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# CATHOLIC VOICE

ARCHDIOCESE OF CANBERRA AND GOULBURN  
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## Steering youth to safety with Red Frogs

BY FIONA VAN DER PLAAT

The Archdiocese is harnessing the power of confectionary in its desire to connect with youth and young adults through a new partnership with the well-known chaplaincy support network Red Frogs Australia.

Archdiocesan Pastoral and Mission Formation Coordinator Christian Nobleza said support for Red Frogs would include running pancake-shaker drives in parishes, recruiting teams of volunteers and raising awareness of Red Frogs' work in guiding the next generation towards safer – and ideally more faith-based – life decisions.

Red Frogs, which grew out of a response to Schoolies Week on the Gold Coast nearly 25 years ago, helps young people safely negotiate a culture of alcohol and drugs. Its volunteers – or 'Froggers', as they are affectionately known – attend events, such as music festivals and university orientation weeks, where young people gather to party. They offer Red Frog lollies, water and other practical assistance, along with comfort, company and conversation.

Red Frogs Marketing and Communications Manager Bek Gilchrist said the volunteers followed a "serve-and-connect



A Red Frogs volunteer at a youth event

model" of support. This came with its fair share of cooking pancakes, cleaning up vomit and walking people home, as well as listening and "loving on" any young person who needed help, from the practical to the spiritual.

Some might be circumspect about the Froggers' motives but they soon realised there was no agenda. "That really speaks loudly to them," she said. The idea was to steer young people into safer territory and "connect

them into a community where they feel accepted and loved unconditionally".

Red Frogs Leader for the ACT Caleb Reid, who oversees about 55 Red Frogs volunteers, said the work was "a direct way of showing the next generation they are valued" and its gentle missionary nature lent itself to a "natural partnership" with the Archdiocese. Another dimension to Red Frogs' approach was school programs "that empower students to make positive life



Mission Formation Coordinator, Christian Nobleza

choices and be a voice of change in their own culture".

With young people returning to social life as restrictions ease, Christian said partnering with Red Frogs was a key part of the Archdiocese's strategy of creating community among young people and enabling them to make a difference in their own lives.

The Red Frogs approach worked because the support was about unconditional service. "It's not about coming across with an overt religious message," he said. "It's more about showing 'we care about you and we're here for you.'"

### Marci parties without alcohol and drugs

As an athlete and former student at the Australian Catholic University in Can-



berra until 2016 and now the Campus Pastoral Associate at the university, Marci Oringo has experienced her share of parties and youth events.

She is among those who prefer to party without alcohol and drugs and knows it's not easy being one of those people. "If you aren't drinking you can get some jibes from your mates," Marci says.

These are the moments she has seen students turn to Red Frogs volunteers at events she attended while working in university sport and with schools. "The Froggers provided a non-judgemental zone for the ones who didn't want to interact with the party culture," she says.

As a staff member responsible for student pastoral care, Marci was grateful to the Red Froggers, who assisted and sat with students who were intoxicated or had taken drugs.

"It was like having that friend who would go with them on a night out and be there to make them feel safe," she says.

Marci is impressed with the way a "technically mission-based organisation" engages young people without imposing beliefs on them. "It's just them asking if they can offer you a lolly or water or something else to make you feel a bit better. [It shows] people can be introduced to the idea of how God is relevant to their life without it being in their face."

### Local Life in the Archdiocese

Congratulations to Sarah Marley of Canberra's Merici College who has been selected to participate in the Australian Ballet School's Intra/Interstate & International Training Programme (ITP) for 2022. Participation in the programme is via audition and prepares students for possible full time study at the ballet school.



Congratulations to Jade Short and Maxwell Arch, year 12 students at Pambula's Lumen Christi College. They were announced as winners of the 2021 Australian STEM Video Game Challenge. The challenge is a national competition hosted by the Australian Council for Education Research. The ACER says the challenge facilitates engagement with science, technology, engineering and mathematics, allowing students to learn skills for the future through designing, building and testing an original video game.



Renovations to St Joseph's Church Merimbula have provided clergy and parishioners with an improved sacristy and sanctuary. Work on the renovations began in earnest in September and on Sunday 10 October Fr Pale celebrated the first Mass in the renovated church. The improvements not only provide clergy with a sizeable sacristy, but the enlarged and improved sanctuary is now a liturgically more connected space with the congregation. Article and photos on the Catholic Voice website - go to [www.catholicvoice.org.au](http://www.catholicvoice.org.au)



**Appointment announced**  
Melissa Hotham has been appointed the new principal at St Joseph's Primary School Grenfell starting in 2022.

## Five minutes with Fr Paul Bateman



Fr Paul Bateman (far right) with (from left) Bishop Power and Fr Bill Keating

### Tell us about your early life

I was fortunate to be brought up in a devout Catholic family involved in parish life. My primary education was at a very good little country school, my secondary to Intermediate at St Patrick's College, Goulburn, Leaving at St Columba's Springwood, where I began training for the priesthood, followed by St Patrick's, Manly.

### Did you see a lot of the Archdiocese during your many years as a priest?

I spent 11 years in Canberra as assistant priest, then Young, followed by Administrator there and at Pambula, Ardlethan, Braddon and St Christopher's. I served as parish priest at Gooloogong, Temora, Aranda, Boorowa and Gundagai from where, after sickness, I retired at 75 years.

### Being a priest is not just parish work; in what other ways did you use your gifts?

I was part-time RAAF chaplain for several years, spent six months in a parish in Ireland and did a course at Louvain University. I was involved with the YCW, Legion of Mary, men's groups, Cursillo and Archdiocesan bodies such as Ministry to Priests, Council of Priests, Consultors, Catholic Education, remodelled some church sanctuaries and introduced planned giving programs.

### Were you busy in retirement?

I lived in my old family home for towards 20 years, offering Mass locally each Sunday if not supplying in most country parishes of the Archdiocese. My only regret was retiring. I think priests would be better off in a small parish now closed or joining another priest to assist where needed.

### What do you say to someone considering the priesthood as a vocation?

Pray about it and speak to your parish priest. To enter the seminary is not a final choice; many who do so decide later that their vocation lies elsewhere.

To donate to the Clergy Retirement Foundation go to [www.cgatholic.org.au/donate](http://www.cgatholic.org.au/donate)

# Have your say to Pope Francis' global Synod of Bishops

BY DON SMITH

CATHOLICS across Australia have been invited to provide their views on the church's future in the lead up to the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops set for October 2023 in Rome.

This follows Pope Francis' recent official launch of the Synod process and the opening of a new online portal in Australia for receiving submissions.

Archbishop Christopher Prowse has appointed Fr Richard Thompson of Mary Help of Christians Parish to lead a small team to coordinate the Archdiocese's response.

Fr Thompson said the Synod was a separate but complementary process to Australia's Fifth Plenary Council, which recently concluded its first assembly. The second assembly is to take place in mid-2022.

The Synod is global while the Plenary Council is focussed nationally on the Catholic Church in Australia.

In drafting its Archdiocesan report, the team will draw from views provided for both the Plenary and Synod processes.

The Archdiocese's report will then be used with other reports from around Australia to develop a national report to the Synod.

The Synod theme is: "For a Synodal Church: Communion,



Fr Richard Thompson speaks with parishioners after Mass at Mary Help of Christians Parish.

Participation and Mission".

Fr Thompson emphasised that 'walking together (synodality)' and 'listening' were the key principles behind the theme, with both the Synod and the Plenary Council seeking to address the central question of what is the Holy Spirit saying to the church at this time.

He said Pope Francis had a particular focus on the participation dimension for the Synod, reaching out to those not connected to the church.

"Most of the people in our pews are parents and grandparents," he said. "Most of their

**"Fr Thompson said his outreach to the unconnected would also include the disenfranchised, LGBTIQA+, those who feel hurt in some way, or see the church as irrelevant or outdated."**

kids who are over 18 aren't near their church. They are not connected."

Fr Thompson said his outreach to the unconnected would also include the disenfranchised, LGBTIQA+, those who feel hurt in some way, or see the church as irrelevant or outdated.

"The big challenge is not so much to reach the people in the pews, but the people in

the pews who are connected to those who aren't there," he said.

The portal for making submissions will remain open until Sunday 12 December 2021 and is available at: <https://www.catholic.org.au/synodalchurch>

See also 'Synod on Synodality - Patrick McArdle explains' <https://www.catholicvoice.org.au/assembly-over-where-to-from-here/>

## Darcy's take on the COVID world

BY DON SMITH

DARCY Snashall, aged 10, says it's all a matter of taking it in your stride.

Like many others, Darcy has been in the thick of it with remote learning from home under COVID lockdown. From his perspective it hasn't been too bad.

The Catholic Voice spoke to the Year 4 student at St Thomas More Primary School Campbell as part of a series of reflections about life during the pandemic.

"You don't get as much work [with remote learning] but the tasks take longer and you get more time. It's really easy once you get into it," he said.

COVID has been a regular

topic around the dinner table that Darcy shares with younger brother Ned, seven, and Mum and Dad, Narelle and Jamie.

"The lockdown has been incredibly challenging for parents who have had to juggle work and home schooling," Narelle said.

"But the school [St Thomas's] has been incredibly well organised. There's still been structure throughout online learning which is really what children crave."

Darcy is looking forward to returning to the classroom soon.

"I want to see faces again,



my teacher's face, and everybody in my class and my friends," he said.

Though still early days, Darcy hopes to move to Daramalan College for high school and then convert his love of the social sciences and maths into a teaching career or perhaps even become a mechanical engineer.

For now, however, Darcy believes in keeping it simple when it comes to dealing with life and its complexities.

"I don't really focus on COVID that much; I just focus on the schoolwork," he said.

"My advice is just do your work and then you can hang out with your friends."