

The Upper Room

*God came looking
for US.*

p2



**What type of Catholic
are you?**

p7

**How to pass your faith
on to your children**

p11

**Becoming a friend:
Volunteering at Vinnies**

p18

**Kicking Goals for Mission
Month!**

p16

**More than a parish:
A Living Multicultural
Community at Holy
Spirit Parish**

p20



**HOLY SPIRIT PARISH
CASUARINA**

The Upper Room

Contents

God came looking for US.	2
A Jubilee Pilgrimage of Grace and Thanksgiving in the Year of Hope	3
Stories of becoming a missionary disciple: Frank	5
What type of Catholic are you?	7
The Principles of Evangelical Catholicism; Vision 2026 for HSP	9
Sharing the faith with Prisoners	10
How to pass your faith on to your children	11
Kicking Goals for Mission Month	16
Limitless faith	17
Becoming a friend: Volunteering at Vinnies	18
More than a parish: A Living Multicultural Community at Holy Spirit Parish	20
Our Parish, 2025	23

We acknowledge the Larrakia people, the traditional custodians of the land upon which our Parish sits. Our parish has a unique covenant relationship with our indigenous brothers and sisters of the St Martin de Porres Community with whom we work together towards true reconciliation and healing through the love and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.





God came looking for us.

The message of Christmas is something that should always astound us.

God loved you so much that he was prepared to lower himself to your level, take on your suffering and experience all the hardship of your life, just so that he could be close to you.

The great mystery is that God wanted to be known. We don't believe in a God who just created the universe then wanted to be left alone. It wasn't enough for us to just believe that he existed. He wanted to be in relationship with us. He wanted to reveal his love for you in the most personal way possible.

Some people seem to think that faith is about searching for God. It is more about God trying to meet you in the reality of your life. The reason why God entered into the lowest point of human existence, becoming human in a poor family in the most rejected part of the world, was so that he could find you whenever you are at your lowest point. When you are drowning under the weight of hardships, you don't have to go looking for God, because he is already there waiting for you.

As we celebrate this beautiful season of Christmas, it is important to remember to let yourself be found by God. Once all the celebrations are over and the commercial noise has faded away, give yourself some time to reflect on the mystery of how much you are loved by the one who created you.

Fr Dave Callaghan

A Jubilee Pilgrimage of Grace and Thanksgiving in the Year of Hope

by Lucas Hurley



During this Jubilee Year, my wife Bianca and I were blessed to undertake a pilgrimage to Rome, a journey made especially meaningful as it marked the 20th anniversary of our Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. We travelled as pilgrims seeking to celebrate God's never-failing mercy and to give thanks for the many blessings poured into our lives; our faith, our marriage, and our three wonderful children.

A highlight of the Jubilee pilgrimage is the grace of passing through the Holy Doors of the four major basilicas of Rome. With deep reverence we crossed the thresholds at St Peter's Basilica, St John Lateran, St Mary Major, and St Paul Outside the Walls. Each Holy Door symbolises Christ Himself, the Gate of Mercy, through whom we enter more deeply into the life of grace.

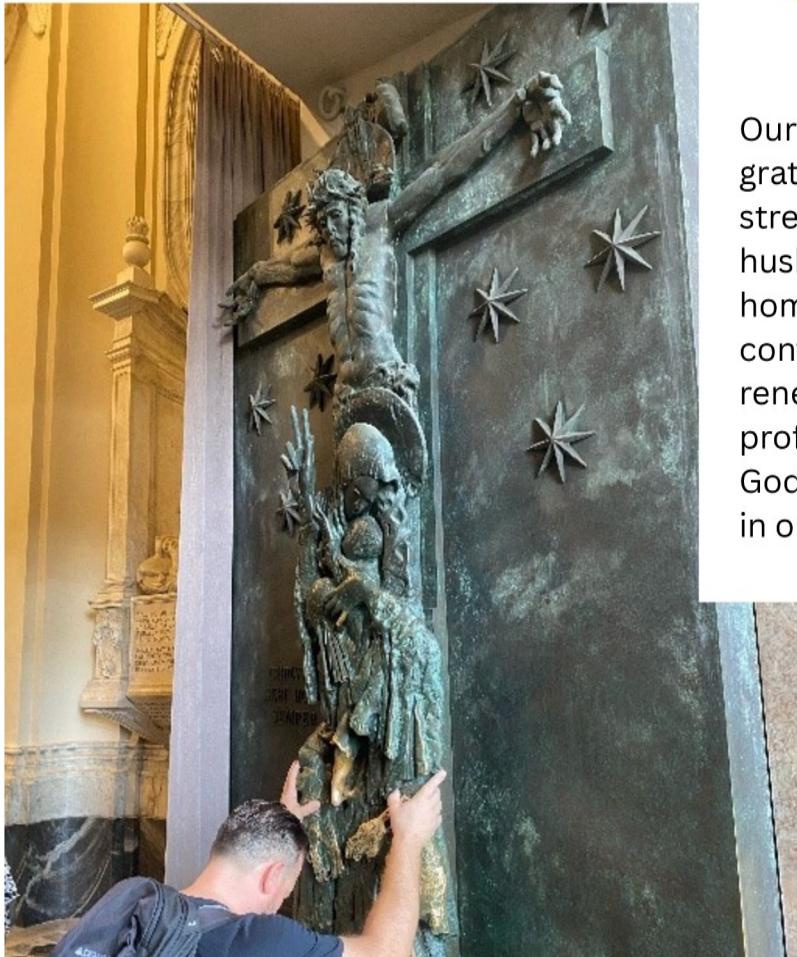
At St Peter's Basilica, we completed the full conditions for the Jubilee Plenary Indulgence, entering through the Holy Door, celebrating the Sacrament of Confession, praying for the Holy Father's intentions, and receiving Holy Communion. It was a profoundly moving experience to stand in the very heart of the Church, united in prayer with Catholics from around the world, aware of God's immense mercy and His patient love for us.

Among the many graces of the pilgrimage, one moment stands out with particular. On 29 June, my birthday and the great Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, I had the privilege of celebrating Mass inside St Peter's, in the Chapel of the Chair. The Gospel proclaimed that day was Matthew 16:18: "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church." Lifting my eyes during the proclamation of the Gospel, I saw those very words inscribed in gold around the dome above me. And beneath that same dome, only metres away, rested the tomb of St Peter himself.



“ It was a pilgrimage of awe, Scripture, history, liturgy, and personal faith converging in a single place. I felt deeply the continuity of our Church, built on the faith of the Apostles and sustained by the Holy Spirit across centuries.

”



Our Jubilee pilgrimage renewed our gratitude for God's mercy and strengthened our vocation as husband and wife. We returned home with hearts full, ready to continue our journey of faith with renewed devotion, joyful hope, and profound thanksgiving for all that God has done, and continues to do, in our lives.



Stories of becoming a missionary disciple: Frank

by Frank Mante

I always went to church on Sundays as I thought it was a form of Life Insurance. If it all ended tomorrow, I'd be able to show St Peter a spreadsheet of all the Sunday masses I attended.

I (thought) I understood and agreed with 90% of the church's teachings

The 10% was my bargain with God. He could have it 90% His way and 10% mine. That's more than fair, right? Little did I know that the areas of my life where I wanted to decide what was right, was holding me back from being able to drink the living water that Jesus promised.

When I started attending Holy Spirit church, they announced things like "We're running the Alpha Course" and "The Search program". I couldn't help but be curious so I attended. I realised I understood very little about my faith. My actual spiritual maturity was one of a 12 year old. I thought "Obey the commandments so you will go to heaven", "Do your best and God will do the rest". I started attending the retreat days and Charismatic mass, and realised that faith is something to be experienced and encountered. If you're brave enough to let go, faith flows through you, rather than something you have to prove so you can get into heaven.

If you're brave enough to let go, faith flows through you, rather than something you have to prove so you can get into heaven.

The beauty of creation started to jump out at me. I would look at someone in the eyes and it's like I could see a glimpse of what Jesus saw in people, which would bring tears of joy to my eyes. Jesus said to the woman at the well, "If you drink the water the world gives you, you will be thirsty again, if you drink the water I give you, you will have a fountain welling up to eternal life".

I started to care a lot less about my next house deposit and the next promotion at work. I cared more about loving the person in front of me.

I feel like a weight has been lifted off my shoulders, and I feel confident in my identity as a child of God. There's an inner peace that I can't seem to explain.

Cultural

This is where you are baptised Catholic as a child because everyone else in your family is Catholic. It is more like a cultural identity than a personal experience of faith. The problem is that once the culture changes, the faith falls away. This often happens with migrant families, where the first generation are strong in their catholic faith, but the second generation stop attending church because they have adopted the new culture. Your faith is more about cultural practice than it is about conversion and being in relationship with Jesus.

What type of Catholic are you?

Recreational

This is where your faith is just another leisure time activity which takes up about 90 minutes of your week but has no impact on your life outside of that time. Church becomes a social gathering with a bit of spirituality attached, but it doesn't influence the rest of your week.

About 20% of people in Australia call themselves Catholic. That is an impressive number, but the reality is there are some very different ideas of what it means to be Catholic.

Most Catholics can be sorted into four categories:

Full-time

This is where our faith is built on a living relationship with Jesus that influences the whole of our life. Our encounter with Jesus on Sunday calls us into a life of full-time discipleship. This version of Catholicism infuses every aspect of life and calls us into a life of holiness and mission.

Cafeteria

This version is like a cafeteria or buffet, where you have a lot of different types of food on offer, and you only choose the ones that you like. There are many Catholics who believe that they can choose which parts of the faith (our doctrines or practices) that they will follow and which ones they will abandon. This is where someone will say that they love coming to Christmas mass, but they don't think that they need to attend mass every Sunday, or they love the church's teaching about caring for the poor, but they don't want to follow other moral teachings.

This final version, the Full-time Catholic, is the version that Jesus created. The other versions of Catholicism are the ones that we created as a way of avoiding a life of real conversion and discipleship.

Ever since the second Vatican Council, the Popes have been calling us to rediscover what it really means to follow Jesus. It called us to focus inwards on true conversion, and outwards on mission to the world. If you look at the church today, it seems like there are two main groups: one group focuses only on the life of prayer and devotion while the other group only focuses on the mission in the world. The first group will pray for the world, but not actually go out to meet the people in need, while the second group will spend so much time out helping people that they never spend any time in prayer.

The true vision of the faith is sometimes called 'Evangelical Catholicism'. This is where both aspects of the faith come together. We are called to be disciples of Jesus, in a living relationship of love with Christ which constantly calls us to conversion. But this love is then meant to call us to look outward, where we witness this love to those in need and share our faith with those who do not know Jesus.

The author George Weigel described this version of Catholicism very clearly: "The evangelical Catholicism of the future is a Catholicism of radical conversion, deep fidelity, joyful discipleship and courageous evangelism. Evangelical Catholics put friendship with the Lord Jesus at the centre of everything, their personal identity, their relationships and all their activity. Evangelical Catholics strive for fidelity despite the wounds of sin and do so through a daily encounter with the word of God and the Bible and a regular embrace of Christ through a frequent reception of the sacraments.

Evangelical Catholics measure the quality of their discipleship by whether and to what extent they give to others what they have been given, by the degree to which they deepen others friendship with the Lord Jesus or bring others to meet the unique saviour of the world."

Our mission at Holy Spirit parish is to build a culture of Evangelical Catholicism. We want to help every person discover a vision of what their life could be like if their faith infused every part of their life. Over the next year, we will be presenting a vision of how we want to develop the parish so that everyone can step into the fullest experience of their faith.

This is a brief extract from Fr Dave's presentation at the parish vision day in November. Early next year we will be launching the parish mission plan. You can watch the whole presentation by scanning this code:

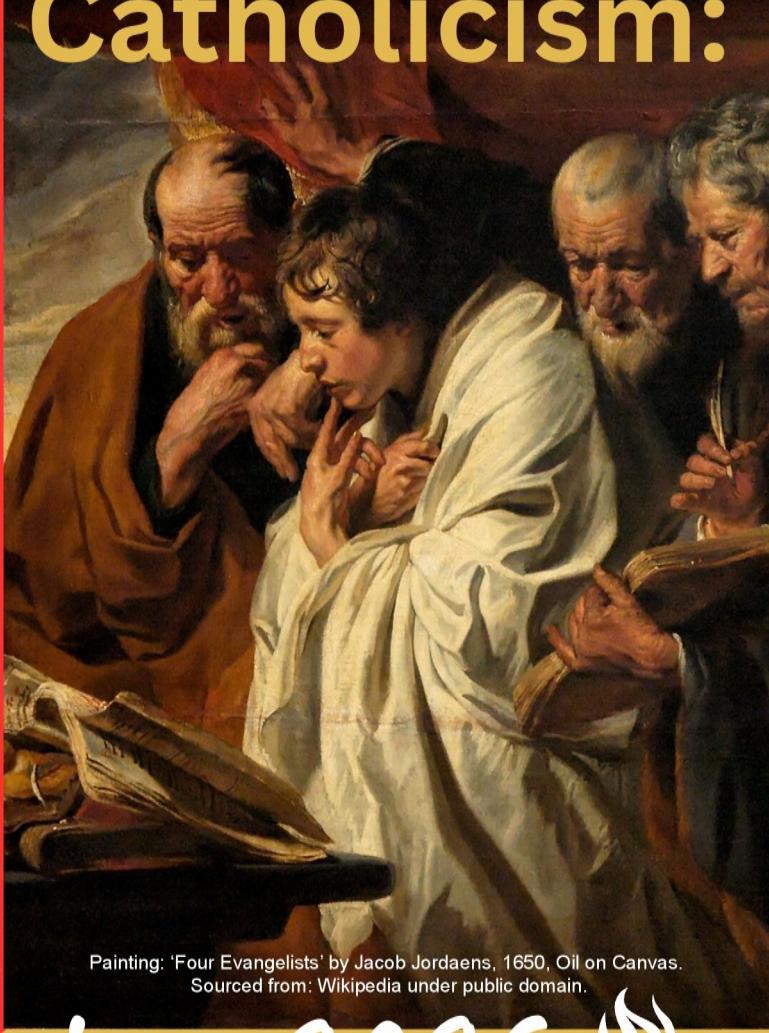


THE PRINCIPLES OF Evangelical Catholicism:

It is not enough to know who Jesus is; we must know Jesus

We need to live our lives based on the whole of the Gospel (not just the bits we like).

We must learn to live as faithful disciples and to reject whatever is contrary to the Gospel.



Painting: 'Four Evangelists' by Jacob Jordaens, 1650, Oil on Canvas.
Sourced from: Wikipedia under public domain.

Being a follower of Christ requires moving from being a Church member by convention to a Christian disciple by conviction.

Receiving the Sacraments regularly and worthily is essential to the life of grace.

All the baptised are sent in the Great Commission to be witnesses of Christ to others and must be equipped by the Church to teach the Gospel in word and deed.

Vision 2026 for HSP

1.

Developing small discipleship groups:

We have been talking about this for many years now, but next year will be the point where we make this happen. If you want to go deeper in your faith, we want to you to consider doing the journey of faith with a small group of parishioners. We will give more details in the new year.

2.

Going deeper in faith:

We have had a lot of people asking for some solid faith formation. We are looking to hold regular faith formation at the church for those who want to delve deeper into the mystery of the Gospel.

3.

Church Extension:

We have sent this year working on plans for the church extension. We are currently in dialogue with builders to try to get the project within our budget. Our hope is that we will get close to starting the project by the end of the wet season next year.

Sharing the faith with prisoners

by Fr Dan Benedetti



As a priest in the missionaries of God's love, one of the most important ministries I've had is to be a prison chaplain to reach out to men, women and children who are incarcerated in the Northern Territory.

It's a massive problem and it just seems to be getting worse. We have prisons that are overflowing, and we have children that are not experiencing the love that they need so that they could live the best lives that God wants. These situations are affecting our whole lives, families, communities and businesses. We ask God to really have mercy on our whole society. Each week we have a team of people from the Holy Spirit parish and surrounding parishes that goes into the prison to celebrate mass and church services to pray with people and to share the good news of God's love. We ask the Lord to send his Holy Spirit to bring healing and hope.

It has been a great joy over these last 10 or 15 years to be taking people into the prison not just to proclaim the good news and to minister God's forgiveness and healing but also to receive from prisoners the gift of faith and hope and love.

I have just been overwhelmed many times and been to very vulnerable places where we open our hearts to God and really ask for mercy and blessing.

This year in December we have the Jubilee for prisoners. We are asking for that gift of hope that these men, women and children who are all sons and daughters of God will have the opportunity to hear the good news. So, let's continue the great mission that Jesus has given us to share the good news and to be pilgrims of hope and healing.

How to pass on the faith to your children

by Fr Dave

As a Christian, you are given the responsibility of sharing your faith with others. As a parent, your first responsibility is to share the faith with your kids. But this can be very difficult in a world that doesn't believe that God is necessary. Here are five tips to share your faith:

1.

Show that your faith has changed you

The witness of your own life is the first step in sharing your faith. Children are constantly watching their parents to see whether their beliefs match their behaviours. If they see an inconsistency between your behaviour at church and your behaviour at home, they will have no desire to listen to what you believe. If they do not see your life being changed by what you believe, they will have no motivation to follow it.

I once heard someone say that the reason they didn't go to church was because their mother had been attending for years, but she was still just as angry and judgmental as she was decades ago. This person said, 'on the day that my mother changes, I will go back to church'. Your own journey of conversion is the most important way of witnessing your faith to your family.

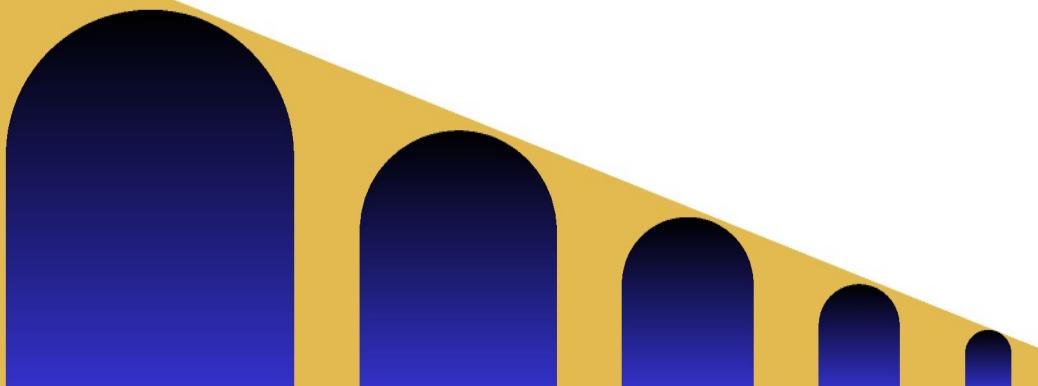
2.

Create good soil

When Jesus tells the parable of the Sower, he is telling us that we need to create a good environment for faith to grow. In the parable, the seed is the gift of faith and the soil is the human heart. If our hearts are filled with the cares of the world or blocked up with pain and hurt, then the seed can not grow.

The best thing that a parent can do is create an environment where their children feel safe to question and search for truth. Instead of trying to convince them to believe in Jesus, focus on removing the blockages or distractions that make it hard to believe. Help the seed of faith to grow

The person whose soul is focussed on Beauty will discover God through creation or art or music. The person whose soul is focussed on goodness will discover God through visible acts of love, such as caring for the poor. If you can understand how your child thinks, you can help them to encounter God in the way that is most natural to them.



by loving them at every moment and praying for them so that no weeds (the lies of the world) take root in their heart.

3.

Understand your child's soul -

There was a famous Franciscan Priest called Fr Benedict Groeschel who claimed that everyone had a different way of encountering God. He said that the three main characteristic of God were 'Truth, Beauty and Goodness'. He believed that every person was attracted to these three things in the world because they were reflections of the nature of God, but each person had one dominant way of encountering God.

The person whose soul is focussed mostly on truth will find God through intellectual discovery.

4.

Search for God with them -

One of the biggest challenges that parents face is knowing how to answer difficult questions about faith. The big danger is when you don't know the answer but try to sound like you do. A lot of young people abandon the faith because the answers they are given are so simplistic that they start to believe that the whole Christian faith is stupid.

If you don't know the answer to a question, the best way to respond is by affirming the question and going



The Upper Room

on a search with your child to understand the answer together. There are a couple of websites that have been developed to answer any question based on the teaching of the church (look for www.catholic.chat or www.magisterium.com).

If you have older children who are asking complicated or controversial questions, sometimes the best way to respond is with another question (this is how Jesus dealt with difficult questions). In a world where we can get instant answers through the internet, there is something beautiful about engaging with a question that can't be easily answered. Encourage them to think deeper about the issue and question the information that they have seen in the media.

Encourage them to search for the truth and trust that if their search is genuine, that God will find them.

Lastly,

5.

Give them time -

Our faith is not just an intellectual belief in an idea. It is an encounter with a person. You can teach your child the bible or the teachings of the church, but you can't make them have an encounter with Jesus and fall in love with him. This is something that is deeply personal and takes time.

If you force them to pray or go to mass, they might harden their hearts and never be open to this encounter. But if you create a culture where they are free to question and search, their hearts will be open to the gift of wonder and awe which will help them to encounter God.

“The Church exists in order to communicate precisely this: Truth, Beauty, and Goodness in person.



-Pope Francis



SOCKTOBER

Kicking Goals for Mission Month

by Fr Dave Callaghan

On a hot and humid Saturday in October, children and youth from the Darwin parishes took to the field for the first inter-parish 'Socktober' soccer competition.

The Holy Spirit parish and school had the privilege of hosting the event to raise money for Catholic Mission and raise awareness of the hardships faced by children around the world.

The 'Socktober' event brought an element of fun to a serious cause, with the soccer matches using a ball made from rags and plastic bags. Sr Jessika from the Canossian sisters organised the event, which brought together teams from Humpty Doo, Karama, Nightcliff and the Cathedral.

The Holy Spirit Parish and the St Martin De Porres community were well represented and played well in all of their games. Fr Shehan played a big role working behind the scenes to organise the matches and keep everything flowing smoothly. Later in the morning, he took on the role of captain for the clergy team as they won convincingly against the Young Adult teams from Holy Sprit and Humpty Doo.

Fr Shehan said "I personally enjoyed working closely with our parishioners. It was heartwarming to see everyone giving their time, talents, and enthusiasm so generously for catholic mission day.



The Upper Room

What made the day even more special was seeing members from different religious communities come together as one team. It was a powerful witness.

The event also gave us a wonderful opportunity to connect with neighbouring parishes, deepen our bonds, and stand together as one Catholic family. Moments like these remind us that we are not alone in our mission but are united as one Church, walking and serving together.



Fr Shehan took on the role of captain and coach for the clergy team (which included religious sisters and a few other parishioners who wanted to play)



“ By the end of the day, there was so much joy, fun, and gratitude in my heart. I felt truly proud to be a Catholic in the Holy Spirit Parish and Darwin Diocese! ”



The final three minutes of each soccer game were played using the 'Socktober' ball made out of rags and plastic bags





The leaders of our parish youth group were recently honoured at a thanksgiving dinner. These young people have taken on the huge task of sharing their faith with the high school students from our parish. All of them are juggling multiple commitments between work and study, yet they keep turning up without fail to run the group.

After many years of service, some of our leaders have decided that they need to step away from leadership to focus on their new careers. We want to particularly honour Jaxy Johnson who was the main leader of the team this year, and is pulling back from the overall leadership role to focus on her study next year.

Special mention also needs to be made of Nicholas Capati who is stepping down after being part of the leadership team for the last six years.

We are looking for some new young adults or young married couples who are interested in helping with the limitless youth group next year. If you are interested, speak to Fr Dave or one of the priests.



Becoming a friend: Volunteering at Vinnies

by Gabrielle Gillamac



For many people, 'volunteering' plainly means giving material relief to people struggling in the margins. At Saint Vincent De Paul Society, or 'Vinnies' for short, however, this comes secondary to giving companionship, respect and encouragement to a wide range of people in need such as international students, survivors of domestic violence and the unhoused.

Frances Abbott, council member for Vinnies and president of the Holy Spirit conference, first started as a volunteer in 2016 before becoming president in 2018. Guided by Vinnies founder, Frederic Ozanam's way of thinking outside the square to help the poor, she shares with us the innovative ways they provide compassionate services to others.

The Upper Room

“When we do home visits to people in need, we always go in pairs, and it’s more to sit with them... and to be someone there for them.”

Frances and the team also tailor curtains for those who have just moved into an empty house. It sounds simple enough, yet it makes a world of a difference and it’s exactly what thinking outside the square means. “We’ll go into the warehouse and get donated curtains but they might not match the windows, so there are a couple of us who can sew...and we’ll cut and hem the curtains to match the windows,” she explains.

The Northern Territory’s Vinnie’s primary advocacy is on homelessness. According to the NTGOV, the NT has the highest rate of homelessness per capita with over 13,000 people experiencing homelessness on any given night.

Frances, along with other members, have raised awareness and funds for homelessness through Vinnie’s annual fundraiser SLEPOUT, which is typically held in July. In addition, St Vinnie’s Ozanam house helps provide the unhoused hot showers, good meals and laundry services.

Over the past year, the Holy Spirit conference has also assisted with food vouchers given the rising cost of living; arranged and purchased the delivery of white goods, kitchen and household appliances, supported phone and utility bills and provided vouchers for fuel. They have also assisted in house visits for companionship giving social and emotional support to those in need.

Following Ozanam’s approach, Frances explains it’s a privilege to serve people.

“We thank them for letting us help them and letting us do something good in Christ’s name.”

If you would like to find out more on how you can support or volunteer at Vinnies head on to their website at <https://www.vinnies.org.au/nt>.

More than a parish:

A Living Multicultural Community at Holy Spirit Parish

by Maricela Arteta

Throughout 2025, the Holy Spirit Parish Community has continued to reveal something deeply meaningful: it is not only a place of worship, but also a vibrant home where cultures meet, migrants belong, and stories are shared with joy and dignity.



A Celebration of Cultures and Belonging!

Events such as the Multicultural Fusion and the Latin American Bazaar became powerful expressions of unity in diversity. With colourful performances, authentic food, music, and dance, these gatherings transformed parish grounds into spaces of encounter – where roots were honoured and new friendships started.

“ *In that moment, culture became a bridge – not something left behind, but something celebrated together.* ”

For many families, these events were far more than social celebrations. One parent shared the joy of seeing her daughter proudly recognise her national flag and explain its meaning to friends.

In that moment, culture became a bridge – not something left behind, but something celebrated together.

For newly arrived migrants, the impact was even deeper. One family, having arrived in Australia only two weeks earlier, described how being welcomed through familiar food and music felt like a blessing so far from home.

Experiences like these affirm that our Holy Spirit Parish Community is a place where everyone is not just welcome, but also truly embraced.

More than 400 people came together during the Cultural Fusion event, sharing food, laughter, and conversation “as one body.” This powerful image reflects the heart of the parish: many cultures, united in spirit. Attendees spoke of the beauty of seeing so many people confidently displaying their traditions and heritage.



The Power of Volunteering and Shared Leadership

None of this would have been possible without the extraordinary dedication of volunteers. From food preparation and cleaning to logistics, children's activities, photography, sound, lighting, and welcoming teams — every role mattered. Volunteers from many countries worked side by side, demonstrating that collaboration across cultures was key to the success of these events.

The Latin American Bazaar, in particular, was highlighted as a lively night filled with rhythm and energy. For many families, sharing culture through music, dance, and food was a deeply joyful experience. Seeing people of all backgrounds dancing together and enjoying traditional dishes filled hearts with gratitude.



Sharing Culture, Creating Home

The events of 2025 have shown that the Holy Spirit Parish Community is more than a parish. It is a living community where everyone can share their roots, honour their heritage, and find a sense of belonging. Through faith, service, and celebration, the Holy Spirit Parish Community continues to build bridges — reminding us that when culture is shared with love, everyone feels at home.





Top: The Pentecost
Feast day Dinner

Right: The First
Communion
celebration in
September





Left: Some of our
Young Adults
getting confirmed in
July



Top: Lighting of the candles at the Women's mass

Left: The Music retreat led by Fr David Lemewu from the MGL Indonesian Mission

The Upper Room



Top: A group photo after the Pentecost Worship Night.

Above: Our Young Adults performing at the Fusion Cultural event

Right: Stalls at the Fusion Cultural Event



The Upper Room

Why did we release a parish magazine?

There are so many good things happening around this parish that we wanted to create a place for everyone to celebrate the amazing things that God is doing.

How often will this magazine be produced?

Our current plan is to do this twice a year, at Pentecost and Christmas.

Why is it called 'The Upper Room'?

The Bible says that on the day of Pentecost, the Apostles gathered in 'The Upper Room' to pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit. We want our parish to be the place where we pray for this grace of the Spirit and celebrate the wonders of God in our midst

Do you need any help with the next edition?

We were able to produce this really quickly with the help of a few parishioners. If you have any skills in photography, writing, editing or proof-reading, we would love to get some help.

The Holy Spirit Parish is under the care of the Missionaries of God's Love.
www.mglpriestsandbrothers.org