressed, they should welcome laypeople stepping forward for ecclesial service.

Addressing a big diocesan assembly that evening at the Bernabéu football stadium, Leo asked the Church to attend to the seekers and searchers turning to Catholicism in increasing numbers. "Have confidence in the growing phenomenon of people who return to the faith or come to know it for the first time in adulthood," he urged them, adding: "Be ready to welcome new beginnings not as an exception, but as the rule of the mission." He then connected this to synodal conversion, stressing the need for discernment and prayer to be built into parish governance: "The participation in parish and diocesan councils has no lesser goal than this: to adjust the sensibility of each person through listening closely to what the Spirit says to the Church." Rather than being reduced to "mere bureaucratic formalities", he said such bodies should be "spaces of mutual listening for the exercise of discernment", as result of which "worship becomes life, and bonds of fraternity and projects of solidarity arise among people". He urged priests not to resist this, but to embrace "the practice of communal discernment as one of the greatest opportunities that synodality offers to their ministry". When parish life is reduced to "a routine in which everyone remains locked into their habits and roles, what we lack is the Spirit", he warned, before urging them, Francis-style, not to be afraid of what the Spirit stirs up.

The Barcelona leg began, too, with a prayer vigil with 40,000 young people at the Lluís Companys Olympic Stadium. Leo listened to raw stories of depression, domestic violence and suicide, as well as faith stories, urging on them a "healthy sense of restlessness" and to be "pilgrims in the night" like Nicodemus, and to see the darkness as the start of new life. Even here, Leo was modelling that the mission to the young begins by listening and entering into the chaos of contemporary life.

Otherwise, Catalonia was about inculturation: how the Gospel roots and blooms in language and culture. At

both the monastery of Montserrat and later in the Sagrada Família, Leo spoke far more Catalan than had been expected, and had beautiful encounters with children. Outside the Basilica, a blind 12-year-old girl, Valentina, ran her fingers tenderly up and down a model of the four-arm cross atop the new Christ tower, explaining in great detail Gaudí's vision for it to Leo, who was standing alongside the King and Queen. (Leo gave Valentina a rosary; Queen Letizia a hug.)

The astonishing Mass in the Sagrada Família - a congregation of 9,000 - put Gaudí's masterpiece of stone and light centre stage, filled it with heavenly harmonies, and concluded outside with a spine-tingling "Hosanna" from the Montserrat's choirboys, the Escolania. Then a spectacular light show and fireworks caused gasps of awe and pride, confirming the Sagrada as the greatest and most daring Catholic edifice of our times.

Against this luxuriant backdrop Leo's homily never quite shone: too many ideas, without a clear through-line. I wanted to report that he used this moment to link to integral ecology and the mission in the new era, for in both respects the Sagrada Família is the perfect temple for our times. In his visionary genius, Gaudí had seen the Basilica - visited by five million mostly foreign tourists a year - not as the last cathedral of the Christian era, but the first of a new era, and its task to heal the breach that modernity had placed between the Creator and his creation. Hich is why he put outside (the salvation mysteries) what is normally inside, and put inside (forests and snails

and reptiles) what is normally kept far away from churches. Leo said the Basilica was an "eloquent catechesis made of stones, colours and light: but - unlike Benedict XVI's homily consecrating the Basilica in 2010 - we didn't learn how.

Leo ended as loving pastor and fiery prophet in the Canary Isles, which Francis had wanted to visit but in the end couldn't. Leo, the first pope to go there, met migrants, those working with migrants, and the local Church, focusing inevitably on the tragedies of the deaths at sea, and linking the *caritas* the Church shows to the poor with the love of God poured out in mission. Social action met urgent material needs, yes, but also a deeper hunger to belong and be integrated, he said in Gran Canaria.

Meanwhile, those who come needing "shelter, language assistance, work and protection" must also find "a community capable of offering paths to knowing Jesus Christ through the witness of life and word", he said, before making clear that this witness meant taking a stand against exploitation and abuse of migrants. In Tenerife, Leo's message "to those who organise death routes, traffic in human beings, withhold documents, exploit workers, threaten women, deceive families and turn the suffering of others into a business" was simply: "Stop. Repent ... For every life lost, every family deceived, every body subjugated, every woman threatened, every worker exploited, you will have to appear before divine justice." The way of Christ would have the last word, he promised - the One who "identifies with the stranger, touches the wounds of

humanity and calls us to recognise him in every brother and sister who needs to be welcomed, protected, supported and integrated".

The crowds of young people turning out for Leo were extraordinary, confirming that, in secular Spain - as the bishops' pastoral plan observes - the challenge is not atheism so much as a hunger for God manifesting in different ways. This was a papal visit designed to bring that hunger to the Church's door. Yago de la Cierva, official coordinator of the papal visit, said the Church in Spain expected Leo "to be a magnet for the young people who are looking for answers to their main questions" and that "this is exactly what happened".

Leo's message to the young in Madrid was, "be truly human" - virtuous, justice-seeking, at the service others - when faced with dehumanising pressures: the message, of course, of *Magnifica Humanitas*. Fitting, then, that at the end of a trip that showed forth humanity's magnificent vulnerability, it should be the tech that proved unreliable, when engine failure forced Leo to disembark from the papal plane and accept King Felipe's offer of his private Falcon jet back to Rome.

As Gaudí's famous motto, lit up by drones at the light festival, put it: "First love, technique second." He meant architecture. But it can be said, too, of Leo's mission to Europe, made in Spain.

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Melbourne Synod 2026

Here in Melbourne, with the release of the first two synod theme papers, we now embark on the next step of our own local synodal journey. The Melbourne Synod, convoked by Archbishop Peter A Comensoli earlier this year, is an invitation to our local communities to listen attentively to the Holy Spirit and to discern how we are called to proclaim the Gospel more faithfully in our time and place. The purpose of this synod is to help shape our evangelical and missionary priorities for the years ahead.

<https://melbournecatholic.org/news/next-steps-for-the-melbourne-synod>

**"You are the light of the world.
A city built on a hill
cannot be hidden."**

Matthew 5:14

<https://lightintothecity.org.au/vision/>



**Light into
the City**

