# CATECHIST

## A year of hope and opportunity

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. ROMANS 15:3

CONFRATERNITY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF WOLLONGONG

DECEMBER 2022



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Diocese of Wollongong

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**Graphic Design** by Jeremy Yuen **Proofreading** by Helen Bennett

# FROMTHE

To all of our current and former SRE Catechists and supporters of this ministry,

O ne of the names of the Saviour, Emmanuel, means "God with us", and is at the heart of this coming season. I hope as you journey through the Advent season, that you are finding time to reflect on the year that has been, in the sure knowledge that amidst all of the welcomed joys and inevitable struggles, you can identify how God has been with you. I hope in

a similar way, in receiving this final CCD publication of the year, you are encouraged and spurred on to trustingly embrace God's purpose in your life, and your role in making Jesus known and loved to young people in Governme

We are in a position as a ministry where our place in schools is widely welcomed.

We are in a position as a ministry where our place in schools is widely welcomed. We have bi-partisan political support and gratitude for what SRE brings to our State Schools - namely, the choice for parents to have their children formed in the faith of their family. It rightly is and should continue to be held up as a strength of Public Education in our multi-cultural, multi-faith society of NSW.

It would be naive to think that this is a position we can take for

> granted. There remain many groups intent on seeing removal of SRE, who will no doubt gain fresh voice leading into the 2023 March state election. In many ways, one of the future hurdles for the provision of SRE is the ongoing availability of willing and able volunteers. As has

people in Government schools.

After the disruption to our work in schools throughout 2020 and 2021, it was really heartening to have the vast majority of schools and Catechists, eager to recommence SRE with the lifting of pandemic restrictions. In particular, it was testament to the way SRE is regarded that we were the first group back in schools, with the vast majority very eager for you, our Catholic SRE teachers, to enter the classroom as soon as possible. always been the case, the future of the Church and therefore of this ministry, is dependent upon those who are not currently in it! Thus the high importance of forming and tasking disciples who can eagerly and appropriately share the Good News of Jesus with the children.

It is for this reason that I have been heartened by some recent very good responses we have had to recruitment drives in a number of parishes. While the last two years

Look! The virgin is with child and will give birth to a son whom they will call Immanuel, a name which means 'God-is-with-us'

ROMANS 15:3

saw a number of Catechists conclude in the ministry, we are seeing new opportunities for recruitment, particularly with flexible work hours and locations that developed during the pandemic. This presents an opportunity and new pool of potential SRE teachers to invite into this work, and this is anecdotally being reflected in the new recruits interested to start in 2023. Assisting parishes in this way will be a real focus of the CCD team led by Frances Fairs as we move towards a new school year and throughout 2023, via recruitment that celebrates and advocates the blessings that involvement in this ministry brings.

In this printed publication to end the CCD year, I hope that there is much that encourages and spurs you on to continue your great work. I trust it gives you a snapshot of things we should be encouraged by, but also to be alert to. It was wonderful to be able to come together without restrictions to celebrate our Catechist awards mass recently and honour so many in our ranks. I truly

Rest on the Flight into Egypt (1667) by Laurent de La Hyre

hope you are emboldened by the report detailing Bishop Mascord's address to the many politicians and Religious Leaders who gathered at the Biannual Parliamentary Celebration of SRE on November 28.

I would like to conclude by sincerely thanking Frances Fairs, Daniel Saliba, Cindy Oliver and Helen Bennett for their work throughout the year supporting CCD in parishes. Most importantly, and as I expressed at our annual Catechist Mass and Awards, thanks to each one of you, for every minute of preparation, prayer, and time spent in the classroom espousing God's love, to a generation of young people in desperate need of knowing and experiencing it.



**Jude Hennessy** Director Office of Renewal and Evangelisation

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

## YEAR OF

AND OPPORTUNITY

#### BY FRANCES FAIRS

Emerging from two years of uncertainty, 2022 has been a year of hope and opportunity for our ministry.

W e started as the previous year concluded, with mask and vaccination requirements, separation of cohorts in schools, and maintaining physical distancing indoors. Most meetings and the Level 1 Catechist Course continued to be Zoom based, which resulted in more SRE Coordinators and Catechists being able to attend but without the gaiety that gathering in person brings. With the resumption of in-person training and meetings, we retained the option to join via Zoom to remove barriers from attending events and can attest that our Level 2 and 3 courses this year were attended by SRE Catechists and Parishioners, from all reaches of our diocese and beyond.

Embracing the benefits of technology, this year also saw the introduction of our monthly CatechistNET Newsletter, which is now emailed out to all SRE Catechists and Parishes. The newsletter was introduced to share information promptly and more frequently than we could when printing and mailing three CatechistNET magazines per year.

Significantly, in 2022 we simplified our process of authorising new SRE Catechists with a shift from the 5-year Teacher Engagement Form (TEF) to an ongoing TEF that only needs to be renewed if there is a change of parish priest/administrator or change of role (from helper to teacher, etc). The new process now includes a compulsory "conversation" for all new SRE Catechists to have with the parish priest/administrator, so that the volunteer service agreement is understood and that being an SRE Catechist is a good fit for the volunteer.

In May, the Diocese of Wollongong hosted the Catholic Conference of Religious Educators in State Schools (CCRESS) conference at the Mount Carmel Retreat Centre, Varroville. It was attended by leaders of CCD from NSW and the ACT, who gathered to address key challenges and opportunities facing the ministry, including ideas pertinent to recruitment, and flexible models for the delivery of SRE.

In June, Peter Gilmore, who has been a leader in CCD Wollongong for more than a decade, moved from CCD into the role of Coordinator of Evangelisation and Parish Renewal for our diocese. Peter sits next to me in the office and remains supportive of SRE in schools and the evangelising work of SRE teachers and helpers in our parishes. In July, we were blessed with an addition to our CCD team with Daniel Saliba joining us as Faith Education Officer for the diocese. Fortuitously, Daniel's first day of work coincided with the Macarthur-Highlands Catechist Coordinators meeting at the Campbelltown Catholic Club (CCC). Daniel has already shown to be an asset to our Diocesan CCD team, with much enthusiasm for SRE and a deep knowledge of our Catholic faith.

In September, our annual Catechist retreat was held at the Mount Carmel Retreat Centre, Varroville and St Mary's Star of the Sea, Gerringong. We are grateful to Sr Magdalen Mather OSB for facilitating these special days of prayer and rest. We increased the length of the retreat day this year, to maximise the experience for those attending.

In November, we enjoyed the Annual Catechist Mass and Awards at our Cathedral in large numbers and were able to celebrate with a generous luncheon afterwards for the first time in three years! Thank you to all those who joined us for the important and uplifting celebration.

A special thank you must go to the CCC who came to our aid this year when Micah House was unavailable, allowing us to use conference rooms for Coordinator meetings and Catechist courses in Campbelltown. The CCC is a large supporter of the faith education of Catholic students and increased funding to CCD in 2022, which allowed for the Christ Our Light and Life (COLAL) online resources, recruitment material and the expansion of the Campbelltown Resource Centre. The CCC has further increased funding to CCD for 2023, so that we can achieve our aim for the year, which is to build our ministry through recruitment and training along with further development of the Resource Centre.

In preparation for 2023, and with a focus on recruiting for SRE Catechists and promoting SRE in our community, we have developed Kindergarten enrolment brochures for school expos, open days, and Kindergarten enrolment packs, and "Answer the call to Mission" brochures for drumming up support and volunteers in our parishes.

We are pleased to share with you our CCD Calendar for 2023 in the centre of this magazine. In keeping with our focus on recruitment and training new volunteers, the Level 1 course will run twice next year, in Terms 1 and 3. The Catechist Retreat will be in May, during Eastertide, and we have planned a short half-day course on Understanding Aboriginal Catholic Spirituality, in three locations: Nowra, Campbelltown and Wollongong. The short course will be run by experts from the Catholic Education Office and is a great opportunity for us to learn about Aboriginal culture and spiritualities to aid us as Catholic educators. I will be the first in line for the course as I've had very little training in Aboriginal cultural studies and have become aware that there are more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in State Schools than in our Catholic Schools. ■

## A prayer for more CATECHISTS

Lord, you told us "the harvest is rich but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers to his harvest." MATT 9:37

We ask you to strengthen us as we follow the vocation to which you have called us. We pray particularly for those called to serve as SRE Catechists in the Diocese of Wollongong.

Father we pray for those whom you have called, those you are calling now and those you will call in the future. May they be open and responsive to the call of serving your people.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

St Charles Borromeo and St Robert Bellarmine, **pray for us.** 

velbeins

CELEBRATING THE VALUE OF SPECIAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS



#### BY JUDE HENNESSEY

O n Monday 28th November, Bishop Brian Mascord, members of the Diocesan CCD team and a group of Wollongong SRE teachers gathered at NSW Parliament House for this year's Celebration of SRE. We joined with 450 people from across all faith traditions to expound the importance of giving parents choice for formation in the faith of their family, with all of its benefits, especially highlighting the way SRE promotes wellbeing and cohesiveness in our society.

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell, Minister for Education and Early Learning, outlined the current State Government's unequivocal support for SRE, affirmation of the work of approved providers and volunteers, and commitment to fixing ongoing issues with the enrolment form.

Similarly, Ms Prue Car, the Deputy Opposition Leader and Shadow Minister for Education, advocated for the very valuable place of SRE in schools and committed to ensuring the enrolment form is fixed to again include both an SRE and a religious identity question to best support and cater for families of faith in public schools.

Bishop Mascord, in giving a vote of thanks to the Education Minister, noted the significant financial and human resources poured into providing quality SRE by the Catholic Church and other faith groups. Importantly, he highlighted that formation in faith unarguably correlates with numerous indicators of wellbeing, and must be a strong and continuing priority for politicians and educators if they truly want what is best for young people.

A number of awards were presented to SRE teachers as part of the gathering and overall the event powerfully affirmed the value of the work you do in NSW, with SRE teachers being the second biggest volunteer force in Australia!

To watch the video of the event, Bishop Mascord's address, and the bi-partisan political support for SRE, go to: https://bit.ly/sre\_celebration

# THE RELEVANCE OF SRE: FINDING IDENTITY IN

#### BY DANIEL SALIBA

Almost 60 years ago Pope St Paul VI affirmed the right of Christian children to receive a specifically Christian education:

**S** ince all Christians have become by rebirth of water and the Holy Spirit a new creature so that they should be called and should be children of God, they have a right to a Christian education." (Pope St Paul VI, *Gravissimum Educationis*, 2)

The ability to teach Catholic children the faith is not seen by the Church as a privilege, but a right. We are presently fortunate enough to have the law uphold this right in NSW, at least as it pertains to the Special Religious Education of Catholic children in state schools.

Currently SRE has bipartisan support within the NSW Parliament. While there are many in the political sphere who are ideologically motivated to simply remove any provision for SRE in legislation, the greatest challenge to SRE continues to be an internal one. Across NSW, diocese after diocese is thinking of new ways to find volunteers to teach the Catholic faith to students in state schools. This has particularly been a struggle since the COVID- 19 pandemic. However, the need for SRE Catechists has seldom been greater.

The move from childhood into adolescence has never been so



difficult. Struggles with self-esteem and bullying continue to be a problem for young people, with Australia unfortunately reporting one of the highest global rates of bullying in schools. In Australia approximately 13.6% of children aged 4-11 are experiencing a mental health disorder and recent data from the United Kingdom indicates that the incidence of mental illness within this cohort is increasing. This is due to a variety of causes, but it stands to reason that with the societal drift away from God, individuals without faith are forced to artificially create identity and meaning for their lives.

Catholic SRE provides an elementary foundation for young children to view the world through the teachings of Christ and the Church. Living in the Third century metropolis of Alexandria, surrounded by many conflicting and hostile views to the Christian faith, St Clement of Alexandria, himself a catechist and head of the first catechetical school is a witness to the perennial approach of the Church to the catechesis of children. According to him "The primary lesson for life must be implanted in the soul from the earliest age. The primary lesson for children is to know the eternal God, the One Who gives everlasting life."

Catholic SRE teaches children that a world made by a loving God is intentional, purposeful and dignified. This provides a platform for children to help find meaning in their lives prior to entering adolescence with all of its challenges. In a Catholic SRE classroom, children are taught that they are loved unconditionally, that there is a purpose for their life, and making the right choices ultimately creates a better world for them and those around them. Children learn that God created them intentionally, body and soul as boys and girls with unique gifts. Finally, that they are image bearers of Christ and were created to grow in his likeness ultimately finding their identity in Him.

CATECHIST calendar

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<b>Coordinator Meetings</b>	10:00am-11:30am
<b>Illawarra-Shoalhaven</b> Xavier Centre Wollongong	February 3, June 23, November 24
<b>Macarthur-Highlands</b> Micah House Campbelltown	January 30, June 26, November 27
*Level 1 (Term 1)	9:30am-1:30pm
<b>Illawarra-Shoalhaven</b> Xavier Centre Wollongong	February 10, 17, 24, March 3, 10
<b>Macarthur-Highlands</b> Micah House Campbelltown	February 6, 13, 20, 27, March 6
Catechist Retreat	9:30am–1:30pm
Illawarra-Shoalhaven	May 5
Macarthur-Highlands	May 1

#### Understanding Aboriginal 9:30am-1:30pm Catholic Spirituality

<b>Nowra</b> St Michael's Parish Centre	May 8
<b>Campbelltown</b> Micah House	May 15
<b>Wollongong</b> Xavier Centre	May 22

*Level 1 (Term 3)	9:30am-1:30pm
<b>Illawarra-Shoalhaven</b>	August 4, 11, 18, 25,
Xavier Centre Wollongong	September 1
<b>Macarthur-Highlands</b>	July 31,
Micah House Campbelltown	August 7, 14, 21, 28

):00am
ovember 11

\* Level 1 is a five-week course which is repeated (Term 1 and 3) at two locations.

Dates are correct at time of printing (December 2022)

# CATECHIST MASS & AWARDS

#### BY FRANCES FAIRS

## Our Annual Catechist Mass & Awards was held on the Memorial of St Josaphat, Bishop and Martyr, on Saturday 12th November.

S t Josaphat suffered a great deal for Church unity between the Western and Eastern Churches in the 16th century, which eventually led to St Josaphat's violent martyrdom. St Josaphat once said, "I rejoice to offer my life for my holy Catholic faith." In those who received

service awards at our Annual Catechist Mass, we saw these words of St Josaphat personified. SRE Catechists, who generously give years of service in the sharing of Jesus with children in State Schools, like St Josaphat, offer their whole lives for our Catholic faith, joyfully and humbly.

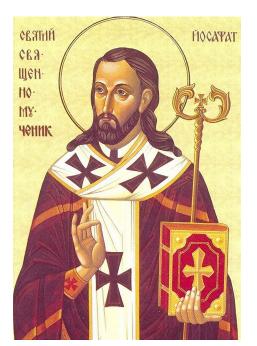
Thank you to our celebrant, Bishop Brian Mascord, who, with an injury, led us beautifully through the liturgy, and to the concelebrating clergy from the diocese for taking the time to support and encourage us by their presence – Fr Leo Duck PP (Albion Park), Fr Chris Sarkis PP (Rosemeadow), and Fr Slawek Plonka OMI PP (Eagle Vale).

Thank you also to Joseph Tonien, and Seminarians: Sinh Le, Darren

McDowell, and Joseph Nguyen, who served humbly on the altar, enhancing our celebration and hope for future priests.

Many people contributed to making the Catechist Mass & Awards such a special occasion this year. Fifi Chadrawy from West Wollongong and Peter Crowe from Corrimal proclaimed the Word to us clearly and prayerfully.

Bishop Mascord welcomed us warmly, and during his homily joked, "have you ever prepared for a lesson, and upon arriving to your class, realised that it was the wrong



sharing the Good News with children in State Schools, and that it is a very precious gift indeed.

lesson?" Bishop Brian shared that he had once been an SRE

Catechist, and that he found the work incredibly difficult

even though he was an excellent Catholic School teacher.

Bishop Mascord spoke of the gift that SRE teachers have in

The Prayers of the Faithful were led reverently by Anthony Rewak from Port Kembla Parish. During these prayers, Mandy Madaschi, SRE Parish Coordinator of Warrawong, presented Bishop Mascord with our Book of Remembrance wherein the names of SRE Catechists who have died are recorded. This year we remember and give thanks for the lives of Sharon Hughes, Philomena Robertson, Mona Errington, Kevin Whalan, Frances Martin, Elizabeth Curley, Jeannette Murrel, Mary Cronin, Margaret Hendriks, Joseph Hallahan, and Mary Clapham.

A big thank you must go to Debbie Gates and Kerrie Hennessy for their help in the smooth running of the awards ceremony, and to

Kristina Knight, SRE Parish Coordinator of Rosemeadow and husband, Dudley Knight, Vicky Stuart also from Rosemeadow and Josefina Miquel, who helped serve and pack up the luncheon.

This day only came together because of the tireless work of the CCD Wollongong team – Daniel Saliba, Cindy Oliver, and Helen Bennett, under the leadership of Jude Hennessy, Director of the Office of Renewal & Evangelisation.

Thank you to all for generously sharing your talents and time for the making of such a special celebration!



































# CATECHIST awarda

2022



#### **DIPLOMA OF CATECHETICS**

An acknowledgement of the completion of all three levels of Catechist training.

Campbelltown Dapto Ingleburn Nowra Port Kembla Rosemeadow Warrawong West Wollongong Wollongong Joy Kuriakose Shirley Parker Heathcliff Pereira, Karen Watson, Myrna Magallanes Anna Evans Antonio Lima Vicky Stuart Sr (Lucy) Thi Hiep Le Cynthia Ricafuente, Benaida Bliss, Fifi Chadrawy Therese Nilsson



#### **BISHOP'S CITATION**

10 years service

Ten years of service represents a wonderful level of dedication to the evangelising mission of the Church.

Dapto Eagle Vale Oran Park Thirroul Terence Carlile Charlotte Kearney Kenneth Garland Elizabeth Busch, Peter Johnston



#### **BISHOP'S CITATION**

15 years service

The fifteen year service award is the second of the significant milestones recognised and shows incredible dedication in making Jesus known and loved.

Berkeley Nowra Thirroul Warrawong Christine Okoniewski Christine Burrows, Kathleen Gleeson Anne Bower, Robert Bower Adelaida Bill The awards ceremony at the Annual Catechist Mass is heartwarming and inspiring. As we recognise the years of service and dedication of SRE teachers and helpers throughout our diocese, acknowledging their commitment and the countless number of children that they have taught because of their generosity, we are encouraged to be more generous with our lives. The awards, as beautiful as they are, are only a token of our deep gratitude for the service and sacrifice that these beautiful SRE Catechists have given - their true reward will be great in heaven!



#### PAPAL BLESSING

20 years service

In recognition of 20 years of generosity and faithful commitment to sharing the Good News with children and to the mission of the Church.

Berkeley Ingleburn-Oran Park Nowra Thirroul Wollongong Georgina Weir Maureen Mohammed Hugh Wilson Patricia Buchan, Lorraine Jones Therese Nilsson



#### MARY MACKILLOP MEDAL

25 years service

The twenty-five year service award represents an exceptional level of commitment to the evangelising mission of the Church.

Camden / Oran Park Nowra Picton Ralph Hanna Kathleen Cook Susan Spiteri



#### LIFE MEMBERSHIP

30+ years service

In recognition of the incredible and selfless commitment of those who have given their lives to sharing the Gospel with children in state schools.

Camden / Oran Park Warrawong Leila Hanna Dolores Grech CATECHISM IN A YEAR podcast

#### BY FRANCES FAIRS

L aunching on January 1, 2023 is *The Catechism in a Year* podcast, featuring Fr Mike Schmitz who also presents the very popular, *The Bible in a Year* podcast. Fr Mike serves as Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry for the Diocese of Duluth and as Chaplain for the Newman Catholic Campus Ministry at the University of Minnesota-Duluth. He has a warm and jovial character and is entertaining to listen to. I recommend visiting the Ascension Presents YouTube channel, to view one of Fr Mike's weekly videos where he reflects on faith, pop culture and the latest news.

Fr Mike will read from the second edition of the Catechism of the Catholic Church with the revision to paragraph 2267 by Pope Francis. Each day in the short podcast, Fr Mike will highlight key concepts, explaining the context, and showing how to live out the teachings of the Catholic Faith in daily life. I encourage you to sign up and get involved by listening to the podcast while you go about your daily tasks. I listen to podcasts while I drive, but you might prefer to listen as you garden or do the dishes!

Next year, CCD Wollongong will host online gatherings to discuss the content of the Catechism, which will be open to all those in our diocese who are listening to the podcast.

The Catechism in a Year podcast is free and can be listened to on a variety of podcast players, such as Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Amazon Music, Google Podcasts and Hallow. what's happening at Michael



R eaders of our monthly *CatechistNET* newsletter are already aware that the Campbelltown resource centre has moved into a much larger space on the top floor of Micah house.

W hile the Resource Centre has been closed due to the installation of a new air conditioning system, the Office of Renewal and Evangelisation Team (ORE), under the guidance of Jude Hennessy, has been thinking of new ways the centre could be used in its full capacity going forward.

One thing which we are all very excited about is that the purpose of the Resource Centre is expanding and will be open to all members of the community, where they will be free to study and borrow resources for their own faith formation. As part of this expansion, the centre will likely also include an office for the Youth Ministry in the region.

It has also been decided that we will have a Blessed Sacrament chapel in the same space. The chapel will be open to members of the community during the opening hours of the Resource Centre. Eucharistic adoration nights could potentially be held. As mentioned in previous newsletters, the new resource centre is large enough to hold Catechist retreats, youth events, and courses as well as other events for Evangelisation and Renewal within the diocese.

The CCD team have also been looking at a new library system which will make it easier to search, borrow and return resources. Going forward, we will be using a platform called 'Libib.' This system is much newer, very user-friendly and more efficient than the current system. Since Libib is an online system, it will allow catechists and members of the community to search for resources in our centre from the comfort of their home before borrowing them in the centre. For those outside the Macarthur region, the new library system will allow orders to be made by simply browsing the catalogue and contacting Cindy Oliver, our resource centre manager. This will make the centre a resource hub for the whole diocese.

While we continue looking forward to the reopening of the centre before the end of the year, we ask for your prayers that everything remains on course and according to plan.



Nativity by Charles Poërson (1667)

#### MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR

• he readings at Midnight Mass this year recall the angel's message to the shepherds "behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people: For, this day, is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David." (Luke 2: 10-11) In his first Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium, Pope Francis challenges those involved in the work of Catechesis to be "joyful messengers" of the Gospel. (EG 168) The Season of Advent and Christmas provides us with a renewed opportunity to encounter this joy in the preparation for, and commemoration of the birth of the Saviour, so that in the coming year we may radiate this joy to the children we teach.

As we look forward to celebrating the birth of the Saviour, the CCD Team wishes you and your family a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

## ANSWER THE CALL TO MISSION



The impact you will have on our young people is unique and lasting. You will be welcomed by young people who are eager to hear about God's Love. You will form a special relationship with those you teach, that in many ways lives on in their minds and hearts long after they finish school.

There has never been a more critical time to engage in the faith formation and character development of our young people.



FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING AN SRE CATECHIST ccdwollongong.com



Come along for a refresher and join us for Level 1 training in 2023!

Illawarra-Shoalhaven Commencing Friday 10 February 9:30am - 1:30pm

**Macarthur-Highlands** Commencing Monday 6th February 9:30am - 1:30pm

Online via Zoom Commencing Friday 10 February 9:30am - 1:30pm

Morning Tea provided at in-person courses. Bookings essential.

(02) 4640 8550 support@ccdwollongong.com



Please consider giving a gift to help continue the good works of the Church today.

A donation to our **Special Religious Education Fund** will help provide for more trained and accredited SRE catechists, the operational costs of the ministry, and the resources for students such as sacred objects and certificates.

You can make a tax-deductible donation at:

### dow.sh/ministrygiving

or by scanning this QR code:



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You can also support the work of SRE Catechists by including a gift in your will. For more information on how to give in this way, including correct clauses and terminology to be used, please contact the Diocesan representative on **02 4222 2466** or visit **www.dow.org.au/giving** 

Thank you for considering supporting the work of Catechists in this way.