

## **ACU brings the world to you: international audience tunes in for Rev Prof Mark R. Francis's online lectures, broadcast live from Chicago**

The Australian Catholic University (ACU) Centre for Liturgy hosted the President of the Catholic Theological Union, Rev Prof Mark R. Francis CSV in a free online public lecture broadcast live from Chicago, USA recently on: "The Challenge of Intercultural Liturgy in the Era of Pope Francis."

The public lecture was a huge success with more than 200 people logging in to the live broadcast from more than 10 countries, including Australia, Samoa, The Cook Islands, Fiji, New Zealand, Malaysia, the Philippines, Hawaii, the continental USA, England, and Italy.

Professor Francis also hosted online lectures for THEL620: Liturgical Inculturation live from Chicago, with 26 Masters students and 59 Professional Learners including clergy, teachers and senior school leaders, Catholic Education Office staff, parish pastoral associates, ministry formators, professional liturgists, and academics in attendance.

The ACU Centre for Liturgy has mobilised during this time of global pandemic to offer lectures via a live virtual platform to connect people to the worldwide scholarly conversation. Professor Francis said, "In lecturing for the ACU Centre for Liturgy from Chicago I was amazed how easily the technology allowed me to reach out to so many people so far away.

"I was very happy with the moments of interaction with those in attendance. Our exchanges underscored our common passion for helping the liturgy become ever more effective in expressing Christ's good news in the many cultural contexts where the Church is present."

ACU Centre for Liturgy Director, Professor Clare Johnson said, "Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, we had arrangements in place to bring Professor Francis to Australia for several weeks of postgraduate teaching, professional development sessions and public lectures.

"When all international travel was restricted, he graciously agreed to work with us live online from Chicago. This was the first time we had attempted to offer a class and public event internationally in this medium, and we were extremely pleased with how it worked."

Referring to the masters-unit/professional learning seminar, Prof. Johnson said, "The live online classroom enabled us to bring Prof. Francis virtually to Australia live from Chicago, and to make this rich and fascinating learning experience available to a far wider range of people across Australia than would have been possible in a regular classroom situation."

In addition to Prof. Francis's lectures, ACU academics Prof. Johnson and Dr Jason McFarland delivered several online sessions in the afternoons for the postgraduate students. ACU Higher-Degree Research Student Rev Michael Wallace and special guest Matthew Digges presented sessions on liturgical inculturation in New Zealand and Australia as well.

Edward Havelock, a teacher at St Francis College in Crestmead QLD said that the Professional Learning Seminar was, "Excellent in all regards. We had access to someone with a great depth of knowledge, insight, and experience. Prof. Francis was at ease and able to relate to all who were involved with the course."

Sr. Judy Foster SGS, a liturgy consultant for the Townsville Diocese said highlights of the professional learning seminar were, "The excellent material presented; and connecting with wide range of people in chats. Sr. Judy was delighted with the online classroom because for someone located in Townsville, the medium provided, "Accessibility...plus no added cost for travel and accommodation, and no added days for travel to venue."

Lisa Freeth, an Assistant Principal for Religious Education (APRE) at St Peter's Caboolture QLD said, "As someone who is new to the APRE role, I found the topics both informative and relevant. I have already started to think about the practical application of this professional learning within our school context."

Fr. Tony Doran, Parish Priest of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Ringwood VIC said that the best part of the Professional Learning Seminar was, "Hearing from a world class scholar on the subject, with plenty of experience from very different global contexts and experiences." Commenting on the format of the seminar, Fr. Tony said: "There was a good balance between lecture and discussion. Having done quite a lot on Zoom over the last four months, the week did not feel as onerous as some Zoom marathons have been."

Given the success of these offerings, the ACU Centre for Liturgy and Faculty of Theology and Philosophy plan to continue this innovative practice and bring other luminaries in the field of liturgy to Australia virtually in the coming months and years.

Please email the ACU Centre for Liturgy at [CentreforLiturgy@acu.edu.au](mailto:CentreforLiturgy@acu.edu.au) for further information on upcoming events.

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