

# SA Catholics for an Evolving Church



## An Easter Spirituality: Lent 2025

### Week 5. 8 April 2025 People of Faith

1. People of Faith and church organisation
2. Kin-dom of Faith – no boundaries
3. Parishes and small Christian communities
4. The role of the church is in supporting people in their commitment to fullness of life.
5. We change the church by changing ourselves

#### 1. Community of Faith – People of Faith - and church organisation

Faith is the unifying feature for Christians. It is more than belief in a creed or doctrine. It is trust and confidence in God, Jesus, the Spirit. Faith is grounded in the love of God.

‘The heart has reasons that reason does not know.’

Differentiating between people of faith and the Church organisation (Institutional Church) helps.

We need organisation and structure in our lives but we also need the freedom to grow beyond the structures to flourish personally and spiritually. As children grow out of a need for parental strictures and guidance, we must grow out of the childish or adolescent spiritualities we grew up with and become responsible adults making our own decisions about how we live and relate to others, guided by the spirit or sense of the faith evolving in us.

People of faith look beyond the Church, and are not tied to its present institutional, stagnant and nostalgic form. ‘Your faith has saved you.’

#### 2. Kin-dom of Faith – no boundaries

The kin-dom of faith includes everyone in some way. We may vary in how we express, ritualise or live it. If we look for faith, we will find it - in ourselves and in others.

Christianity is a vision for humanity. Faith involves love, a shared perspective, meaning, value, commitment to what is worthwhile. As our faith and love develop, so does our ability to discern true goodness and value.

You get involved: they become kin. This is the love of God as preached by Jesus.

Recognising the love of God means we live in a friendly universe.

Transcendence is about going beyond (transcending) the self you are now for the self you can become (self-transcendence). It is not about connecting with an ‘imaginary’ or notional reality already ‘out there.’ The way of ‘connecting’ is through expanding our reality in the love of God and the action of the Spirit, recognised in the universe we live in which includes our innermost being and achievements. The future of a vibrant Church lies in learning to respond to “the hunger for spirituality” that has largely replaced any interest in traditional religious practice.

### **3. Parishes and small Christian communities**

People come together and form communities for mutual support, based on shared experiences, worldviews, perspectives, values and commitments. They form communities of faith.

‘When even two or three of us gather in the name of truth, honesty and love, in the name of courage, compassion and kindness, we find ourselves feeling joined by another presence – the presence of Christ, the way, the truth and the life.’ (Brian McLaren)

The future of parishes is as communities of faith - Small Christian Communities – where Catholics explore and celebrate the social and community dimensions of faith.

The community of faith is ‘a school of life and a school of wisdom’. (Vatican II) It is a field hospital that offers space “to discover and exercise the therapeutic potential of faith.” (Pope Francis) It is a source of encounter and conversation, where experiences of faith can be shared as well as spiritual centres, places of adoration and contemplation. These places exist in the small groups who gather in homes, local centres and churches at the initiative of the participants.

### **4. The role of the church is in supporting people in their commitment to fullness of life.**

People set up the church originally as a way of assisting and providing mutual support for their Christian living, personally and in the informal communities that were coming together.

Spiritual accompaniment is the core purpose and the way that the Church can regenerate itself. Fostering spirituality is what the Christian community itself needs, to turn outwards to others. Spiritual accompaniment is a significant way for people to discover accurate and profound religious insights, and for authentic and creative decisions about life.

To realistically face the potential and demands of the future, sensitive and theologically formed spiritual accompaniment can help men and women through their years of growth and into adult life.

### **5. We change the community of faith by changing ourselves.**

If you want to grow up, stop asking for permission. With faith we have the courage to change.

The inability of the church organisation to keep pace with our times in its structures, practices, its intellectual coherence and its public credibility is also the inability of Catholics.

A fresh narrative and synodality with teeth are ways we touch the imagination and inspire fellow Catholics and others.

The ideas and opinions of ordinary Catholics constitute a moment of opportunity in which radical changes can occur enabling the Gospel to be heard in a dramatically different world.

Christian spirituality can make a significant contribution to the spiritual culture of humanity today, far beyond the bounds of the churches.