

"It doesn't matter what some public figures say, we're not separated by borders; we're all living this together."



Archbishop's Message
Archbishop Christopher Prowse

Synodality is the new but very ancient theological language for Christians. The new handbook for the upcoming international Synod on Synodality has offered us some excellent summaries of what Synodality is and is not. Below is an excerpt from the Official Handbook for Listening and Discernment in Local Churches: Communion, Participation, and Mission Vademecum for the Synod on Synodality.

Attitudes for Participating in the Synodal Process

• **Being synodal requires time for sharing:** We are invited to speak with authentic courage and honesty (parrhesia) in order to integrate freedom, truth, and charity. Everyone can grow in understanding through dialogue.

• **Humility in listening must correspond to courage in speaking:** Everyone has the right to be heard, just as everyone has the right to speak. Synodal dialogue depends on courage both in speaking and in listening. It is not about engaging in a debate to convince others. Rather, it is welcoming what others say as a way by which the Holy Spirit can speak for the good of all (1 Corinthians 12:7).

• **Dialogue leads us to newness:** We must be willing to change our opinions based on what we have heard from others.

• **Openness to conversion and change:** We can often be resistant to what the Holy Spirit is trying to inspire us to undertake. We are called to abandon attitudes of complacency and comfort that lead us to make decisions purely on the basis of how things have been done in the past.

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Santa Claus and the Joker

BY DON SMITH

LOOKING for a good sense of humour in these COVID times?

Rumour has it that Frs George Ogah and Namora Anderson have it in spades.

The merry duo are the parish priest and assistant priest respectively at the Immaculate Conception parish, Tumut.

They bring a light-hearted touch to their banter which, according to Fr Namora, has a deeper meaning that comes with a label.

It's called eutrapelia, roughly pronounced utre-pelia; a Greek word meaning 'wittiness'. It's about being a little playful in conversation in a nice way, nothing crude, rude, or crass.

Eutrapelia has a long ancestry having come down from the classical philosophers and the church's great thinkers. Fr Namora said he was much influenced by the concept from his studies at the seminary.

"In the parish we try to live eutrapelic lives," he said. "We enjoy life and part of that is good humour. So I'm always telling silly jokes. Nothing ridiculous."

The jokes apparently get a good response from his presbytery housemate whose chortle, Fr Namora says, is "infectious and booming, like a big Santa Claus laugh."

For his part, Fr George says he and Fr Namora have much in common.

They both love soccer and are big Chelsea fans. They share meals, jokes, and prayers together.

"There's never a dull moment



Tumut Catholic Church of the Immaculate Conception priests Father George Ogah from Nigeria and Father Namora Anderson from Canberra. PHOTO Tumut and Adelong Times



Fr George Ogah (left) and Fr Namora Anderson (2nd from right) along with Fr Lolesio Gisa (2nd from left, parish priest Sacred Heart Parish, Cootamundra) and Fr Yoseph Neonbasu (assistant priest, St Mary's, Young). The four priests were attired in their national dress for Christmas 2020 – Nigeria, Samoa, Indonesia, and Indonesia respectively. (Ancestries for Fr Namora and Fr Yoseph are from different areas of Indonesia and hence the different style of dress.)

in the presbytery," Fr George said. "In our house, our home here, it's still fun."

Fr Namora suggests good humour is integral to their Christian mission in the parish.

"Once eutrapelia comes into play, we become joyful people," he said.

With so much talk of viruses at present, it's the one condition we all hope might be contagious.

Local Life

Congratulations to Baden Godfrey (left in head gear) & Shane Wilcox (about to kick) of **St Edmund's College**, selected in the 2021 Australian Schoolboys 'A' Team.



Representative honours also to Matias Jensen (below left), Ben Keogh (below centre), and Harry Williams (below right) of **Marist College, Canberra**. Matias and Ben have been selected in the 2021 Australian Schoolboys 'A' Team, while Harry has been selected in the 2021 Australian Schoolboys President's Team.



Roof repairs to **St Bede's Braidwood** underway



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Lockdown nuptials

BY DON SMITH

ROMANCE being what it is in the age of technology they met online, sharing a mutual love of family history research.

But then love being what it is, Ron Norton and Rosemary Rogers fell in love, too.

Last week before Fr James Antony at Holy Family Church in Canberra's south, the happy couple tied the knot.

The handsome groom is 92, the beautiful bride 82.

With the wedding taking place in the midst of the lockdown, the only witnesses present aside from the celebrant were Ron's daughter Leslie Hayward and Rosemary's son, David Thomas.

In a poignant touch, David officiated as Ron's best man and Leslie as Rosemary's matron of honour.

It is a marriage of words and numbers for Ron and Rosemary. He's a former journalist and newspaper editor, including with the Canberra Times; she was an accountant.

Rosemary was living in Sydney and Ron in Canberra when they first met over the internet five years ago. Email exchanges and telephone calls followed leading the accountant to weigh up the numbers and make a decision to relocate to Canberra in late 2016.

"It was a good place to move to and plus it had a bonus," she said with a chuckle.

The relationship with the "bonus" developed to a point where earlier this year at Ron's great-granddaughter's wedding



Fr James Antony with Ron Norton and Rosemary Rogers

"It's just so great, so peaceful, so fulfilling in my life to have that [becoming a Catholic] and to be accepted as a member of the beautiful church"

Rosemary Rogers

the idea of marriage came to a head.

"We'd been talking about it for some time," said Ron. "Being at the wedding stirred the emotions and I proposed to Rosemary that night."

She said yes, apparently without too much hesitation. "I think I'd waited long enough," she said with another chuckle.

The lady of the numbers did the figures and decided instinctively they would get married on the eighth of the ninth this year.

To their delight, the date

coincided with the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

They are parishioners at Holy Family Church where they were married but were both initially Presbyterians who came to Catholicism late in life.

Ron became a Catholic in 2014, with Rosemary following a year later after a series of family bereavements.

"It's just so great, so peaceful, so fulfilling in my life to have that [becoming a Catholic] and to be accepted as a member of the beautiful church," she said.

For the couple, their marriage holds a message at this difficult time for many.

"At our age we've shown people that even in [this time of] adversity love can nourish and be fulfilled," Rosemary said.

Plenary update

COVID-19 has seriously impacted the format for the upcoming first session of the Plenary Council which will take place on 3-10 October this year. A key change in the delivery of the First General Assembly is that it will now be totally online with one person on one device at their home.

Archbishop Christopher Prowse has emphasised that the upcoming Plenary Council will be one step among many in the renewal of the Catholic Church in Australia.

"Our journey is in harmony with the International Synod on Synodality, coming up in 2023, of which Pope Francis has called for the participation of all dioceses around the world," Archbishop Christopher said.

The language of the Plenary Assembly and its agenda reflects Pope Francis' strong emphasis on discernment and synodality, that is 'walking together' and walking with the Holy Spirit while exercising 'communal listening and discerning'.

"As we start to work out what implications the Australian Plenary and the interna-

tional Synod means for the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn, an important step is to listen and learn about the "language of synodality," Archbishop Christopher said.

"Putting aside, for the moment, the things we can do, let's look at what sort of people does God want us to be? What is the language as we talk together prayerfully? How do we truly discern where God is walking in our Archdiocese?"

"If we give way to each other, walk together, listen carefully and allow the Holy Spirit to lead us, we will be well on the way to expressing evangelisation and mission in the Archdiocese for the years ahead."

Archbishop Christopher is proposing that all local members (formerly known as delegates) gather daily at 8am in the Cathedral for Mass and prayers – this will be live-streamed via the Catholic Voice YouTube channel.

A Novena will be offered in the nine days leading up to the start of the Plenary Assembly on Saturday 25 September.



Carrying the message 'you are not alone'

BY DEACON JOE BLACKWELL

BEING a hospital chaplain at Canberra Hospital has emphasised for me how precious life is, how strong the human drive to survive is and how important our connections to others are.

Although our team has been reduced to Fr Johny Abraham and myself since COVID-19 hit in March 2020, we have been able to continue ministering the sacraments and being a friendly ear.

In chaplaincy it is a great privilege to be present to others, to communicate and often to listen. It's not to drive a conversation where we think it ought to go, but to share these times with people.

Witnessing the heartache,

sense of loss as well as love of the parents at a stillbirth, or in the long struggle faced by babies and parents of very premature births bears striking similarities to what I've seen when aged parents sit in vigil alongside their over-60-year-old dying child.

It is the same with children sitting with a dying parent. The tears and emotions run deep as does their desire for support, love, care and assurances.

Some people hold on to life till certain family or friends are present, or until a family member is ready for them to go. Sometimes the period of struggle involving one step forward then numerous steps back has enabled their loved ones to come to a better space and strength when death occurs.



Fr Johny Abraham (left) and Deacon Joe Blackwell

For some, this means having the ability to give permission to the patient to stop their impossible fight.

Ultimately, a person's last moments are uniquely theirs. Every illness has both physical

and emotional aspects to be faced by the patient. Such situations are personal to each of us, but we don't have to face them alone.

The current COVID-19 restrictions which exclude almost

all visitors have highlighted the importance of family and friends. Today's electronic devices are not a substitute.

Isolation continues to present one of the greatest challenges. It is into this isolation that chaplains have the beautiful privilege of bringing to people the message communicated by the visits of many family, friends, and volunteers - that they are not alone, that they are loved, there is hope!

One of the messages from the musical Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat that has stayed with me is in the words of Joseph, imprisoned in Egypt awaiting his fate: "Close every door to me, keep those I love from me. Children of Israel are never alone."