



2023 ANNUAL REPORT TO MEMBERS BY THE PRESIDENT ON BEHALF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MAY 2024

The members of the Committee are:

Denise Playoust - President
Catherine Hammond – Vice President
John Stuart -Vice President
Gabrielle Walsh-Secretary
Margaret Goggin-Treasurer
Richard McLachlan
Julie Thorpe
Carmel Varney

Catalyst for Renewal enjoyed a very good year. We again presented a diverse and stimulating program.

We were able to run a full program of **Reflection Mornings** at Hunters Hill; thank you Carole Wilson and team. The average attendance is in the low 30s. Carol Teodori and Len Blahut had the Lawson program operating again; thank you both. Lawson has about 15 enthusiastic participants.

The **Events** team under Carole Wilson's leadership organised three **Q&As** in the Crypt of St Patrick's Church. In April Fr Frank Brennan SJ outlined both the "Yes" case and the "No" case in the upcoming referendum on *The Indigenous Voice to Parliament*. Bishop Michael Morrissey, the newly appointed Bishop of Geraldton WA, was our guest the next month. His topic was "*God was in your diocese before you came and will still be there when you leave*". In June Fr Richard Lennan, an Australian priest who teaches at Boston College, presented a brilliant lecture and Q&A session on "*An In- Between Church in An In-Between Time*". The final one for the year addressed the topic of "*The Future of the Catholic Church----Creating Unity Through Diversity*" with welcome input from Bishop Danny Meagher and John Warhurst.

The Catalyst Café was an innovation this year. The Events Committee decided that a simple lunch rather than a dinner was a prudent decision while people are still concerned about COVID. With careful attention to protocols we had two very successful **Catalyst Lunches**, with the theme "**Food for Thought**". At the first one Sr Patty Fawkner had us contemplating, "*How shall I name you, O God*" and at the second, Jon Owen, the CEO of the Wayside Chapel, challenged us on "*The Building of Communities: No us and them*".

The Call to Be had nine programs, most a series of three lectures. Pauline Mueller, Leanne Zyner and Greg Zyner have a good support team and the format of a lecture interspersed with questions and conversation has been successful. It has been attracting a modest but faithful audience, many of whom attended most of the courses.

The Spirituality in the Pub is probably only operating in 8 venues. The price of room hire has been a problem in attempting to revitalise this program. Marea Donovan organises, and Susan Eichorn presents **Spirituality on the Sofa** (SIP in online form) each month. These Zoom sessions draw large audiences and give people in remote areas and those with limited mobility a chance to engage in conversations on a large range of topics on this year's theme "Spirituality in.....".

We partnered with Catholic Religious Australia to bring **James Alison** to Australia for a series of lectures and workshops. A lot of work and money was invested in this visit. We are grateful to Catalyst members and religious congregations who gave substantial donations to defray much of the loss we sustained. The only specifically Catalyst event was a Forum at which Geraldine Doogue facilitated a conversation led by James Alison and assisted by Finn Stannard on *What does radical inclusion really mean for a modern synodal Church?* It had a very disappointing number of attendees but did provide a high-quality video for our website.

Our last event of the year was the Eucharistic Reflection. Fr David Orr, OSB, was our celebrant and reflection leader. Everyone joined in to make the occasion a warmly memorable one.

The major upgrade of our website is reaching completion. The digitisation of *The Mix*, and of the Catalyst Reflection Sheets is done and they are on the website. The material on the old website is being edited and moved to the new one. The new website is looking fresh and informative. The plan is that a seamless transfer will occur, people will log onto the website, and the new one is the one they will access.

We were able to report a modest financial surplus for the 2022 calendar year. Revenue for the year rebounded following the contraction of the two previous pandemic years. This year (2023) we made a loss. The "Call to Be" made a substantial profit, but most other activities operated on a slim margin, either a modest loss or modest profit. Many administrative costs, communications, wages, insurance, and the like were not covered by net profits on events this year.

We are grateful for the ongoing diligence of our Administrative Officer, Pauline O'Neil, who has served Catalyst almost since our founding 29 years ago. We also express our appreciation to our Patrons, Friends, financial supporters, to members of our local SIP committees to Catholic Religious Australia, all of whom assisted in delivering our program in 2023.

Catalyst's mission is to foster conversation for renewal in our church and society, mindful of our own ever-present need of conversion and renewal and relying on the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Information about our programs will be found on our website at <https://catalystforrenewal.org.au>

This is my first report on behalf of the Committee. The presidency has been a daunting task and I have relied heavily on Bob Birchall's mentoring and coaching. I could not have done the job without the advice and help of the executive committee, and I wish to mention Gay Walsh and Carole Wilson, with whom I have been in almost daily contact. The enthusiasm and skills of Julie Thorpe have helped us all, and the Call to Be team's self-sufficiency has been appreciated. Pauline O'Neil has been infinitely patient with me; I thank her for that and her knowledge of Catalyst.

Denise Playoust
President
May 2024