

INTRODUCING THE LIBERAL CATHOLIC CHURCH

Sacramental Worship with Freedom of Belief

Origins of the Liberal Catholic Church

The Liberal Catholic Church combines two elements separated since the early centuries of the Christian era. One of these is Christian sacramentalism of which the Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican Churches have long been the principal custodians. The second is the esoteric Wisdom Tradition, which, we believe, once formed a vital leavening component within Christianity. With the suppression of those Greek Fathers of the Church who interpreted Christianity in the light of their Platonic background, the orthodoxy of the Latin Fathers prevailed, and the very few who preserved the deeper doctrines had of necessity to remain silent.

The Liberal Catholic Church traces its origin to 1916 when James Wedgwood was consecrated a bishop in the English Branch of the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands. Wedgwood was a prominent member of the Theosophical Society, as was his co-founder, Charles Leadbeater. Under their leadership the English Old Catholic Church became independent of the Dutch church of origin, and adopted its present name (1918). The Liberal Catholic Church soon developed its own distinctive liturgy, which owes much to Wedgwood's gift for language, and its own distinctive teachings, deriving from the worldview shared by the founders and their colleagues.

A New View of the Sacraments

The Liberal Catholic Church offers Catholic sacramentalism in its fullness with the added advantage that the writings of the founding bishops help us to understand the inward effects of the various services. Above all they point to the Holy Eucharist, or Mass, as being for focus of a prodigious outpouring of blessing, which is believed to irradiate the whole neighbourhood of the Church, as well as nourishing spiritually the participants.

Freedom to Grow

The doctrines of the Liberal Catholic Church are offered, not imposed. Members interpret them how they will. Freedom of belief is held to be an indispensable pre-condition for personal growth and maturity. Most Liberal Catholics however, do accept the tenets of the Church's doctrine, holding that we all live many times, growing in will, love and refinement as we encounter the outcomes of past actions, whether of this life, or earlier lives. The Lord Christ is seen as our Older Brother, "the Great Teacher of Angels and of Men", "the spiritual guardian of all humanity", "a mighty spiritual presence in the world" (The Liberal Catholic Church *Summary of Doctrine*).

The Great World Religions

Liberal Catholics are encouraged to take a sympathetic interest in the other great world religions, and to see them as alternate pathways back to our source in God.

Services Offered

Services are open to all who wish to attend. At the Holy Eucharist all present are invited to receive Communion. A warm welcome is extended to parents with children. Baptism and Confirmation are offered, along with explanations of their

inner effects. Regular services of healing are directed towards the healing of the body through the harmonising of the psyche. Liberal Catholic priests are nearly all registered as marriage celebrants, and will re-marry divorced persons who approach marriage with respect.

Liberal Catholic Clergy

Liberal Catholic clergy are unpaid, earning a living in the usual way, and doing their work for the Church in their spare time. They qualify, for ordination through years of graduated service, and through a comprehensive course leading to a qualification in Religious Studies. The Liberal Catholic Church in Australia has five active bishops and 27 priests, most of whom are married.