

# JOURNEY

NEWS FROM THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF WOLLONGONG

WINTER 2019 | NO. 67

Jamberoo  
Abbey's  
new mother  
leading by love.

PAGE 8



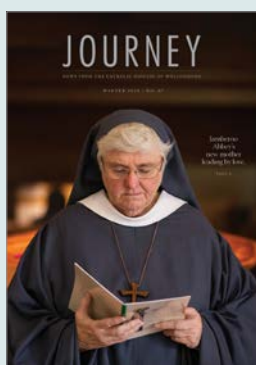


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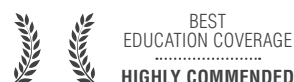
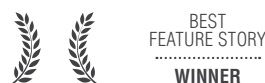
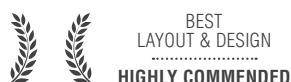
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# to the threshold

AD LIMINA APOSTOLORUM  
VISIT TO ROME

On 13 June this year, I left the diocese to join the bishops of Australia in Rome for what is known as the *ad limina apostolorum* (“to the threshold of the apostles”). During this trip “to the threshold of the apostles”, we met with the Holy Father and with the heads of the various dicasteries, councils and commissions that oversee the life of the Catholic Church throughout the world.

One of the major events that took place during this time was the audience with Pope Francis, which for us, happened at the beginning of our visit. This was my first experience of an *ad limina*, and those more “seasoned” bishops said that this was a very different experience. On previous occasions, the pope would meet with each bishop. However, on this visit, all the Australian bishops met together with Pope Francis for about two and a half hours. Our conversation with him was very personal, and to use the words of a brother bishop: “Very private, spiritually intense, pastorally astute, and a very honest, free and frank discussion.”

Some of the key moments of the *ad limina* were our visits to the four major basilicas of St John Lateran, St Peter’s, St Paul Outside the Walls, and St Mary Major. These were moments that brought to mind the fact that we belong to a Universal Church, but also clearly defined for me that I also belong to a very local Church, and it was in these places that I prayed for the Church of Wollongong. This visit was not just about me as the bishop of Wollongong, but about us as the Church of the Diocese of Wollongong.

This was brought home to us as we prayed at the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls at the grave of Francis Xavier Conaci—a young Indigenous Australian Benedictine monk who died in Rome in 1853 and is buried at St Paul’s.



PHOTO: © VATICAN MEDIA

**“... very private, spiritually intense, pastorally astute, and a very honest, free and frank discussion.”**

There was also a particularly pastoral dimension to the visit—that of the companionship that was shared among the bishops. We had the opportunity to be with and get to know each other as we shared stories particular to our own dioceses. We first gathered a week before the *ad limina* visit for a time of retreat. This has never happened before, and it was a powerful experience for us to pray together, share our reflections of prayer and continue to recognise the call that God has given us: To be shepherds in leading the people entrusted to our care into an experience of the incredible love that God has for us. This first week—and indeed all our time in Rome—was deeply moving and encouraging.

On the last day of our visit to Rome, we, as the bishops of Australia, had the opportunity to concelebrate the Mass for the feast of Ss Peter and Paul in St Peter’s Basilica. At this Mass, former

Wollongong local, Archbishop Peter Comensoli, received the *pallium*—the sign that he is now the metropolitan archbishop of Melbourne. It was a wonderful opportunity to be present to support him in this next stage of his journey of faithfulness to where the Lord has called him.

I believe that the circumstances of the Church in Australia were heard and understood by all we met, and the time away was an outpouring of grace for each one of us. The Holy Father truly showed us the gift of servant leadership through his compassion and humanity, his being at one with us, and his call for us to be the face of a living and loving God—a people committed to the liberating message of the Gospel.

Overall, the experience of the *ad limina apostolorum* was a unique and grace-filled time and I am very grateful that I had the opportunity to participate in the whole experience. ■

Yours in Christ

*+Brian Mascord*

Most Rev Brian G Mascord DD  
Bishop of Wollongong









# LISTEN TO WHAT THE *spirit* IS SAYING.

REVELATIONS 2:7

BY JUDE HENNESSY

*In October 2020, the Catholic Church in Australia will gather for the first plenary council to be held since the Second Vatican Council. From August 2018 to March 2019, our diocese, with the entire people of God in Australia, began preparing for this historic moment by listening to God through listening to one another's stories of faith. In that time, more than 222,000 people participated in individual or group listening and dialogue encounters.*



*Diocesan plenary gathering at St John the Evangelist Campbelltown, 30 March 2019.*

In our diocese, over 120 local animators in parishes, school and agencies led processes that enabled prayerful consideration, humble listening and bold speaking. This culminated in the Diocese of Wollongong contributing 1,451 submissions of the overall 17,000 received from the 33 dioceses across Australia—all faithfully passed on to the National Centre for Pastoral Research (NCPR) for consideration in the development of key themes for the next phase of discernment.

The diocesan listening process endeavoured to provide a variety of opportunities including individual online submissions and group processes in parishes, schools and CatholicCare; each of these arms of the Church reaching out to those in their sphere of influence as well as those disconnected from

our worshipping communities. The local animators not only organised the dialogue processes; they were also tasked with listening in the context of their own communities and faithfully distilling what they heard into succinct face-to-face presentations and written submissions for Bishop Brian Mascord at four regional listening days. On the completion of this listening process, Bishop Brian provided his initial feedback at our 30 March 2019 diocesan plenary gathering—expressing great gratitude for all he had heard.

From my perspective, it was a humbling privilege to have sat through the presentations made by our local animators with other members of the bishop's Plenary Council Steering Committee over a series of weekends. In doing so, the members of the

steering committee—Trish Cooney (CatholicCare), Ken Bryant (Catholic Education Diocese of Wollongong), John Tubridy (diocesan Plenary Council 2020 project officer) and myself—along with Bishop Brian, heard stories of hope, lament, hurt, healing and belonging, and the fervent desire for the Church to become, more clearly, the body of Christ on earth.

The practical insights and suggestions associated with this feedback were broad, and at times, contradictory. A great deal of what was heard was joyful and inspiring, and other feedback was hard-hitting and confronting. Still, all of it was received sincerely and humbly with the hope of giving voice to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

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## A snapshot of what was heard in the diocese

### A future full of hope and renewal

Whilst living in tumultuous times, local animators nevertheless spoke of encountering much joy and encouragement: Discussion is happening; dialogue is being heard; lives are being changed. From all parts of the diocese, hope emerged that our Church can be renewed so that we may continue to become truly missional in the example of Christ.

### Personal renewal and encounter with Jesus

Many expressed that such renewal comes through a deeper encounter with Jesus and each other. Whether children, youth, middle-aged or elderly, feedback gave evidence of this desire for the cultivation of a deeper, relational quality in our faith. Such an encounter emerges through proclaiming the basic Gospel message—Jesus died for us, rose again and desires relationship to be with us always. Thus, in seeking to foster greater connection, we must find new ways to evangelise and reach out to those disconnected from our worshipping communities.

### Our sacramental life

Taking our sacramental life “to the next level” was a desire shared by many participants.

It was variously expressed that if our sacramental life, especially the celebration of the Eucharist, is truly the source and summit of our worship, then we must ensure it is truly demonstrated. This requires giving attention to the quality of our worship and requires preparation, resourcing, training, time and talent.

Furthermore, the need for quality music was repeatedly mentioned—regardless of the era or style. There were very strong references to the need for more contemporary styles of music in our worship with language that was easy to understand, affirming our beliefs, and inviting us to a deeper personal walk with God.



Similarly, the quality of preaching was named as a vital feature of worship and necessary for the formation of missionary disciples. The desire to be nurtured and challenged by a fervent message—well prepared, well delivered, with relevant and usable take-home content—was often communicated.

### Courage in governance and leadership

Drawing upon all our gifts for ministry and mission was a key component of much feedback. There was a strong desire for deep consideration of governance, accountability and transparency within the Church, ensuring that all people, especially women, were involved in meaningful ways in all levels of decision making. Many spoke of the desire for real co-responsibility at all levels of the Church that encourages and cherishes the gifts and leadership of our laity.

### Concern for our clergy

So much of what was said during the listening sessions focussed on the

important role played by clergy. Many noted concerns for our clergy and the declining numbers of priests. A deep love for clergy was expressed, openly and overtly, for the central role they play in our lives and journey of faith.

Contributors wished for our clergy to be joyful and thriving. There was a deep desire for clergy to be well supported, well formed, and to complement the collaborative visions for renewal our Church needs alongside trusted, capable laity—both paid and volunteer. There was a repeated call to free-up the clergy from tasks that hinder them from their core work to make missionary disciples, teach, provide pastoral care, and build vibrant faith communities.

### Welcome and inclusion

While many of our parishes do well at welcome and inclusion, it was recognised that a significant number still appear to struggle in this area. Parishioners and visitors are often anonymous attendees who do not feel strongly connected to each other as a





PHOTOS: DARREN MCDOWELL

## How is God calling us to be a Christ-centred Church in Australia that is:

1. Missionary and evangelising?
2. Inclusive, participatory and synodal?
3. Prayerful and Eucharistic?
4. Humble, healing and merciful?
5. A joyful, hope-filled and servant community?
6. Open to conversion, renewal and reform?

People in faith communities across Australia, including the Diocese of Wollongong, will be called to participate locally in their own communal listening and discernment encounters, with local animators again invited to draw their local communities into these processes. Applications for membership of national working groups for each theme will open in September, and the fruits of what is discerned during this time will shape the agenda of the first session of the plenary council in October 2020. Please visit [www.plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au](http://www.plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au) for more information as it becomes available.

On behalf of Bishop Brian, I sincerely thank everyone across the diocese who has been part of the Plenary Council 2020 process thus far, particularly our local animators and John Tubridy who have each been tasked with the processes of enabling good listening and discernment in our diocese. The six themes that have developed out of this are rich in content and reflective of a broad range of perspectives. Rightfully, we are now called to meticulously and prayerfully discern together with great care, wisdom and knowledge. Thus, as we move into this second phase of preparation for Plenary Council 2020, we will need to continue to seek the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, spend further time listening to God and each other, and continue to decipher what has been heard through the lenses of Scripture, tradition and the magisterium. ■

Jude Hennessy is the director of the Office of Renewal and Evangelisation in the Diocese of Wollongong.

faith community. The important place of small groups in the context of big parishes was repeatedly referenced in order to build connections in a nurturing community. There was widespread agreement that a mission-focused Church should pay particular attention to reaching out and deliberately inviting the disconnected and marginalised into our faith communities.

The importance of authentic Catholic witness and teaching in Catholic schools was regularly referred to as essential in this element of renewal, as was ensuring a strong partnership with shared mission focus between parishes and schools.

### Healing the hurt

During the sessions, we heard much about the need for collective healing and the ongoing disillusionment and anger associated with child sexual abuse. There was a strong desire for an apology that is humble, heartfelt, just and public. There was a deep

sense of shame and recognition that rebuilding trust will require authenticity, sound professional standards formation, and for many, the passage of time.

### Process and listening

One of the great fruits of phase one of Plenary Council 2020 was the listening process itself, which was widely regarded as a blessing—pointing strongly to a Church where co-responsibility is enthusiastically embraced and the gifts of the laity are released for the service of the Church.

## What happens next?

### The process of discernment

The responses from the Diocese of Wollongong and those from all around Australia were received by the NCPR, considered and reviewed, and have culminated in the development of six broad themes.

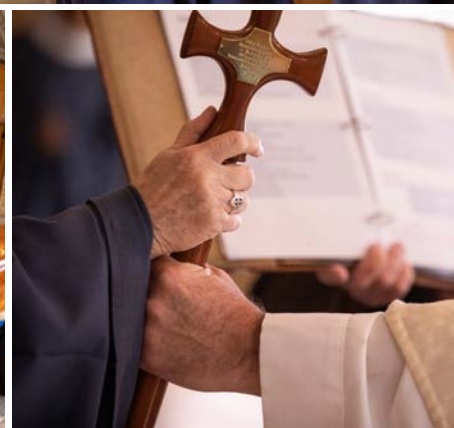




# Leading by Love

BISHOP BRIAN BLESSES  
JAMBEROO ABBEY'S NEW MOTHER





PHOTOS: DANIEL HOPPER

BY CATHERINE SHEEHAN

***Mother Hilda Scott OSB says she was “awestruck” and “very humbled” by her election as the new abbess at Jamberoo Abbey. She said her recent installation and blessing as abbess was, for her, “A visitation of the Holy Spirit”.***

**A**fter I got over being awestruck—which really took a few days—what I felt was extremely privileged that the Father had, for his own reasons, chosen me to be shepherd of this community.

“I felt very humbled and I felt very enabled by the sheer goodness and willingness of the community here at Jamberoo. That’s essential. You can’t

be abbess without the support of the community ... their love and support was palpable,” Mother Hilda said.

Mother Hilda is well-known in the diocese for her contributions to the diocese’s Advent and Lenten publications and her weekly segment on the diocese’s *Journey Catholic Radio* show that is aired on over 15 local Christian radio stations around Australia to an audience of up to 70,000 listeners each week.

Mother Hilda is also much-loved around Australia as a result of her appearance on the ABC’s television series *The Abbey* in 2007 and her presentations at the Australian Catholic Youth Festival, where she proved immensely popular with young people. She is known for her spiritual wisdom and insights, her down-to-earth approach and cheeky sense of humour.

After being elected abbess on 11 February by her fellow Benedictine sisters at Jamberoo Abbey, Mother Hilda then received the abbatial blessing from Bishop Brian Mascord on 25 March 2019.

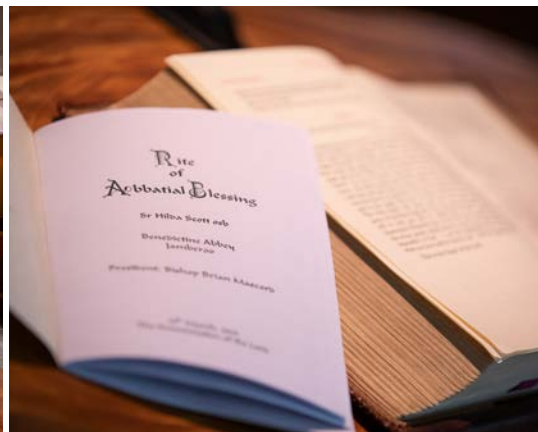
At the blessing Mass, celebrated at Jamberoo Abbey on the feast of the Annunciation, Mother Hilda made solemn promises to lead her community “by love” according to the Rule of St Benedict.

“It’s straight out of the Rule of St Benedict ... where it says that the abbess is to be loved, not be to be feared,” Mother Hilda said.

“Also, she must understand that she has taken on the care of souls and not tyranny of the weak ... she is to

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PHOTOS: DANIEL HOPPER

organise all things so that the weak have nothing to run from and the strong have something to strive for. It's Benedict at his best."

She said the blessing ceremony was "very moving" and "very precious".

"That was, for me, a visitation of the Holy Spirit ... it confirmed the choice of the community," she said.

Bishop Brian said that just as Mary's life had been dramatically changed by the angel Gabriel's announcement of the Incarnation, so too Mother Hilda's life had been "turned upside down" by her election as abbess.

"Let's just think back to the day of the election and how your life, Hilda, was turned upside down, and that of the community," Bishop Brian said.

**"I felt very humbled and I felt very enabled by the sheer goodness and willingness of the community here at Jamberoo. That's essential. You can't be abbess without the support of the community ..."**

MOTHER HILDA SCOTT

"Today Hilda, your life will never be the same again, but like Mary, God dwells within you and us."

Mother Hilda was presented with five symbols of the Office of Abbess: a copy of the Rule of St Benedict; a key symbolising her role as head of the monastery; a seal demonstrating her official authority; a ring to signify her

personal relationship with God and her new commitment to him; and a wooden staff indicating her duty as shepherd of the community.

Mother Hilda has taken "blessed are the pure in heart" (Matthew 5:8) as her motto.

The 69-year-old is the third abbess at Jamberoo replacing Mother Mary Barnes OSB who retired earlier this year. Currently, there are 24 sisters at Jamberoo including 21 solemnly professed sisters and three novices.

We pray for Mother Hilda as she takes on her new role as shepherd of the community and proclaims her own fiat, "Be it done unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38). ■

Catherine Sheehan is an award-winning multimedia journalist. This article first appeared in The Catholic Weekly.



# Australia's **first** religious sisters

THE SISTERS OF CHARITY  
CELEBRATE 180 YEARS

BY SR GENEVIEVE WALSH RSC

*Mary Aikenhead was born on 17 January 1787 in Cork, Ireland, into a comfortable Protestant family. Her father became a Catholic before he died in 1802, and Mary was baptised that year. Through the Gospel story of Lazarus and Dives (the rich man), Mary wanted to give her life for the poor, but not as an enclosed nun.*

Through Archbishop Daniel Murray, Mary and a companion entered the novitiate of the Loreto Sisters in York, England, on 6 June 1812. On their return to Dublin in 1815, Mary and her companion walked the streets, visited the poor and the sick and became known as the “Walking Nuns”. So began the Sisters of Charity!

In 1834, Fr John Bede Polding OSB was consecrated a bishop for the Australian mission. He asked for some sisters to come to Australia. The Sisters of Charity were founded for the poor of Ireland, not for overseas mission. Volunteers were called resulting in five Sisters of Charity—Mary John Cahill, De Sales O’Brien, Baptist De Lacy, Lawrence Cater and Xavier Williams (a novice)—leaving for Australia in August 1838.

After four and a half months at sea, the ship, *The Francis Spaight*, arrived in Sydney Cove.

As they were lowered down on chairs to boats, the sailors all cried, “God bless you ladies!” Bishop Polding and crowds



Sr Mary Aikenhead RSC

of Catholic and non-Catholics were there. Not having seen nuns since they left home, they cried.

The Sisters of Charity were the first religious sisters to set foot on Australian shores. After a welcome Mass at the Cathedral, the sisters set to work. For 19 years, these Walking Nuns criss-crossed Parramatta, and from 1847, they were in Hobart doing the same work.

In 1857, they opened St Vincent’s Hospital for the poor at their Tarmons Convent in Potts Point which they purchased the year before. A year after the hospital was opened, the sisters established St Vincent’s College—a day-school for poor children in the area. These were the first Catholic hospitals and schools to be administered by religious in Australia. They wouldn’t be the last! For the next 171 years, the Sisters of Charity established schools and hospitals in Tasmania, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland.

Their Nazaretto Convent in Bega on the South Coast of New South Wales was established in 1884. For the next 40 years, four sisters worked in schools and visitation in the area. In 1958, the sisters came to our diocese and opened Stella Maris Catholic School at Shellharbour, working in the parish and teaching catechetics. Nazareth Catholic Parish Primary School opened in 2000



Sr Kerry Barrass RSC

**In 1958, the sisters came to our diocese and opened Stella Maris Catholic School at Shellharbour, working in the parish and teaching catechetics.**

at Shellharbour City, the first principal being a Sister of Charity.

Sr Val Green RSC worked in Vincentia in the Shoalhaven region of our diocese. Sr Kerry Barrass RSC (pictured above) still works for the people of God at All Saints Catholic Parish in Shellharbour City.

In 2009, the Sisters of Charity established Mary Aikenhead Ministries PJP (Public Juridic Person), ensuring the enduring charism and mission of the sisters in all facilities, particularly in regard to their fourth vow—“service of the poor”.

On 31 December 2018—180 years later—we thank God for the generosity of Mary Aikenhead and the courage of the first five sisters and the 1,300 sisters who have followed since then, and the many colleagues with whom we have worked. Deo Gratias! ■

Sr Genevieve Walsh RSC is a Sister of Charity. She was professed in 1964 and spent 50 of those years in Catholic education.





quo vadis?

(where are you going?)

POPE FRANCIS AND  
THE CALL TO HOLINESS

*In our time, there is a deeply felt urgency to “get more priests” for our diocese. Many dioceses throughout Australia and the Western world are feeling the same urgency. But, the question, “How can we get more priests?” only scratches the surface. The lack of priests is merely a symptom of a deeper malaise in our Church and serves as a call to renew our sense of urgency in the Church’s mission—especially to young people.*

BY FR DUANE FERNANDEZ

There is an epidemic among young people of our time: they are suffering from a lack of a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives. It is into this space that the Church must seek new ways to proclaim to every young person that God has created them for a purpose – and that his plan alone will bring them the happiness they seek.

“Vocation”, from the Latin *vocare*, meaning “to call”, begins with a universal call that the Church has received and passes on to all: the call to follow Jesus. In 2018, Pope Francis wrote an apostolic exhortation titled *Gaudete et Exsultate—Rejoice and be glad: On the call to holiness in today’s world (GE)*. It can serve as a renewed call to every one of us who call ourselves Christian. As priests and parishioners, as teachers and as parents—the first teachers of faith—let us turn to these recent words of the pope in order to discover anew how to help all people, especially the young, to hear and respond to the call of Jesus in their lives.

### Who wants to be “holy” anyway?

The very word “holiness” has lost much of its power in our time. Many would associate the very word with being somewhat weird, boring and perhaps even feeling superior to others. True holiness is none of these things! The call to “be holy”, as Pope Francis insists, is the essence of the call to follow Jesus—it is in fact the only way to the true happiness for which God has created us.



"The Lord asks everything of us, and in return he offers us true life, the happiness for which we were created. He wants us to be saints and not to settle for a bland and mediocre existence.... Do not be afraid of holiness. It will take away none of your energy, vitality or joy. On the contrary, you will become what the Father had in mind when he created you, and you will be faithful to your deepest self" (GE, 1,32).

The first step in our mission to young people (and all people who are yet to commit themselves to the call of Jesus in their lives) is to give them the good news that the voice of Jesus will always lead them to fullness of life; that they will find in him the very purpose for which they are created and a joy and fullness of life that the world cannot give. It is for us who have encountered this life-giving voice of Jesus to proclaim the message with urgency "in season and out of season" (cf. 2 Timothy 4:2)—by our words and by the example of joy which we radiate!

### Who can be holy?

Once our young people have begun to believe that the holiness to which Jesus calls us is something attractive, the next challenge is the challenge of *despair*. Never before in history have young people been faced with more empty promises of happiness than in our time. From the "hook-up" culture leading young people to think casual sexual relationships are "normal" or even "necessary", to internet pornography at their fingertips, to the narrative that getting "wasted" on drugs or excessive drinking is the way to have a good night, the voices of the world have never screamed louder than today.

"Hedonism and consumerism can prove our downfall, for when we are obsessed with our own pleasure, we end up being all too concerned about ourselves and our rights, and we feel a desperate need for free time to enjoy ourselves.... Consumerism only bloats the heart. It can offer occasional and passing pleasures, but not joy" (GE 108,128).

Meanwhile, the quiet voice of Jesus continues to call each and every young person out of the emptiness of the promises of a hedonistic, consumeristic society, and into true fullness of life: "The Gospel continues to resound, offering us the promise of a different life, a healthier and happier life" (GE 108).

... discernment "requires no special abilities, nor is it only for the more intelligent or better educated. The Father readily reveals himself to the lowly." (GE 70)

Many young people are tempted to think that "holiness" is out of their reach—that they have already strayed too far. This is why the sacrament of Reconciliation has never been more urgently needed than today. Our young people need more than ever before to be confident that no matter how difficult it may seem, and no matter how far or how often they have strayed, that Jesus never stops calling them, forgiving them, and giving them the help they need to grow in holiness:

"When you feel the temptation to dwell on your own weakness, raise your eyes to Christ crucified and say: 'Lord, I am a poor sinner, but you can work the miracle of making me a little bit better.' In the Church, holy yet made up of sinners, you will find everything you need to grow towards holiness. The Lord has bestowed on the Church the gifts of Scripture, the sacraments, holy places, living communities, the witness of the

Never before in history have young people been faced with more empty promises of happiness than in our time.



saints and a multifaceted beauty that proceeds from God's love, 'Like a bride bedecked with jewels' (Isaiah 61:10)" (GE 15).

### How do we become holy?

Once a person begins to believe that God's call is attractive, and that he is still calling them in spite of their weaknesses and sins, then comes the final challenge: To hear God's voice amidst all of the many other voices clamouring for our attention. Here, the pope and the Church speak of "discernment". The process of discernment begins with the little decisions we make every day and culminates for young people in the discernment of the "way of life" to which they are called—marriage, single life, consecrated life or holy orders. The commitment to discernment of God's will in one's life is always a pathway of prayer and sacrifice. Indeed, making time for prayer is itself a sacrifice, especially in our time, when there are so many pleasurable distractions at the ready.

"The gift of discernment has become all the more necessary today, since contemporary life offers immense

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possibilities for action and distraction, and the world presents all of them as valid and good.... Without the wisdom of discernment, we can easily become prey to every passing trend.... It has to do with the meaning of my life before the Father who knows and loves me, with the real purpose of my life, which nobody knows better than he....” (GE 167).

Moreover, as Pope Francis notes, discernment “requires no special abilities, nor is it only for the more intelligent or better educated. The Father readily reveals himself to the lowly” (GE 170). In other words, there are no special qualifications or formulas when it comes to “discernment” of God’s voice—except perhaps for one: prayer. If we do not make it a point to make at least a little time to be quiet with God each day, we will quickly start to lose our way. God is always speaking, but it is up to us to freely decide to stop and to listen.

“Trust-filled prayer is a response of a heart open to encountering God face-to-face, where all is peaceful and the quiet voice of the Lord can be heard in the midst of silence” (GE 149).

In those moments of quiet, we begin to hear God’s quiet voice speaking to us of his love, of his closeness, of how much we are worth to him, and of the path he has planned for us to find the true peace and joy that the world cannot give—nor take away.

And yet, true discernment will not stop with ourselves. It will always lead us out of ourselves. And, here we discover the uniqueness of the Christian call, setting it apart from every other spirituality or philosophy which offers “inner-peace”, or “well-being” to the consumer: Christianity is not ultimately a consumer spirituality, or a self-help approach, for it is not ultimately about what we can “get”, but about what we can “give”, and it is precisely in making ourselves a gift to others that we receive the happiness for which we are created.

“This entails a readiness to make sacrifices, even to sacrificing everything. For happiness is a paradox. We experience it most when we accept the mysterious logic that is not of this world: ‘This is our logic’, says St Bonaventure, pointing to the Cross.... God asks everything of us, yet he also gives everything to us” (GE 174, 175).

## The importance of youthful communities of faith

The response to God’s call in one’s life is deeply personal—and yet at the same time it is not something one does alone. “No one is saved alone, as an isolated individual. Rather, God draws us to himself, taking into account the complex fabric of interpersonal relationships present in a human community” (GE 6).

**Younger people from adolescence onwards are especially influenced by their peers in their efforts to define themselves and their identities and discern the way to happiness.**

This leads us in our context to a very practical consideration: How do we create communities of young people who can encourage each other along the path to holiness? Younger people from adolescence onwards are especially influenced by their peers in their efforts to define themselves and their identities, and discern the way to happiness. With declining numbers of young people attending church on a regular basis, the basic community of faith within an average parish can often make the relatively few young people present feel more isolated than ever. If they see only older generations regularly attending Mass, the message they often take away is: “This is not for you; it is no longer relevant for your generation.” As the numbers of youth attending Mass declines, this dynamic could become a self-fulfilling prophecy—unless we recognise that the parish community need not be the *only* faith community that exists.

**... there is a unique power in the gathering of hundreds of thousands of young people in the joyful celebration of the one faith.**

This is where the prophetic genius of St John Paul II in instituting World Youth Day (WYD) has provided the Church with a blueprint for the youth of our time. This is not to say that WYD, in itself, is the practical solution—after all, so few young people can actually afford the time



PHOTOS: JEREMY YUEN

Approximately 500 young people from across the diocese attended LIVE festival in 2018





15,000 young people (including 500 from Wollongong) attended ACYF Sydney 2017

and money to attend. Rather, it is to say that we have discovered through this phenomenon of the modern Church that there is a unique power in the gathering of hundreds of thousands of young people in the joyful celebration of the one faith. The powerful and often surprising message that is shouted into the lives of the young people who attend is: "This is for you; this is as relevant as ever for your generation!"

The Australian bishops are likewise to be commended for the more recent establishment of the Australian Catholic Youth Festival (ACYF). Though significantly smaller than WYD, nevertheless the presence of thousands of young people united from around the nation for a faith event conveys the same, often surprising message to our young people that they are not alone, and that there are many among their own generation who are finding true joy in following Jesus.

Similarly, Catholic Youth Ministry Wollongong led by Seth Harsh and Joel Duval must be commended on their work for our youth. As well as creating faith spaces within our Catholic schools, an annual *LIVE* event in Wollongong brings together hundreds of young people from around the diocese who are often pleasantly surprised to discover the support of a community of like-

minded young people, who are either committed to following the voice of Jesus, or at least open to hearing it.

Presently, our diocese is seeking to develop more ways in which young people are able to encounter each other in communities of faith, as well as getting to know adults joyfully living out their own vocations—including priests and religious prophetically witnessing to the joy that can be found in the countercultural call of Jesus in our time: From Holy Hours and meals together, to youth Masses followed by fellowship amongst youth, to Vinnies Youth and Young Adults seeking to enable young people to do good works, together, for those in need.

These relatively new initiatives from the Church worldwide to our own local Church, as well as many more youth gatherings and conferences that have been born in recent years, are creating spaces in which the young are able to hear the voice of Jesus in their lives and come to find an ever deeper joy in following him. As they come to know and love Jesus more and more, they come also to love the sacraments more and more, and finally they come to desire to enter more fully into the missionary life of the Church—seeking to share the joy of Christ's love with all, in the particular ways in which he calls.

There is indeed a great urgency to promote vocations in our time and place, and this must begin with a renewed call to holiness for all our young people. As priests, parishioners, teachers and parents, let us work together to create a culture in which youth are repeatedly reminded by us and by each other that God *does* have a plan and a purpose for them, that God's plan *is* trustworthy, and that God *will* continue to call them in spite of the greatest sins and mistakes they may make along the way.

Let us seek to accompany our youth in discernment of the particular way of self-sacrificing love by which Jesus calls them to follow him in his mission for our Church and for our world. Then, indeed we will be blessed with many faithful priests and deacons, religious sisters and brothers, faith-filled single people, and faithful married couples, who in turn will pass on to their children the call to holiness and fullness of life. ■

PHOTOS: ACBC

*If you would like to know more about discerning your vocation or the various youth activities running in the diocese, please contact the following:*

- **Vocations**  
Help in discerning God's call  
Fr Duane Fernandez  
vocations@dow.org.au
- **Australian Catholic Youth Festival 2019 Perth**  
dates, cost, cut-off (see p 38)  
Georgia Farrugia  
youth@dow.org.au
- **Holy Hour for young adults and diocesan youth activities**  
dates, times, places (see p 34)  
Seth Harsh  
youth@dow.org.au
- **Vinnies Youth**  
Rebecca Hall  
youth@svdpwgong.org.au

Fr Duane Fernandez is the administrator of St Therese Catholic Parish in West Wollongong and the vocations director for the Diocese of Wollongong.



# ON earth AS IT IS IN heaven



BY CATHERINE SHEEHAN

*They came in their hundreds, many standing throughout the two-and-a-half-hour ceremony, to witness the dedication of their magnificent new church, which has been designed to lift the mind from the things of earth to the things of heaven.*

After 25 years in the planning and 18 months of building, the new Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Church at Rosemeadow has finally been completed. And it was well worth the wait.

Everything about the building speaks of the divine. From the grand Romanesque architecture, the two lofty bell towers, the 46 stained glass windows, the artwork including icons and hand-carved wooden statues, to the pair of angels hovering protectively over the tabernacle with their lanterns.

“It is my humble and sincere prayer that, in this house of God, you find your spiritual home,” parish priest of 27 years, Fr Christopher Sarkis, told parishioners during the Mass of Dedication on 8 March 2019.

“From here, and from its epicentre of grace and power—Our Lord truly present in the Most Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle—may you receive comfort and consolation in your times of troubles and sorrows, peace and rest in your times of happiness and joys, and may you be strengthened in faith, hope and charity to go out into the world to be missionaries of God’s love, witnesses to the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, the only name by which we can be saved.”

When asked why in a post-Christian era, a new church should be built on such a grand scale, he responded, “Now is the perfect time! The beauty of the church building should make one feel that they have glimpsed heaven on earth—drawing us from the secular

**“The beauty of the church building should make one feel that they have glimpsed heaven on earth—drawing us from the secular to the sacred; from the earthly to the heavenly; from the human to the divine.”**

FR CHRISTOPHER SARKIS

to the sacred; from the earthly to the heavenly; from the human to the divine.”

The long journey of planning, financing and building the new church has not been without its challenges, Fr Christopher said.

“Indeed I believe there were occasions when the devil himself did all he could to prevent tonight from happening.

“God’s grace and Our Lady’s help ensured we finished what we began. And, I pray it will help many people who visit to touch the divine on earth.”





PHOTOS: DANIEL HOPPER

The building was financed by the development of surplus land owned by the parish and the interior embellishments were paid for by donations, Fr Christopher said, with the overall cost reaching several millions of dollars.

Originally part of the Campbelltown parish, Our Lady Help of Christians Rosemeadow became a parish in its own right in 1994, prompting planning to begin for the new church.

Built in a cruciform shape, the new church comfortably accommodates over 500 people and features side chapels, a “crying room”, an extensive choir loft and a large narthex centred around the holy water font. Adorning the altar are four works of art by renowned iconographer, Michael Galovic, depicting the Immaculate Conception, the Annunciation, the Assumption and the Coronation of Our Lady.

Michael said the works were not traditional icons, but rather “a contemporary rendition with a nod to

the classical icon and simultaneously to an altogether different treatment.”

He also produced a traditional icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour for the side chapel dedicated to Our Lady.

The enormous crucifix above the altar and the two angels on either side of the tabernacle are the work of Sydney-based sculptor, Engelbert Piccolruaz.

The stunning stained glass windows were designed and made in Italy.

Bishop Brian Mascord, who presided over the Mass, likened the anointing of the new church with the sacraments of initiation for those entering the Catholic faith.

“In those sacraments of initiation, we, like this church, are anointed and we are nourished to go out and be ‘anointed ones,’ in our world. You and I are called to be missionary disciples. We are the body of Christ. We, too, have had to answer the questions that Jesus posed to his disciples.

**“This church is anointed, and I am not talking about the building, I am talking about us ... we are anointed to be the body of Christ in this place ...”**

FR CHRISTOPHER SARKIS

“This church is anointed, and I am not talking about the building, I am talking about us. Yes, this building will be anointed, honouring it as a sacred place, but we are anointed to be the body of Christ in this place, Rosemeadow, in this place, the Diocese of Wollongong.

“Being a member of the Church is much more than being in this building,” Bishop Brian said. “It is going from this place into the world, to take what we receive here, to the world.”

Bishop Brian anointed the altar and the church’s walls with the oil of Chrism and then incensed the altar and entire church.

A beautiful 130+ page hardcover book will shortly be published on the theology and spirituality underpinning the design of the church. The book has been written by Fr Christopher and contains full colour pictures (photography by Daniel Hopper and graphic design by Jeremy Yuen) of all the windows, works of art and photos from the Mass of Dedication.

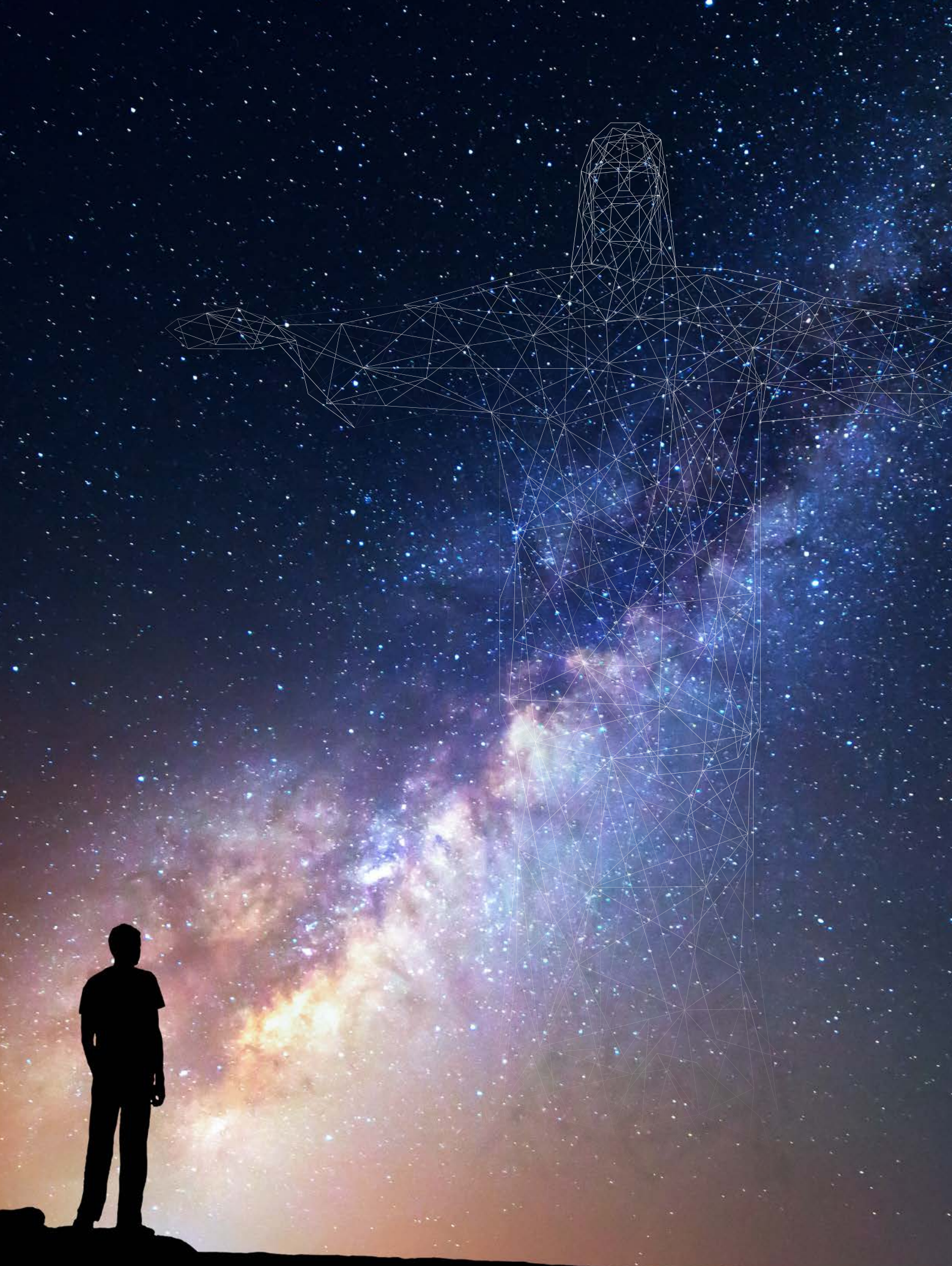
When asked about the inspiration for writing the book, Fr Christopher said, “There is nothing in the church that is there for purely artistic reasons alone. Rather, the use of the beauty and craftsmanship of art and architecture is there to help raise the mind, heart and soul to God. The objective underpinning the design and art of the church was to visually give a simple spiritual synthesis of what we believe as Catholic Christians. This is what the book attempts to capture and explain.” ■



If you would like to order a copy of the book, contact the Rosemeadow parish office on (02) 4628 1385 or [rosemeadow@dow.org.au](mailto:rosemeadow@dow.org.au)

Catherine Sheehan is an award-winning multimedia journalist. This article first appeared in The Catholic Weekly.







*Moses, Jeremiah, Ruth,  
Esther, Jonah and ... you.*

*We hear people talk about  
God having a plan for our  
lives, but we don't often think  
of it being like the heroes and  
heroines of the Bible. After all,  
God's plan for me would never  
be like that, would it?*

BY PETER GILMORE

### An unlikely prophet

He was born in the little village of Anathoth, not far from Jerusalem, to a good family during a very turbulent time. The Assyrian empire had all but fallen to the invading Babylonian and Median armies. Even the current Egyptian dynasty fell under the pressure of the Neo-Babylonian empire. Right in the midst of this chaos, God calls out to this young man, Jeremiah, and says, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations" (Jeremiah 1:5).

Think about it. We're sipping our coffees, scrolling through photos on Facebook, and suddenly a voice speaks: "Hey!" Frozen, mid-scroll, we slowly lower the cup of coffee. "Yes?" we reply. "Before your parents ever thought of you, I was thinking about you; about your life and the great things that we could do together." It's at this point we sniff the contents of our coffee cup.

### Our insecurities

It's easy to imagine God having a plan for someone else. It's always someone else, isn't it? Jeremiah fell right into this thinking when he replied, "Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy." Never have four words summed up the insecurity that, if we are totally honest with ourselves, most of us feel: "I am only a ..." "I'm only a mum," "I'm only a teacher," "I'm only a deli worker," "I'm only an engineer," or "I'm only good at computers." It's followed by insecurity phase number two: "I do not know how to," which we could translate today to be, "I could never." "I could never do that!" "You've got to be kidding! Start a business? I could never do that." "Share my faith? I could never do that." "Reach out to the lonely? I could never do that." Whatever it is: "I could never do that."

So, how does God reply to Jeremiah (and to us)? "Do not say, I am only a [insert what you say here]; for you shall [insert what God calls you to here]. Do not be afraid ... for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord." And then, after Jeremiah hears this, God touches his mouth and gives him the words to say to the Israelites. Likewise, in our Baptism, the priest touches our ears to receive Christ's word, and then our mouths to proclaim the faith for God's glory. Just as Jeremiah was anointed prophet, so we are anointed, too.

Your 70-odd years  
of life, in comparison  
to the universe,  
are just a speck.

*continued next page ►*



## Our story

We are all telling a story with our lives. Given we live in Australia in 2019, it's probably a prosperous story—even the poor in Australia are generally rich compared to other countries. Your story may involve a certain amount of success in business or family life, or both. Perhaps you're involved in Church life, you volunteer in this way or that. You might have a friendship group that you spend time with or perhaps you occupy the online world a lot more. That's your story. And it's a good story. It might even be a great story of overcoming obstacles and difficulties.

If you imagine this story in three acts—like a movie—you might be in the first act; life ahead of you and you're just starting to tell your story. Or perhaps you are in the middle of the second act right now and things are looking a little bit hairy—right in the middle of conflict or disaster. Or, you might have entered the third act and the story is starting to resolve and wind down. Wherever you are in the story, and however good or great your story is, if it's just your story, it will come to an end.

Your 70-odd years of life, in comparison to the universe, are just a speck. Just as the psalmist said, "We are dust." We are like the grass or the flowers of a field. The wind passes over us and then we're gone. Perhaps we'll be remembered, for a time. But even great men and women are forgotten eventually. When's the last time you thought about Marcus Aurelius, Cleopatra or Socrates? It's easy to fall into a sort of nihilism when you consider this. If this is it, if my story is all there is and I know it's coming to an end, what is the point? Average story? Good story? What's the difference? We all end up dust eventually. Some have even argued that the malaise, the despair of the modern world, is exactly this discovery—my story will come and go.

## God's story

But God has a story, too. And, it's a big story. In fact, all of reality is his story. It spans from the beginning all the way to the end—one might even say, the Alpha and the Omega—and even better, it's a really good story. It's a story of perfection and then loss, of redemption and hope, and then all things coming together in the end. If you don't mind spoilers, have a read of the Book of Revelation, from

Chapter 20 to the end. New heaven, new earth, big angelic battles and the river of life? What a way to finish a story! And, right in the centre of it, when things seemed their darkest, God enters into the big story and gives everything just so that we—you and I—could experience the joy of the ending he planned.

It's a love story, it's an action story, it's a thriller, and often unbelievably, it's a supernatural story. But this story is told in human lives, sewn together like a patchwork quilt. Each section, big and small, short and long, makes the whole picture. As we pull the camera back on the image formed by the quilt, we see the face of Jesus—the image of love and mercy.

**... this story is told in human lives, sewn together like a patchwork quilt. Each section, big and small, short and long, makes the whole picture.**

## The invitation

It's a big call, but here it is: You are invited to be part of God's big story. Yes, we are all invited, but you specifically—the one reading this page—are invited to play a part in God's big story. And, it's an important part that only you can play. It's not a bit role or the part of an extra like crowd actor # 54 in the back of the scene. It's an integral "can't-do-without-it" role. And, if you're missing, there's a bit of the story that won't get told, leaving a hole in the quilt. There is something of Jesus that goes unseen when someone doesn't play their part, because only that person was ever going to show it in the story. But, when we allow God to fold our story into his story, to make it part of the great redemption narrative that he has been telling with humanity, two great things happen.

Firstly, even the most painful, seemingly meaningless parts of our lives, become infused with profound meaning and dignity. St Paul tells us that our suffering in pursuit of God's story is "preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure" (2 Corinthians 4:17) and that "all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

Secondly, our whole existence becomes "on purpose" for a purpose. In an overly romantic gesture, a spouse will say:

**... neither death nor life, no angel, no prince, nothing that exists, nothing still to come, not any power, or height or depth, nor any created thing, can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

ROMANS 8:38

"You're the reason I get out of bed." When we are weaving our story into God's big story, he becomes our reason for being, and nothing, or no one, can ever separate us from that fact (cf. Romans 8:38–39).

## Faithfulness not success

How you are called to do that is between you and God, but it always begins the same: responding to God's call. We can often imagine this needing to be like when God announced his plans to Daniel in the Bible: A hand flying in the window and writing the plan of God on the wall in laser print, probably in a nice cursive font. We look for grand signs, when God speaks mostly in gentle whispers. He guides us to be the right person in the right place doing the next right thing. This might be a simple act of kindness or stepping out of the boat and discerning priesthood. It could be being the one who begins a conversation of reconciliation, or taking that next step towards marriage.

The best part of placing our story into God's story is realising, as St Teresa of Calcutta said, we are not called to be successful, but faithful. A faithful person continues to follow even when it gets hard. A faithful person asks, "How should I do the thing you are asking me?" not "why?" A faithful person gets up when they fall and continues to follow the call.

Yes, you are telling a story with your life but there is a bigger, grander, eternal story being told around us.

Whose story will you tell? ■

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Peter Gilmore is a CCD and evangelisation coordinator for the Diocese of Wollongong.





# Worship

ENTERING GOD'S SPACE

BY PETER GILMORE  
AND DARREN MCDOWELL

***From the moment we awoke this morning, whether we knew it or not, we were worshipping. In its most basic form, worship is simply about what we value. It's our response to what matters most to us. It's a religious thing, but it's also an "everything" thing.***

From the smallest decision, to our response during life's biggest dilemmas, it is all a reflection of what is at the centre of our lives. This has been colourfully imagined to be like the throne of our hearts. Our decisions—where we spend our time, talent and treasure—enthrones someone or something, and then, in turn, that someone or something directs our decisions. Therefore, we can say that worship is a way of life rather than just an activity confined to one space or time. Any attempt to constrain it to one part of our lives creates in us a divide. You can't most-value something or someone some of the time, just as you can't be part-time married. It just doesn't work.

As Catholics, the call is to make the worship of God the mission of our lives. The Catechism of the Catholic

Church reminds us that the First Commandment, reinforced by Jesus himself, is: "You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve" (Luke 4:8). But, this is not a relationship between slave and master, rather lover and beloved. It is only in this relationship that we truly become free—free from "the slavery of sin and the idolatry of the world" (CCC 2097). All other things that we aim our lives towards, as good as they may be, will always be lesser goods than God himself. St Augustine tells us that the highest good is "that which will leave us nothing further to seek in order to be happy, if only we make all our actions refer to it, and seek it not for the sake of something else, but for its own sake" (*City of God* VIII, 8). This is why worship is so important.

During 2019, the diocese's Office of Renewal and Evangelisation team introduced Worship Nights—opportunities for songs of praise, inspirational teaching and personal prayer with and for each other. These nights are aimed especially at supporting the faith journey of those who have moved through the Alpha\* course in their local parish. Each evening offers the opportunity to surrender, ever more, to the presence and call of Jesus to enter, through his grace, more deeply into personal relationship with him and one another.

**All other things that we aim our lives towards, as good as they may be, will always be lesser goods than God himself.**

In a certain sense, we are all trainees in the art of worship—learning to place God at the centre of our lives. This isn't a weekly action, it's a moment-by-moment action. At Worship Nights, we are trying to create a space where we can powerfully experience this reality—the focus always being on deepening our relationship with God and with each other.

Around 120 people have already experienced the beauty of these evenings at Eagle Vale and at Campbelltown. Long term, we hope to provide a template that parishes can use, and along with Alpha and Connect groups, make Worship Nights an important part of their parish life.

\* *Alpha* is a series of interactive sessions that freely explore the basics of the Christian faith. No pressure. No follow up. No charge. ■

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Peter Gilmore is a CCD and evangelisation coordinator for the Diocese of Wollongong and Darren McDowell is the coordinator of evangelisation and discipleship for the Diocese of Wollongong.





PHOTO: DANIEL HOPPER

*It's Fairs to say ...*

*we love here!*

AN INTERVIEW WITH FRANCES FAIRS

We continue our series of profiling the many volunteers in our diocese who work tirelessly behind the scenes. Frances Fairs resides in the Shoalhaven region of our diocese and is a member of St Michael's Catholic Parish in Nowra.

INTERVIEW BY DEBBIE GATES

**I** know who you are! I remember you from our cocktail party, but I'm sure we have spoken a number of times about all sorts of things including online shopping and comfortable shoes." And so, the tone is set for a very friendly, relaxed and long interview with Frances.

I must admit that I knew her more from reputation. Frances' name was always being mentioned when discussions were being had about our lay leaders, our female role models, or when examples were given about the great work being done in our parishes.

Well, I was about to find out why.

Frances is currently the Shoalhaven region's catechist coordinator, regional youth coordinator, a member of the Parish Pastoral Council, a member of the Diocesan Pastoral Council, a Plenary Council 2020 animator and an Alpha and Youth Alpha leader. She is also a keen runner, loves cooking, and is mum to four children under 14 years of age.

**So, how did you become so involved in Church life?**

I have a tendency to say "yes". I think this is an exciting way to live. I moved to Nowra with my husband, Gavin (who is in the Navy), not long after going on maternity leave from my job in Melbourne as a high school maths and physics teacher.

When we arrived in the Shoalhaven, a place where I didn't know anyone, it was a great joy to get involved—baby in tow. I helped organise a young adults group (my first group of friends in Nowra!) and volunteered as a catechist. I have volunteered for the Church most of my adult life, starting-up groups and volunteering as a leader of children's liturgy and as a catechist.

**I have a tendency to say "yes". I think this is an exciting way to live.**

Volunteering is underrated. You meet the best people and the work is deeply fulfilling. Our parish priest, Monsignor Patrick Faherty, offered me a paid role as a coordinator after my fourth child turned one. My involvement in Church life has steadily increased each year.



### Why did you become involved?

Early on, I felt a responsibility to contribute. I had encountered Jesus in a profound way in my early 20s and started to see everything, including my faith, as something that could help others. It changed the direction that my life was heading as I was embarking on a military career in engineering and had not even considered becoming a teacher, let alone volunteering for the Church!

**Volunteering is underrated. You meet the best people and the work is deeply fulfilling.**

### What are some changes that you are proud of that have happened under your “watch”?

Leading our first parish Alpha\* comes to mind. I feel strongly that our Church must be outward looking, and Alpha is a means for evangelising and changing our culture from inward looking (maintenance) to outward looking (mission). Also, I'm proud of developing, along with other key leaders, our parish *Strategic Focus* which is to better engage the parents and families seeking the sacraments in our church. It's very exciting! We are a large parish made up of six communities and we are all

sharing ideas and implementing changes with the same goal of reaching out and evangelising.

### What are you passionate about?

I want our Church to better live out its mission. We can be better! This drives a lot of what I do, but is not my fundamental passion. I'm most passionate about sharing our faith. My faith is a great source of joy and hope in my life, even in the sad times, and I want others to have that too. There are so many negative messages in society and it is easy to get swept up in it all. The love and mercy of God is greater than anything. The Gospel is life-giving and countercultural. It takes courage for our young people to stand up for our faith, but they do—young people are inspirational!

### A “God” moment?

I've had some big moments with God along my journey that have had a lasting effect on me, but it's the many smaller moments with God which have developed my personal relationship with him. Each moment, large or small, has helped me. God loves me as he loves you. I know that when I come to him in heartfelt prayer, he is there guiding, comforting and leading me. God is good!

**I want our Church to better live out its mission. We can be better! This drives a lot of what I do, but is not my fundamental passion. I'm most passionate about sharing our faith.**

### Your “claim to fame” moment?

I don't have one, but I think that my children Caitlin (13), Bridget (12), Henry (10) and Xavier (6) will be my claim to fame in the future. They are lovely and generous people.

### Something that people may not know about you?

I'm a keen runner. That's not to say I'm winning any races. My daughters and I compete in our local cross-country competition. I also love to cook homestyle meals. It's relaxing, especially when I have the kitchen to myself! ■

Debbie Gates is the director of development and community engagement for the Diocese of Wollongong.

**YOU** are loved by God  
**YOU** matter  
**YOU** belong  
**YOU** can do great things  
**YOU** can be a light to the world


A message worth  
**SHARING**

Become a **Catechist** and share this important message with Catholic children in state schools.  
**We need your help.**

To get involved, talk to your Parish Priest, Catechist Coordinator or call Cindy on (02) 4640 8550

 **Catholic SRE**  
DIOCESE OF WOLLONGONG



A man in a blue denim shirt and a young boy in a plaid shirt are kneeling in a grassy field, planting a small sapling. The man is holding the base of the plant while the boy holds the stem. They are both looking at the plant with interest. The background is a lush green field with trees in the distance, and the scene is bathed in warm, golden light, suggesting late afternoon or early morning.

It changes you as a  
person, you grow with  
them. To see where  
they come from and  
where they are now.

# Fostering Futures

**Permanency Support Program**



*Sometimes families are unable to care for their children due to many different reasons. Whether it be mental illness, substance abuse, domestic violence, poverty and/or homelessness, these children and young people who come into foster care deserve an equal chance of achieving a good quality life just like every other child. That's where people are needed to rise to the challenge and become carers to make a positive impact on a child's future for a short time, or a lifetime.*



PHOTOS: MARK NEWSHAM

## Deb and Nathan's story

After being unable to have their own biological children, Illawarra carers, Deb and Nathan, decided to enquire about becoming carers in the hope of being able to provide a child with a permanent home.

"We went to a little seminar and decided to sign up. We have been [carers] for 11 ½ years for the same two boys, and five years ago we had a young girl come into our family," said Deb.

"The two boys came into our care as brothers when one was four years old and the other 20 months old. Five years ago, we applied for a young girl to come into our family and she has been with us ever since she was 6 years old. She has slotted into our family so well.

"We were given the two boys, and it was like 'wow', a whole new world opened up. They were dropped off to us with everything they owned basically," Deb continued.

Although being a carer comes with its challenges, Deb and Nathan believe that it just takes time and it is important to remember that these children and young people in care just want to be loved, as few have never experienced a proper family or real love.

**It changes you as a person, you grow with them. To see where they come from and where they are now ...**

**They mean everything to us and I just want them to be happy and have the best opportunities in life.**

"It changes you as a person, you grow with them. To see where they come from and where they are now. Especially with my eldest one and the number of things he has been through—he has come through the other end and is just a different child ... I couldn't be prouder of him," said Deb.

"It's just been really good to see how much he has changed over the years and for other people to say, 'You have such well-behaved kids.' Well, we have done the hard yards because you don't see it as much as other people, so it's nice to get feedback from others saying they are really good kids. You are like, 'Oh, thank you!' You feel like you have done a good job.

"They mean everything to us and I just want them to be happy and have the best opportunities in life. You treat them as if they are your own.

Unconditional love.... You just have to stand by them and be there for them.

"I can't put into words how grateful I am for the support we have received from CatholicCare and our case workers ... I can't say enough about how fantastic they are," Deb said.

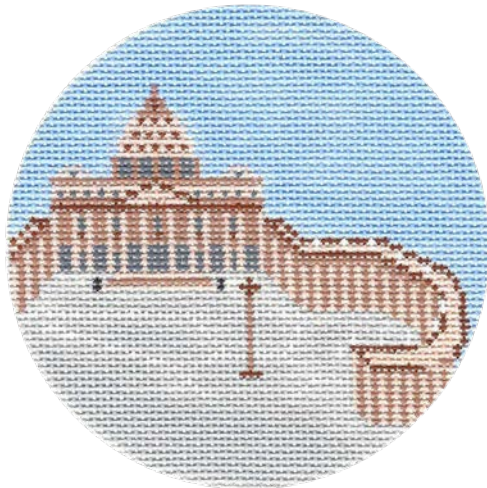
Right now, right here in our region, people are needed to put their hands up to become carers. Every family is unique, just as every child who comes into care is unique. The more carers we have, the better chance there is of making a successful match.

At *Fostering Futures*—CatholicCare Wollongong's permanency support program—we're passionate about children's wellbeing and their right to have stable, caring families and positive childhoods. We're always on the lookout for potential carers who can share their homes and lives to make a positive impact on a child's future for a short time, or a lifetime.

If you are interested in learning more, you can take it one step at a time to decide whether this is the right journey for you and your family. ■

Call CatholicCare on 0418 783 956 or email at [fosteringfutures@catholiccare.dow.org.au](mailto:fosteringfutures@catholiccare.dow.org.au) and they will support you every step of the way.





# HOME SWEET HOME

FINDING OUR HOME IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

*an unlikely, but blessed journey*

**Henri and Tianah Taylor are both 22 years old and grew up in Nowra. They were married in December 2018. They grew up regarding people who believed in God as deluded, zealous and alien. Yet, on 21 April 2019, at the Easter Vigil at St Francis Xavier Cathedral in Wollongong, they were baptised and joyfully embraced becoming Catholic.**

**Jude Hennessy recently sat down with the both of them to gain some insights into what they describe as their unlikely journey and very happy arrival as members of the Catholic Church.**

INTERVIEW BY  
JUDE HENNESSY

**Tell me a little bit about yourselves.**

**Tianah:** We went to high school together and started dating after Year 12. After beginning tertiary studies, we lived together and started to face some of the grim realities of modern life—relationships included. We were taking our lead based on the societal norms and popular culture and we had no understanding of God, the Bible or the Church in helping us to live a good, happy and fulfilling life.

**Henri:** The blueprint for our lives and relationship was predicated on examples set by our peer circles and society. We both had a growing uneasiness and dissatisfaction, not with each other, but with the mindset and values we were surrounded by—which for both of us, in one way or another, lacked meaning and consistency and certainly weren't making anyone we knew truly happy.

**Tianah:** Henri and I are very different in many ways, and so we commenced this search for deeper meaning and consistency for living in different ways, but we continued to discuss what was going on in our minds and eventually in our hearts.

**How did you make the jump from non-belief to belief?**

**Tianah:** Our realisations took place at approximately the same time. We had been doing a lot of reading and listening to podcasts from various sources, and the Catholic Church started to stand out as being credible and consistent. We now know that most people choose to come to the Church through one of three avenues: truth, beauty or goodness. For me, I was attracted by the Church's quality of goodness. I came to see that goodness must have a source in God, and there are great expressions of this goodness in the codes for living presented by Jesus in the Gospels. I was especially







PHOTO: DANIEL HOPPER

We were enriched by learning about the Holy Family as a model and by the Theology of the Body—an understanding of the Church’s teachings on life and fertility.

**I came to see that goodness must have a source in God, and there are great expressions of this goodness in the codes for living presented by Jesus in the Gospels.**

attracted to the person of Mary. For Henri, the journey was initially a more intellectual one.

**Henri:** I’ve been interested in philosophy for some time, particularly Aristotle’s three main disciplines: metaphysics, epistemology and ethics (the study of what is real, what is true and what is good.) At first, enlightenment philosophers like Rousseau and Kant seemed to hold to thinking that gave answers to these questions for me, but in the end, they seemed baseless and missing a foundation.

Like Tianah’s realisation of a need of a source of “good”, I came to accept, logically, the need for divinity in order to determine truth. It was in the reading of thinkers like St Thomas Aquinas, St Augustine of Hippo and St Paul that I came to embrace Jesus as the truth—the Word who was made Flesh and dwelt among us. Because of their writings, I came to increasingly see the Catholic Church as having the robust thinking and teaching to explain and enrich the relationship between the intellect and mystery. The fact is, there are limits to what we can know. We are given enough knowledge to enable us to embrace the need for mystery, for faith, as well as reason.

**So, goodness and truth got you to a point of acceptance and desiring to explore becoming a Catholic. What got you across the line?**

**Henri:** We came to mix with some impressive people at the Catholic Society at the University of Wollongong—young people who were smart, contemporary

and faithful. They were so welcoming and genuinely interested in having conversations that moved us along. I came to the understanding of the need to not just think, but to pray. I had to learn and I am still learning how to do this, but it was clear that God wants to be in a relationship with us, one that includes a felt reality, an encounter with the Spirit, intellectually, but also in our hearts. My openness to that started when I was invited to do menALIVE last year in the diocese and I have been growing in my understanding of prayer and experience of God ever since. Now, after becoming a Catholic and receiving the sacraments, I get the fuller experience of that, particularly by receiving Jesus in the Eucharist.

**Tianah:** Without even knowing it, our relationship and moral system was slowly falling into alignment with Christian values. It was around about this time that I became pregnant.

*continued next page ►*



We began talking about a future together: marriage, children and family life. I was starting to dip my feet into the water of basic Catholic Church teaching too. The Catholic Church's teachings on femininity, the Holy Family and motherhood—especially through the veneration of Mary—expressed a deep richness that I wanted for us and any future children we would have. I started praying the rosary. I love it! It is an amazing way to meditate. All of this spurred my conversion and my embracing of the faith. It was so countercultural, so different to everything I had experienced, and yet it was obviously beautiful and it sat so peacefully with me.

A clincher for us was last January when we were encouraged to attend a matrimony conference in Tasmania. We both came to see the richness of the Catholic Church and were exposed to things that blew our minds. We were outsiders; recently civilly married; not-yet Catholic; with a baby due in five months. Despite all this, we were made to feel so welcome and that was amazing. We learnt so much and experienced so much. We were enriched by learning about the Holy Family as a model and by the Theology of the Body—an understanding of the Church's teachings on life and fertility. We experienced various forms of prayer, from middle-of-the-road Catholic prayer and liturgy, to more charismatic, and then quite traditional forms of worship and prayer. We spoke to awesome married couples and incredible priests and nuns and had our perceptions of what the Church was broken-down and rebuilt. It was after this point we knew we definitely “wanted-in” and started RCIA to become Catholic.

**The Catholic Church's teachings on femininity, the Holy Family and motherhood—especially through the veneration of Mary—expressed deep richness that I wanted for us and any future children we would have.**

#### **What was it like to be received into the Church?**

**Henri:** To be honest, I was really excited and it was our first experience of a real Easter, so everything is a bit of a blur. There was a holiness in the liturgy. It touched me deeply. I encountered a new sonship in God—definitely! Our friend, Emma, also from Wollongong University, joined RCIA late and had been journeying with us. She was baptised by Bishop Brian just last weekend—she just couldn't wait till next Easter. I think I was more excited for her and I was certainly able to take more in.

**Tianah:** I loved it. It was such a beautiful experience. We had journeyed with the parish through RCIA and they were so excited with, and for us, and the other candidates. I felt an overwhelming joy of being received. There was a sense of togetherness and I felt really assured about who I am through trusting in God and Mary.

#### **What does being a disciple of Jesus and a new member of the Church mean to you?**

**Henri:** I guess our social circles have morphed a little as part of this journey, but at the same time, we retain close friendships with old friends. I am being

careful not to come on too strong, but I really want to share the joy and confidence that comes with knowing who you are in God's eyes with my old friends. That's tricky, but really important, because the call to evangelise isn't an optional extra for Catholics, and I want them to experience and know what I now know. It's tough, because in many ways, young people are almost vaccinated against Christianity and Catholicism. They've been given just enough sometimes to make them immune to it, but not enough to capture them. They don't know what they don't know and the result is that they can be really closed. So, you need to be wise—don't preach, just share your own story when the time is right.

**The Church is so big and rich. We know that this is the beginning of our faith journey and we will always have more to learn. We know we are vulnerable as new Catholics.**

**Tianah:** As far as being a growing disciple goes, the Church is so big and rich. We know that this is the beginning of our faith journey and we will always have more to learn. We know we are vulnerable as new Catholics. We love going to Mass and do not want to fall into the trap of going to Mass every Sunday simply ticking a box without our lives being transformed for service of God. I get a sense that is a very real trap that is out there. We will not be able to do this alone and we hope the Church community is able to provide us with the deep relationships with other couples and friends with whom we can have the sort of conversations and prayer that remind us of the beauty, the truth and the goodness that led us both here in the first place. ■

*Two weeks after being initiated into the Church, Tianah and Henri welcomed their baby boy, August, into the world. Soon after, August was baptised—an added celebration of their new life in Christ in the Church and with each other as a family growing in holiness.*

Jude Hennessy is the director of the Office of Renewal and Evangelisation for the Diocese of Wollongong.



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# God is good.

... AND GOOD FOR YOU



BY JUDE HENNESSY

***A lot has happened in the last 10 years in the work undertaken by catechists—our Catholic “Scripture teachers” in government schools. It seems like only yesterday that the entire ministry was embroiled in a furore resulting from a decision by the NSW Government to introduce Special Education in Ethics (SEE) classes in competition with Special Religious Education (SRE) classes.***

Bishop Emeritus Peter Ingham—who was, at the time, responsible for the oversight of SRE amongst his brother bishops—prophesied that all Confraternity of Christian Doctrines across NSW would need to roll up their sleeves in readiness for a prolonged defence of this good work. He was spot-on!

Fast forward 10 years and Bishop Brian Mascord is now in charge with the broad oversight of SRE in NSW on behalf of his brother bishops. He has inherited a ministry that has seen the full introduction of SEE classes; a parliamentary enquiry in SEE; ongoing calls for the removal of SRE from either ill-informed or biased lobby groups; a Department of Education-sponsored independent review of SRE; the tabling of one of the largest ever petitions to the NSW Parliament in support of SRE; new recommendations and guidelines; new enrolment procedures; TV talk-show debates; new training, resources and curriculums. It has been quite a ride for all involved.

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

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

The recently released report authored by two world-renowned academics, Professor Zehavit Gross (Bar-Ilan University, Israel) and Professor Emerita Suzanne Rutland (University of Sydney), is of immense value. Importantly, it has received support from both the NSW Government and Opposition.

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

**The report advocates strongly for SRE in schools, finding that it provides a host of additional benefits including improvements in mental health and establishment of values that had not previously been considered.**

and ideas. The report also pointed to SRE as bringing important psychological benefits to students' mental health and well-being, reducing the risks of mental illness.

Additionally, an Australian study in 2018 by McCrindle Research found that 90% of Australians believe that students should have the opportunity to explore religion, spirituality and faith, with 82% recognising the place of religion as a key part of cultural heritage and 79% agreeing that schools should be a safe place for students to explore deeper questions of faith and belief.

Suffice to say, it is pleasing to note that in 2019 we find ourselves in a place of much greater stability in SRE. Thanks be to God, it appears that the tide is turning and the amazing contribution of our catechists—seeing almost 9,000 Catholic children in 140 government schools weekly in NSW—is starting to be rightfully acknowledged. The findings outlined above enable all of us to confidently and sincerely thank all our catechists throughout the diocese, and those who support them, who are faithful to their call as Catholics in embracing the evangelising mission of the Church. ■

Jude Hennessy is the director of the Office of the Renewal and Evangelisation for the Diocese of Wollongong.



# Camino de Santiago

## A walk with Faith and Trust as my companions

BY FRANCES VAN LEERDAM

I received a “calling” to walk a Camino during my first overseas trip in 2012 while visiting Assisi in Italy. A few years later, I ran out of excuses and my thoughts turned to reasons why I *should* walk a Camino. I booked a return flight to Lisbon, Portugal, five weeks before departure. As soon as I booked the flight, the niggling of the call ceased, a warm calmness enveloped me, and I knew I would be safe.

I chose Camino de Santiago—the Way of St James, a network of pilgrims’ ways or pilgrimages leading to the shrine of the apostle St James the Great in the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, Northwestern Spain, where tradition has it that the remains of the saint are buried. The Camino Frances (French Way) is popular because it is well signed and supported by many bars and accommodation; it was made popular by the Emilio Estevez movie *The Way*. There are many “paths” and many “ways” to be a pilgrim. I decided to walk the Portuguese Way via the Coastal route because I wanted to visit Fatima, and so Fatima became my starting point. I also decided to go solo, carry my backpack, and book one night’s accommodation in Lisbon. I had no expectations; just leave it in God’s hands. Departing late October—early winter in Portugal—I had 28 days to walk.

I stayed in hostels, albergues, pensiones and hotels, meeting people from 21 countries, ranging in age from 19 to 67. It rained on 15 days, enhancing my walk and awakening my senses with freshness and vitality. I carried two letters—one from Bishop Brian Mascord and the other from my parish priest, Fr Christopher Sarkis—introducing me as a true pilgrim should I require assistance. I carried intentions for Fatima and Santiago and an Immaculate Mary medal and chain with a note: if I encountered a pilgrim who would benefit, I could pay it forward. I also carried the spirit of my grandchildren: curiosity, creativity, mindfulness and delight.



PHOTOS: FRANCES VAN LEERDAM

## The first day

I lost the path many times—common on this route—and I returned to Fatima. The next day I took a two-hour bus ride to Porto to re-start my pilgrimage, eventually walking to Santiago (twice) as follows:

- I walked the Portuguese Coastal route to Caminha, then I crossed to the Central route, deviating onto the Variante Espiritual at Pontevedra, then on to Padron and Santiago where I received my first Compostela (traditional certificate). **(15 days)**
- The following day, I caught the bus from Santiago to Sarria to walk the 120 km back to Santiago. Sarria to Santiago is the end section of the Camino Frances. The minimum distance required to receive a Compostela is 100 km. I dedicated this walk to a loved one who was ill, receiving a Compostela on their behalf. **(5 days)**
- I then walked from Santiago to Finisterre via Muxia. Muxia is a seaside spiritual site, a most sacred place filled with legend. Traditionally, a pilgrim would walk to Muxia to thank Our Lady for the safety of the journey, then walk on to Finisterre—known as the end of the world in pagan times. This is not part of the Camino de Santiago but well worth walking if time permits or visiting by bus. **(4 days)**



There was never a moment when I felt unsafe; never a time that I left a bar without someone saying, "Buen Camino" ("good journey.") I was recognised as a pilgrim by a shell that was attached to my backpack. How many kilometres did I walk? It doesn't matter, I did okay, having never carried a backpack, hiked or trekked. I returned home strengthened in body, mind and soul.

### Prayer on the camino

The title of the first book I read in my preparation was *The Way of a Pilgrim* (a 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian work of a pilgrim's journey) while practising the Jesus Prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." Also known as the Prayer of the Heart, it is considered to be the unceasing prayer that St Paul the Apostle advocates in the New Testament, by virtue of the power of the Holy Name of Jesus.

Every afternoon at 2.30 pm, I would start chanting this prayer as I walked. November days are short. I always managed to find accommodation about half an hour before dark, and most evenings I heard the bells calling me to weekday Mass. One afternoon, early for me, I veered off the path about 3 pm to find a town and accommodation for the night, not knowing why, just doing it. Shortly after I settled into a hostel, the sky turned black and a severe storm hit with the power cutting out many times during the night. The next morning was clear and still, and as I walked through the town in the early morning, the town was filled with the sound of chainsaws, men clearing the many trees that had fallen across roads and pathways during the storm.

## UNIVERSAL CHURCH

### Variante Espiritual

I hardly felt the 600-metre ascent to the monastery through the pine and eucalyptus forest after a restful night in Combarra. The air was refreshingly cold and my body warm. The albergue and monastery accommodation was closed for the winter, so I produced my Spanish-translated letters to the nun and I was welcomed with a hug and a room for the night. Later, I attended Mass, then vespers, and received a pilgrim's blessing. I truly felt a part of the "Universal Church".

### Padron to Santiago

I started out in the dark with five Portuguese pilgrims. I walked with two military servicemen; one of them was shortly to return to service after a long recovery from an injury. As we walked, I listened to his story. When we met again, I offered him the Immaculate Mary medal, which he accepted, lost for words. Later he told me his mother was going straight to Fatima to light a candle. I arrived at Santiago mid-afternoon. Three of the Portuguese pilgrims were sad to tell me that my friend was still hours away and didn't look like making it. I attended evening Mass at the cathedral, and after Mass, I literally walked straight into the two servicemen who had completed their pilgrimage. I've no doubt the prayers of many carried this man to Santiago.

### Santiago to Finisterre via Muxia

A wet walk and stormy arrival in Muxia: roads flooded, high waves pounding the rocks, a very dangerous coastline even today. You can sense those who have walked this path: in hooded cloaks; making their way to carriages; pilgrims looking for shelter.

Walking from Muxia to Finisterre with beautiful views and hamlets, the surroundings so quiet and still, gave an eerie experience on this ancient path.

### Backpack and blisters

I left home with a 36-litre backpack (packed weight 6.5 kg) anticipating temperatures of 28° to 0° and some rain. I returned home with a 28-litre backpack (packed weight 3.5 kg.) I mailed home my sleeping bag and a second set of clothes. No blisters, tendonitis, plantar fasciitis or calf pain due to wearing compression socks. The best piece of equipment I took—ultra light trekking umbrella. Equipment I didn't use—sunglasses.

I'm in my early 60s and have three adult married children who all know me well, respecting and trusting my sensibilities, and four grandchildren, who think Gran is just great! ■

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Frances Van Leerdam has been working for the Diocese of Wollongong for the past 27 years in various roles, currently in parish support—administration for the Office of the Bishop.



# paving the way

ADVENT PROGRAM  
GOES GLOBAL

BY DANIEL HOPPER

*The Diocese of Wollongong continues to be blessed by the success of its Advent and Lenten program books and music resources—now selling over 50,000 copies annually throughout Australia and increasingly around the world. It's a long way from the 800 copies sold of the first Advent program in 2011.*

What's next? We have been inundated with requests from customers wanting us to release similar resources for the rest of the year. While this is something we would love to do, and we will continue exploring this concept, our current resource levels don't stretch that far, just yet. The strain put on the Office of the Bishop staff for the six months from September to February each year while we sell and distribute the Advent and Lenten programs is already overwhelming.

We asked ourselves the question—with the program's growing popularity and impact on people's lives—should we consider offering it more deliberately to the wider Universal Church? If we tweaked it and brought in other people from other parts of the world, could we have an even greater impact on people's prayer life and personal relationship with Jesus—forming them for missionary discipleship in preparation for renewal of the Church? Our answer was yes, we could, and we should, not only from the perspective that it is central to the mission of the Church, but it also has the potential to build great capacity in our own diocese to fund and support other critical ministries.

While we are now exploring our options in relation to independently



distributing in the USA or securing a publishing deal, I am excited to announce that we have secured seven new major international contributors for the upcoming Advent program, in addition to some of your favourite local contributors such as Monsignor Graham Schmitzer, Mother Hilda Scott OSB, Fr Christopher Sarkis, Trish McCarthy, Peter Gilmore and Fr Sean Cullen—just to name a few.

Our seven new contributors are:

**Dr Eleonore Stump**—One of the most influential philosophers of religion in the world today, especially in relation to her writings on St Thomas Aquinas. She has been described by critics as "among the brightest of minds and gentlest of hearts".

**Fr Gregory Pine OP**—One of the most articulate young priests you will ever hear or read. He is now in huge demand in the USA, largely due to his work with the Thomistic Institute and his guest appearances on Matt Fradd's popular podcast, *Pints with Aquinas*, and his YouTube show, *The Matt Fradd Show*. When asked whether he

would like to contribute to the Advent program, he immediately replied, "I'd be delighted to contribute.... I was ordained for you and for the people whom you serve." What a legend!

**Trent Horn**—Widely acclaimed author and staff apologist with *Catholic Answers* in the USA. He is also an adjunct professor of apologetics at Holy Apostles College in Connecticut.

**Fr Damian Ference**—Doctoral student in philosophy at the Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas in Rome, Italy. He is also a regularly featured writer on Bishop Robert Barron's *Word on Fire* website.

**Michael "Gomer" Gormley**—If you are one of the thousands of cool people who download the hugely popular Catholic podcast, *Catching Foxes*, each week, you will know who Gomer is and you will immediately want to purchase the Advent program for this reason alone! Gomer is also a popular speaker in the USA and is currently the coordinator of evangelisation at St Anthony of Padua Catholic Church in The Woodlands, Texas.





**Fr James Mackay**—Anyone who knows anything about Alpha of Divine Renovation will know the wonderful Fr James Mackay from the Docklands in London. He wowed Catholics and non-Catholics alike at the recent *Alpha Leadership Conference 2019* in the UK.

**Fr Chris Pietraszko**—A wonderful young Canadian priest who has a great love for philosophy, theology and apologetics. He has his own podcast, *Fides et Ratio*, and blog, *Fr Pietraszko's Corner*, and is a regular guest on *Pints with Aquinas* and *The Catholic Man Show*.

We are excited to bring you the wisdom and spiritual direction of these new contributors, along with our regular contributors, in this year's upcoming Advent program titled *The Way*. The program will go on sale in early September on our website at [www.dow.org.au](http://www.dow.org.au).

*To whet your appetite, we have included Monsignor Graham Schmitzer's reflection on Raphael's cover artwork:*

## Madonna del Granduca

**Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino  
(1483–1520)**

"Madonna del Granduca", c. 1504. Oil on panel, 84 × 55cm. Florence, Palazzo Pitti, Galleria Palatina. Public Domain.

**By Mgr Graham Schmitzer**

**D**uring his closing address at our diocesan marian congress in 1981, Cardinal James Freeman said of our Lady: "She has been accepted or rejected. Only with difficulty has she been ignored." The most depicted subject in art is that of the Madonna and Child. Somehow, this theme catches the imagination and speaks of life itself—the joy of motherhood and the excitement of a new human beginning. But then, we quickly remember the fate of this Child, and the painting takes on a new dimension. Suddenly, we detect a wistful expression on the Mother's face. Instinctively we know we can turn to her, for she is a Mother of Sorrow, even in the midst of joy.

The *Madonna del Granduca* was painted by Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino (known as Raphael) in 1504 shortly after he arrived in Florence. It became the property of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Ferdinand III, hence the name of the painting. It is still housed in Florence in the Palatine Gallery of the Pitti Palace. Mary is shown standing, and we see her in more length than in Raphael's other Madonnas. This allows Mary to be shown in a more majestic pose. Instead of the baby being held at shoulder height, the Christ Child is tenderly held and supported by his Mother at almost waist level. Mary gazes downwards in an almost trance-like expression, while the Christ Child is wide-eyed and inquisitive. Whatever he sees, he is clinging to the comfort and protection of his Mother. We, too, naturally fly to her when times are tough. "We fly to thy protection, O holy Mother of God, despise not our prayers in our necessities, but deliver us from all dangers, O glorious and blessed Virgin" is the oldest known prayer to Our Lady, dating from around A.D. 300.

The *Madonna del Granduca* remains one of Raphael's finest creations in his early period. He came to Florence after his formation by Perugino (whom we met in our 2017 Advent program—his *Baptism* adorns the Sistine Chapel.)

Previous artists seem to have all been groping for the very simplicity that Raphael attained.

One critic points out Our Lady's hand supporting the baby's buttocks: "The most disarming gesture I have ever witnessed in painting," he says. Raphael repeats the gesture several times later. But, notice Our Lady's other hand, more than holding the Child, she is pointing to him. In fact, this hand occupies the very centre of the painting. Raphael may well have been influenced by Byzantine art. There are several "classes" of Marian icons, one being the *hodegitria*—literally "she who shows the way". Mary does more than just point. She is "showing" us her Child, for he is "the Way". Although Our Lady takes up almost the centre space of the picture, it is the Child who is the main feature. In Jesus is the whole reason for Mary's being. "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord" (Luke 1:46). Mary is not forcing the Child on us. She is simply offering him as the Saviour of the World to those with eyes of faith. Our Lady's posture is simply a gentle invitation to move closer to Jesus—he wants to belong to us as much as he obviously belongs to her.

In his commentary on another class of Marion icon—the *Tenderness* icons—Rowan Williams, a former archbishop of Canterbury, points out that Mary actually represents us, and Christ's clinging to his Mother is a sign of how close he wishes to come to us. "Unless you change and become like little children you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 18:3). Jesus is asking us to do no more than he has done himself. Children are full of trust. It must always be our attitude before God.

Mary is not looking directly at us, but she truly "sees" us. This is the whole point of the painting. We are not spectators at a museum. We are the Mother's children given directly to us by her Son. "Behold your mother" (John 19:27). We have come to her with all our problems in life. She is showing us the answer: "Do what he tells you" (John 2:5). We spend so much of our lives trying to look "good" so that others will notice us, that we may not be prepared to be truly "seen". ■

Daniel Hopper is the director of media and communications for the Diocese of Wollongong.





CAN  
YOU NOT  
WATCH

# one hour

MATT 26:40

WITH  
ME?

A YOUNG ADULTS  
EXPERIENCE OF  
HOLY HOUR

BY LACHLAN GILLESPIE

*While I have always professed being Catholic, there have been, and continue to be, many times where I live in a way that God is not at the centre of my life. I claim that I just don't have the time—not with all my university work, social engagements, computer games and various other “important” activities.*

As much as some of this busyness is legitimate, if I am being honest, it is often used

**Holy Hour is a very intentional time to enter into dialogue with Jesus. Distractions are removed and I find I become exposed.**

to distract me from my relationship with God and the things that are truly weighing heavily on me.

When I prayerfully reflect on how I can change this, I come to two responses: I must increase my prayer life and I must engage in a community that will encourage me in my journey with God. One way that I have managed to do this of late is by attending the diocese's Holy Hour for young adults at the Cathedral [also at Rosemeadow] with some friends of mine.

Holy Hour draws its inspiration from Christ's words to the apostles at Gethsemane, “Can you not watch one hour with me?” (Matthew 26:40). At each Holy Hour, Bishop Brian and/or other clergy join us for adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, praise and worship, Reconciliation, Liturgy of the Word, and a short teaching followed by silence and benediction. After Holy Hour, we then come together in fellowship and share a meal.

For me, Holy Hour is a very intentional time to enter into dialogue with Jesus. Distractions are removed and I find I become exposed. I learnt, not too long ago, that the Latin root of the word *adoration* means “to be mouth-to-mouth.” Adoration is just that! The face of the invisible God is intensely and intimately made known to me. It





PHOTOS: DANIEL HOPPER

... the Latin root of the word *adoration* means “to be mouth-to-mouth.” Adoration is just that! The face of the invisible God is intensely and intimately made known to me.

is confrontational—in a good way. I voluntarily enter into it because it is time I know I need. During adoration, I gain clarity of myself, where I am at, and where I am going.

This clarity of myself comes about through clarity in my relationship with God, made known to me during adoration. Overwhelming joy is experienced in this, especially when I

realise an area of my life that I need to change and I cooperate with God—the joy of aligning my will to his.

We acknowledge in the *Our Father*: “On earth as it is in heaven.” This is a prayer we so commonly pray, but I forget that this—through the miracle of the Mass—is a reality also in adoration.

As the saints ceaselessly adore and glorify God in heaven, so too can we adore God as a community here on earth. In communing in Jesus, we are made a community. I find this extremely important. I have noticed from my own life how friends and people of significance around me shape and form how I think and act. Many well-meaning friends of mine have undermined and dismissed what I hold to be significant and important in my relationship with God.

However, adoration—especially during Holy Hour for young adults—is monumental in strengthening, encouraging and directing me.

This has been my experience, and I pray that you, too, experience the joy of “watching one hour” with Jesus.

Holy Hour for young adults (18–30 years) will be held at St Francis Xavier Cathedral in Wollongong (36 Harbour Street) on **14 August and 9 October**, and at Our Lady Help of Christians Church in Rosemeadow (Demetrius Road) on **28 August and 23 October 2019**. ■

Lachlan Gillespie is a parishioner in the Lumen Christi Catholic Parishes region of Wollongong and president of the Catholic Society based at the University of Wollongong.





# FRIEND OR FOE?

AN ENCOUNTER  
WITH JESUS CHRIST

BY SETH HARSH

*I was shocked. I thought I understood what I was talking about. Why hadn't I consulted the dictionary earlier to avoid misleading so many people in something so important? I'd been using a term to describe a most important aspect of youth ministry incorrectly. Or, had I?*

## What's in a word?

Encounter. I've been harping on about "encounter" for years—proposing it as central to all that we do in youth ministry. The term sounds harmless enough—even catchy. "So, what's the problem?" you ask. Well, when I looked at the definition of the term, particularly its etymology, I discovered that "encounter" comes from the Latin: *in* (in) + *contra* (against), and that the word had been historically used to mean "meet as an adversary". As you can see, my problem is that I have been potentially (and unknowingly) presenting an encounter with Christ as a meeting with an adversary! This is patently untrue.



In my panic, I considered changing the term in all documentation relating to youth ministry in the diocese as well as discontinuing use of the term verbally when discussing or teaching anything youth ministry related. Jesus is not an enemy! We can't speak or write in a way that would present him as such. But, before making any rash decisions, I paused to reflect: Does the term "encounter" work at all? Then, it hit me: maybe Christ is not the enemy. Maybe it's us.

### Communion requires conversion

When we experience God's love and holiness, we're inspired to respond through the surrendering of our lives to him. We long to be loving and holy so as to have communion with him. What we learn very quickly though is that we have a long way to go. We realise that many of our attitudes, inclinations and actions make us enemies of God.

We realise that we need to change—to be converted. This is a very important step, but it should not lead us to despair. Rather, it should lead us to call on the "Spirit who helps us in our weakness" (Romans 8:26). If we do not see the need for conversion, we run the risk of creating a god in our own image and likeness, rather than seeking to be transformed ever more fully into the image and likeness of the one true God.

**If we do not see the need for conversion, we run the risk of creating a god in our own image and likeness, rather than seeking to be transformed ever more fully into the image and likeness of the one true God.**

Encounter does mean "meet as an adversary", but Christ is not the enemy—we are. This is perhaps painful for us to hear, but necessary nonetheless. We are called through encounter to acknowledge our sinfulness, but to look beyond it to the grace of God—to call on him to help us transcend our weaknesses and become more like him. Yes, we can be enemies of God, but we take comfort and confidence in the words of St Paul, "For if while we were enemies, we were

**When we experience God's love and holiness, we're inspired to respond through the surrendering of our lives to him.**

reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life" (Romans 5:10).

Suffice it to say, I'm comfortable again with the term "encounter", and my deepened knowledge of the term has led me to better understand what it means in the context of youth ministry. I now realise that encounter is more than just a meeting—even a remarkable one. Encounter should lead me to consider my life in the light of Christ who is "the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). It should lead to a change in my life that makes me more like Christ.

So how are we here at Catholic Youth Ministry Wollongong (CYMW) creating opportunities for young people to encounter God?

## YOUTH MINISTRY UPDATE

### National Evangelisation Team

As youth ministry continues to grow under the blessing of God in this diocese, there has arisen a need for experienced youth ministers, especially in the area of high school-aged youth ministry. We were very excited at the beginning of this year to welcome the National Evangelisation Team (NET) into the CYMW family to help us meet the ever-growing needs of youth ministry.

A key part of NET's role in the diocese is to provide encounter days in our high schools. These days generally run the length of a school day and involve games, talks and activities all centred around an encounter with Christ. Importantly, at the end of each day, all students are given an opportunity to respond to Christ's call.

*continued next page ►*



PHOTOS: DANIEL HOPPER



## LIVE Nights

*LIVE* Nights are now in their third year in systemic schools throughout the diocese and they are stronger than ever. For those of you who haven't heard about *LIVE* Nights yet, they typically have two main parts: A lunchtime concert from the mobile stage (or other conspicuous place in the school), and an afternoon youth ministry event. The afternoon consists of food, fellowship, games, a guest speaker, music and small discussion groups.

The themes of our *LIVE* Nights this year are: "Who am I?", "Who is HE?", and "Who are WE?" We have had two of our themes already this year, with one more to follow. The response of students has been fantastic with almost 100 students attending at some schools. Support of staff has also been outstanding with youth ministry coordinators (staff) and youth ministry leaders (students) working particularly hard on promoting the events and working with us on the day to make them powerful opportunities for encounter.

## LIVE Local

*LIVE* Local is a regional youth group that has been operating out of St John's Parish Hall in Campbelltown since Term 2 this year and is open to all high school-aged young people.



PHOTOS: DANIEL HOPPER

There is a great community forming here with up to 30 young people attending on any given night, but our hope is to grow this group considerably next term and in 2020.

*LIVE* Local is a key initiative in the plan for youth ministry in the diocese as it offers an opportunity for those who have attended *LIVE* Nights or NET Encounter Days to continue their faith journey with other young people who have had an encounter with Christ.

## Activate Fire

Newly introduced this year for all Year 6 students in our systemic primary schools is Activate Fire. This is a day that focuses on the sacraments with an emphasis on Confirmation. The day consists of games, prayer, music, worship, food, fellowship and fun. We at CYMW have all been overwhelmed by the positive response to this initiative by staff and students. ■

Seth Harsh is the diocesan youth ministry coordinator for the Diocese of Wollongong.





# MAKING A WORLD OF *difference*

*In 1980, CatholicCare started with just one employee and 10 volunteers. While times change, one thing remains constant—volunteers are integral. Over 170 men and women of all ages, walks of life, of different religious and cultural backgrounds, now volunteer with CatholicCare.*

The theme for *National Volunteers Week* in 2019 is “Making a world of difference”, and for CatholicCare community visitor volunteer, Judy Lenehan, wanting to help others just comes naturally and she believes volunteering adds another dimension to her life.

Judy has been brightening the lives of residents at her local aged care facility through sharing her love of art over the last 14 years. As a trained nurse and talented oil painter, Judy had always been interested in supporting seniors and, once she retired, she was hoping to continue to put her passion into action.

“When I retired, I thought, ‘Well, I have to do something,’ and I had some friends who were doing manicures at the aged care facility. I used to do nails and

massages, and I started doing dolphin cruises or bus trips as a volunteer. I always did what they liked me to do,” said Judy.

“One of the recreational activity officers at the aged care facility asked me to start an art group, so that’s how we began.”

For two hours every Wednesday morning, Judy runs the art group, inviting residents to come together, express their creativity and participate in a variety of activities through painting, colouring and drawing.

“I really think you get more than you put in. It gives you a different slant on life. You get to hear other people’s stories. Everybody has a story and you get to be a part of someone else’s world.

“To feel that you are making a difference is a joy. I also think people who volunteer in all different aspects are extraordinary.

“It makes a difference to not only you, but also to those you visit ... to know that someone really cares, especially if they don’t have relatives close by. If they can relate to a person, that’s really beautiful,” said Judy.

CatholicCare says thank you to all the volunteers that make the world of difference to the lives of others and the whole community in our diocese! ■

If you are interested in any of the volunteering opportunities at CatholicCare, please call us on 4227 1122 or visit [www.catholiccare.dow.org.au](http://www.catholiccare.dow.org.au)



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FEAR**  
*for I am  
with you*

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# Encouraging discussion and challenging ideas

CATHOLIC BUSINESS CONNECTIONS OFF TO A FLYING START

BY DEBBIE GATES

*At the inaugural Catholic Business Connections (CBC) event held in February 2019, Bishop Brian Mascord launched a vision for this exciting new diocesan venture: “It is my hope that Catholic Business Connections will offer an environment that encourages discussion about perspectives on a broad range of challenging ideas, providing a great opportunity for members to enhance their faith life and build their professional network.”*

Bishop Brian trusted that guest speakers would inspire members with their unique story and how they balance their work and spiritual life in the context of living in a challenging world. And, our speakers have not disappointed so far!

At the first CBC luncheon, 50 new members and guests gathered at Rydges Hotel in Campbelltown to network, enjoy a delicious meal and be inspired by guest speaker Robert Fitzgerald AM’s presentation on *Trust and Integrity—touchstones for success in private and public life*.

Upon reflecting on his various roles and experiences as a commercial lawyer, board member and executive officer with several profit and non-profit organisations, Robert concluded that, “Only personal integrity will build trust.” Robert also discussed at length his time as a commissioner on the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, and since 2004 as a commissioner with the Productivity Commission. He asked, “What is Integrity?” and offered this answer: “In the words of Micah, ‘Act with justice, love with tenderness and walk humbly with your God’” (Micah 6:8).



**“If people don’t believe in the messenger, they won’t believe the message.”**

PETER TURNER

This same topic was addressed at CBC’s second luncheon in May at levelone@harbourfront in Wollongong. The guest speaker this time was Peter Turner, the director of schools for the Diocese of Wollongong (since 2007). Peter reflected on the impact of a changing and complex world. Referring to data illustrating that trust in institutions had declined significantly since the 1970s, he observed that, “If people don’t believe in the messenger, they won’t believe the message. If people don’t believe in you, they won’t believe in what you say. And, if it is about you, then it’s about

your beliefs, your values, your principles and how true to these you are.”

Peter lamented that somewhere along the way towards the 21st century, notions of ethics, morality, honesty, character and personal discipline had come to be viewed as quaint, irrelevant and unnecessary by many. He cautioned that when trust and integrity are absent, anything can fill the gap. And, relating this to today’s youth, Peter said that whilst schools had a responsibility to educate young people, “It was the collective responsibility of *everyone* to help young people to sort things out, to not let extreme viewpoints take over from common sense, to promote reason, to presume goodness in other people, to reject cynicism and ... to stop doing nothing.”

Peter ended his presentation quoting 17th-century Catholic mathematician and





PHOTOS: DANIEL HOPPER

## “... when trust and integrity are absent, anything can fill the gap.”

PETER TURNER

theologian, Blaise Pascal: “The virtue of a man or woman is not measured by any one extraordinary act (or word), but by his/her everyday conduct.” He then asked the 70 members and guests present to personally reflect on the question: “For what do I wish to be known?”

At both CBC luncheons, the guest speakers’ presentations were followed by robust Q&A sessions. The feedback received from members has been inspiring. Marie Pulford from St Mary Star of Sea College in Wollongong said, “Thank you for the invitation to

this event and the opportunity to connect with other members of the community. Robert’s speech was thoroughly engaging and inspiring.” Diocesan committee member, Trish Reid, commented, “The Q&A sessions which have followed both Peter and Robert’s presentations have been engaging and enthusiastically responded to by all.”

The two remaining CBC luncheons for 2019 will be held on:

- Thursday 22 August at Rydges Hotel, Campbelltown. Guest speaker: Greg Sheridan AO, foreign editor of The Australian.
- Thursday 14 November at levelone@harbourfront, Wollongong. Guest Speaker: Elizabeth Espinosa, president of the Law Society of NSW. ■

### Become a Catholic Business Connections member

Catholic Business Connections (CBC) holds four luncheons per year in a relaxed setting alternating between Illawarra and Macarthur venues. Each lunch begins at noon and has a firm ending at 2 pm with extended networking until 3 pm. Membership is for a calendar year. As events for this year have commenced, the membership fee for August–December has been reduced to:

- Standard membership is \$220 (including GST).
- Clergy and religious membership is \$100 if joining as a member of a parish or order (GST free).
- Concessional membership is available for retirees, pensioners and students for \$110 (including GST).

Membership includes complimentary admission to all events held within the year. Members are welcomed to invite guests. Guest attendance per function is \$132 (including GST) per person. Tables of 10 (including the member) are available for \$1,188 (including GST).

Sponsorship opportunities are available to members for each event.

For member registration, additional tickets and sponsorship package details visit [www.cbc.dow.org.au](http://www.cbc.dow.org.au).

Debbie Gates is the director of development and community engagement for the Diocese of Wollongong. For further information and enquiries, please contact Debbie on (02) 4222 2446 or [debbie.gates@dow.org.au](mailto:debbie.gates@dow.org.au).





## VIRTUOSO PIANIST WOWS THE DIOCESE

BY FR MARK DE BATTISTA

***During February and March 2019, the diocese played host to an amazing concert tour by world-class pianist, Eric Genuis. In conjunction with the centenary celebration of St Patrick's Parish, Port Kembla, Eric filled a month-long itinerary jam-packed with 42 concerts in high schools (10), parishes (20) and 12 concerts in five prisons. His ensemble consisted of a world class violinist, cellist and soprano.***

**D**uring the month-long concert tour, over 8,000 people came to hear a concert and be touched by inspirational stories about life, love, suffering, forgiveness and mercy. They laughed and sighed and many even cried as they entered into the lively and powerful music of Eric Genuis.

"I've never heard anything so beautiful in my life!" exclaimed one concertgoer. "His music is amazing ... you never get sick of listening to it." People were visibly moved, and quite a few came for a second and third time. One parishioner attended six concerts: "I heard him ten years ago. He was great then and he's even better now."

Eric and his ensemble played at a number of high schools in the diocese—always encouraging students to ask questions. It was heart-warming to see hundreds of our young Catholic school students being dazzled by Eric's classical style music. The vast majority of them thought they would never be attracted to a violin, but they went away with a different opinion. "How did you get so good?" asked a girl at St Joseph's Catholic High School in Albion Park to Yu-Ting (violinist). The student verbalised what the others were thinking. Most had never seen anyone playing a violin or cello at such a high level and were left in awe at what they saw and heard.

**It was a moving experience. I felt that for once something humane and nurturing was happening, and I loved it.**

SOCIAL WORKER (LONG BAY)

One particularly beautiful school concert was at Mater Dei in Camden, a K-12 congregational school catering specifically for students with special needs. Having a daughter with Down syndrome, Eric related so naturally with these beautiful children. One of them asked, "Why do you keep on saying 'peace' all the time?" referring to Eric's commentary "the next piece we have for you is..." Eric admitted that in 30 years he had never been asked that question. He explained what he meant and then expressed his wish that his music may also bring her peace. Children often verbalise what adults take for granted!

The parish concerts across the four regions of the diocese varied in size





PHOTOS: JEREMY YUEN

from large to more intimate groups. The audiences were made up of young and old, families, couples, single people and general music lovers alike. One thing they all had in common was the impact of Eric's music. One woman captured it well, "Your music crosses the boundaries of generations."

Nowhere was this more evident than when Eric played in five prisons: South Coast (Nowra), Berrima, John Moroney (Berkshire Park), Silverwater (Women) and Long Bay. The 12 concerts moved inmates, officers and social workers alike.

The joy was profound when Eric played at John Moroney on a Sunday morning where 400 men had been in their cells for 48 hours due to a strike by Corrective Services officers across NSW. They were on the point of rioting and the concert was about to be cancelled, but after Eric played for two hours to an audience across four yards in 34-degree heat, one officer told me, "They're happy now ... they've seen something beautiful."

Many of the inmates were thanking Eric for coming to play for them. "God bless you brother!" they yelled out. "Thanks for coming, Eric" said others. "It's very emotional" said one big tattoo-covered inmate in Nowra with teary eyes.

A social worker at Long Bay wrote, "It was a moving experience. I felt that for once something humane and nurturing was happening, and I loved it."

Yet another worker (Nowra) wrote, "For a moment, the whole jail experienced a sense of calm. It was clearly enjoyed by the inmates as they clapped and cheered.... This will be something I will remember for the rest of my career."

The beauty, entertainment and inspiration of the whole tour were evident with each concert. But, such initiatives do not materialise without the hard work, enthusiasm and motivation of a dedicated concert committee. Perhaps the sentiment

**For a moment, the whole jail experienced a sense of calm. It was clearly enjoyed by the inmates as they clapped and cheered.... This will be something I will remember for the rest of my career.**

SOCIAL WORKER (NOWRA)

of this group was best captured and acknowledged by the chaplain at South Coast Correctional Centre:

"I was in prison and you visited me" (Matthew 25:36). ■

Fr Mark De Battista was the organiser of the Eric Genuis concert tour in the Diocese of Wollongong. He is also the Catholic chaplain at the University of Wollongong.



# caring for our kids

CATHOLICCARE AND  
CATHOLIC EDUCATION  
JOIN FORCES

***CatholicCare and Catholic Education Diocese of Wollongong recently signed a memorandum of understanding naming CatholicCare as the Out of School Hours Care (OOSH) provider of choice for Catholic schools in the diocese.***

CatholicCare currently operates seven OOSH services in the diocese, with plans to grow significantly over the coming years. CatholicCare has a proud tradition of providing quality services for children and families particularly through counselling services for Catholic school students through the School Student and Family Program.

Director of CatholicCare Wollongong Michael Austin said, “We are very pleased to extend our work with school communities to include out of school hours care.” Michael was quick to point out that collaboration is at the heart of this new service. “We were fortunate to collaborate with Centacare Brisbane who supported us in the development of our OOSH services and we have a



PHOTOS: ELLE HOLDER-KEEPING

great foundational working relationship with Catholic Education in our diocese,” he said.

Director of Schools Peter Turner agreed with Michael’s sentiments: “The support CatholicCare provides to families within our school communities is invaluable. We are called to provide safe and supportive school environments, and our partnership with CatholicCare across a number of services ensures we have an aligned mission across our whole system,” he said.

Bishop Brian Mascord was full of praise for this significant partnership. “This

exciting new venture is testimony to what can be achieved when Catholic agencies work together in partnership, enacting our common mission to achieve better services and outcomes for the families we serve.

“We trust this spirit of collaboration continues to bear fruit for children and families in our communities,” Bishop Brian said. ■

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For more information about CatholicCare’s OOSH services, please visit [www.catholiccare.dow.org.au](http://www.catholiccare.dow.org.au).



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# Hope for the future

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS  
WEEK 2019

BY LEAH MIREYLEES

*Our Catholic schools are vibrant places of learning, faith, hope and opportunity, with almost 3,700 dedicated teaching and support staff in our diocese providing nurturing places for nearly 19,000 young people—developing them academically, spiritually and socially. These supportive Catholic communities are places of faith and learning, providing high quality education and helping students to find meaning and purpose in their lives.*

Catholic Schools Week (CSW), held in March each year, celebrates the great strengths, joy and distinctiveness of Catholic education throughout NSW. It also provides an opportunity for schools to celebrate their Catholic identity, the fundamental role they play within their local community, and the many positive learning experiences that take place each and every day.

CSW is also about supporting relationships between all who have a stake in Catholic schools—students, staff, families, clergy, parishioners and members of the wider community.

The theme for CSW this year was, “The future has a name, and that name is HOPE”—inspired by one of four core values identified in Catholic Education Diocese of Wollongong’s *Lighting the Way Vision and Strategic Direction 2019–2022* document.

Director of Schools Peter Turner said, “Our mantra of ‘lighting the way through faith and learning’ describes our purpose for all students and staff. It lies at the very heart of our hope-filled



PHOTOS: ELLE HOLDER-KEEPING

**“Our mantra of ‘lighting the way through faith and learning’ describes our purpose for all students and staff. It lies at the very heart of our hope-filled aspirations for the children and young people in our care.”**

PETER TURNER

aspirations for the children and young people in our care.”

During CSW, schools opened their doors, hosting open days, special activities and liturgies to showcase some of the wonderful things happening in Catholic education in our diocese. With so many events during CSW, parents and carers were invited to visit their local Catholic school to take the opportunity to learn more

about the educational initiatives and activities available for students.

As a key part of the celebrations, CSW included our annual diocesan education Mass with student and staff representatives from all corners of our growing diocese gathering, in a strong statement of unity, for a moving celebration as one united faith-based learning community.

*The Diocese of Wollongong has 29 primary schools, eight systemic secondary schools and one K–12 Catholic school, serving almost 19,000 students in the Illawarra, Macarthur, Shoalhaven and Southern Highlands. There are also eight independent Catholic schools administered by religious congregations.* ■

Leah Mireylees is a communications officer for Catholic Education Diocese of Wollongong.



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# who we are

NEW DIOCESAN WEBSITE

**dow.org.au**

BY DANIEL HOPPER

***It's been a long time coming, but hopefully it's been worth the wait! The diocese's new website is now live at [www.dow.org.au](http://www.dow.org.au)***

As any one of my communications colleagues from dioceses around Australia will tell you, undertaking the development of a new diocesan website is a project that may just send you over the edge.

You engage in months of research and interviews with people who fit the “persona” of who you are trying to attract to your website, and the feedback you receive is: “It needs to do

everything and have everything while being easy to navigate and not bloated. It needs to be outward-focused in its language and content as a tool for the new evangelisation, yet people ‘in the club’ who visit the site must have everything at their fingertips in one click—finding a Reconciliation time in their region or knowing where they can go for vigil Mass when they are on holidays in the Shoalhaven.”

It doesn't take long before you realise that trying to balance these aims perfectly is an exercise in futility. So, we also looked to the wisdom of Pope Francis: “The internet offers immense possibilities for *encounter* and *solidarity*.... This is something truly good.... A gift from God.”

**“The internet offers immense possibilities for encounter and solidarity.... This is something truly good.... A gift from God.”**

POPE FRANCIS

Based on Pope Francis' advice, we attempted to create a website that:

1. Offered an “encounter” with Jesus Christ and his Church—accessible to a new generation.
2. Offered “solidarity” to Catholics in our diocese—accessible information and resources to deepen their relationship with Jesus and connection with each other.



## Encounter—a tool for evangelisation

Unlike many diocesan websites that we saw from around the world, our primary focus for the new website was to be outward-focused in terms of appealing to those who are not Catholic but may be interested in what the Church has to offer. To this end, we wanted the look and feel of the website to be fresh and appealing. We also wanted to ensure that we used simple language that didn't require a degree in theology to understand.

After studying the best church websites from around the world, we realised a key component to their success is that they play to their strengths. Our diocese has a good reputation in terms of the publications and resources that it produces for faith formation and evangelisation. Therefore, the homepage has a resources section with links that showcase our diocesan publications such as the Advent and Lenten programs, Faith Circles resource, liturgy resources, and our outreach programs such as Alpha and Journey Catholic Radio.

In addition to rolling banners on the homepage that point to the diocese's three arms—parishes, schools and CatholicCare—we also wanted to make sure that seekers were aware of the unique blessing in our diocese of having six retreat centres offering individual and group retreats, prayer, spiritual direction and opportunities to get away from the busyness of everyday life and focus attention on listening to God.

There are a couple of sections that we will be soon adding to the website on “becoming Catholic” and “being Catholic” that we hope will further enhance the experience of non-Catholic seekers and Catholics alike looking for practical support. We don't intend these sections to be a replacement for the Catechism (there are plenty of other websites that do this), but they will concentrate on the common questions enquirer's may have of a diocese such as why the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life. How can I get my child baptised? What is adult initiation? How can I get married in the Church? How do I organise a funeral and who do I contact? How can I get involved in my church?

... our primary focus for the new website was to be outward-focused in terms of appealing to those who are not Catholic but may be interested in what the Church has to offer. To this end, we wanted the look and feel of the website to be fresh and appealing.

## Solidarity—a resource for Catholics

We analysed the hits from our old website to determine who visits and why they visit. It comes as no surprise that a lot of Catholics visit our website to find out where they can go to Mass or Reconciliation in their area, or when the next rosary group or adoration is being held. When we drilled down further, it became obvious that this desire to search for service times is in high demand in the popular holiday destinations of the diocese such as the Shoalhaven and Southern Highlands regions.

Therefore, we wanted to make sure that the new website had a comprehensive database of services that the user could easily filter by service type (Mass, Reconciliation, adoration, anointing, and other services), day, time of day, language, region and suburb—with results displayed on a map or in a list. This was an enormous task to achieve taking into consideration all the variables, flexibility and accuracy required for the 600+ services that are held in our diocese on a weekly basis.

We have designed the parish pages to be like mini websites for parishes that don't have the resources to have their own website. They have the capacity to include their own calendar of events as well as being able to upload important parish information like parish bulletins and welcome packs.

We also wanted to ensure that the website included a comprehensive directory listing of all the parishes, schools, agencies, religious communities, active clergy, councils, commissions and committees, and the myriad of other groups and services offered by organisations and individuals operating in the diocese.

## “Who we are” video project

Finally, we wanted to include a background video at the top of the homepage as an initial introduction that showcased “who we are” as a diocese. When discussing the various shots that we wanted to capture, we quickly realised that the video was not just relevant to non-Catholic seekers on the website. Everyone in our diocese—especially our unwavering Catholics—need to be reminded, more than ever, of who they are and to be proud of the good people and works that are happening in our Church. The video project became a work of passion as we combined our efforts as a diocese—Office of the Bishop, parishes, schools and CatholicCare—to produce a beautiful and concise visual story of who we are.

We engaged Sydney-based filmmaker, Hugh Clark, to assist with the project. Hugh conducted over 35 interviews with various laity, clergy and religious in the diocese before beginning to shoot on Christmas Eve 2018 in our Varroville parish. Hugh undertook a further 22 shoots wrapping on Pentecost Sunday 2019 with Bishop Brian during Confirmation at St John Vianney's Co-Cathedral in Fairy Meadow.

The video is now online on the “About us” page of the diocese's website ([www.dow.org.au](http://www.dow.org.au)) and on our diocesan Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/wollongongcatholic](http://www.facebook.com/wollongongcatholic)). The video will also be used as part of the diocese's other promotional activities such as the Bishop's Annual Appeal in September. CatholicCare engaged Hugh for additional days of shooting during the process in order to capture footage for their own agency-specific videos that will be released soon.

It is my hope that the new website will be a great resource for everyone in the diocese as well as for those seeking the love of God in the Illawarra, Macarthur, Shoalhaven and Southern Highlands.

The diocese wishes to thank the team at Digerati Solutions ([digeratisolutions.com.au](http://digeratisolutions.com.au)) for their professional help in designing and building the website and Hugh Clark ([hughjclark@gmail.com](mailto:hughjclark@gmail.com)) for his beautiful filmmaking skills. ■

Daniel Hopper is the director of media and communications for the Diocese of Wollongong.



# a match made *for* heaven

VINNIES AND CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

*It was a young 20-year-old, Blessed Frederic Ozanam, who started the St Vincent de Paul Society when he decided to do something about the poverty he saw in his community. Today, it is the young people in our Catholic primary and secondary schools who are a driving force behind the success of Vinnies' good works in the Diocese of Wollongong.*

BY JESSICA SPARKS

Our Catholic schools and Vinnies have a century-long history of working together to help those in need. It's an enduring and rewarding collaboration based on a shared set of values: compassion, social justice, spreading hope, and a wonderful willingness to offer a "hand up".

Executive officer of the St Vincent de Paul Society Wollongong Central Council, Peter Quarmbly, said Vinnies is privileged to have the ongoing support of Catholic Education Diocese of Wollongong (CEDoW). "Working together has enabled the development of a mutually beneficial partnership that sees students and their families, and staff alike, put their faith into action in a variety of ways—from generous fundraising efforts and participation in social justice causes, to Mini Vinnies initiatives and extensive ongoing support of the Vinnies Van."

For Vinnies, the investment makes a lot of sense. Short-term, it means harnessing the passion and energy of many more enthusiastic hands, hearts and minds through awareness, volunteering and donations. Long-term, they build a generation of new volunteers coming through to carry on their work and continue the Vinnies legacy of putting faith into action and giving tangible meaning to living the Gospel.



**Working together has enabled the development of a mutually beneficial partnership that sees students and their families, and staff alike, put their faith into action in a variety of ways ...**

PETER QUARMBLY

"Social justice is fundamental to Catholic teaching, and promoting awareness of social justice issues is a core work of Vinnies. By nurturing the compassion of our young people through participation in Vincentian programs that help alleviate need, we're also encouraging the leaders of our future to help identify and address the unjust structures that cause this need," Peter said.

The community at St Brigid's Catholic Parish Primary School in Gwynneville typifies this partnership in action and its benefits, not just for students, but also staff, parents, and other family and community members. Together, they have supported each other,

strengthening a shared understanding of hope, connection and dedication to helping those experiencing disadvantage.

One parent at the school, Ainsley Eckermann, said, "It's been a wonderful experience for the children. They've learned that not all people have a home, a comfortable bed and food in their cupboards. It's also taught them that even though they are small children, they, too, can make a positive change in the world."

Last year, the school's students, parents, extended families and even neighbours, all came together in outstanding generosity for a whole-school walkathon. The event raised a massive \$7,630 for the Vinnies Winter Appeal—an incredible effort considering, as a small school of under 200 students, this averages out to a contribution of over \$40 per student!

"We're lucky to have all the things we do, but there are people out there who aren't as well off as us. So it's important to take time to support people in our community by raising this money and donating food and toiletries," Year 6 student Henry said.





PHOTOS: ST BRIGID'S STAFF / ELLE HOLDER-KEEPING (TOP RIGHT)

## Our ongoing partnership with Vinnies is shaped by our desire to demonstrate Jesus' transforming love and to give of ourselves to other people.

KATHY URODA

"In class, we've been learning about the importance of helping people in need. So, our class decided to hold a cupcake stall as part of our walkathon so we could raise even more money for Vinnies. It is a good feeling to help people who need food, clothes and blankets to keep warm," fellow student Emily said at the time.

St Brigid's Principal Kathy Uroda said the school is focused on creating a culture of "being present" to others and showing a generosity of spirit—whether it be by smaller student-leadership initiatives such as fruit kebab and cake stall fundraisers, and staff and parents regularly volunteering together for the Vinnies Van, or bigger events such as their walkathon, participation in

the Vinnies Return and Earn Scheme, and their donation drives for Vinnies' Winter, Christmas and Drought appeals.

"I believe it is extremely important that we provide opportunities for students and our school community to not only learn about their Catholic faith, but to *demonstrate* Jesus' mission to bring God's kingdom to earth. Our ongoing partnership with Vinnies is shaped by our desire to demonstrate Jesus' transforming love and to give of ourselves to other people.

"Through the lens of Catholic social teaching and our school values of compassion, courage, service and stewardship, we are able to teach our students from an early age the relevance and importance of their religion in promoting outreach and social welfare for those in need," Kathy said.

Peter said the breadth of support for Vinnies shown by schools like St Brigid's is exemplary. "We are sincerely appreciative of the efforts of students, families and staff. The financial and social contribution made by St Brigid's and other school communities across the diocese assists greatly in the provision of services that allow Vinnies to reach out to the most marginalised within our local communities. It is truly inspiring to see the passion of young people being fostered by their schools and directed to such worthy and meaningful causes."

It is this kind of outreach that builds the social, emotional and spiritual depth of our students and instills in them a strong sense of service and community. When reflecting on what they'd enjoyed about their years of Catholic schooling, many of our recent Year 12 graduates nominated this aspect of their schooling experience as one of the most formative, enjoyable and empowering.

Winston Churchill said, "We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give." Our students come to know this inherently. They go forth into the world carrying what they've learned with them, giving of themselves and making a difference in the lives of others. ■

Jessica Sparks is a communications officer for Catholic Education Diocese of Wollongong.

## A snapshot of the CEDoW-Vinnies partnership

- School fundraisers and donation drives raise thousands in funds and items to support the Vinnies Winter Appeal, Christmas Appeal and the recent Vinnies Drought Appeal.
- The original Vinnies Van was purchased by CEDoW in 2011, and CEDoW continues to fund the van to keep the service going. There are currently 120 registered Vinnies Van volunteers, including over 12 teams of parents and staff from Catholic schools across the diocese. With CEDoW's help, more than 16,500 meals were provided to people in need during the last financial year.
- Every year, a senior CEDoW staff member participates in the Wollongong CEO Sleepout event with schools and staff raising funds for the cause. Last year, CEDoW was the second highest fundraiser, donating more than \$11,000.
- All our schools participate in the Vinnies NSW Container Deposit Scheme, collecting eligible containers and donating them to Vinnies for processing at its Bulk Container Deposit Centres. This helps raise funds for Vinnies services across the region and allows schools to respond to Pope Francis' call to "hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor".
- Vinnies staff speak to students on issues of poverty, homelessness and social justice at school events. Representatives also attend school events to commission Mini Vinnies members, accept Christmas hampers, and thank students for funds and donations.



# safety.

EMBEDDING SAFEGUARDING  
PRINCIPLES IN MINISTRY

BY ASANTE VISWASAM

*The diocese's Office of Professional Standards and Safeguarding is now in its second year of rolling out a comprehensive professional development program for those in positions of leadership (both lay and clergy) across the diocese's agencies and ministries.*

The program is an example of the diocese's commitment to the Royal Commission's Child Safe Standard 1: *Child safety is embedded in institutional leadership, governance and culture.* The program requires participants to undertake 10 units of professional development annually to advance their knowledge, skills and awareness in the areas of professional standards and safeguarding to ensure the principles of safe practice are embedded in the organisational leadership, governance and culture of the diocese.

On 4 June 2019, leaders of our diocesan agencies and ministries came together for a professional development module on the *Changing Landscape of Ministry*. Bishop Brian Mascord, along with former diocesan chancellor, Sr Moya Hanlen FDN, and Paul Davis from the safeguarding team at the Diocese of Parramatta, led the session that explored the evolution of ministry over time—what has changed and what remains important in light of our values and principles. With changes to societal norms, new laws and nationally implemented safeguarding practices, it is important to continually reflect on our work and how we can best carry out our ministry whilst providing a safe environment for all involved.

Each speaker brought a wealth of various experiences and reflections to the forum, drawing on their years



**... it is important to continually reflect on our work and how we can best carry out our ministry whilst providing a safe environment for all involved.**

working within the areas of safeguarding and professional standards across many dioceses in NSW. The session involved robust and, at times, challenging discussions as participants explored how concepts of child protection and safeguarding have evolved within

our society throughout the past few decades. The discussions highlighted the impact that the changing concepts have had on those working with, and on behalf, of children.

The module then turned to contemporary documents and guidelines, where participants looked at what it means to be a leader in today's landscape. To this end, Paul Davis broke-open the Commitment Statement issued in 2013 by the leaders of the Catholic Church in Australia in response to the Royal Commission (see right).

This statement provoked much discussion and questions. There was an acknowledgement of the importance of the Australian bishops to collectively recognise the wrongs of the past and to further this through meaningful action in the way we approach the future. As we move out of the hearings and private sessions of the Royal Commission and seek to implement the arising recommendations, it is important that we understand the significance of creating and maintaining child-safe environments





PHOTOS: DANIEL HOPPER

**Participants were called upon to reflect on their own work situations and how they could implement best practice principles whilst also being compassionate and work in accordance with the Gospel values.**

in our agencies and ministries. We should also seek to consistently analyse our practices to ensure a delivery of services that promote the safety of all.

Another professional development module held on 28 May 2019 sought to explore the approaches of diocesan leaders in delivering their ministry and services to the people of the diocese. The session, led by the diocese's vicar general, Fr Bernard Gordon, challenged people to explore their understanding of what it means to be "pastoral" and what it means to be "professional", and the respective intersectionality of these terms. Fr Bernard explained how the two concepts are so intertwined

that you cannot have one without the other—otherwise you increase the risk of potential harm. Participants were called upon to reflect on their own work situations and how they could implement best practice principles whilst also being compassionate and work in accordance with the Gospel values.

## COMMITMENT STATEMENT BY THE LEADERS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

*in response to the Royal Commission*

**The leaders of the Catholic Church in Australia recognise and acknowledge the devastating harm caused to people by the crime of child sexual abuse. We take this opportunity to state:**

1. Sexual abuse of a child by a priest or religious is a crime under Australian law and under canon law.
2. Sexual abuse of a child by any Church personnel, whenever it occurred, was then and is now indefensible.
3. That such abuse has occurred at all, and the extent to which it has occurred, are facts of which the whole Church in Australia is deeply ashamed.
4. The Church fully and unreservedly acknowledges the devastating, deep and ongoing impact of sexual abuse on the lives of the victims and their families.
5. The Church acknowledges that many victims were not believed when they should have been.
6. The Church is also ashamed to acknowledge that, in some cases, those in positions of authority concealed or covered up what they knew of the facts, moved perpetrators to another place, thereby enabling them to offend again, or failed to report matters to the police when they should have. That behaviour, too, is indefensible.
7. Too often in the past, it is clear some Church leaders gave too high a priority to protecting the reputation of the Church, its priests, religious and other personnel, over the protection of children and their families, and over compassion and concern for those who suffered at the hands of Church personnel. That too was and is inexcusable.
8. In such ways, Church leaders betrayed the trust of their own people and the expectations of the wider community.
9. For all these things the Church is deeply sorry. It apologises to all those who have been harmed and betrayed. It humbly asks for forgiveness.

**The leaders of the Catholic Church in Australia commit ourselves to endeavour to repair the wrongs of the past, to listen to and hear victims, to put their needs first, and to do everything we can to ensure a safer future for children.**

*Source: Truth, Justice and Healing Council, 2013*

For more information on upcoming modules and how to register, visit [www.dow.sh/opsstraining](http://www.dow.sh/opsstraining). ■

Asante Viswasam is the director of the Office of Professional Standards and Safeguarding for the Diocese of Wollongong.



# we believe.

DIOCESAN EDUCATION  
MASS 2019

BY JESSICA SPARKS

*“Victor Hugo once said,  
‘The future has many names.  
For the weak of will, it means  
impossible, and for the fearful,  
it means the unknown.’*

*But Pope Francis has a different  
view, and may it find a place in  
each of your schools throughout  
this new school year.*

*‘The future has a name,’ he says,  
and that name is ‘hope.’”*

This was the opening statement of the address by Director of Schools Peter Turner to over 800 CEDoW staff gathered at this year’s diocesan education Mass.

The Mass was a special and moving celebration for the CEDoW education community. It saw Catholic educators from all corners of our growing diocese come together at St John Vianney Co-Cathedral in Fairy Meadow in a strong statement of unity and spirit, to celebrate not just who we are, but what we believe in.

“The 26,000 young people who walk through the gates of our diocesan systemic and congregational schools for nearly 200 days in 2019—they are the reason why this church is filled to capacity,” Peter said.

“Consider for a moment the stories behind the faces of those 26,000 young people: Some come ready to change the world, some come anxious and uncertain, some come well-supported from home, some come lost and forgotten, some come well-versed in their faith, while some come void of an experience of a loving God. All, however, have one thing in common: They—this day, this week, this year—come to you.

“Pope Francis calls education an act of love. He said, ‘The educator in a Catholic school must be, first and foremost, competent and qualified but, at the same time, someone who is rich in humanity, capable of promoting human and spiritual growth.’



**We believe** that the heart of the Catholic school is found in the person of Jesus Christ.

**We believe** in the dignity of each young person we serve.

**We believe** in an education that celebrates, challenges, and values knowledge, wisdom and truth.

**We believe** in a faith that is brave and accountable.

**We believe** in a Church, battered and bruised and capable of being much better.

**We believe** in a sense of mission, of purpose and compassion.

**We believe** in an option for those, who through no fault of their own, live at the margins.

We acknowledge that the world of our schools is challenged by a society that embraces materialism, cynicism, and self-focus, but **we believe** in a better way.

**We believe** that for our young people, we carry a message that proclaims ‘hope.’

**Peter Turner**  
Director of Schools

Peter concluded his address with the official launch of CEDoW’s new *Lighting the Way Vision and Strategic Direction 2019–2022* document, and its symbolic handing over to Bishop Brian. “This plan outlines our responsibilities in faith and learning and how we intend to deliver on these intentions. The work is founded on the myriad of values espoused by Jesus in the Gospels, but with a focus on four: integrity, justice, compassion, and our chosen theme for 2019—*hope*,” he said.



PHOTOS: ELLE HOLDER-KEEPING

The Mass was also a memorable occasion for the diocese’s three new principals who were formally commissioned and blessed by Bishop Brian: Laurinda (Lindy) Nelson (St Mary Star of the Sea, Milton) Belinda Hughes (St Michael’s, Thirroul) and Vicky Davidson (St Francis of Assisi, Warrawong).

The joyful night was elevated by the beautiful array of music from our diocese’s many talented musicians and singers, led by CEDoW’s Education Officer Tim Hart.

“It was a liturgy of passion and commitment, and such a joyful celebration,” one member of the congregation said. “Eight hundred people singing in unison with all their heart and soul was an amazing experience. You could see it impacted many in the congregation. I know this will stay with me for a long time,” said another.

CEDoW’s Catholic Life, Education and Mission Education Officer Amy Sammut said it was a privilege and pleasure to have organised the evening with the support of a great team of CEDoW staff around her. “The Mass was indeed an inspiring and uplifting display of solidarity, filled with people coming together to celebrate the fact that we have the best job in the world serving our students and Catholic school communities,” she said. ■

Jessica Sparks is a communications officer for Catholic Education Diocese of Wollongong.



# a profound & noble calling

DIOCESE WELCOMES  
NEW STAFF

BY LEAH MIREYLEES

*There was mingling, laughter, the sharing of wisdom, and a few unexpected surprises when 190 guests gathered on 28 February 2019 at Villa D'oro Function Centre in Wollongong for a dinner to welcome new staff into Catholic Education Diocese of Wollongong (CEDoW).*

Each year, newly-appointed CEDoW teachers and staff attend a dinner with principals and other experienced teachers, leadership team members, support staff and other employees from CEDoW head office. This year they were joined by other distinguished guests including Bishop Brian Mascord, Valerie Jones from the Independent Education Union, and the director of EduCom IT, Jay McCann.

Master of ceremonies for the event, and CEDoW's Head of Human Resource Services Carolyn Hadley said, "The significant number of new staff in attendance is a great sign of our growth as a system of schools. It's our privilege to hold this dinner and our aim is to give you a chance to relax, enjoy a meal together and debrief about the first few weeks in your new roles."

The dinner began with an Acknowledgement of Country given by early career teacher and proud Aboriginal woman, Danielle Grados, and an opening prayer led by CEDoW's Head of Catholic Life, Education and Mission Ken Bryant.

In his address, Bishop Brian spoke of the importance of each of us having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and the importance of authenticity. He said, "They know when we're authentic and when we're not. We've got to see the students entrusted into our care not as something of the future, but rather of the now."



PHOTOS: ELLE HOLDER-KEEPING

**"Like never before, our young people need teachers and advocates who are women and men of hope, enthusiasm and life. That is the underlying call for the schools of our diocese."**

PETER TURNER

During the event, Director of Schools Peter Turner acknowledged the "big job" of guiding over 18,000 students in the diocese. He also spoke of the most significant factor in any school—the commitment to quality relationships. "There is no more profoundly important or noble calling than this," Peter said.

"For me, respectful and life-giving teacher/student learning relationships is essential and undeniable. Like never before, our young people need teachers and advocates who are women and men of hope, enthusiasm

and life. That is the underlying call for the schools of our diocese."

Peter's advice to new teachers was motivational: Commit to a learning culture of high expectation, motivation and challenge. He also encouraged them to centre their work on the principles of integrity, compassion, justice and hope. Peter encouraged the new teachers, as educators, to always remember the "why" at the heart of their job.

At the end of the night, guests exited with full stomachs and inspired hearts. "What a great way to make new people feel welcomed and a part of the family," said St Justin's Oran Park teacher, Chloe-Jane Tweedie. "As an early career teacher, I can already feel the support from such beautiful people at the Catholic Education Office. I'm very excited to begin my career as a primary teacher in such a welcoming, caring and encouraging diocese." ■

Leah Mireylees is a communications officer for Catholic Education Diocese of Wollongong.



***Edmund Rice College in West Wollongong—an all-boys secondary Catholic College in the Edmund Rice tradition—is pleased to collaborate with Journey Magazine in the presentation of this article “Baptism: The First sacrament of initiation” by Oliver Needham.***

Earlier this year, all Year 8 students were presented with the exciting challenge to compose an article on one of the sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Eucharist or Confirmation), with the winning article to be included in the Winter edition of *Journey Magazine*.

The boys worked hard to combine knowledge acquired in the religious education classroom, their personal experience of the sacraments, and their writing talents, to submit many wonderful articles.

Edmund Rice College would like to thank the diocese for this opportunity and congratulate our winner Oliver Needham.

#### **Michael Toohey**

*Religious Education Coordinator  
Edmund Rice College Wollongong*



*Left to right: Michael Toohey  
(Religious Education Coordinator)  
Oliver Needham (Year 8)  
and Peter McGovern (Principal).*



*Daniel Hopper took these photos on a recent trip to the USA where his niece, Rose, was baptised by her grandfather, Deacon Gregory Haberman, at St Joseph's Catholic Church in Wenatchee, Washington.*

# Baptism

THE FIRST SACRAMENT  
OF INITIATION

BY OLI NEEDHAM

## **What is Baptism?**

There are three sacraments of initiation—Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist (or Holy Communion). Our life as a Christian depends on these sacraments. In this article, we talk about the first sacrament of initiation: Baptism.

In the Catholic Church, infants are baptised by a priest or deacon to welcome them into the Catholic faith and to free them from the original sin they were born with. Through Baptism, they are incorporated into the body of Christ.

According to the Catechism, Baptism makes a person a member of the body of Christ and prepares him or her for the reception of the other sacraments. Baptism usually occurs in a parish community, and the preference is to be baptised as an infant, although you can be baptised at any age.

## **Origins of Baptism**

The origins of Baptism start in early Christianity, and Jesus was baptised himself by John the Baptist in Jerusalem. But, we don't know for sure who actually started the sacrament of Baptism because there is not enough information to know if it started with John.

Mostly, adults were baptised in those early days because they were Jews that were converted to Christians as adults. Infant Baptism has been practised from the second century on.

In the early Church, Baptism was typically practised through complete bodily immersion. Affusion (pouring water over the head) was also used when immersion was not possible.

In the Bible, there are many clues why Baptism was important. For example,





PHOTOS: DANIEL HOPPER

## Rituals of Baptism

There are a number of rituals in the Baptism ceremony:

### *The assembly*

The assembled community in the church welcomes the person being baptised before God. The parents and godparents are present.

### *Sign of the Cross*

The priest or deacon traces the sign of the cross—a sign of Christ’s love—on the forehead of the baby and invites the parents and godparents to do the same.

### *Anointing with oil*

The priest or deacon anoints the crown of the head with oil of Chrism (made from olive oil and balsam fragrance). The oil of Catechumens is applied to the chest with the Sign of the Cross.

### *Pouring of water*

The priest or deacon pours water over the person and says, “I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

### *Lighting candle*

A small candle is lit from the paschal candle. The priest says, “Receive the light of Christ.” Parents are instructed to keep the light burning.

### *Scriptures*

As the Scriptures are proclaimed, Christ himself is present in the assembly, calling them to be his disciples.

### *Baptismal promises*

The priest asks the parents what they want for their child. The parents reply, “Baptism.” The parents then make the baptismal promises on behalf of their child. ■

Oli Needham is a Year 8 student from Edmund Rice College, West Wollongong.

*A special congratulations goes to the following students who made the shortlist for consideration; Bailey Abela, Matthew Bunder, Ben Caroutas, Jay Choudhary, Lachlan Cole, James Donsante, Alec Haughton, Noah King, David Masarella, Cooper Newell-Glaser, Bailey Olivera, Luca Piacentin, Daniel Rouen, Payton Skurtevski and Louis Vilella.*

**The *water* symbolises life, death and cleansing and the “passing through water” (cf. 1 Peter 3:20–21) to become a child of Christ.**

“And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptised and wash your sins away, calling on his name” (Acts 22:16).

This is a call for people to wash away their sins, through Baptism, in their journey to become a Catholic and to enter the family of God.

St Mark’s Gospel (16:16): “Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” shows Christ asking us to have faith in God and to be baptised in order to be free of original sin and be to saved from hell.

## Symbols of Baptism

During the ceremony, there are many symbols reflecting the meaning of Baptism. The *water* symbolises life, death and cleansing and the “passing through water” (cf. 1 Peter 3:20–21) to become a child of Christ.

The *white garment* symbolises acceptance to the religious community. It resembles the glowing light of the figure of Jesus Christ that is now within the individual being baptised.

A *baptismal candle* is lit from the Paschal candle and symbolises that the flame of faith in Christ is alive in the child’s heart.

The *oil of Chrism* symbolises the sealing of the Holy Spirit in the person being baptised, and the *oil of Catechumens* gives them the strength to turn away from evil, temptation and sin.



# a covenant of compassion

STUDENTS HELP THE  
WORLD'S POOREST

BY LEAH MIREYLEES

***Twelve-year-old Thandolwayo walks seven kilometres a day on a route inhabited by crocodiles to collect contaminated water for her family. Born in Zimbabwe, she attends a local school which has just 35 students—and thought her dreams of becoming a nurse would be impossible to realise.***

This was until the Church's international aid organisation, Caritas, helped Thandolwayo's village install solar-powered pumps to draw the water up from the river as well as two 10,000 litre storage tanks. Thanks to this support, water is now on tap in the village, benefitting its 500 residents, and Thandolwayo can concentrate on her education.

"Now I can bathe every day and the distance to collect water for the family has been drastically reduced," Thandolwayo said. "We now drink clean, safe water and diseases are no longer affecting us."

And Thandolwayo isn't the only young person who has been given the gift of hope.

This touching story is one of six which underpin *Project Compassion*—the annual Lenten campaign which sees millions of Australian Catholics come together in solidarity with the world's poor. To launch the local fundraising appeal, 40 schools from across the diocese gathered at St Brigid's Catholic Parish Primary School in Gwynneville on 5 March 2019.

"This Lent, we look to demonstrate how hope is possible for all generations, backgrounds, cultures and communities who are part of our one human family," said Caritas' Diocesan Director Monica



PHOTO: ELLE HOLDER-KEEPING

Ward-McCann during the launch. "Supporting Project Compassion is one way we can proclaim the faith that is in our hearts. This enlivens our faith and enables us to accompany our brothers and sisters in their efforts to thrive."

Bishop Brian Mascord was in attendance for the launch with other guests including Director of Schools Peter Turner, St Brigid's parent representative, David Macdonald, Aboriginal artist and respected local Elder, Uncle Kevin Butler, and members of the leadership team and staff from Catholic Education Diocese of Wollongong (CEDoW).

When addressing the congregation, Bishop Brian said, "It's not something to do just for 40 days, but every single day. Our support empowers young people to build a hope-filled future for themselves, their families and their communities."

Bishop Brian invited students to think of Lent as a long-term outlook. "Project Compassion gives us a real sense that we're not just working for here in Wollongong, but right across the world," he said. "We're saying we want to make a difference because we're followers of Jesus."

During the liturgy, student representatives participated in the ceremonial signing of the "covenant of compassion"—declaring a collective commitment of diocesan school communities to support the world's poor.

Year 11 students from John Therry Catholic High School in Rosemeadow, Sofia, Ella and Luke, said they were

***"Our support empowers young people to build a hope-filled future for themselves, their families and their communities."***

BISHOP BRIAN MASCORD

moved to share the message with their peers and planned to encourage others to give money for marginalised and vulnerable communities to achieve better lives.

Ken Bryant, CEDoW's head of Catholic Life, Education and Mission, gave thanks to the people who made the launch possible including CEDoW's Primary Education Officer Catherine Hailstone, who coordinated the liturgy along with the St Brigid's Principal Kathy Uroda and Monica Ward-McCann.

Praise was also given to St Brigid's community and the staff who organised the event, including Anna Arthur-Worsop, Nichole Harris, Kate Sparks and Year 6 leaders. Thanks also went to the talented students from Edmund Rice College in West Wollongong who provided uplifting music for the liturgy.

As for 12-year-old Thandolwayo, her future is looking brighter thanks to the project's aid. The plentiful water supply has also triggered new ventures. Water is being used to mould bricks for building houses and to pound maize to sell. Plans are underway to establish a community garden and a fishpond to generate a better income and a more hopeful future. ■

Leah Mireylees is a communications officer for Catholic Education Diocese of Wollongong.





The diocesan executive from left: Jo Clark (president), Lynne Harrison (senior vice president), Robyn Miller (secretary) and Lynne Hudson (treasurer).

## Catholic Women's League

BY JO CLARK

I am proud and honoured to be the incoming president of Catholic Women's League (CWL) in the Diocese of Wollongong that includes 19 branches with 384 members. My term continues until the end of 2021.

I joined the Ulladulla/Milton Branch of CWL in 2007 and found it a wonderful way to meet other women in the parish and learn the values of CWL, such as social justice issues, advocacy for human rights, support of parish life, charitable works and overseas aid.

I held the positions of president and treasurer in the branch, and when I

moved to Wollongong in 2016, I became the senior diocesan vice president.

Margaret Fletcher founded our organisation in Oxford, England, in 1906 to provide a voice for Catholic women in the Church and in society, as well as a way to develop their personal faith through prayer and support for each other. The League formed in the diocese in 1963 through the patronage of Bishop Thomas McCabe.

Our members enjoy a number of annual liturgical and social events during the year. Non-members are most welcome to attend. Some of the highlights from 2019 so far have included:

- **10 May**—Mass celebrated by Mgr Graham Schmitzer followed by a

lunch hosted by the CWL Port Kembla Branch to recognise our association with the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisation (WUCWO). WUCWO has consultative status with the United Nations and is represented at the Economic and Social Council.

- **12 June**—retreat day at St Mary Star of the Sea Church in Gerringong. The theme chosen by our chaplain, Fr Patrick Vaughan, was: *Mary Mother of the Church and Saint Anthony*.
- **26 July**—Diocesan conference and Mass at St Francis Xavier Cathedral and Xavier Conference Centre in Wollongong. The Conference theme was: *Holiness is doing ordinary things with Love and Faith*.

With CWL branches meeting on a monthly basis in their parishes, and diocesan council meetings held bi-monthly in Wollongong and at other venues in the diocese, there are many opportunities for non-members to participate and enjoy the friendship and faith-filled experiences that the League has to offer. We would be pleased to hear from you! ■

For more information on the Catholic Women's League contact Jo on 0400 041 190 or at [jo.clark@y7mail.com](mailto:jo.clark@y7mail.com)

Jo Clark is diocesan president of Catholic Women's League in the Diocese of Wollongong.

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# CLERGY NEWS



## Departures

**Fr Sijo George Edakkudiyl** (May 2019). *To India from the Syro-Malabar Community Wollongong.*

**Fr Tomasz Nowak SChr** (March 2019). *To Archdiocese of Sydney from Lumen Christi Parishes Wollongong (Polish chaplain).*

**Fr Reginald Jayamaha OMI** (May 2019). *To the Archdiocese of Adelaide from Mary Immaculate Parish, Eagle Vale.*

## Anniversaries

**Mgr Graham Schmitzer PP** (23 August)—*Unanderra*. 50 years ordination to the priesthood.

**Fr Bernard Dowdell** (6 September) —*Retired*. 50 years ordination to the priesthood.

**Very Rev Bernard Gordon VG** (9 April)—*Vicar general*. 25 years ordination to the priesthood.

## Appointments

**Fr Michael Williams PP** (January 2019)—administrator at St Aloysius Parish, The Oaks, in addition to parish priest at St Paul's Parish, Camden.

**Fr Duane Fernandez** (March 2019)—administrator at St Therese Parish, West Wollongong. *Previously assistant priest at St Michael's Parish Nowra.*

**Fr Jerzy Slowinski SChr** (March 2019)—chaplain to the Polish Community. *From the Archdiocese of Melbourne.*

**Fr George Mankuzhikary** (May 2019)—Pastoral care of the Syro-Malabar Community and assistant priest at Lumen Christi Catholic Parishes Wollongong. *From the Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes.*

**Fr Raja Kommareddy SVD** (May 2019)—pastoral work at St Mary MacKillop Parish, Oran Park. *From the Diocese of Darwin.*

**Fr Meno Basti OMI** (May 2019)—assistant priest at Mary Immaculate Parish, Eagle Vale. *From the Archdiocese of Adelaide.*

**Fr Leo Mifsud OMI** (July 2019)—assistant priest at St Michael's Parish, Nowra. *From the Archdiocese of Adelaide.*

**Fr Sean Cullen PP** (July 2019)—Episcopal vicar for clergy, in addition to parish priest at St Thomas Aquinas Parish, Bowral and parish priest at St Michael's Parish, Mittagong.

# Getting Involved

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PO Box 1239 Wollongong NSW 2500 **or email to** [giving@dow.org.au](mailto:giving@dow.org.au)

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(entry via Crown St)

### Diocesan Ministry Resource Centre

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(02) 4222 2481

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(entry via Crown St)

### CCD Resource Centre

(02) 4640 8550

Micah House

35a Cordeaux Street, Campbelltown

## Office of Renewal and Evangelisation

Faith formation, liturgy, youth ministry, CCD, planning & outreach  
jude.hennessy@dow.org.au  
or (02) 4222 2407

## Vocations Support

General information can be found at:  
catholicovocations.org.au  
For enquiries contact: (02) 4222 2400

## Marriage Tribunal

Support for those divorced, remarried or seeking to remarry: (02) 4222 2409

## Needing Help?

CatholicCare Wollongong provides a range of services: (02) 4227 1122

## Mass Times, Churches and Upcoming Events

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