



The Escarpment
Newsletter of the Wollongong Cursillo Movement

Dear Friends,



As the Church in Australia prepares to welcome the International Eucharistic Congress to Sydney in 2027, we are invited to rediscover the centre of Christian life: the Eucharist. For Catholics, the Eucharist is not simply a devotional practice among many others. It is the heart of the Church's life, the place where Christ gives Himself to His people and where the Christian community is continually renewed.

The Second Vatican Council described the Eucharist as the “source and summit of the Christian life.” Everything in the life of the Church flows from this sacrament and returns to it. In the Eucharist, the saving events of Christ's life, death, and resurrection are not merely remembered but made sacramentally present. When the Church gathers at the altar, we participate in the mystery of Christ's self-offering and are united with Him and with one another.

For those of us in the Cursillo Movement, this truth is already familiar. The Christian life expressed in **piety, study, and action** finds its deepest source in the Eucharist. It is through the Eucharist that our friendship with Christ is nourished and sustained. The encounter with Christ that many people experience during a Cursillo weekend ultimately finds its continuing life in the Mass and in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

The Anglican Benedictine liturgical scholar **Dom Gregory Dix** once described the Eucharist as the Church's central act of worship throughout history. In his influential work *The Shape of the Liturgy*, Dix observed that from the earliest centuries the Eucharist followed a pattern rooted in the actions of Christ at the Last Supper: the bread and wine are **taken, blessed, broken, and given**. Through this simple yet profound action, Christ's command - "Do this in memory of me" - has been faithfully carried out by Christians for nearly two thousand years. As Dix asked, "Has any command been so obeyed?" While working on my thesis (the research for which I enjoyed immensely) I recalled Dix's words – written in 1942, and for an Anglican audience – both while I served at Sunday Masses, and during weekday Masses in which I was but an equally humble participant.

Yet the Eucharist has not always been universally cherished or understood. History reminds us that devotion to the Blessed Sacrament has sometimes been contested. During the English Reformation of the sixteenth century, many traditional forms of Eucharistic devotion were removed or discouraged. Practices such as the **reservation of the Blessed Sacrament**, Eucharistic adoration, and the visible presence of the sacrament within churches were reduced or abolished in some places.

The reaction among ordinary believers could be surprisingly strong. In 1549, when the first English Book of Common Prayer was introduced, many people in the west of England rose in protest. Among their demands was a striking statement about the place of the Eucharist in the life of the Church. One of the rebels' petitions declared:

“We will have the Blessed Sacrament hang over the High Altar and there be worshipped as it was wont to be.”

In medieval churches the consecrated Host was often reserved in a pyx suspended above the altar, a visible reminder that Christ remained sacramentally present among His people. The rebels' demand reflected a deep instinct of faith: they believed that the Eucharist was not merely symbolic, but the living presence of Christ in the midst of the Church.

Whatever the political complexities of that moment in history, their instinct reminds us of something important. When reverence for the Eucharist fades,

something essential in Christian life is diminished. The Church has always recognised that the Eucharist is both **sacrifice and sacrament, presence and communion.**

This is why the Blessed Sacrament continues to be reserved in our churches today. The quiet presence of the tabernacle is a constant reminder that Christ remains with His people. Many of us have experienced the peace that comes from simply sitting in silence before the tabernacle, bringing our worries, hopes, and prayers before the Lord. In those moments we rediscover that prayer is not merely speaking to God but resting in His presence.

The forthcoming Eucharistic Congress will therefore be more than a large Church gathering or international event. It will be an invitation to rediscover the Eucharist at the centre of our lives. Events like this have historically served as moments of renewal in the Church, encouraging deeper participation in the Mass and renewed devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

For members of the Cursillo Movement, this invitation resonates deeply with our own spirituality. Cursillo encourages us to encounter Christ personally and to live that encounter in community. The Eucharist is where that encounter is continually renewed. Each Mass draws us again into the mystery of Christ's love and sends us out to bring that love into the world.

As we look toward 2027, we might take this time to deepen our own Eucharistic devotion. Perhaps it means spending a few moments in prayer before the tabernacle during the week. Perhaps it means approaching the Mass with renewed attention and gratitude. Or perhaps it simply means remembering that when we gather at the altar, we stand at the very centre of the Church's life.

Generations before us understood this truth instinctively. They knew that the Eucharist was not an optional extra in Christian life but its living heart. As we prepare for the Eucharistic Congress in Sydney, may we rediscover that same sense of wonder and reverence.

For in the Blessed Sacrament, Christ remains with His Church - present, living, and waiting for us. That is the chief reason I became an acolyte, through a deep-seated longing to be closer to the miracle of the altar (the confection of God Himself in the Blessed Sacrament), the reason I started weekly Adoration at St John the Evangelist parish in Dapto, which a small but faithful group of parishioners attend.

Matthew Nicholson

To commemorate the year of St. Francis, Dianne G. sent in this offering (thanks, Dianne):

Imagine a conversation between God and St. Francis:

God: Frank, you know all about gardens and nature. What in the world is going on down there in Sydney? What happened to the dandelions, violets, thistle, bindi and clover I started eons ago? I had a perfect, no maintenance garden plan. Those plants grow in any type of soil, withstand drought and multiply with abandon. The nectar from the long-lasting blossoms attracted butterflies, honeybees and flocks of songbirds. I expected to see a vast garden of colours by now, but all I see are these green rectangles.

St Francis: It's the tribes that settled here Lord. The suburbanites. They started calling your flowers "weeds" and went to great extent to kill them and replace them with grass.

God: Grass? But it's boring. It's not colourful. It does not attract butterflies, birds and bees, only grubs and sod worms. It's temperamental with temperatures. Do these suburbanites really want all that grass growing there?

St Francis: Apparently so Lord. They go to great pains to grow it and keep it green. They begin each Spring by fertilising grass and poisoning any other plant that comes up in the lawn.

God: The spring rain and warm weather probably makes the grass grow really quickly. That must make the suburbanites happy.

St Francis: Apparently not, Lord. As soon as it grows a little, they cut it – sometimes, twice a week.

God: They cut it? Do they bale it like hay?

St Francis: Not exactly, Lord. Most of them rake it up and put it into bags.

God: They bag it? Why? Is it a cash crop? Do they sell it?

St Francis: No, Sir. Just the opposite. They pay to throw it away.

God: Now let me get this straight. They fertilise grass so it will grow well and when it does grow, they cut it and throw it away?

St. Francis: Yes, sir.

God: The suburbanites must be relived in the summer when I ease back on the rain and turn up the heat. That surely slows the growth and saved them a lot of work.

St. Francis: You aren't going to believe this, Lord. When the grass stops growing so quickly, they drag out hoses and pay more money to water it so they can continue to mow it and pay to get rid of it.

God: What nonsense! At least they kept some of the trees, which was a stroke of genius, if I do say so myself. The trees grow leaves in the spring to provide beauty and shade in the summer. In the autumn, the leaves fall to the ground and form a natural blanket to keep moisture in the soil and protect the trees and bushes.

St. Francis: You'd better sit down, Lord. The suburbanites have drawn a new circle. As soon as the leaves fall, they rake them into great piles and have them hauled away.

God: No! What do they do to protect the tree and shrub roots in the winter and keep the soil nice and loose?

St Francis: After they throw your leaves, they go out and find something called 'mulch'. They haul it home and spread it around in place of leaves.

God: And where do they get this 'mulch'?

St. Francis: They cut down the trees and grind them up.

APG ENCOUNTER THE PHILIPPINES



Eight very excited Australians met at the airport before boarding our flight to Manila to begin our Asia Pacific Encounter. On arrival Gorith greeted us, we had met at the National when she represented the Philippines there. She helped us change our money then arranged our transfer to the Pius XII Catholic Centre where we were accommodated for the night in quite comfortable rooms. Here we met the rest of the Australians, now we were 13.

Our night started with Mass followed by a little concert given by Filipino Cursilistas (in the rain) really wonderful, added, to us slowly joining in dancing in the rain (Kristine couldn't resist). Then food! Next day we headed, by a 3-hour bus trip, to our home for the week. Welcomed by enthusiastic Filipinos and escorted to our rooms. Shirley, Elizabeth and Kristine shared one room and Nancy shared with 2 Americans and bonded with them over the time. We were welcomed with such hospitality that we were at home immediately.

The first session was at 3.30pm (Philippine time, which we got used to) After welcome remarks and introduction to the APG executives we watched a video about Cursillo in the Asia Pacific, interesting!

We were then introduced to the Speakers for the Encounter. We had 3 Bishops – 1 Vietnamese, 1 Filipino and the Archbishop of Seville In all we had 12 clergy (12 Apostles) a good omen for Evangelization! Countries attending: Vietnam, Vietnam in Diaspora, Taiwan, US Military in Korea, Philippines in USA and Australia. The typhoon cancelled the plane from Japan, but Fr was with us in spirit.

With 150 attending and all their family and friends praying for the typhoon to avoid us God had no option and this day was the last rain (misty) we saw!

Our leaders were Conrado Dizon and Gorith Bendoy. We had beautiful music throughout, great voices – so talented. By dinner time we had already got a taste of the fun, joy, excitement and hospitality of the Filipino Cursilistas who looked after us so well. Australia was the flavour of the month, so popular, so cared for.

Every day started with Morning prayer followed by Mass said by a bishop with thought provoking homilies, followed by breakfast. The program for the day usually followed the same pattern. A short recap of the previous topic, group discussion within each country which was then shared with all, the Plenary talk before lunch. Back to community singing and fun and dancing (Kristine can't help it!) the layperson's talk on topic, the questionnaire discussion.

Two of the first questions we discussed: Situations of the Church and MCC in the Asia Pacific region Strengths and weaknesses. And what new paths of evangelisation do we need to open today in the Asia Pacific region? Challenges we addressed all week. Some days we had 2 Plenary talks followed by a lay person's complimentary talk.

Day 4 was Fiesta afternoon!! What fun we had. We Aussies sang G'day G'day and a couple of other Australian songs (badly), the Filipinos danced, Taiwanese sang (We all joined in) Vietnam etc all were so good. Best I can say about us is that G'day was being sung by many for the rest of the week!

We were in awe of the faith shown, especially in the countries under persecution, living their faith can be dangerous at times, they are constantly watched. Yet they do more than we do to evangelise! Here are a few examples of what Vietnam has done.



1. On Sunday a group of Cursilistas travel 2 hrs. to a poor rural area to share the Gospel and care for the poor and the sick. When they first came there were a few Catholics, no church or chapel. Today a small Parish community has been formed, through their faithful presence and loving witness.

2. A Cursilista every day, at work, at 1pm has a short prayer time inviting all Christians, this has resulted in bringing more to Christ.

3, Another one, on his birthday organised a charity activity for the poor, together with his fellow employees. This had a small start, but eventually the management got involved and now the company has a charity day on his birthday. They have renovated a village fixing and rebuilding homes. The villagers did not know God, but through this activity they do now!

The Taiwanese looked up Baptismal records and went door knocking to find the lost Catholics.

What can we do to bring God to people who do not know Him? Not to Cusillo necessarily but to Christianity. We need to Evangelize through Cursillo not only to Cursillo, could be Vinnies, another group or another way of serving God. We need

to talk to God about it, listen to his guidance on how best to approach any activity. “Talk to God about a friend then talk to the friend about God” The Holy Spirit will lead.

The theme for the encounter was *‘Cursillo: A tool for evangelisation in the Asian region’*

Day 1: Welcome and introduction to the executive and speakers:

Conrado Dizon	President
Fr. Paul Tung Nguyen	Spiritual Adviser
Anthony Think	Vice President
Goreth Bendoy	Secretary
Ahn Tran	Treasurer
Alfred Bongsi	International Representative

Speakers:

Archbishop Jose Angel Saiz-Meneses	Spain
Bishop Joseph Tran Van Toan	Vietnam
Bishop Daniel G Presto	Philippines
Dr, Alvaro Martinez-Moreno	OMCC Spiritual Director

Day 2: Cursillo As An Instrument For Christian Renewal And Evangelization

10 points were presented to address this topic. 1. How do I need to live to be happy? How do I need to live in the best possible way? Cursillo Movement has the best answers to these questions.

2. It is fundamental to being Christian, 3.The person is central value. 4. Walking together=community 5. Friendship, testimony & prayer. 6. A process, not a 3-day weekend. 7. Cursillo Movement can offer an effective answer to many situations

and circumstances 8. It has simple and elemental structures 9. It is fully part of the Church and serves her evangelizing mission. 10. It was born from inspiration of the Holy Spirit and continues to live through that same Charism today. These points were considered throughout the week.

Day 3: Christian Renewal

L5:4 Put out into the deep. The foundation of the Church's work in proclaiming the Gospel is Christ's command "Go out into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation" which must be carried out in parallel with the command "Put out into the deep". Mission is the nature of the Church.

Questionnaire;

In what way can I contribute to the renewal of the Church through Synodality? What is the main element (attitude, subculture, environment or others) that hinders me from living out an honest Christian renewal?

Proverbs from Lao Tzu. Be careful of your thoughts because your thoughts become your words. Be careful of your words because your words become your actions. Be careful of your actions because your actions become your habits. Be careful of your habits because your habits become your character. Be careful of your character because your character becomes your destiny.



Day 4: Evangelization in Southeastern Asia.

Challenges: Jesus was born in Asia, but paradoxically most people in this vast continent don't know him and continue to view him as a character from the west, a person foreign rather than Asian. The poor, indigenous people and their living environment are not given the attention and priority they deserve. Evangelizers who proclaim the good news in the 21st century need to reset their missionary strategies to engage in search and dialogue with people of different beliefs, religions, non-believers, those with the same opinions, other cultures and even with non-believers who hold communist views

Synodality in the MCC

Basic concepts of synodality: Walk together as people of God. Key words: Communion, participation and Mission.

Day 5: Presentation and signing of Manifestation, Resolution and Call to Action.

Farewells from executives and delegates.

We returned to Manila and stayed the night again at the Pius XII Catholic Centre, next day we caught the bus to Baguio in the mountains. A 4-hour trip. This is the city that Gorith lives in and for the next 3 days she hired 2 vans and showed us her city. We saw so many fabulous places and had so great a time experiencing her home. We really did experience, not just sightsee. Met her family, went shopping with her daughter, had fun with her grandsons. The last day we rose at 3 had breakfast and travelled to the top of the tallest mountain in The Philippines for sunrise. It was freezing and windy, but the view of mountains and vegetable terraces was worth it all. That night Suga and the boys brought us a farewell cake, and we had a party with them. What a wonderful way to end our stay in the Philippines. Last day, bus back to Manila and on to the airport after saying goodbye to wonderful Gorith,

To sum up Filipinos, Fun, frolic, fiesta, fantastic, food, fellowship, friendship, and most of all FAITH an unforgettable inspiring encounter, full of peace, love and joy.

There was so much more than can be said here.

Elizabeth Gill.

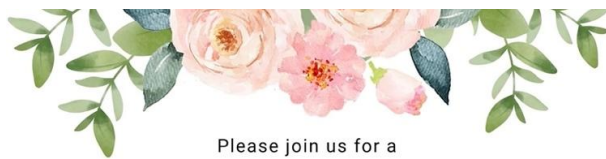
Thank you, Elizabeth, for such an enlightening and entertaining contribution.

Ultreya 2026 Reminder:

Ultreya venues are subject to change depending on the parish involved.

NB: There will be no Ultreya in June due to the team commissioning and Pot Luck lunch on the 20th.

Date	Time	Venue	Host Group
March 21 st	2pm	O.L.H.C, Rosemeadow	Rosemeadow
April 18 th	2pm	St, Anthony's Tahmoor	Tahmoor
May 16th	2pm	Zoom	Panania



Please join us for a

Luncheon

The next social lunch will be held at the Illawarra Master Builders Club, 61 Church St. Wollongong at 12pm on the 27th March. If you wish to attend text Pru 0422 540 484. Family and friends welcome.

Our next women's weekend will be held on the 10th to 13th September 2026.

Please keep the process of selecting a leader and team in your Prayers.

REUNION GROUPS

Updated 2/3/26

LOCATION	CONTACT	MEETING
<i>Eagle Vale Ladies - Day</i>	Contact Pauline Ranger	2 nd Wednesday of the month at 2pm on Zoom
<i>Campbelltown Ladies – Night</i>	Contact Margaret French	Last Tuesday of the month at 7pm on Zoom.
<i>Camden Ladies - Day</i>	Contact Dianne Garland:	2 nd and 4th Thursday of month 10am in Camden.
<i>Tahmoor Ladies - Day</i>	Contact Lesley Wyatt:	4th Monday of the Month 11.30am in Picton
<i>Wollongong Ladies - Day</i>	Contact Elizabeth Gill	Last Monday of the month at 9:30am.
<i>Panania Ladies Group – Day</i>	Contact Trish Benn	1 st Tuesday of each Month 11.30am at Panania