

Fostering the Christian Way of Life
A Reflection for the NSW Knights of the Southern Cross
By Fr Julian Belich

I would like to begin with a simple picture.

Imagine an older man sitting at his kitchen table somewhere in suburban Australia. He has lived a long life. He has seen the Church change, the country change, and the world change. He knows something about faithfulness, but he also knows something about disappointment. Some days he looks at the news, or even at his own parish, and wonders what difference one person can still make.

He is not as strong as he once was. He may not travel as easily. He may not have the same energy he had years ago. And yet, in that quiet moment, two words from Scripture come back to him.

The first is from the prophet Jeremiah: “Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you... and pray to the Lord on its behalf” (Jeremiah 29:7). Those words were spoken to people living in exile, people who may well have felt displaced, discouraged, and far from what was familiar. Yet God did not tell them to give up. He told them to pray, to remain faithful, and to seek the good of the place where they were.

The second word is from Jesus in the Gospel: “You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:13–16). Jesus does not say, “You might become salt,” or “You may one day become light.” He says, “You are.” That means that even a quiet, older Catholic man, living an ordinary life, still has a real part to play in the work of God.

Salt is by no means dramatic. It is small, hidden, and easily overlooked, but it changes everything it touches. Light does not make noise. It simply shines, and because it shines, others can see. So much of Christian life is like that. It is not always found in big public moments. Often it is found in patience, kindness, prayer, steadiness, and presence.

That older man may not preach sermons. He may not lead large projects. But he may pray for his children and grandchildren every day. He may sit quietly in church before Mass. He may encourage someone after a funeral. He may help keep a parish community calm, faithful, and hopeful just by the way he lives. In God’s eyes, that is not a small thing.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says that the laity are called “*to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God’s will*” (CCC 898). In other words, God calls ordinary believers to live their faith in the middle of ordinary life. Family life, parish life, neighbourhood life, and the life of the nation are all places where holiness can be quietly lived.

Now imagine that same man later in the day entering his parish church. Perhaps the church is quiet. Perhaps only a few people are there. He sits in a pew. His knees may hurt. His thoughts may wander. He may not have many words. But still he comes.

The Catechism says: *“In the New Covenant, prayer is the living relationship of the children of God with their Father, who is good beyond measure, with his Son Jesus Christ and with the Holy Spirit”* (CCC 2565). Prayer is not only saying prayers. It is remaining in relationship. It is turning up. It is sitting before the Lord and allowing the Lord to look upon us with love.

That is why the spiritual life matters so much, especially in later years. A man may not be able to do everything he once did, but he can still pray. In fact, he may pray more deeply than before. He may become a man of presence, a man of peace, a man whose hidden life with God strengthens others in ways he will never fully see.

The Desert Fathers understood this. They believed that a hidden life of prayer was never wasted. What looked small in the eyes of the world could be very great in the eyes of God. Their wisdom still speaks to us now. A quiet chair at home, a Rosary prayed slowly, a visit to the church, a few moments before the tabernacle—these are not insignificant things. They are ways of keeping the heart close to God.

Even modern psychology has noticed the value of steady habits in older age. A 2026 article in *Educational Gerontology* reported that older adults who maintained a regular daily routine showed higher morale, with resilience and self-esteem helping explain that pattern. The Church has long spoken in a similar way about virtue, calling it *“a habitual and firm disposition to do good”* (CCC 1833). In simple terms, good habits help form a good soul.

This is one reason the Eucharist matters so much. The Catechism teaches that *“The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life”* (CCC 1324). The Mass is not just one activity among others. It is the centre. At Mass, we bring our whole lives to the altar: our joys, our regrets, our tiredness, our hopes for our families, our concern for our country.

Pope Benedict XVI spoke very beautifully about adoration. In his Corpus Christi homily in 2008, he said: “Adoration is a prayer that prolongs Eucharistic celebration and communion, during which the soul continues to nourish itself: it feeds on love, on truth, on peace.” That is a lovely way to understand adoration. We are not simply filling in time. We are allowing Christ to feed us with his presence.

So when an older Knight spends time at Mass, or in adoration, or in a quiet visit to the church, he is doing something real for the Church and for the nation. He is seeking the welfare of the city. He is becoming salt and light. He is helping to foster the Christian way of life not by noise, but by depth.

That may be one of the most important messages for older men to hear. Sometimes people think their best years of service are behind them. But in the life of faith, hidden prayer, wisdom, patience, and encouragement are forms of service too. A man who stays close to Christ in the Eucharist, who keeps praying for his parish and his family, who remains gentle and faithful, is still bearing fruit.

So the message of these Scriptures is not really a heavy demand. It is an invitation to remember who we are. We are men placed by God in a certain time, in a certain parish, in a certain part of Australia. We are asked to pray for this place, to seek its good, and to live our faith in a quiet and hopeful way. We are asked to be salt and light, even if the world barely notices.

And perhaps that is enough: not a long list of things to do, but a simple reminder. Stay close to the Lord. Stay close to the Eucharist. Pray for the city. Live gently. Be faithful in small things. God can do a great deal with our littleness.

Simple discussion points

- *At this stage of life, what does being “salt” or “light” look like for you?*
- *What simple habit of prayer helps keep you close to God?*
- *How has Mass, or a quiet visit to the church, helped you in life?*
- *What is one simple way older men can still help foster the Christian way of life in Australia?*

This reflection says, in summary: pray for the place where God has put you, stay close to Christ in the Eucharist, and never underestimate the quiet witness of a faithful Christian life.