

CatechistNET

CONFRATERNITY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE • DIOCESE OF WOLLONGONG

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Annual Catechist Mass &
Awards 2021

Catechist Retreat 2021

Alpha for Catechists

& more

2021: A Virtual Success

Catechists connect in
record numbers via Zoom
for training and prayer



Confraternity of Christian Doctrine

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CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF
WOLLONGONG



Message from the Director

So much to celebrate about SRE in 2021

While of late there has clearly been much disruption to our work as Catechists, there have actually been so many things to celebrate in the Diocese of Wollongong and more broadly across NSW about Special Religious Education (SRE), as evidenced in the Virtual Parliamentary Celebration of SRE that was held on Tuesday November 9.

In our Diocese, despite not being in the classroom for most of this year, some amazing things have happened amongst our Catechists and in the work of CCD, primarily in the area of formation.

Zooming along

Our level 1, 2 and 3 courses were very well attended, with the pause in teaching giving us the opportunity to run all 3 levels of training, with so many of our Catechists learning new skills associated with 'zooming' and were engaged online by some fantastic content and presenters. The material delivered online for our Level 1-3 courses were recorded and were regarded as being so professional and engaging in their content that the Catholic Conference of Religious Educators in State Schools (CCRESS) has picked many of the presentations up and made them available to Catechists across NSW.

Building on the enthusiasm for coming together in Level 1-3 training, saw the CCD team follow them with the running of the Alpha course online. It too was well attended and provided great opportunities for personal faith sharing, the rehearsing of the basic gospel and wonderful connections in small groups. Again, the desire to continue to connect and grow was noted, and resulted in the development of weekly prayer seminars, conducted by expert presenters who have been breaking open different spiritualities and prayer forms, leading participants in an experience of this prayer. These seminars are continuing to run on Tuesday evenings and have been so well received, enriching the lives of Catechists and the many others who have joined in as well. Another highlight was the online Catechist Retreat, with powerful inputs from our Vicar General, Fr Bernard Gordon and Therese

Mills MGL, with a focus on the year of St Joseph.

I must note how encouraging and inspiring it has been to see how Catechists have embraced these opportunities for formation. I would like to sincerely affirm and congratulate Peter Gilmore, Frances Fairs and the entire CCD team for the way they have quickly adapted and responded to the needs and desires of Catechists. Peter Gilmore has done a marvellous job navigating the turbulence of this time in our ministry and Frances Fairs in her first year in the role has responded with eagerness and flexibility to nurture and encourage Catechists at every turn.

The Parliamentary Celebration

This event held on November 9, was a great occasion that celebrated the contribution of a diverse group of volunteers from a wide range of faith communities who enrich education in NSW through SRE. The Inter-Church Commission on Religious Education in Schools (ICCOREIS) organised the event for all authorised providers of SRE, in conjunction with All Faiths Special Religious Education (AFSRE) with the event attended online by representatives from all major Religions with close to 900 SRE teachers, including many from the Catholic Church and our Diocese.

The Hon Dominic Perrottet, NSW Premier spoke glowingly of the place of SRE and the contribution of faith providers and volunteers to Public Education and society more broadly. He noted that major faiths have not only been important in the current pandemic crisis but are vital in any thriving community. He described how people of faith generally have a strong spirit of service, and that the great foundations of our State and the nation has been built on this service in Education, hospitals and the support of the needy and vulnerable. He recognised that there is a limit to what Governments can do and how faith communities contribute to bringing joy and meaning into

people's lives. Further the Premier noted the commitment of the Parliament to make sure that no one is persecuted for their faith and importantly how SRE helps students to go beyond academic learning, pondering life's bigger questions and contributing significantly to the education of the whole person. He thanked SRE teachers for their unique role and impact on student well-being, noting that Public Education must be a partnership between the State and the family, thanking SRE providers and volunteers not just for their role in education but to the civic life of NSW.

In a similar way, the Leader of the Opposition Chris Minns, outlined that SRE plays such an important role in our schools, and how the Wran Labour Government in 1980 enshrined parental choice for Religious Formation in state schools by suitably qualified persons, which has resulted in the great partnership that exists between schools and faiths to this day. He noted that he himself was a product of SRE instruction in the 1990's, thanking SRE teachers for their ongoing service to students and their families in the pandemic, and how they responded to the difficulties with professionalism, dedication and the ability to adapt to the challenges of online learning, seeing the fruits of that in his own household.

The Hon Sarah Mitchell, Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning, outlined why it is so important that we provide the opportunity for religious formation for our students and that the desire to quickly resume after lockdown, was an indication of how important it was regarded for the well-being of young people. She highlighted that this choice for families is something the Government was committed to and really shows the strength of our system and the importance of multicultural and multi faith curriculum options.

Shadow Minister for Education, Prue Car, gave strong endorsement of the valued place and contribution of SRE teachers,

paying tribute to how they have gone beyond the call of duty in supporting schools, and the value that SRE brings to the community-should never be underestimated, noting her party's commitment to help providers to continue to deliver SRE in schools.

Our own Bishop Brian Mascord spoke on behalf of the NSW-ACT Bishops and all providers in thanking the major parties for their strong and growing support of SRE, and how the partnership has blossomed since 2015 with the new implementation guidelines, noting the commitment of the major faiths to deliver quality SRE in schools.

Keynote speakers Professor Zehavit Gross (Head of Policy and Leadership in Education Systems, Bar-Ilan University, Israel) and Professor Emerita Suzanne D Rutland OAM (University of Sydney) detailed the important place of SRE in NSW, holding it up as a model for other jurisdictions to emulate, as a way of giving families the choice of faith formation for their children and in ensuring cohesive, supportive communities of diverse belief where young people can thrive.

The event was one that clearly showed how school communities working together with families and faith providers are developing well rounded young people with faith and values, with great results beyond the classroom for the wellbeing of students and society more broadly. Essentially, the many speakers said what we say repeatedly to you our Catechists, and that is, – Thank you, you are making a huge difference and we hope you are eager to embrace this wonderful ministry when we resume in earnest in 2022.

Blessings

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

Farewell & Thank you

**CCD Support Officer,
Lisa Metcalfe**

Written by Jude Hennessy

Recently Lisa Metcalfe concluded in her role as member of the CCD team, having commenced work with the Office of the Bishop in 2016. In her role as CCD Support Officer, Lisa provided high quality support to this Apostolate, including for the Regional Coordinators, Parishes and Catechists.

At the time Lisa commenced, the ministry was entering a new phase in its operations, with the Parliamentary Review of SRE having led to numerous new requirements and expectations for SRE teachers in terms of safeguarding, heightened expectations with regard to training, in the use of approved curriculum materials and support around classroom management and communication with volunteers, schools and families. As a seasoned Catechist and Parish Coordinator for St Michael's Thirroul, Lisa brought with her a wealth of experience and knowledge but also, and perhaps more importantly, a zeal for the ministry of Catechists that provided some great insights for the Diocese on how to better practically support catechists.

After the Bishop decided to establish Cathlink as the single database for various ministries, key groups and stakeholders for the Office of the Bishop, Lisa took on an additional role supporting its development. A recent report on the progress and achievements of Cathlink, outlined how this database has enhanced communication, ministry authorisation, safeguarding processes, fundraising systems, promotions and bookings for events. Crucially, Lisa helped to train many around the Diocese in its use and in so doing, she has contributed significantly

to enhancing the missional capabilities of Parishes throughout the Diocese.

Lisa always kept those she was serving as her main priority. I thank Lisa for her service of the mission of CCD and the Diocese more broadly. She is really going to be missed by all who have worked with her in our Office and by the many Parish Secretaries, CCD coordinators, Catechists and other ministry volunteers with whom she worked so well. ■



Lisa Metcalfe receiving her 15-year service award from Bishop Brian in 2020



Alpha Online: Something worth sharing

Written by Peter Gilmore

On a dusty road in Africa, a man met a missionary from another tribe. The two walked for a while and soon they began talking about this miracle worker named Jesus. Right there, on the side of the road, they prayed together and the man was baptised.

Full of joy, the man took off running to his home village. He had to tell them. In only a few hours, his life had been turned upside down, but in a good way! And he had to share the joyous news of the saviour Jesus who came and died for all of us. Upon entering the village, he cried out, “He loves us! He loves us! Jesus loves us and he died for us!” He was not met with joy or laughter as he had expected. Instead, the men of the village grabbed him, beat him severely, and dragged him out of the village, leaving him to die in the wilderness.

Hours later, after coming to, he sat and pondered the events of the day. He came to the only conclusion that seemed logical – I must have got the story wrong. After all, when he heard it, he was full of joy. “I must try again”, he decided.

This time, as he returned to the village, he spoke a little softer. “He loves you”, he said. Again they seized him, beat him, and left him for dead.

“I must have got it wrong, again!” he thought.

The final time he returned to the village, he didn’t even have a chance to speak. The men seized him, and the women began to beat him with strands of razor wire. As he passed out of consciousness, the last thing he saw was the women beginning to weep.

This time, as he regained consciousness, he found himself in his home, his wounds bound, and the chief and elders gathered around his bed. “Tell us”, the chief said, “tell us about this Jesus who you were willing to die for”.

If the Gospel is true, what will we do in response? Because if it’s not true, the above real story seems insane. But if it is true, it’s the most logical thing in the world.

This year, during lockdown, a number of Catechists from around the diocese gathered together to journey through the

Alpha program via Zoom. Alpha is a powerful experience because it asks the question that every person at some point in their life asks: Is there more to than this? Is there more to life than work or mortgages or study or relationships. Is there more to life than money or success or fame. The compelling part of the Gospel, and what Alpha explains so well, is that the answer is a resounding “YES! There is more to life than this!”

The course moves through the basics of our faith but in a way that leaves even the most seasoned Catechist saying, “wow! I never thought about it that way”. The highlight of the course is often the Holy Spirit retreat day where we have a chance to stop and reflect on the Holy Spirit’s role in our life. This was accompanied by some extended time of prayer and reflection. It was a beautiful experience for all involved.

We hope to offer another Alpha course for Catechists in the future, hopefully in person! We look forward to walking with you on this amazing journey of faith. Truly, we have something worth sharing! ■



Annual Catechist Mass & Awards 2021

Written by Frances Fairs

Our Annual Catechist Mass & Awards was held on the Memorial of St Frances Xavier Cabrini, Saturday 13th November, at St Francis Xavier Cathedral, Wollongong.

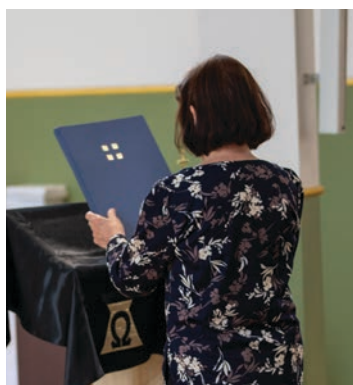
Aptly chosen for our Catechist Mass, the Memorial of St Frances, was a source of inspiration and encouragement. Well-known for her missionary zeal, St Frances said, “I will go anywhere and do anything in order to communicate the love of Jesus to those who do not know Him or have forgotten Him.” In her lifetime, St Frances established sixty-seven missionary houses, along with schools, hospitals, and orphanages. St Frances, pray for us!

Thank you to our celebrant, Bishop Brian Mascord, for leading us beautifully through the liturgy, and to the concelebrating clergy from around the diocese for taking the time to

support and encourage us by their presence – Fr Shane Kelleher (Varroville), Fr Paul Clarke (Helensburgh), Fr Leo Duck (Albion Park), Fr Damien Ellis (Berkeley-Warrawong), and Fr Bosco Son (Macquarie Fields). Thank you also to Cathy Zamroz, parish coordinator for Lumen Christi, and Rick Parmenter who served humbly on the sanctuary during the Mass.

There were many people who contributed to making the Catechist Mass & Awards such a special occasion this year. Dona Eady from Berkeley (also a 25-year awardee) and Anthony Rewak from Port Kembla proclaimed the Word to us clearly and prayerfully.

Bishop Brian welcomed us by explaining that he had once been a catechist, and that he found the work incredibly difficult, but essential. In his homily, Bishop Brian spoke of how all saints,



PHOTOGRAPHY BY DANIEL HOPPER

including St Frances Xavier Cabrini, respond to their encounter with God's love by revealing God's love to the world. When the love of Jesus is not revealed in our world, destruction, and chaos reigns. Bishop Brian reminded us that being a catechist is much more than teaching children about God but helping them to encounter Jesus in their lives and how to respond to this encounter of Love.

The Prayers of the Faithful were led reverently by Cathy Baird from Varroville (also 25-year awardee), Sue Cole (also 10-year awardee) and Michael Young from Ruse (also a 25-year and 30-year awardee). During these prayers, Jo Mortimer, parish coordinator of Oran Park and Ingleburn, presented Bishop Brian with our CCD Book of Remembrance where the names of Catechists who have died are recorded. This year we remember and give thanks for the lives of Brian

Barlow, Nola Butler, Fr Peter Caruana, Majorie Christian, Bernice Fogarty, Philippa Hardy, Joan Lee, Joseph Moore, and Judith Sandeman.

A big thank you must go to Daniel Hopper who photographed our Mass for us and to Max Norden, who organised and recorded the livestream of the Mass.

This day only came together because of the hard work and dedication of the CCD Wollongong team – Thank you to Jude Hennessy, who also provided beautiful music on the day, and Peter Gilmore for their leadership. Thank you to Cindy Oliver and Helen Bennett for their tireless support. Lisa Metcalfe, who has since concluded in her role as CCD Support Officer, also played a key role in organising the day.■

2021 CATECHIST AWARDS

DIPLOMA OF CATECHETICS

LEVEL 1, 2 & 3 TRAINING



Albion Park – Therese McQuade, **Camden-Oran Park** – Maureen Mohammed, **Campbelltown** – Maria Galvez
Corrimal – Peter Crowe, **Dapto** – Robyn Ford, Christine Marsh, **Eagle Vale** – Roxanna Rodriguez, **Ingleburn** – Marie Townend
Lumen Christi – Julia Walsh, **Macquarie Fields** – Barabara Hitchcock, Margaret Raisbeck, **Milton** – Patricia Williams, Russell Williams
Nowra – Christine Burrows, Virginia Robertson, **Port Kembla** – Mary Sebben, **Varroville** – Sr Serafina Castro CM, Vira Fernandes
Feviline Stewart, Sr Susan Timbal CM, **West Wollongong** – Peggy Lee Shoy

BISHOP'S CITATION

10 YEARS SERVICE



Campbelltown – Maria Antoni, **Eagle Vale** – Yvonne Garton, **Helensburgh** – John Rayment
Lumen Christi – Jo Clark, Susanne Cole, **Macquarie Fields** – Jackie Heeraman, **Port Kembla** – Antonio Lima
Varroville – Maria Gleeson, Madonna Selvaraj

BISHOP'S CITATION

15 YEARS SERVICE



Albion Park – Maria Takacs, **Campbelltown** – Jessie Bolin, Rosemary De-Kauwe, **Camden** – Praba Daniel
Dapto – Patricia Robinson, **Ingleburn** – Teresa Clarke, **Ruse** – Maria Byron, **Varroville** – Loretta Binny, Maria Gleeson

PAPAL BLESSING
20 YEARS SERVICE



Albion Park – Mary Daly, **Bowral-Mittagong** – Beverley Harland, **Camden-Oran Park** – Ralph Hanna
Dapto – Christine Marsh, **Lumen Christi** – Melinda Mueller, Julia Walsh, **Moss Vale** – Maureen Lynch
Rosemeadow – Christiane Harmour, Kristina Knight, **Varroville** – Lee Scales

MARY MACKILLOP MEDAL
25 YEARS SERVICE



Berkeley – Dona Lee Eady, **Bowral-Mittagong** – Beverley Harland, **Camden-Oran Park** – Leila Hanna
Dapto – Carolyn Young, **Kiama** – Elizabeth Reeves, **Lumen Christi** – Patricia Calabro, **Macquarie Fields** – Margaret Raisbeck
Nowra – Leonie Querci, **Oran Park** – Pauline Camilleri, **Ruse** – Gwenneth Harris, Michael Young, **Varroville** – Catherine Baird

LIFE MEMBERSHIP
30 YEARS+ SERVICE



Camden-Oran Park – Mirjana Gasperov, **Dapto** – Mirella Troman
Macquarie Fields – Alla Bakulic, **Ruse** – Gwenneth Harris, Michael Young

Turning to prayer during lockdown

Written by Frances Fairs

It was in conversations with Catechist Coordinators and Catechists, that the idea of 'Prayer Seminars' was born.

Unlike our other CCD courses, which focus on theology and pedagogy, Prayer Seminars included both information on the prayer as well as the prayer experience. Led in prayer by a variety of leaders each representing different spiritualities within our Catholic tradition, participants were able to 'sample' distinctive styles or pathways to Catholic prayer.

With Bishop Brian's support, each Prayer Seminar commenced with song and prayer intentions for our diocese. The Prayer Seminar then continued with the instruction and prayer. Prayer Seminars included The Examen, Lectio Divina, Prayer Journaling, Centering Prayer, and the Rosary.

Although Prayer Seminars was the work of CCD and hosted by our team, we invited anyone and everyone from our diocese to attend. The response was



Sr Magdalen Mather OSB leading us in a Benedictine Path to Prayer

overwhelming with more than 160 people registering! Guests were welcome to join any of the seminars with no requirement to attend every week, after all, Prayer Seminars ran for 11 weeks!

We are grateful for the positive feedback that we received, and we hope to continue Prayer Seminars in person and online in the future. ■

Some feedback we have received:

"I am an outsider from another diocese but I found a place in this and was quite comfortable with the process."

"I enjoyed the spirituality of this experience and feel I could make a great deal of use of it in future prayer times."

"I'm actually from Melbourne but I have found these sessions very calming and enlightening."

"The most helpful talk on prayer I have ever heard. Clear, cohesive, inspiring and empowering, this seminar has been transformative."

4 good questions to ask ourselves in 2022

Written by Peter Gilmore



Am I due to renew my authorisation and/or WWCC?

Making sure that we are following through with all the legal requirements to be allowed into the classroom is an important part of the ministry. When does your WWCC expire? Are you due to renew your Teacher Engagement form in 2022? If you're unsure, speak to your coordinator or parish secretary to find out when you need to renew

Who could I ask to join the ministry?

There's always a great need for more SRE Teachers and helpers. Do you know someone who might like to give it a go? Perhaps you know someone (maybe even you!) with good admin skills who might make a good coordinator? Suggest they go to our website (ccdwoollongong.com) and have a look at the "Join the team" page!



What training will I do in 2022?

We all need to be learning, growing, and refreshing our knowledge and understanding of the Catechist ministry in an ongoing way. In 2022, CCD will be offering all three Catechist Training Courses, as well as in-services in Parishes. What training course will you attend to make sure you are staying sharp and ready for the classroom environment?

How am I helping connect SRE families to parish life?

This ministry is about teaching children and sharing with them the Catholic faith. It's also about making connection points between families and parish life. What could we do to make this happen? Could we host a BBQ? What about a Mass for the families of SRE children?



Level 3 & Listening to your feedback

Written by Frances Fairs



Thank you to all those who took the time to complete feedback for the CCD Level 3 Course! We received 30 responses, mostly from Catechists, but it was wonderful to receive feedback from those in our Parish communities too, some of whom (26.7%) had never attended a Catechist Training event.

Attendees were asked about the course, the content and about the individual weekly sessions. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Here are some of the many comments received:

"Absolutely amazing course! I learned so much more about my faith. Very helpful as a Catechist. Thank you so much!"

"I found the course heavy, but very

interesting. I am still reading the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which I have never opened before!"

"The sequencing of the topics seemed logical with each one building on the previous one."

"The content seems to be designed to draw us into a deeper understanding while meeting the needs of the participants who came from a broad range of knowledge and experience."

"Content was excellent, I found all presenters were excellent."

"All the presenters were so knowledgeable & I will watch again in case I missed something or need clarity with my notes."

"Excellent all throughout. Totally rewarding and completely enriching!"

"I am so grateful for the opportunity

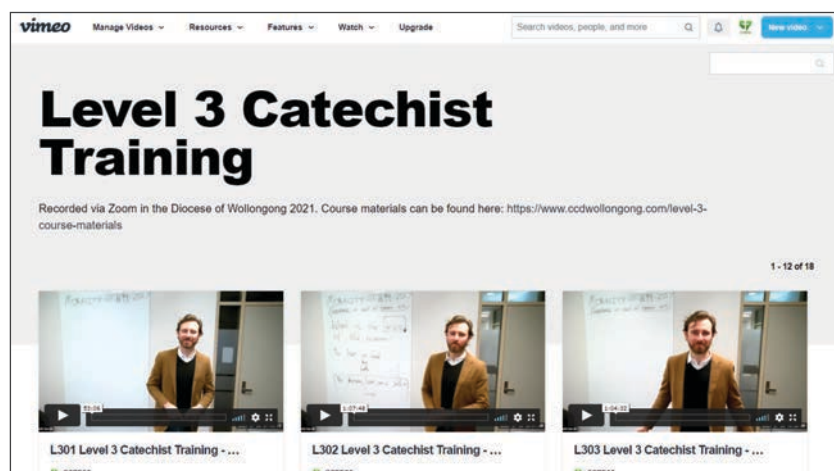
to have participated in this program. It has answered so many questions as well as opened up a whole new perspective and thirst to learn about my faith."

"All Presenters were excellent. I am sorry it had to come to an end."

"The sessions were managed and delivered well. People were given the opportunity to ask questions, Great work all around. Thanks"

Thank you for providing us with this feedback. As with all our courses, we use the feedback to make improvements to the courses and content we deliver. Please don't hesitate to contact us to let us know about your experience!

CCD Wollongong will run the Level 3 Course again in Term 3 2022. ■



The Level 3 Catechist Training course was recorded in 2021 and is available for viewing at home. Please don't hesitate to contact us at support@ccdwoollongong.com to gain access.

Please note: Viewing the videos does not count towards accreditation.

With a Father's heart

Catechist Retreat 2021

Written by Peter Gilmroe



Pope Francis opens his Apostolic letter, *Patris Corde*, with these words: “With a father’s heart: that’s how Joseph loved Jesus”. This beautiful letter inspired and challenged us to prepare a retreat for Catechists in 2021 that acknowledged the Year of St Joseph in the Church and explored the topic of St Joseph and his relationship with Jesus. Perhaps by understanding whom Jesus called “father” on earth, we might understand a little better whom Jesus called “father” in heaven.

More than 100 Catechists came together via Zoom to take a day to rest, pray and reflect. Led so brilliantly by Fr Bernard Gordon, Vicar General, Therese Mills, Missionaries of God’s Love Sisters, and the CCD Wollongong Team, Catechists explored territory in our faith that many commented they had never explored before.

After being led in a time of worship through music by Jude Hennessy, Fr Bernard, who has written a thesis on St Joseph, spoke to Catechists on the topic of “How is Joseph a father to Jesus?” Fr Bernard worked through many of the profound

points that Pope Francis made in his letter. In the second session, Fr Bernard continued by opening up the questions, “What kind of father is God? What kind of father did Jesus reveal?”

A number of Catechists commented on how profound Fr Bernard’s reflections were around these two sessions, some noting that it had helped them understand more deeply how and why they see the first person of the Trinity, God the Father, as they do.

The third session of the day was led by Therese Mills MGL, who returned (once again to the delight of Catechists) to share on the topic of “Is God a good Father?” It was a very moving session as Therese shared her personal experience of pain and healing in her relationship with God.

Some of the feedback we received from the day included:

“5 days later I am still reflecting on what Fr. Bernard shared.”

“I wanted to thank Fr Bernard and Sr Therese for their wonderful talks and insights, God Bless you both”

“Very enriching engagement to aid my spiritual growth. I left it hugely satisfied yet longing for more.”

During the retreat, we sang a song entitled, “Good Good Father” (Pat Barrett) as part of our prayer. It opens with the words, “Oh, I’ve heard a thousand stories of what they think You’re like but I’ve heard the tender whisper of love in the dead of night. And You tell me that You’re pleased and that I’m never alone.” These words have stuck with me since that day. Especially in this time of uncertainty, knowing that we are never alone and that we are loved by God just as Joseph loved Jesus but infinitely more perfect, is healing for our hearts.

Thank you to everyone who attended the retreat. We pray that it was as blessed a time for you as it was for us. We look forward to more opportunities to meet with you and pray and explore our faith. ■

Catechist Profile

Margaret Botterill

Catechist

Rosemeadow Parish



How long have you been a catechist?

I started as a catechist at St Helen's Park Primary School in 1996. A friend, Vicky, started with me and we both continue to teach at the same school 26 years later.

What inspired you to become a catechist?

After listening to a catechist at Mass asking for volunteers to teach scripture I thought I would be able to help. As my children were at school and I was doing some casual teaching I thought it was a good time to volunteer.

What do you enjoy about teaching SRE?

Probably the most enjoyable part is seeing the looks on the children's faces as they hear the stories of Jesus' life and how much love He has for them.

What do you find most challenging about teaching?

The most challenging part is trying to simplify some lessons in order to cater for children in a composite class who are of different age groups. Completing the bookwork can also be difficult for some children.

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

As a primary school trained teacher I can use my experience to solve discipline issues that may arise. It also is useful in keeping their attention focused and being aware that each child is understanding what is being taught

What warms your heart when you are in the classroom?

When a child comes to me at the end of a scripture lesson and says "Thank you for teaching me today" or "I love coming to scripture". Then I feel like they have really understood and they can relate to in that lesson. Your best tip for other catechists

What is your future direction as a Catechist?

I realise how quickly the last 26 years have gone and I am grateful for the opportunity to be involved in this valuable ministry. The chance to give to these children the gift of learning about their faith which they would probably otherwise not have. I hope to be able to share my knowledge and faith for many more years.

Your best tip for other Catechists.

I would say to someone considering their future as a catechist to be proud of what they do. They are contributing to the faith education of children who might only have this half hour lesson each week to learn about the Good News of God's plan for them.

Thank you so much Margaret for sharing about your journey in the ministry! ■

Want to share your story in the ministry of the catechist? Please email us at:

support@ccdwoolongong.com



I have seen the Lord, I have heard his voice, and I know he lives..

Written by Jude Hennessy

What a year! The Coronavirus pandemic has seen us again throughout 2021, face as a society, and as a church, so many challenges that we would not have imagined at the end of 2019.

The impacts have been widespread, not only on the millions around the world that have died or been struck down by the illness, but also on those who have lost loved ones, colleagues and friends and those who have cared for them. There has been great disruption to family life, work, schooling and the way we, as Catholics, have worshipped. I, like so many of you, longed for my faith community, for the sacraments and have so come to appreciate the need for and the gift of the Mass – of Eucharist.

The almost inescapable barrage of daily news reports, detailing fresh outbreaks, lockdowns, job losses and other associated impacts, have inevitably caused many to live with uncertainty, fear and a sadness bought on by isolation. I personally haven't seen many of my family members for over two years. My wife and I have prayed constantly for our eldest daughter who was working in the thick of the pandemic in a respiratory hospital in London. We felt acutely too, the separation from our youngest daughter in Canada, especially when it became clear that we would not be permitted to attend her recent wedding. Lockdowns have meant my inability to see my mother who was recovering from cancer treatment and separation from my dear dad, who needed to be

moved permanently into a nursing home in the midst of all that was unfolding. I share these personal impacts, knowing that my story is just one very small part of 'our story', with most, if not all of you, able to similarly share how the pandemic has impacted on you and those you love.

I openly admit to some periods of real heartache, but prayer always drew me back to the need for gratitude and the realization that whatever unfolds, my loving Father is ultimately in control and that the sufferings and uncertainty of this time, 'our time', are in reality not unprecedented and in many ways not as extreme as the suffering and uncertainty encountered by many previous generations.

At Easter this year, unable to sing at Church, I found myself singing at home a song written by Bob Hurd. 'I have seen the Lord, I have heard his voice, and I know he lives, yes I know he lives. Death where is your sting? Fear, where is your grip? Hearts now free to love, lives now free to give!'

I love this song and I have sung it many times at Easter liturgies and family funerals. In the singing and repeating of it, I was shaken out of my doldrums. It reminded me powerfully of the great gift of our faith, the freedom that comes in knowing with certainty, that we are owned now, and journeying to our God, who has cleared the way for us and is preparing a place for us, a place of eternal life, love and joy. When all is said and done, if you truly believe this, regardless of

what you or I face now or might face in the future, surely nothing else really matters! This knowledge enables us to live now and always with freedom and ultimate certainty. It is at the heart of the good news of the Gospel, is the truth that sets us apart and which empowers us to be people of hope and joy, and the light of the world, most especially when skies seem to be darkening.

It is this ultimate belief and trust in God's love and our salvation, which is the impetus and fuel for our work as Catechists. We can't help but desire to share this good news. It is the source of our freedom and joy. It is the reason why we turn up each week to classrooms in state schools right throughout our Diocese. The young people you come into contact with are hungering for the fullness of life that comes from the knowledge and truth you have been equipped to share with them. As things slowly return to what will be a 'new normal', and we re-embrace the opportunity to again share the life giving, freeing news of Jesus with young people, let us remember to constantly be grateful for the gift of faith we have been given. In so doing, let us be reinvigorated by the Holy Spirit so as to be able to authentically invite young people ever more deeply into a relationship with Jesus and his Church.

Thanks Jude for sharing this challenging and encouraging word with us! ■



Calendar 2022

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

Illawarra-Shoalhaven Xavier Centre	Jan 28, Jun 24 Nov 18
Macarthur-Highlands Micah House	Jan 31, Jun 27 Nov 21

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

Illawarra-Shoalhaven Xavier Centre	Feb 4, 11, 18, 25 Mar 4
Macarthur-Highlands Micah House	Feb 7, 14, 21, 28 Mar 7

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

Illawarra-Shoalhaven Xavier Centre	May 6, 13, 20 27, Jun 3, 10
Macarthur-Highlands Micah House	May 2, 9, 16, 23 30, Jun 6

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

Illawarra-Shoalhaven Xavier Centre	Aug 5, 12, 19, 26 Sept 2, 9
Macarthur-Highlands Micah House	Aug 1, 8, 15, 22 29, Sept 5

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

Macarthur-Highlands Micah House	Mar 14 Oct 25
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Catechist Retreat (10:00am-2:00pm)

Illawarra-Shoalhaven	Sep 16
Macarthur-Highlands	Sep 12

Annual Catechist Mass (10:30am)

St Francis Xavier Cathedral	Nov 12
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*Dates are correct at time of printing

BOOKINGS ARE ESSENTIAL
CONTACT CINDY OLIVER ON 4640 8550
OR support@ccdwoolongong.com

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Looking for a fresh start in 2022?

Come along for a refresher and join us for Level 1 Training - There's always something new!

Illawarra-Shoalhaven
Commencing Friday 4 February
9:30am – 1:30pm

Macarthur-Highlands
Commencing Monday 7 February
—9:30am – 1:30pm

Online via Zoom
Commencing Friday 4 February
9:30am - 1:30pm

Morning Tea provided.
Bookings essential.
(02) 4640 8550
support@ccdwoolongong.com