

# CatechistNET

CONFRATERNITY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE • DIOCESE OF WOLLONGONG

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VOLUME 17 • ISSUE 2 • JULY 2019

*A message worth*  
**SHARING**



The Bigger Picture  
.....

Message from  
the Director  
.....

Catechist Profile  
.....

Leadership Tips  
.....

Professional Standards  
& Safeguarding  
.....

& more



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Edited by Darren McDowell.

# Message from the Director



Thanks be to  
God & to you  
our Catechists!

Dear Catechists and supporters throughout the Diocese of this wonderful work,

Recently, I have taken the time to reflect on what has happened in the world of Special Religious Education (SRE) in the last ten years. It seems like only yesterday that I was commencing in the work for Bishop Peter Ingham as the Director of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD), and within the first few weeks, the whole ministry was embroiled in a furore resulting from a snap decision by the State Government to introduce Ethics classes in competition with Scripture classes. Bishop Ingham, who was at the time responsible for oversight of SRE amongst his brother Bishops, suggested all CCDs across NSW will need to roll up their sleeves in readiness for a prolonged defence of this good work. He was spot on!

Fast forward ten years, Bishop Brian Mascord is now the NSW Bishop responsible for SRE. He has inherited broad oversight of a ministry which has seen the full introduction of Ethics classes, a parliamentary enquiry into Ethics, ongoing calls for the removal of SRE from either ill-informed or wantonly biased lobby groups, a parliamentary review of SRE, one of the largest petitions ever tabled in NSW parliament in support of SRE led by Churches and parents, new recommendations and guidelines for SRE providers, new enrolment procedures, TV talk show debates, new training, resources and curriculums!

### The Valuable Place of SRE

It has been a period where the advocates of SRE have, at every turn, looked to highlight with media and politicians the valuable place of SRE and the right of families to have this choice. Importantly, it has brought about a strengthening of bonds across Christian denominations but also the formation of a multi-faith body, All Faiths Special Religious Education (AFSRE) bringing leaders from all major religious traditions together to support each other in the provision

of SRE. These developments have been a huge step forward for quality SRE, together with the well-attended bi-annual celebration of SRE at NSW Parliament House. Still, commitment to continual improvement and working with all stakeholders remains very important.

Throughout this period, many of us, especially our Catechists, have advocated for what we simply know deep in our bones – that faith formation for young people is a huge positive. Certainly, there existed numerous international studies that highlighted the positive influence of faith formation on the lives, character and health of young people. Still, what we had long required was some Australian research that would enable us to confidently and credibly endorse and defend the place of SRE. We now have it.

### New Research into SRE

The recently released report authored by two world-renowned academics, Professor Zehavit Gross, (UNESCO-Burg Chair in Education for Human Values, Tolerance and Peace at Bar-Ilan University, Israel), and Professor Emerita Suzanne Rutland (of the University of Sydney) is of immense value. Importantly, it has received support from both the NSW Government and Opposition after being initially presented at a

celebration of SRE at Parliament House in November 2018.

The report advocates strongly for SRE in schools, finding that it provides a host of additional benefits, including improvements in mental health and establishment of values that had not previously been considered. It indicates that SRE can strengthen multiculturalism and reduce extremism in our wider communities while at the same time, remain a safe and appropriate place for students to share their feelings and ideas. The report, also pointed to SRE as bringing important psychological benefits to students' mental health and wellbeing, reducing the risks of mental illness.

These findings concur with the recent Harvard University study quoted in the report that, "results suggest associations of frequent religious participation in adolescence with greater subsequent psychological well-being, character strengths, and lower risks of mental illness and several health behaviours".

Additionally, Australian 2018 McCrindle research has found that 9 out of 10 Australians believe that students should have the opportunity to explore religion, spirituality and faith, with 84% recognising the place of religion as a key part of cultural heritage and

79% agreeing that schools should be a safe place for students to explore deeper questions of faith and belief.

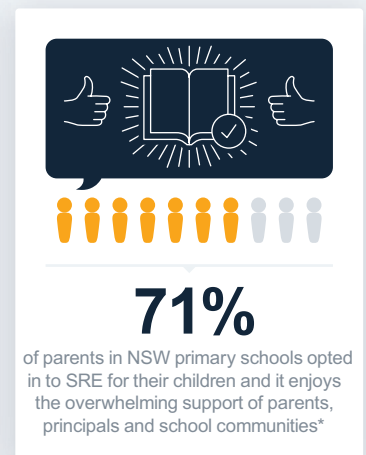
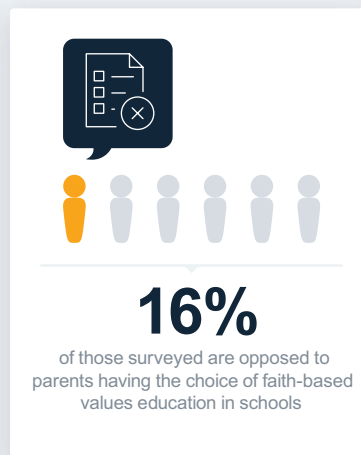
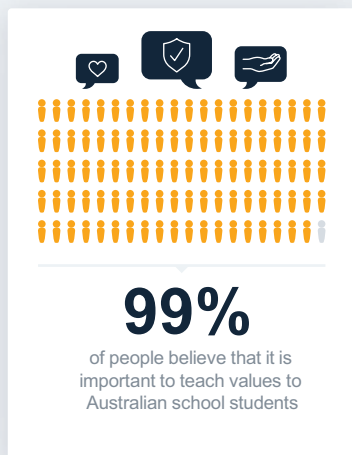
### Greater Stability

More references will be made to these research findings in future editions of CatechistNET. Suffice to say, it is pleasing to note that in 2019 we find ourselves in a place of much greater stability in SRE. Thanks be to God, it appears that the tide is turning and the amazing contribution of our Catechists, in seeing almost 9000 Catholic kids in 140 government schools weekly, is starting to be rightfully acknowledged. The findings outlined above, certainly are a welcome addition to the conversation about the place of SRE in schools and enable me to confidently say – thank you to all our Catechists and those who support them! Not only are you being incredibly faithful to your role as Catholics who embrace the evangelising mission of the Church, but what you do is also of immense importance and influence for the common good.

*Mr Jude Hennessy  
Director  
Office of Renewal & Evangelisation  
Diocese of Wollongong*

## Survey of Values, Education and Faith in Australia

**CHRISTIAN SRE**   
QUESTION. EXPLORE. DISCOVER.



### METHODOLOGY

A national survey of Australians n=1,013. The nationally representative survey was conducted by McCrindle in April 2018.  
\*The '2015 Review of Special Religious Education and Special Education in Ethics in NSW Government Schools', by Dept. of Education & ARTD Consultants, 2016 found that 71% of primary school students attend SRE.



# Consistent Practices in Safeguarding

Written by  
The Office of Professional Standards  
& Safeguarding

*In the December 2018 issue of CatechistNET, we laid out the seven-point plan being implemented by the Professional Standards and Safeguarding team. Each of the subsequent seven issues of CatechistNET explore one of the points of the outlined plan.*

**Diocese of Wollongong's prevention approach through effective recruitment and ongoing education, rigorous application of the code of conduct and other child protection policies.**

The Diocese of Wollongong promotes a comprehensive recruitment processes which encapsulates the importance of sound processes from application through to recruitment (legal compliance, referencing checking, interviews, etc.) and then induction and ongoing support of employees and volunteers once they have been established in roles.

One area in which the Diocese works towards prevention of harm is through the ongoing education of leadership in the Diocese to ensure consistent practices in establishing safe cultures in all ministries and agencies. In 2018 the Office of Professional Standards and Safeguarding, developed and implemented the

Diocesan Leadership Professional Development Modules. The program, under Diocesan Requirement, mandates each person in the Diocese in a leadership position to undertake a minimum of 10 units (equating to around 7 hours) of professional development in the areas of safeguarding and professional standards.

In 2019 the program once again features modules covering a wide range of topics from experts in the field and provides an opportunity for leaders to learn more about the importance of implementing a culture that works towards prevention and best practice. The foundation module establishes basic knowledge requirements in the areas of safeguarding and professional, including the importance of establishing and enforcing codes of conduct and child protection policies, while the more advanced modules provide participants with opportunities to look at specific issues in a greater level of detail. So far this year we have run the following modules: Investigations in Practice, Where Pastoral meets Professional, the Changing Landscape of Ministry, Children Displaying Sexually Harmful Behaviour, Walking with Survivors, and Vicarious trauma: Recognising early, prevention and



Child Protection training is available to all Catechists through the Level 1 Training Course and individual in-services

leading by example. There are another seven modules to be run before the end of the year which include: Responding to High Risk Behaviours in Adults, Challenging Conversations, Building Foundations, Conflict Resolution, Listen up when kids speak up, Trauma informed: Working with children and families subjected to domestic violence, and Resilience in Ministry.

There are also a number of opportunities available for volunteers of the Diocese to engage in training offered through the Office of Professional Standards and Safeguarding. In 2019, the Office began work with DOW's CCD office to provide presentations to CCD Level 1 Training to further the Diocese's efforts in ensuring that Catechists have a sound understanding of

the Diocesan codes of conduct and policies as they relate to those undertaking this important area of work. These presentations have also provided CCD Level 1 Training attendees with the opportunity to work through scenarios with the Office to problem-solve real life challenges and issues to ensure a shared understanding of best practice approaches to work in the classrooms.

*The Diocese's prevention approach will continue to be developed in line with external recommendations from government, national Catholic agencies, and private sectors who provide expert direction in this area, as well as through collaboration with other Dioceses nationally.*



**CCD Wollongong is dedicated to Keeping Kids Safe**

# Catholic SRE providers gather together

*Written by Trish McCarthy*

**CCRESS Conference:** The month of May marked the bi-annual gathering of Catholic SRE providers from across NSW. Representatives travel great distance to be present for a time of prayer, learning, fellowship and discussion of key issues that affect the delivery of SRE in state schools.

Amidst the discussion there emerged some common themes across all dioceses: the ongoing challenge of recruitment, Department of Education audits on schools which in turn effect demands on SRE providers, the generosity and heroic stories of SRE volunteers as well as how to respond to the emerging needs of SRE. These are big questions which require planning, diligence, strategy and perseverance. I was heartened to be amongst passionate, skilful and faith-filled leaders to help guide and support SRE across the State.

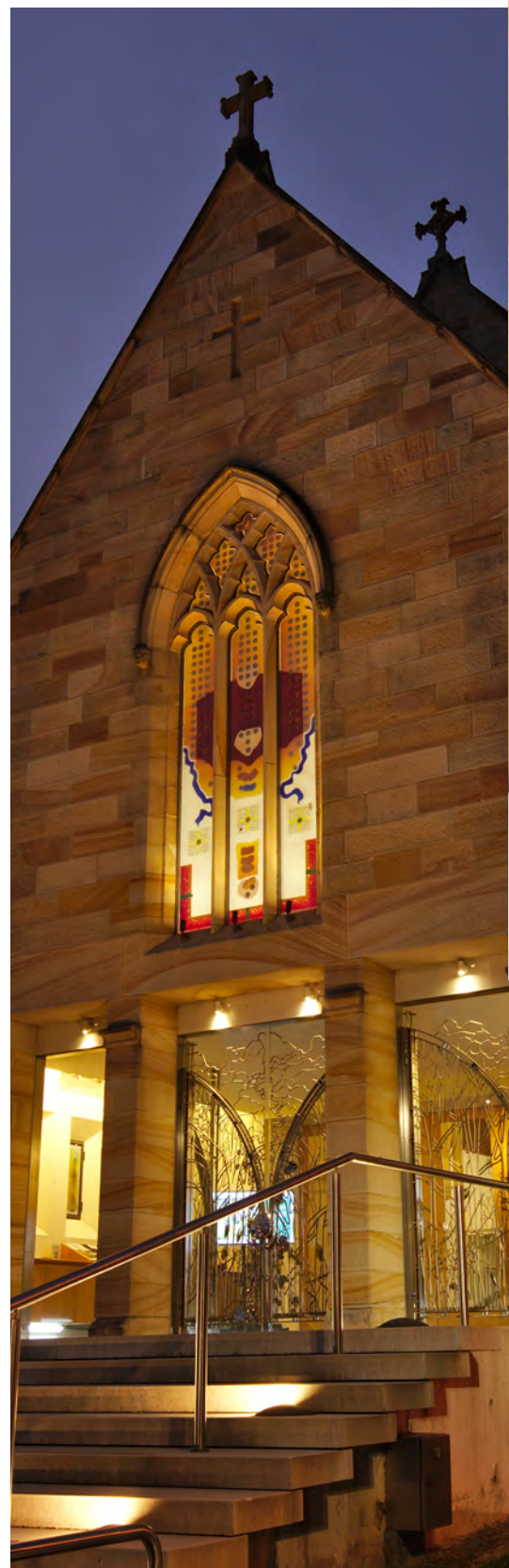
Building on these themes revealed another aspect of the CCRESS Conference; the opportunity for ongoing professional development. The host Diocese of Paramatta, engaged Maureen Hemmings, a lecturer at the Australian Catholic University. Maureen is also a trained facilitator of 'Godly Play', a teaching and learning method designed to help staff and students

get more out of exploring the Scriptures together. On this occasion, Maureen focused on the Parable of the Good Samaritan with specific consideration for the 'Worlds of the Text'; the world behind the text, the world of the text, and the world in front of the text. Considering these ways of engaging with the Scriptures takes readers into a much deeper understanding rather than a viewing a text at face value, which can sometimes feel like it has no relevance for the contemporary culture of today's students. Going deeper, the Scriptures truly become the Living Word of God that has the potential to touch our lives and transform us in the midst of our daily life!

Given the value of such a skill, there may be an opportunity to make this experience available to Catechists in our Diocese.

The CCRESS Retreat is due to take place in November 2019 and we will be sure to share the learnings of our next gathering.

***For more information on the 'Worlds of the Text', visit the Brisbane Catholic Education Website at [dow.sh/worlds](http://dow.sh/worlds) You will find resources for each Stage of learning.***

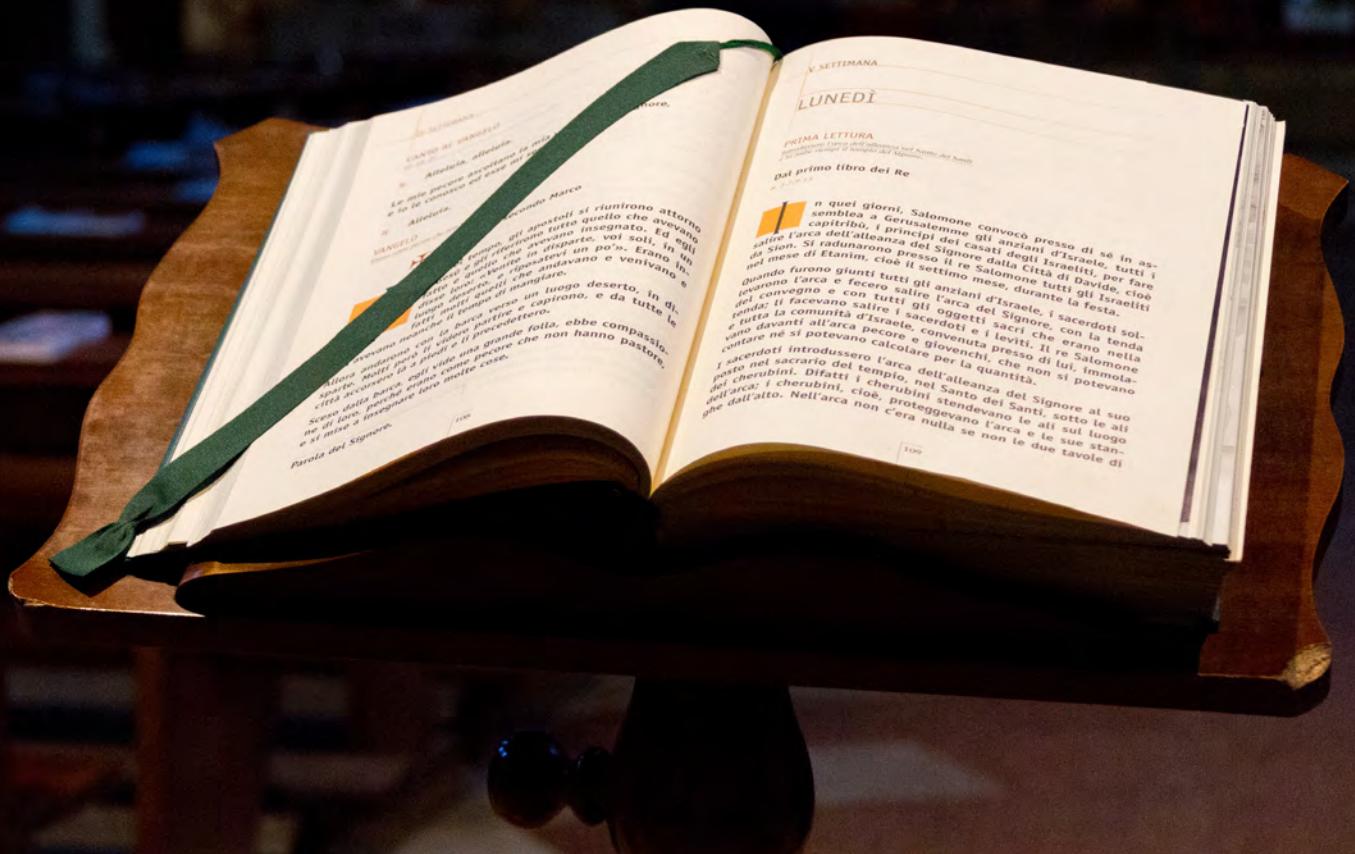




Visual Resource







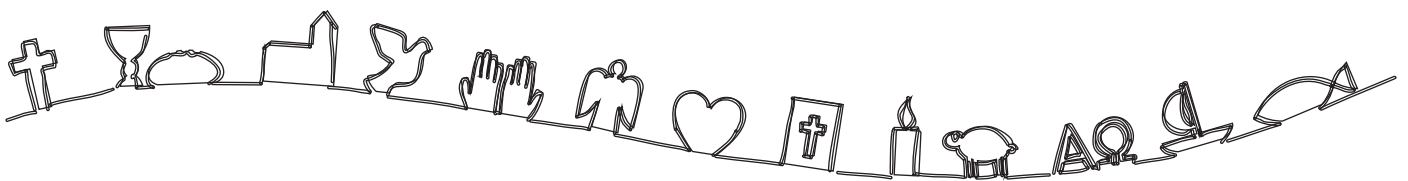


# Find-a-word!

## Together At Mass

X A O X I T R F J Y W L K N R  
U Y T D R A E Z P B N G F Y B  
B Q H E Z T A H A G O D A F I  
P E W S N W D M L O H D M V B  
E U C H A R I S T S G D I D L  
C S I N G I N G A P J B L K E  
A W F A I I G C R E Q F Y C W  
T J C N M A S S L L I Q K A F  
H S H Y E T Q V J K K H M N E  
O S U Y Z E L I T U R G Y D Z  
L P R I E S T P L M W Q B L J  
I A C I Z K D E N P R A Y E R  
C N H Z X C A V A I Y I E S N  
P S A L M M F Z S Z M Y W I C  
A C O M M U N I O N C O W W Z

MASS PEWS  
EUCCHARIST CATHOLIC  
PRIEST CHURCH  
FAMILY  
LITURGY  
GOD  
PRAYER  
BIBLE  
READINGS  
GOSPEL  
PSALM  
SINGING  
COMMUNION  
ALTAR  
CANDLES





# Catechist Profile

## Dianne Koens

Catechist Coordinator  
Douglas Park

*How long have you been a Catechist?*

35 years but in different parishes. I started in St John's, Campbelltown and worked there for many years and as a co-ordinator for one year, before moving to Douglas Park.

*What inspired you to become a Catechist?*

My only sister, who was a Catechist for 40 years, before her death.

*What do you enjoy about teaching SRE?*

The ability to share my faith and love I have for God with each of the children and letting them know how God loves each one of them very much.

*What do you find most challenging?*

The fact that each week I teach year 1 to year 5. Also, year 4 and year 6 combined. As well as year 5 and year 6 combined - combined classes can be very challenging!

*Do you have a particular talent or skill that you make use of in the classroom?*

I listen to the children, respect them and ask for their respect. I also let them know they can ask questions on topics relating to religion at any time. I have a strong clear voice.

*Describe a lesson that went particularly well? What happened?*

I taught a lesson once to year 5, about death and told them that one day we hope to be in Heaven

with God. A young boy followed me out after the lesson was over and asked if I really believe what I said and I said yes. He thanked me and said, no one had told me him that before.

*What warms heart when you are in the classroom?*

When the students ask questions, listen, show interest and also the way they show love and care.

We have all, as Catechists, been filled with faith. We can share that with the children we teach and in years to come, they will remember something special that you have taught them.

Example: I taught a boy in year 6, about 4 years ago, and in their books, it asked, who first taught them to pray and the answer was my year 1 scripture teacher. It filled my heart with joy. There is no greater gift than being a catechist and I thank God for his gift to me.

*What is your future direction as a Catechist?*

To keep doing what I do for as long as I can.

***Thank you so much, Dianne, for sharing about you and your journey in the ministry!***

***Want to share your story in the ministry?***

We'd love to hear from you.  
Please contact  
[cindy.oliver@dow.org.au](mailto:cindy.oliver@dow.org.au)



# Challenging Conversations

*Event Summary written by  
Frances Fairs  
Catechist Coordinator, Nowra Parish*

*After the mid-year parish coordinator meeting in July, Catechist coordinators from around the diocese took part in professional development with Tricia Casey on the topic of dealing with challenging conversations. Tricia is a renowned relationship and conflict specialist who has developed a process for dealing with difficult conversations that we often need to have. Frances Fairs, Catechist coordinator from Nowra Parish, sent us this summary:*

## **A Brief Overview**

Tricia informed us that strong relationships, communities and organisations often need to have challenging conversations. These challenging conversations involve strong emotion, high stakes and controversial topics. They are difficult but essential if we want the best for our ministry. Tricia equipped us with strategies and tools to have these conversations.

## **My Highlight**

Tricia helped us to consider the other person's point of view. When considering why a person would act in a certain way, she advised us to always presume good intentions. This excellent advice is simple and will help to build good working relationships and a strong team.

## **Something helpful**

Knowing how we react when confronted with a challenging conversation is useful as we can plan ahead for the best outcome for all. To help calm our mind, Tricia recommended prayer and controlled breathing. The breathing technique that we practiced was simply: breathe in for 4 seconds, hold your breath in for 4, breathe out for 4, hold your breath out for 4, and repeat.

## **Would I recommend the in-service to another Catechist?**

Certainly! Challenging conversations lead to growth and are extremely important for all relationships. Entering the conversation with skills to manage emotion and have a constructive, respectful conversation is worthwhile for us and our ministry as a whole.

*Thank you, Frances, for sending us this great Event Summary!*

*For more information about challenging conversations, consider discussing this process with your Catechist coordinator.*

*Have you been to a CCD event or training recently?*

We'd love to hear from you.  
Please contact  
[cindy.oliver@dow.org.au](mailto:cindy.oliver@dow.org.au)

# Divine Renovation Leadership Tips

*Written by Peter Gilmore*

Recently Jude Hennessy, Trish McCarthy and I had the wonderful opportunity to attend the Alpha Leadership Conference for 2019. It was an intensely packed program over three twelve-hour days! Over the next few issues we'd like to share with you some of the insights into leadership that are applicable to the Catechist ministry. As author Ken Blanchard says in *Lead Like Jesus*, "We believe leadership happens anytime we influence the thinking, behavior, or development of another person". Doesn't that sound exactly like the role of a Catechist? Let's get into it!

**Creating a Value-driven Culture in your classroom** (*Adapted from the teaching of Pastor Craig Groeschel*)

## **1. Determine honestly what your actions say you value**

We all have values that we bring with us into the classroom and they shape the culture of our SRE classes. What do your actions communicate to the children you teach? Are you rushed or calm? Do you take time to include children in the prayers you are praying? How do you react to bad behaviour? Do you ask a lot of questions or do you do a lot of lecturing? Our actions communicate what we value.

## **2. Identify the values within you**

What matters most to you about teaching Catholic SRE? What do you passionately love about teaching? What does a good lesson look like to you? What are you hoping the children get out of a Catholic SRE lesson?

## **3. Narrow down your values to the top few**

As Craig says, if everything is important, nothing is important. If you value everything, you don't value anything. In a Catholic SRE class, what are the key things you value?



## **4. Describe your values in short, life-giving statements**

The values for your classroom should be punchy, simple sentences. If they don't move you emotionally, they are too dry. If they don't prompt action, it's time to get some new values. They should be memorable and easy to communicate to the children. A good example might be, "Our Scripture class is a place to have fun, learn more about God and pray" or "Jesus wants to be our best friend and best friends talk to each other every day".

## **5. Shape your classroom culture and lead the children towards your classroom values**

Classrooms don't change! Children change! And when the children change, your classroom culture will change. If you want things to change in your classroom, you need to help the children to change. So we need to keep reminding the children about our classroom values – this means telling them and showing them how to behave. We need to value our lessons (and our preparation) the way we want the children to value them.

*Consider discussing these five points at your next parish Catechist meeting. You might also like to discuss the values for your parish Catechist team. What are the sorts of values that define the kind of team you want to be in?*

# The Bigger Picture



## Advent Program

The Diocese of Wollongong continues to bless and nurture growing numbers of people through its Advent and Lenten programs—now selling over 50,000 copies annually across Australia and abroad.

We are excited to announce that we have secured seven new major international contributors for the upcoming Advent program—titled *The Way*—in addition to some of your favourite local contributors. Our seven new contributors include Dr Eleonore Stump, Fr Gregory Pine OP, Trent Horn, Fr Damian Ference, Michael “Gomer” Gormley, Fr James Mackay and Fr Chris Pietraszko.

*The Way* will go on sale in early September on our website at [www.dow.org.au](http://www.dow.org.au).

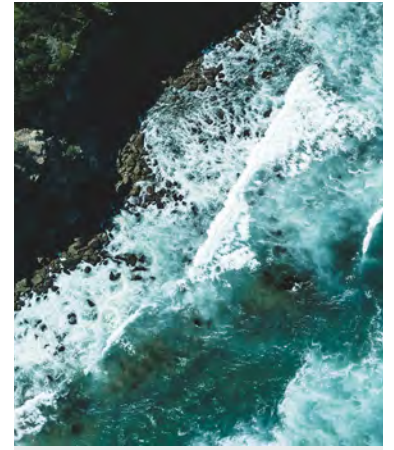


## Parish Leadership

Leadership is the process of influencing – whether our small family unit, a team or even a large organisation. We start with ourselves – leading my own thoughts and actions, then moving out to lead others. We do this through inspiring, empowering and guiding them towards a common goal.

As a Diocese we support many ministry leaders to grow in their potential and practise of leadership. Parish Leadership Teams have been established as well as the employment of people to work specifically on raising up leaders through Alpha.

An important question in leadership is – who am I raising up beside me, who is my apprentice? Through apprenticing another – inspiring, empowering and guiding them - we are truly leading like Jesus.



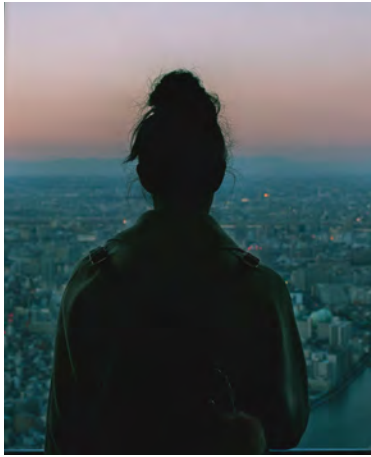
## Plenary 2020

At Pentecost 2018 we were asked by Bishops Brian to listen to what the Spirit is saying and respond to the question “What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?” Over 220,000 Australian people responded to this call. Six National Themes for Discernment have now been published for us to pray about and discern.

Local gatherings will be asked to engage with these themes and give feedback to the National Working Groups

This is an opportunity to find fresh ways of being Church that reflect authentically the person and message of Jesus Christ and empower people with hope.

*The ministry of Catechists happens in and contributes to the broader work of the Church to evangelise, renew and support people in their faith. The Bigger Picture is a small spotlight of some of these works. Thanks to John Tubridy, Daniel Hopper, Darren McDowell and Jude Hennessy for their contributions to the Bigger Picture.*

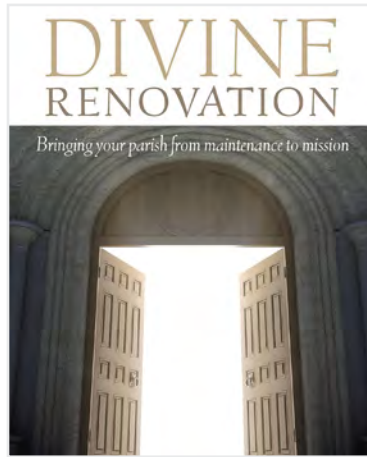


## Alpha

Through Alpha, the Holy Spirit has brought people back into relationship with Jesus; freed them from addictions; lead them to experience God's presence daily and know his daily guidance. Experiencing the Holy Spirit has brought them to a greater love of people.

Our parishes are also being transformed. Parishioners have said how it has made the community more joyful, more like a family, they are experiencing more people willing to become involved and a burst of new people wanting to join the Catholic faith.

Such transformation only comes through prayer. Alpha is most effective when time is dedicated to focused prayer for participants. Many of our teams are now sharing the exact time they will pray for people in Alpha – eg: 7:30am; 9:30pm etc – building a culture of shared prayer.



## Divine Renovation

Over the past two years various parishes have begun the process of transforming their communities to become more outward focused, looking towards the needs of 'the outsider', 'the lost' and 'the broken'. The fruit of such transformation is evident in renewed lives, renewed faith, encounter and deep relationship with the person of Jesus Christ.

Such a process of moving from maintenance to mission takes time and is grounded in three essential elements: the primacy of evangelisation, the best of leadership principles, and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. These three keys are held together with the Eucharist.

Jesus gave entrusted to us his mission – go out to all the world and tell the good news! What does this mission look like for you in your community?



## MenAlive

Last year the Diocese ran a series of highly successful menALIVE events in the Diocese of Wollongong, providing over 120 men of all ages with great formation and support to live life to the full and embrace their role as sons of the Father. We saw many men returning to the Sacraments after a long period and even some becoming Catholic through the witness of other men! One of the great outcomes was the establishment of numerous ongoing mens small groups, meeting regularly for a coffee, catch up and prayer. Hopefully similar positive impacts will result from our Parish hosted weekends in **Milton (September 7-8)** and **Bowral (September 21-22)**.

*To register contact [helen.bennett@dow.org.au](mailto:helen.bennett@dow.org.au) OR call Jude Hennessy on 4222 2407 for more info.*



# Calendar 2019

## Coordinator Meetings (10:00-11:30am)

Illawarra-Shoalhaven Nov 22  
Xavier Centre

Macarthur-Highlands Nov 25  
Micah House

## Level III (9:30am-1:30pm)

Illawarra-Shoalhaven Aug 16, 23, 30  
Xavier Centre Sept 6, 13, 20

Macarthur-Highlands Aug 12, 19, 26  
Micah House Sept 2, 9, 16

## Craft Day/Morning Tea (10:30-12:00pm)

Micah House Oct 23

## Catechist Retreat (10:00am-2:00pm)

Illawarra-Shoalhaven Oct 18  
St Mary S. Sea, Gerringong

Macarthur-Highlands Oct 21  
Mt Carmel Retreat Centre, Varroville

## Annual Catechist Mass (10:30am)

St Francis Xavier Cathedral Nov 16

\*Dates are correct at time of printing

### BOOKINGS ARE ESSENTIAL

CONTACT CINDY OLIVER ON 4640 8550  
OR [cindy.oliver@dow.org.au](mailto:cindy.oliver@dow.org.au)

# Catechist Retreat

facilitated by

**Fr Bernard Gordon** VG

**Illawarra-Shoalhaven Retreat**  
St Mary Star of the Sea, Gerringong  
Friday, October 18th  
10:00am-2:00pm

**Macarthur-Highlands Retreat**  
Mt Carmel Retreat Centre, Varroville  
Monday, October 21st  
10:00am-2:00pm

**Morning Tea provided, BYO Lunch**  
**Bookings essential.**

**GO DEEPER  
IN FAITH**

## Catechist Training Level III



Level III training is a chance for all Catechists to take their knowledge of the Catholic Faith deeper. Over six weeks, Level III focuses entirely on Theology and Church teaching, with the aim of providing space to explore and reflect on the profound truths of our Catholic Faith.

### TOPICS INCLUDE

- Creation: Work of the Trinity
- Communion: Eucharist - Source & Summit
- Reconciliation: Forgiveness of Sins, Healing
- Christ: Heart of Catechesis
- Morality: Life in the Spirit
- Church: Mission of the Holy Spirit

**See Calendar above for course details.**  
**Bookings essential.**