

CatechistNET

CONFRATERNITY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE • DIOCESE OF WOLLONGONG

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& more

**During your times of trial
and suffering, when you see
only one set of footprints,
it was then that
I carried you.**

**(Footprints in the Sand,
Margaret Fishback Powers)**



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Edited by Darren McDowell.

Message from the Director



Going back into classrooms and our new reality

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

I recently wrote to all of our current serving Catechists after receiving the good news that the NSW Department of Education (DoE) were enabling the resumption of SRE from the start of Term 3. This decision was heartening for a couple of reasons. Firstly, it signalled a growing confidence from governmental and health authorities, that the measures to restrict the spread of the pandemic have been proving effective. Furthermore, the eagerness of the DoE and Schools for SRE to resume has been a vote of confidence in the contribution that our Catechists make to public education, and recognition of what a huge positive SRE is for the lives of children and families.

No longer business as usual

In saying that, the team at CCD have endeavoured to communicate clearly and calmly to each of our active Catechists and parish leaders of this ministry, that we certainly cannot think of this recommencement opportunity as “business as usual”. It has been evident in dialogue with Catechists around NSW, that there would be many Catechists who would be very eager to return to this ministry as soon as possible. Others have well founded reservations of a return at this point, and some may not wish to return to teaching SRE at all. Each of these positions have been arrived at after weighing up personal attitudes and feelings, advice from family, friends, and health professionals. Additionally, the CCD team provided individual Catechists and Coordinators with NSW Department of Health and Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) guidelines to assist Catechists to best make an informed decision that suits their particular circumstances.

As you would imagine, much of the energy of the CCD team in the Office of the Bishop and local parish leaders over the past few weeks has been

directed to assessing the capacity locally to resume teaching from the start of term 3 . As part of this, we have focussed on supporting parishes to gauge their capacity to resume SRE, with Catechists being asked to nominate if they were willing to return now, or at a later date or perhaps not at all.

What is and what will be

It is clear that in the midst of these decisions, that we are definitely entering a new phase in our ministry. Those who return will engage with a changed classroom environment. The importance of personal hygiene and social distancing will be of vital importance and schools will be briefing SRE teachers about the practices and protocols needed to keep everyone entering school communities safe. In a sense we are not going back to “what was” but will be configuring a new “what is and what will be”.

In a sense we are not going back to “what was” but will be configuring a new “what is and what will be”

It is difficult in the various communications I and the

team have had with you thus far, to convey adequately just how grateful CCD is for your involvement in this ministry, and just how earnest we are in wanting you to know, that whatever you decide, we will in the short term cope with the situation and make SRE work. It will require a modified form of delivery in the short to medium term. It will require us when we can, to have a significant outreach for new Catechists. None of us are exactly sure what the long term ramifications will be for the way we go about delivering this ministry in the medium term.

Keep praying and trust

It is for this reason, that I ask all of our Catechists, those continuing, those pausing for a time and those who may be finishing or finished, to pray for this ministry. Pray we find good solutions to provide SRE well, for the students and families who in such strong numbers want this faith formation for their children. Pray for, support and encourage each other. We certainly are in a time of change, but the Holy Spirit turns all things to the good for those who love him, making all things new.

As such, we will pray like everything depends on God and work hard and think creatively – as if everything relies on our efforts.

We remain incredibly grateful for all that you contribute to this incredible work, for the sacrifices made so that Catholic children hear the wonderful news about Jesus.

Blessings

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

“..we will pray like everything depends on God and work hard and think creatively – as if everything relies on our efforts.”

DISCOVER SRE IN SCHOOLS

CHRISTIAN SRE 
QUESTION. EXPLORE. DISCOVER.



Benefits of Special Religious Education (SRE)

Connect

SRE builds tolerance in schools around diverse communities and promotes multiculturalism through joint celebrations of different faith groups and the recognition of different cultural heritages.

Succeed

SRE contributes to a well-rounded education and provides students with a values perspective to make informed ethical choices.

Thrive

SRE is community building and helps connect schools with the local community.

- ARTD Review of SRE and SEE

“Spiritual wellbeing relates to our sense of meaning and purpose. It can include our connection to culture, religion or community and includes the beliefs, values and ethics we hold”

- NSW Dept. of Education Framework

Better Balanced Futures

Better Balanced Futures is about creating and maintaining better training and curriculum standards for SRE, helping to equip our children for a more certain future, by teaching positive values and providing a solid foundation and balance in their lives.



THERE ARE:

101

SRE providers



REPRESENTING:

29

faith groups

A woman with curly hair, wearing a dark jacket, stands at the front of a church. She is positioned in front of a white-clothed altar. The church pews are filled with people, some of whom are looking towards the front. The lighting is warm and the atmosphere is solemn.

Farewell, Trish McCarthy

Written by Jude Hennessy

I was approached recently by Ms Trish McCarthy, who informed me of her decision to conclude her time in the role as our Macarthur- Highlands coordinator at the end of July, a position that she has embraced, and in many ways transformed over the last nine years.

Trish joined the CCD team at a time of great turmoil and change for this ministry, and she met the many challenges with an eye to what God was asking of her, of us as a leadership team and of this work as part of the evangelising mission of the Church. She has brought so many strengths to this role, not the least of which is her ability to think outside the square and to always direct decisions or discussions back to consideration of the most important resource that this ministry has, that is our individual catechists.

Her achievements are too many to list adequately here. She has not only been a contributor to but, in many instances, has been the catalyst for significant systematisation of CCD processes, support of Catechist Coordinators, training and resourcing. Without a doubt, the way we currently support and form our Catechists, especially spiritually, has stemmed from

the desire of Trish to nourish above all else, the hearts of Catechists. This has been borne out in so many ways, especially via her rejuvenation of our retreat program, through her writings, talks and the way she has brought Catechists together in prayer.

She has spent the last three years, serving the ministry more broadly in NSW as a member of the 'Executive' of our peak body, the Catholic Conference of Religious Education in Schools (CCRESS). In so doing, Trish has identified a number of the key challenges facing this ministry in the medium term. This decision by Trish to conclude in her role was arrived at after a prolonged period of thought and consideration. It has involved a bold stepping out



in faith, with Trish asking with her usual trust, what is the Lord asking of me now? Trish will be taking a period of sabbatical, eager to discern that question, travelling and being ready to respond to what God is calling her to do next.

I personally, will miss Trish enormously, her friendship and good counsel in particular, as will the Office of the Bishop more broadly. One thing is for certain, whatever role Trish takes on next, will benefit from Trish's passion for the mission of the Church, her wisdom, prayerfulness, and calm leadership. God Bless you Trish, and rest assured you will remain in the prayers of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) family.

Catechist Authorisation

*Written by Lisa Metcalfe
& Cindy Oliver*

Well, we are all waking up from the pandemic paralysis in different ways. For some people, few changes were necessary, but, for the vast majority of people everything changed. Perhaps if you are an extravert it is the awkwardness of not greeting people with a handshake or hug, or feeling the real disconnection from gathering as a community in worship at Sunday Mass. For others it may be the constant washing of hands and surfaces as members of your household come and go.

For many of the mighty, volunteer evangelising Catechists, the abrupt end to classes provided a time for reflection on what a privilege it is to be involved in the ministry of Special Religious Education, where to speak of the love of God in schools is supported and facilitated through the Education system. It will soon be possible for volunteers to return to the classroom and one focus of the last few months has been to bring all Catechists up to date in their training.

To become a Catechist the Diocese of Wollongong requests many things for the parish volunteers to have:

- a valid Working With Children Check,
- have Parish Priest approval via Teacher Engagement Form,
- completed Level One training and to continue to update training and professional development

Professional development can take many forms; through participation in ongoing formation – personal prayer, participation in parish worship, and continued learning and updates in Child Protection and Classroom Management. To ensure that Catechists are classroom ready, over 350 Catechists will have received a brochure that reviewed Expectations of Attitudes and Behaviours in Child Protection and Classroom Management, over 60 people participated in Level One - Week One face to face training either at the Micah House or Xavier Center and the response to OpenLearning Catholic Conference of Religious Educators in State Schools online courses has been very popular.

In whatever way you took the opportunity to engage in continuing professional development thank you!

Thank you to all those people who attended Level 1 and to the many online learners. This is one way you can be classroom ready.

Many Catechists have now had training records updated, including Recognised Prior Learning and at the completion of training opportunities highlighted above. If you wish to check on your training status or check out the latest online courses please submit your request update your training go to www.ccdwollongong.com and click on Online Training to register, call Cindy Oliver on 4640 8550 or email Lisa Metcalfe at lisa.metcalfe@dow.org.au

We look forward to hearing from you and thanks again for your continued commitment to the ministry.

This little light of mine

Written by Peter Gilmore



It is not often that someone has cause to quote Friedrich Nietzsche in a Catholic context. Indeed, it is strange source to go to given that the German philosopher infamously wrote, “God is dead.”

Everyone knows that quote and it is quoted ad nauseum. But he also said, “He who has a why to live, can bear almost any how”. The essence being that whatever Goliath we face in our lives, if we have a bigger purpose, a “why”, the “how” almost fades into irrelevancy. Earlier this year, I read a news article with the headline, “Father burned while rescuing children from apartment fire”. The story was simple: a father ran into the fire to rescue his two children and was burned badly in the process. There is no follow up interview with him, but do we even need one? What will he say that we do not already know? These are my children and of course I ran into the fire to get them, he would say. His why allowed him to survive a terrible how.

A lot of the time we talk about how we teach Scripture or SRE. How do classes work? How do I become a Catechist? How does it work in schools? How do we deal with behaviour problems? And these are all good questions but they are not the main question nor do they give us an answer that will sustain us when the ministry is difficult, when we are at our wits end or when we feel like giving up.

We need to ask “why?”. Why do we need to do this? Why would we take time out of our week to go talk to Catholic children and young people about God, faith, and life? Why do we tell the stories of our faith? Why does any of this matter? And our answer needs to be bigger than “I love spending time with the kids” or “I think it’s important”. To answer this question, we need to go to the heart of the mission of the Church, which is the mission of every baptised Christian.

It is fascinating to read the last words of famous people. For example, Casablanca star and

Hollywood great, Humphrey Bogart’s final declaration was, “I should have never switched from Scotch to Martinis”. Nostradamus, the 16th century self-proclaimed prophet and seer’s last words were, “Tomorrow I shall no longer be here”. At least he got one prediction right. Winston Churchill, having led the United Kingdom through WW2, uttered “I’m bored with it all” before slipping into a coma. Of course, we all know Ned Kelly’s final phrase – “Such is life”. Quite often these words tell us so much of who they were and what they stood for.

Jesus on the cross, with the full weight of our sin and brokenness upon himself, cried out his final words, “It is finished” and then he died. His mission to come and then to die for the sins of the world had been completed. But Good Friday had an Easter Sunday, a Resurrection, a new beginning and, in Jesus through Baptism, we die, and we rise again. We have a new beginning. We have new life in him. The power of sin and

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Our friend,
Jesus



Footprints in the Sand

One night a little child had a dream. They dreamed they were walking along the beach with God. Across the sky flashed scenes from their life.

For each scene they noticed two sets of footprints in the sand: one belonging to them, and the other to God. They noticed that many times along the path of their life there was only one set of footprints. They also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times in life.

This really bothered the little child and they asked God about it: "God, you said that once I decided to follow you, you'd walk with me all the way. But I have noticed that during the most difficult and sad times in my life, there is only one set of footprints. I don't understand why when I needed you most you would leave me."

God replied: "My precious child, I love you and I would never leave you. During your saddest times, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you."

(Adapted from Margaret Fishback Powers)



Find-a-word!

Our friend, Jesus

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

Eucharist

Master

Omega

Lamb

Emmanuel

Christ

Rabbi

Adam

Messiah

Jesus

King

The Word

Alpha

Lord

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death is broken! We have hope of heaven! This is the wonderful news of the Gospel. But here is the best part – Jesus spoke those words before dying but, after he rose again, he directed his second “final” words towards us, the Church. Just as he was about to ascend into heaven, he gave us his instructions, he invited us into his mission. He said, “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age”. Now that is a mission.

To go and make disciples has always been the mission of the Church. We are fed at the table of the Eucharist, but our mission is not just to “attend”, it’s also to “go”. Mass is like the battery for our lives, and our lives are meant to shine like a light in the darkness, leading people home. Pope Paul the 6th tells us, “inspired by no earthly ambition, the Church seeks but a solitary goal: to carry forward the work of Christ under the lead of the befriending Spirit”. This mission will not win us awards. It will not win us applause. It will not even win us heaven – after all, Jesus has already won that for us. We go because Jesus calls us to. We go because when we do, we bring about the kingdom of heaven here on earth. We go because faith brings life, because hope brings joy and because even a little light can make a dark room bright. That is the *why* we need.

During the extraordinary Holy Year of Mercy at the end of 2015, Pope Francis instructed that the Holy Doors of Churches be opened around the world. These doors represent the “great door of God’s mercy”. Now, when you open a door, it lets people in, yes, but it also reminds us that we need to go out. Pope Francis said, “If the door of God’s mercy is always open, the doors of our churches, our love, our communities, our parishes, our institutions, our diocese also must be open so that we all can go out to bring God’s mercy”. The gift of our faith was never meant to be a secret nor was it meant to be private. In our modern world, discerning what is good, true, and beautiful can sometimes feel like an impossible task but our faith in Jesus gives us solid ground to stand on and holds us firm even during the fiercest of storms. This is God’s gift to us and our gift to the world. Not only is it true but when it is lived out, we live the best lives possible and become our best selves.

This is the mission of the Church – to make disciples, to teach and to share the joyous news that Jesus is with us, now and forever. More than a charity, more than a social institution, more than a family, more than a club or interest group – the Church is the living Body of Christ. This is not a mission that was passed on to us, like a baton in a relay race. Jesus continues his mission in and through us because he lives in us!

Now that we know the why, we can ask the how. How does God want me to serve him? How am I to respond to this great calling? Over the years, we have tried different promotional strategies for seeking out new volunteers to the ministry but the one my heart keeps going back to because it was as true then as it is now is this one: I’m a Catechist. Knowing all the reasons why, the mission, I’m a Catechist. Knowing all the difficulties and the challenges, I’m a Catechist. And if you ask me tomorrow, I will tell you the same thing: I am a Catechist. What does your heart say?

Wherever you call, Lord, I will follow

The way of Jesus is the way of the Cross. It always has been. And we don’t “arrive” until we see Jesus face-to-face and the Father declares before all the saints and angels, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:23). Until then, may we all have the courage to step out of the boat like St Peter did and say, “If it’s you Lord, bid me to come” (Matthew 14:28). It’s important to remember that being a Catechist in the ministry of CCD, teaching children in State schools, is just one way of following God’s call. It’s a particular path for a particular time for particular people. CCD does not have a monopoly on following God’s will, so we implore you to feel free to respond to the Lord’s call when, where and however he calls you.

The lyrics of the song “Oceans” by Brooke Ligterwood come to mind and I pray they serve as an encouragement for you:

*You call me out upon the waters.
The great unknown where feet may fail.
And there I find You in the mystery. In
oceans deep, my faith will stand.*

*And I will call upon Your name.
And keep my eyes above the waves
When oceans rise, my soul will rest in
Your embrace. For I am Yours and You are
mine.*

*Your grace abounds in deepest waters.
Your sovereign hand will be my guide.
Where feet may fail and fear surrounds
me, You’ve never failed and You won’t
start now.*

*Spirit lead me where my trust is without
borders. Let me walk upon the waters,
wherever You would call me. Take me
deeper than my feet could ever wander
and my faith will be made stronger in the
presence of my Saviour.*

Working with the HOLY SPIRIT

Written by Trish McCarthy

Over the last three months, as we have navigated circumstances beyond our control, the Holy Spirit has been with us, working for our good and the good of those we reach out to.

We are invited to work alongside the Holy Spirit with greater awareness, in our mission and ministry. This invitation includes considering what the Holy Spirit does in our everyday life as well as what it means for our mission and ministry.

Over the last few decades, we have been encouraged by our Popes to participate in the New Evangelisation. This simply means finding new and culturally relevant ways of sharing and offering the Good News of Jesus. Jesus' message is wonderfully clear in the New Testament Scriptures¹ that God loves and desires relationship with us so deeply that he sent his Son Jesus; to set us free, to heal and to reconcile or restore us in our relationship with God and others. This has been possible through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and the power and action of the Holy Spirit gifted us as the sign God is with us always.

The Pope's encyclicals attest, the Holy Spirit is the principle agent of all mission and evangelisation². Without the power of the Holy Spirit, we cannot proclaim the Good News: "Techniques of evangelization are good, but even the most advanced ones could not replace the gentle action of the Spirit. The most perfect preparation of the evangelizer has no effect without the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit the most convincing dialectic has no power over the heart of man". As Catechists, this means we must ask for the Holy Spirit to inspire us (as the very Breath of God- to fill us more and more), with love and the heart of Jesus, reminding us of His words.

Since we can see why the Holy Spirit is important for our mission and ministry, let's look at what the Holy Spirit does when we invite the Spirit into our lives.

Among many other things, the Holy Spirit is active in three ways, inviting us to: wake up, grow up and step up. These phrases might seem a little harsh at first but as we dig deeper, we see there is great truth, beauty, goodness, and wisdom beneath them.

The very first thing God does is call us to life!³ Unless God continuously calls us and invites us, we remain stuck. We are first called into being in our humanity. Then even deeper, into a new life in the Spirit through our Baptism and the grace available each time we celebrate the feast of Pentecost⁴. We are called to life in the Spirit! Alive and awake to the work of the Holy Spirit in our life.

It is the Spirit of God who also invites us to grow. These invitations to grow up come through experiences, the example of others (witness), our hearts' desires, requests from others and often from Scripture when it pierces our hearts and 'speaks' to us. It also entails a commitment to becoming mature disciples. It's one thing to follow Jesus and be a disciple; yet another to be a mature disciple and like the Apostles (meaning 'one who is sent'), go out and be the message of Jesus. The Vicar General, Fr Bernard Gordon, during our Catechist Retreat last year, spoke of the importance of emotional maturity; Jesus was mature in every aspect of His humanity – emotionally, physically, spiritually, sexually, intellectually – which means to image or "be like" Christ is to follow the pattern of His earthly life and maturity too⁵. We are invited as Catechists to foster a culture of learning and growth, knowing that there is more than just our schooling, or university degree, or Level 3 Catechist Course. God desires for us to go deeper and grow in wisdom and stature.

“The Holy Spirit is active in three ways, inviting us to: wake up, grow up and step up.”

Finally, the Holy Spirit invites us to step up. Here we speak of the beautiful notion of stepping into our anointing, just like Jesus did when he read from the Hebrew Scriptures at the start of His ministry⁶. From that moment, Jesus stepped into His ministry with power and conviction. Paul’s letter to Timothy reminds us that God did not give us a spirit of timidity (fear), but a Spirit of power and love and self-control⁷. This is where our call to life, our growing in understanding of our gifts, knowledge of self and deeper knowledge of God come together to shape our unique response and contribution to life. Our life is a response of love to the invitations of the Holy Spirit, of Jesus the Living Word and the unconditional and providential love of the Father.

When we respond to the Holy Spirit from this place, our mission and ministry becomes more effective as we act not in our own strength, but from a place of unity with Trinity⁸. He is the vine, we are the branches. May our lives and Catechesis continue to bear the most enticing and nourishing fruit, blessed by God.

References

1. *John 3:16-18; Luke 4: 17-19*
2. *Redemptoris Missio, n. 21; Evangelii Nuntiandi, n. 75*
3. *Genesis 1-2; Jacques Philippe, Called to Life, 2008.*
4. *John 20:22; Acts 2.*
5. *Luke 2:52*
6. *Luke 4*
7. *2 Tim 1:7*
8. *John 15*



The Bigger Picture

General Faith Formation



Formed

www.formed.org

A huge Catholic resource website library containing thousands of faith formation videos, movies, programs, audio and books covering all aspects of our Catholic faith. Materials are available for both adults and children with many being highly valuable for sacramental preparation and formation. Access is free via the Diocesan Subscription which can be accessed by emailing Darren McDowell at darren.mcdowell@dow.org.au

Bible & Catechism in a year



Coming Home Network

www.chnetwork.org

By making a commitment of only twenty to thirty minutes a day, you can prayerfully read through the entire Bible and/or Catechism in one year! Use whatever Bible translation you like that contains the entire Canon of Scripture. This guide is divided by month, but you can start at any time.

Bible in One Year

www.bibleinoneyear.org

From the founders of Alpha, Nicky & Pippa Gumble take you through reading the whole bible in one year. Each day includes a short passage from both Old and New Testaments, the Psalms or Proverbs and a reflection on each scripture passage. Spend 25min per day soaking up the scriptures.

Families & Children



CathFAMILY & CathKIDS

www.cathfamily.org

CathFAMILY provides a selection of activities, prayer rituals, crafts and recipes for families to use in nurturing faith. Part of this suite includes CathKids: A weekly interactive experience with a two-minute animated reflection on the Sunday reading, questions to stimulate discussion, a simple activity and prayer. Families in the diocese are encouraged to utilise these resources at home to share faith with kids. Visit www.cathfamily.org to sign up. It's free for the first three months during this Covid-19 pandemic.

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 Darren McDowell for his contribution to the Bigger Picture.

Liturgical Life



LiturgyHelp

www.liturgyhelp.com/aus/woll/pray

LiturgyHelp provides a range of online resources which include daily prayers and Mass readings, prayer services, the Sunday Mass, commentaries, homilies and reflections as well as Gospel based activities and resources to support personal and family prayer.

Personal Prayer



Pray as You Go

www.pray-as-you-go.org

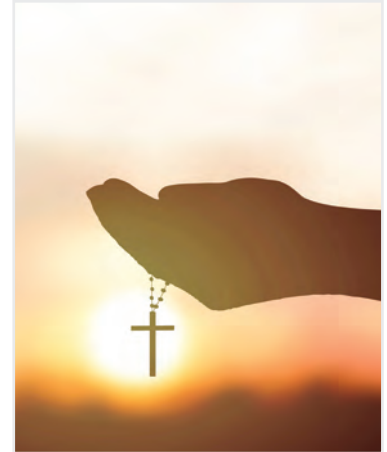
Pray as You Go provides daily reflections on the scriptures using the readings of the day. Also available as a phone app.

Bread4Today

www.csr.org.au/bread4today

Created by the Australian Province of the Redemptorist Missionaries, this app provides reflections on the daily scripture readings. Bread 4 Today is as a free, accessible meditation aid which people can use to come closer to God and effect positive change in their lives and their community.

Church Mission



Divine Renovation Ministries

www.divinerenovation.org

Creating vibrant and life-giving communities doesn't just happen – it takes time, vision, leadership and perseverance. We need to learn and grow from the experience and insights gained by others who've trodden the path before. This app provides key insights and tips on how to recreate the culture and mission of your community. It includes podcasts, videos, stories and much more to assist you in building the life of your community.



Calendar 2020

Please note: This calendar was correct at the time of printing. Please ensure that you contact Cindy Oliver when booking to confirm any changes to dates and availability of courses and events due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Some events have been rescheduled or changed to online only in response to the current situation we are in. Thank you for your understanding.

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

Illawarra-Shoalhaven Xavier Centre	Jan 31, Jul 3 Nov 20
Macarthur-Highlands Micah House	Jan 30, Jul 6 Nov 23

Level II (9:30am-1:30pm)

Illawarra-Shoalhaven Xavier Centre	Aug 7, 14, 21, 28 Sept 4, 11
Macarthur-Highlands Micah House	Aug 10, 17, 24, 31 Sept 7, 14

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

Macarthur-Highlands Micah House	Mar 16 Oct 22
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Catechist Retreat (10:00am-2:00pm)

Illawarra-Shoalhaven St Mary S. Sea, Gerringong	Sept 21
Macarthur-Highlands Mt Carmel Retreat Centre, Varroville	Sept 18

Annual Catechist Mass (10:30am)

St Francis Xavier Cathedral	Nov 14
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*Dates are correct at time of printing

BOOKINGS ARE ESSENTIAL
CONTACT CINDY OLIVER ON 4640 8550
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Talking about sickness and healing

This has been and continues to be a time of fear and confusion. Two of the things that children need most is stability and certainty. Here are some questions you might get asked in the classroom and what the Catholic response could be.

Why does God allow sickness? Sickness is part of the mystery of evil. It wasn't part of God's original plan for people, but it's one of the results of original sin. It's important to remember being sick does not mean we've done something bad or we are being punished.

Why do we pray for healing? Because God wants us to, because God wants what is good for us, and because God wants to be in a loving relationship with us. God can use our sickness to bring about something good when we turn to him in our time of need. That good might involve physical healing, but it also might simply be a strengthening of our relationship with God.

What good can God bring from sickness? If we stick with God in prayer when we are sick, even if we aren't immediately healed, God can still bring about something good – he may help us to love him more or to realise just how close he is, especially when we are sad or in pain. We can also offer our sickness to God for the sake of someone else. People can pray, "God, I offer you my sickness for the sake of someone who needs to know you today".

Why doesn't God always answer our prayers by healing the sick person? This is a mystery. The Book of Job spends pages and pages wrestling with this question, and we know that Jesus didn't heal everyone in Israel. His healing miracles were an announcement of the coming of the Kingdom of God, which is present in the Church but not yet fully realised. When it is, there will be no more sickness and no more death (Isaiah 35:5-6; 65: 19-20).

Should we still go to the doctor? Yes. The Church has long taught that part of God's plan is that we fight against all forms of evil, including sickness, using the gifts God gives us. This is why Catholics have founded so many hospitals and health care facilities!

Adapted from <https://teachingcatholickids.com/pray-for-the-sick/>