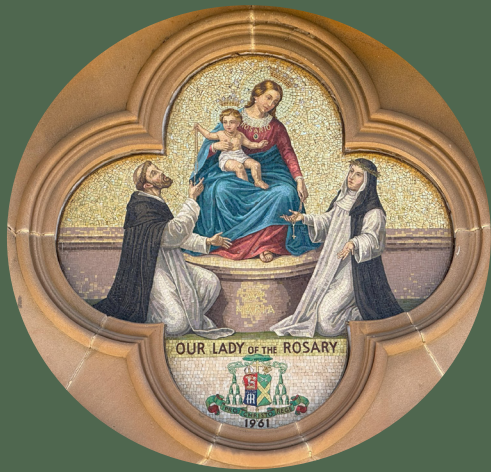




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CATHOLIC VIEWPOINT

JULY - SEPTEMBER 2026

ARMIDALE SYNOD



Around 80 people registered their interest in participating in the Armidale Synodal Gathering which was held on Saturday June 20, 2026. Those who gathered experienced the communion that is the reality of the Church. How wonderful to see a cross-section of Armidale's Catholics together in fellowship, listening to each other and exploring the three questions placed before us by our Bishop:

1. In what ways can we bring Christ to others in our midst?
2. How can we have more prayerful and reverent liturgies?
3. How can we best proclaim the Gospel in our parish?

There were six people at each table, and each question was explored separately using the Spiritual Conversation Process:

Round 1: listen to each person at the table without debate, discussion or disagreement.

Round 2: respond to what you see or hear (optional).

Round 3 (announce): A speaker from each table reports to the gathering what themes, actions, or questions emerged.

Below is a synthesis of what was captured in response to each question:

1. Know the Gospel and have the courage to proclaim it, living your faith as a joyful witness who seeks holiness, invites others, acts with charity, and serves generously.
2. Deepen our life of prayer through Eucharistic Adoration, prayer in the home and the Rosary, allowing personal prayer to enrich the liturgy and foster reverence, silence, thanksgiving, and an appreciation of the saints and sacred art.
3. Bring Christ to others by living our Catholic faith with courage and conviction, praying for others and our parish, promoting our rich devotions and public expressions of faith, and deepening our formation through theology, the liturgy, the saints, retreats and study.

Now that the what has been tabled, the next stage will be to consider how these priorities can be concretely achieved, so that we can renew our parish and become missionary disciples who reach out to the 60% of Armidale residents who are non-Catholic, non-Christian or have no religion.

SOLEMNITY OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

On 15 August each year, the Church celebrates the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, when Mary was taken body and soul into heaven. In 1950, Pope Pius XII solemnly defined the Assumption as a dogma of faith, not teaching something new, but formally affirming the Church's ancient belief.

The Assumption also reminds us of the dignity and destiny of the human body. Pius XII proclaimed the dogma only a few years after the terrible destruction and loss of life of two world wars. Against such disregard for human life, the Assumption points to the Christian hope that the body is sacred and destined for resurrection. It is not something to be used or abused, but cherished and cared for.

The remarkable Varia di Palmi, pictured to the right, gives dramatic expression to this belief. In the Italian town of Palmi, Calabria, a huge 16-metre-high votive structure represents Mary's Assumption into heaven. At its summit is the Animella, a young girl representing Mary, surrounded by figures representing God the Father, the Apostles and angels. The 20-tonne structure is moved through the streets by 200'mbuttaturi, or bearers.

The Assumption invites us to remember where, with God's grace, we hope to be headed. Heaven is reunion with the faithful departed, the saints and angels, and above all with God, who made us and loves us. All the wounds and sorrows of this life will be gone. Imagine the joy when Mary entered heaven and was reunited with St Joseph, Elizabeth and those she had loved, and most of all with Jesus, her Son. A reunion awaits us too. If we follow Christ, we hope one day to meet again those we have loved, with every sorrow healed and only the joy of love remaining.

Let us ask Our Lady's prayers that we and those we love may one day join her in heaven and await the resurrection. Our Lady Assumed into Heaven, pray for us!

- Written in collaboration with Ignatius Zaar



Varia di Palmi 2013 Karlos80, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons

SOLEMNITY OF ST MARY OF THE CROSS

- AUGUST 8



SAINT MARY OF THE CROSS

Born in Melbourne in 1842, St. Mary of the Cross grew up in a poor but deeply Catholic family. As a teenager she worked to support her family, while feeling increasingly drawn to serve God and those in need.

As a young woman she met Fr Julian Tenison Woods, and together they dreamed of bringing free Catholic education to poor rural children. In 1866 this vision led to the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, whose mission soon extended beyond education to the poor, elderly and destitute.

Her mission became part of our own story when Bishop Elzear Torreggiani welcomed the Sisters to the Diocese of Armidale. During Mary's lifetime they established foundations at Tenterfield, Inverell, Glen Innes, Uralla, Quirindi, Tingha, Hillgrove, Narrabri, Walgett, Bingara, Nyngan, Manilla, Wialda, Bundarra and Wee Waa. Mary MacKillop's vision became deeply woven into the Catholic story of our region.

Yet Mary's path was far from easy. In 1871 she was excommunicated for alleged disobedience, a decision reversed less than six months later. She endured opposition, misunderstanding and serious ill health, yet remained determined to serve God by serving

those in need. Through it all she could say, "The Will of God for me is like a dear book which I never tire of reading."

Mary died in 1909 and was canonised by Pope Benedict XVI in 2010, becoming Australia's first canonised saint. Her life remains an extraordinary story of faith, courage and perseverance.

For a woman who possessed little in worldly terms, Mary MacKillop left Australia an extraordinary inheritance. And more than a century after her death, her life still whispers the same invitation: listen to God, trust Him, and never see a need without trying to do something about it.

- Written in collaboration with Mori Cahutay

THE SVDP SLEEP OUT

-AND THE FACE OF POVERTY IN OUR COMMUNITY



In the last financial year, Vinnies Conferences across the Diocese provided assistance to more than 4,500 people, representing a significant increase on the previous year. On Friday, 28 August, 25 brave participants gave up the comfort of their beds for the annual Armidale Community Sleepout, “sleeping rough” for a night to raise awareness of homelessness and support those experiencing it. Thanks to the incredible generosity of our local community, along with the dedication

of Vinnies members and supporters, the event raised more than \$38,000 for Freeman

House. The Sleepout was not only a successful fundraiser but also a meaningful learning experience. More than 60 people attended the pre-Sleepout function, where three inspiring guest speakers shared valuable insights into the realities of homelessness and the challenges faced by those doing it tough in our communities. If you would like to make a difference and join Vinnies in supporting people experiencing hardship in our local communities, we would love to hear from you:

(m) 0403 467 863

(e) armidale@vinnies.org.au



BUSHY SHIELD MATCH

The local rugby community gathered for a deeply meaningful fixture as St Albert's College (Albies) faced off against the Armidale Blues for the Greg 'Bushy' Stephen Shield, with the Blues taking home the silverware in a spirited contest. Beyond the action on the field, the day was defined by tradition, family, and remembrance. Both clubs were delighted to welcome members of the Stephen family in attendance to honour an individual whose legacy spans both institutions.

The Shield commemorates Greg 'Bushy' Stephen, a beloved figure in Armidale rugby who passed away in late 2019 following a long battle with cancer. First introduced to Albies as a student in 1979, Bushy—alongside his wife Trish—impacted the lives of thousands of students over four decades as a selfless contributor, mentor, and career guide.

Both Greg and Trish hold Honorary Fellowships at St Albert's College, the highest honour the institution bestows. While Bushy's devotion to the Albies red and green was legendary, the Stephen family's legacy naturally spans both sides of the rivalry.

Bushy's passion was matched by his brother Maurie, while other members of the Stephen family bleed Blue—making the fixture a true celebration of the broader family's decades-long contribution to local rugby. - Catherine Stephen



IGNITE SYDNEY 2026



The Armidale Diocese was well represented at the Ignite Catholic Youth Conference in the Diocese of Broken Bay. More than 1,000 pilgrims attended, with some travelling from as far away as New Zealand. Under the theme “Ascend”, a strong contingent from our secondary schools and St Nicholas’ Parish was inspired and renewed through powerful testimonies, keynote presentations and workshops. The rallies, with music provided by Emmanuel Worship, particularly resonated with the pilgrims, while Mass, Adoration and Reconciliation were among the highlights of the Conference. Bishop Michael Gielen of Christchurch and Fr David Ranson, Diocesan Administrator of Broken Bay, together with a strong contingent of clergy and religious, provided a constant and encouraging presence throughout the Conference.

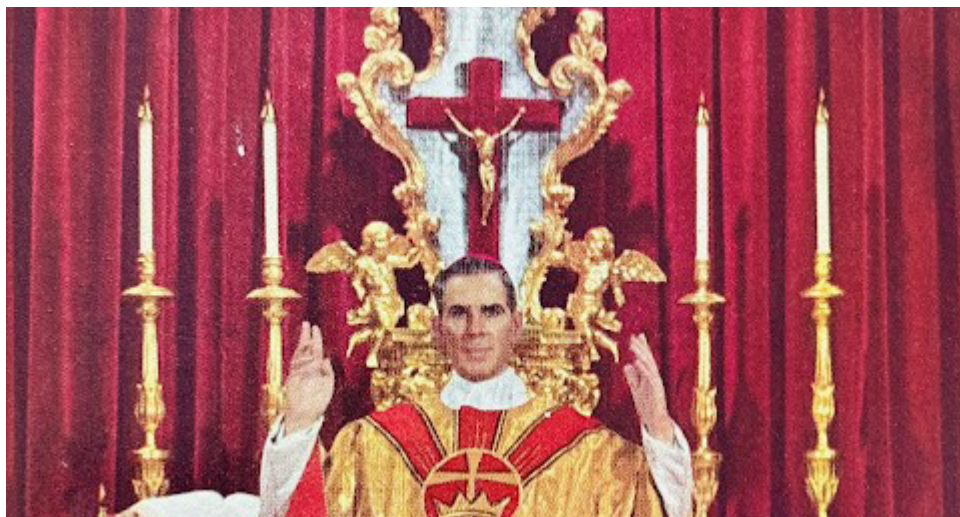


Bishop Gielen provided a memorable homily at a beautiful Sunday Mass. It was also great to spend time with our religious. Deacon Allem accompanied the St Nicholas’s pilgrims, Deacon Max assisted Bishop Gielen during Sunday Mass, while Sr Celine, Br Francis and Sr Gemma were welcoming visitors at the Immaculata booth at the Expo. Pilgrims are already looking forward to Ignite 2027, with the theme “Surround”. -Damian Roff



BLESSED FULTON SHEEN

24 SEPTEMBER 2026



Bishop Fulton Sheen at his Private House Chapel in circa 1957

The Venerable Archbishop Fulton Sheen was beatified on 24 September 2026 at the Dome in St. Louis, Missouri. Born on the cusp of the twentieth century, Archbishop Fulton Sheen later became a household name as one of the most celebrated media personalities of the twentieth century. Between 1930 and 1950, he hosted *The Catholic Hour* on NBC, reaching an audience of approximately 4 million

weekly listeners. In 1951, he moved to television, where he spoke on the Catholic faith and current events in his program *Life Is Worth Living*. His weekly program drew up to 30 million viewers. In 1952, he won an Emmy for outstanding television personality and was famously featured on the front cover of *Time* magazine.

Something less known about Archbishop Sheen was his daily dedication to Eucharistic Adoration. When he was ordained a priest in 1919, he resolved to spend an hour in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament each day for the rest of his life. He kept this commitment throughout his priesthood and always looked forward to it. "When I stand up to talk, people listen to me; they will follow what I have to say. Is it any power of mine? Of course not. St Paul says, 'What have you that you have not received and you who have received, why do you glory as if you had not?' But the secret of my power is that I have never in 55 years missed spending an hour in the presence of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. That's where the power comes from. That's where sermons are born. That's where every good thought is conceived."

He described this daily adoration as the source of his strength, calling it "the hour that makes my day." Archbishop Sheen placed his desk in a position where he could gaze upon the tabernacle in his chapel while he worked, and he described himself as "tethered to the tabernacle." "There are three intimacies in life: hearing, speaking, and touching ... We hear of Christ in the Scriptures, we see him with the eyes of faith, but we touch him in the Eucharist."

Article adapted from Q & A with Fr Flader, The Catholic Weekly, March 2026.

ST. CARLO ACUTIS EUCHARISTIC MIRACLES EXHIBITION - TOUR OF THE DIOCESE

The St Carlo Acutis Eucharistic Miracles Exhibition Tour has come to an end after 10 months of travelling around the Diocese, visiting all the schools and running many parish missions. The St Carlo team shared the story of St Carlo's life and his love for the Eucharist. In collaboration with parish priests, many people, including students, parishioners and members of the local community, were able to encounter Jesus through Eucharistic Adoration. The St Carlo Tour has been an exciting adventure, and the team has been greatly privileged to experience and witness God's providence, love and transforming power at work in people's lives.

-Sr John Mary



40 YEARS AS A CATECHIST

MRS HELEN SWAIN - WILLOW TREE

On Monday June 29th, the Catechists of Quirindi Parish, together with parishioners, gathered to pray and celebrate the generosity, dedication and commitment of Helen Swain, who shared her faith with the students at Willow Tree Public School for 40 years. Helen retired from this most valuable ministry in our Diocese (and across the state of New South Wales) earlier this year. We wish Helen and her family every blessing in the years to come.

More recently, I spoke with Helen over the phone about her time as a Catechist:

When I started forty years ago as a Catechist, I felt somewhat scared and underprepared. Fortunately, I only had one Kindergarten class to teach and the help of Sister Giuseppe from St Joseph's. Today there is much more help, so much more. As time went on, my confidence increased.

As a child growing up, my mother would take us to Mass on Sunday. My father wasn't Catholic but always supported Mum. She used to take us to the 7.30am Mass, and if ever we felt tired and didn't want to go, Dad would insist that we went.

My grandmother was a role model for me in wanting to become a Catechist and staying on for 40 years. I would only see her once a year at Christmas time, as we lived very far apart, but she was inspiring.

What kept me going for these 40 years was my love for Jesus and for children. I wanted to tell the children and show them that Jesus is a loving, caring person and that their parents and carers are very special.

The advice I would give to anyone considering being a Catechist is: Go for it! You get so much out of it. By teaching the children the faith, it spurs you on to deepen your own faith. Not just to go to Mass, but to live it and preach it. Recently, I was teaching the kids about St Carlo Acutis, and one of the students piped up and said, "Mrs Swayne, you're very excited, aren't you?" Which I was. I wanted to share my love of Jesus with the children.



INTERESTED IN BECOMING A CATECHIST?

Our Sts Mary and Joseph Cathedral Parish Catechists are a committed group of parishioners who carry out one of the Church's most important missions of bringing the message of Jesus Christ to children in our state primary schools through Special Religious Education (SRE).

It was a great pleasure to have Bishop Peter join us for a special morning tea with Fr Ernie and to share stories of our ministry in the Armidale primary schools. We noted that our longest-serving catechist, Margaret Latham, has been teaching SRE for thirty-two years, while our newest catechist, Natalie Ramazani, has been teaching for two years.

Schools where Catholic Scripture is taught in Armidale are Ben Venue, Newling, Armidale City and Sandon. Engaging lessons are taught every week, incorporating storytelling and discussion and using our authorised NSW curriculum. Students are encouraged to explore their faith and sense of belonging. For many catechists, SRE is a ministry of accompaniment, meeting children where they are, listening to their questions and helping them encounter the love of Christ. For many children, SRE may be the only regular contact they have with their Catholic faith.



We currently have three schools requiring SRE teachers – Martins Gully, Drummond and Ben Venue, where two classes require teachers – and we would welcome new parishioners to join our supportive team. No experience is necessary, and you will be trained and mentored in the role of a catechist or an assistant catechist. Deacon Paul Manvell looks after all catechists in the Diocese of Armidale and provides training and retreat experiences that help us in our continuing faith development. If you are interested in learning more about becoming a catechist, speak to Fr Paul Chandler or Tina Clarke in the Parish Office, and we will organise a meeting with you.

WALKING BESIDE THE PEOPLE OF TIMOR LESTE

WENDY BAKER ON HER RECENT VOLUNTEER TRIPS TO EAST TIMOR



What began with an interest in a language project in western New South Wales has become an enduring relationship with the people of Timor-Leste, spanning eight visits over more than 20 years.

My relationship with Timor-Leste began in 2005, although the journey really started in Walgett, in the west of our Diocese. I had long admired a Christian Brothers project working with the Gamilaroi-Yawaalaray community to help elders preserve their language. When the project finished, I offered the Brothers a year of my time as a volunteer. Their response came as something of a surprise. They needed a sewing teacher, not in Walgett, but in Timor-Leste!

And so I found myself in Ermera Province, helping women sew school uniforms. That unexpected invitation began a relationship with Timor-Leste that has continued ever since. Other visits followed with Rotarians and secondary school groups, as well as the unforgettable experience of walking beside the Timorese as they welcomed Pope Francis. In all, I have now made eight trips.

In 2025, I returned for another reason. I had been appalled to learn of Australia's bugging of Timorese government rooms during negotiations over the Timor Sea oil and gas reserves. I wanted, in some small way, to be a positive Australian presence in a country whose people had given me so much.

Through Palms International Volunteering, I returned to teach English to college students with the Marist Brothers in Baucau. I also taught accounting to office staff and took a weekly English class for Franciscan nuns at a local preschool.

My students impressed me enormously. Many speak five or more languages, including Tetun, their village language, Portuguese, Indonesian and English. English is particularly valued because many young Timorese hope to work overseas and provide an income for their families at home.

Parish life in Baucau was one of the great joys of my time there. Walking along the busy, rough road to Mass, I would chat with women about their families and delightful children. Their respect for older people meant my grey hair had some unexpected advantages! I was regularly helped over difficult ground, offered seats and given refreshments first.

One special memory was joining the College choir and singing in Portuguese for St Joseph's Day in the Cathedral. It was a great privilege to walk beside the students, staff and wider community. What wonderful people! Volunteering is not simply about what we can do for others. It is about solidarity, friendship and what we learn and receive from those alongside whom we work.



I am deeply grateful for the support of my family, the Vincentians, Catholic Schools Office, Armidale Parish and Rotary.

As the Timorese say in their heartfelt farewell:

"Ba ho Maromak!" Go with God!
And if you have ever thought about volunteering overseas, do consider it!

ADIG 2026 PARISH CONTRIBUTIONS

ADIG is proud to report that for 2026 we have made a significant contribution to the Diocese of Armidale and its Parishes. Our annual distribution is for the support of our local Catholic communities in their charitable, pastoral and educational works and mission.

As part of the mission of the ADIG, we commit to providing the Diocese and each Parish a distribution from the profits made the previous year. These annual distributions allow our parishes to provide opportunities for new evangelisation programs or fund new charitable outreach programs in our communities, that otherwise may not have been possible.

The ability of the ADIG to provide this support to parishes and communities is heavily reliant on the support of lay investors and community groups who choose to invest in the ADIG. Our community benefits from the support of our parishioners and lay faithful. Through your investment with the ADIG we are able to support and provide an annual distribution to the Diocese and each of our parishes.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all our investors over the last 12 months who have helped in the mission of the ADIG and the Diocese. We thank you for your support and look forward to many years ahead.

Join us and make a difference.



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