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Advent & Christmas



Taking the Gospel to the World

CONFRATERNITY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE BROKEN BAY

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FROM THE

A Reflection on 2025 -

The end of Term 3 is always a time of reflection for me. Planning for 2026 is well under way, however it's important in our planning to look back across the current year and note our highlights and challenges. I am encouraged by the joy and hope which is evident in the Ministry of SRE and in the catechists of Broken Bay. It is fair to say that we have had challenges to manage in 2026, however I am constantly in awe of the joy which Parish Catechist Coordinators and SRE catechists exude when they speak about their time in the classroom with the children. Whatever obstacles might seem to stand in our way before we get into the classrooms, the reality of SRE classes is that they are running smoothly, the students are mostly engaged, and catechists are sowing seeds of hope in the hearts of children and young people.

Just think about it for a moment – there are 12,000 Catholic students in Broken Bay regularly receiving the Good News of Jesus as we honour the choice of parents to have Catholic SRE taught to them by 700 dedicated SRE catechists. This is Good News!!

There has been much to celebrate in our classrooms this year, with the Holy Year of Hope classroom pilgrimage, and the Canonisation of St Carlo Acutis, the first millennial saint who young people have claimed as their own. If you haven't seen our Carlo Acutis lessons yet, check them out: <https://www.bbcatholic.org.au/mission/ccd/resources>

The vast majority of our schools welcome SRE teachers into their classrooms and do so because they are respecting the rights of families to enrol their children into special religious education. Most of our negotiations with schools are fruitful and we value the support and effort which school principals, SRE coordinators and administrative staff put into the SRE program so that it can run efficiently throughout the school year.



This year saw a vast improvement in the SRE start date in Term 1 across all three deaneries in the diocese. This information is supported by a survey which we conducted at the end of Term 1 in both 2024 and 2025 which indicated that negotiations which Parish Catechist Coordinators and CCD Regional Coordinators carried out towards the end of 2024 at a local level have borne fruit. We hope to continue that standard across all schools in 2026, where our goal is to be back into school by the third week of February or earlier.

Another thing to celebrate in 2025 is the number of SRE catechists who have registered

HEAD OF CCD

Celebrating Our Ministry



for the CCD Training and Formation courses, whether they be new catechists or experienced catechists undertaking their mandatory ongoing training. Every professional or volunteer workforce needs upskilling, and we are encouraged by the uptake of our training and formation courses as well as our reflection days.

In this edition of Connections, you will find a flyer advertising our Advent Reflection Day which is being held in two separate locations. We have an external presenter, Caitlin Douglas. Caitlin, a spiritual director and catechist, will explore the season of Advent inspired by the wonder of the night sky and the timeless hymn, O Star of Wonder, Star of Light. Come along and be nourished both in spirit, by Caitlin, and body as we spoil you and thank you for your service to our ministry with a scrumptious morning tea and a delicious lunch. Bookings are essential so get in early and book your spot for this happy occasion.

A celebration we are looking forward to is our Annual CCD Mass and Presentation of Awards ceremony, this year being held on Saturday 22 November at 11:15 at our Cathedral. (See back page for invitation.) Please join us as we celebrate all catechists and renew our commitment to the Ministry for the following year. We will also honour our deceased catechists, those who have served so faithfully and gone to God in the past 12 months. Bishop Anthony Randazzo will preside at our Annual Mass this year, so come along and meet our Bishop and celebrate Eucharist with him.

Two of our CCD staff, Kristy and Alicia, have daughters doing HSC this year. We have been praying for them as they celebrate the end of 13 years of formal schooling. We also pray for all Year 12 students. If you have a Year 12 student in your family, drop us an email with their name and we will include them in our daily prayer. Email ccdadmin@bbcatholic.org.au



When we reach the Season of Advent once more, let's all take the time to reflect as we wait in patience for the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. I love Advent – the readings, the prayers, the Advent wreath, the giving tree, the joy of children and families as they wrap up another busy year and prepare to welcome Christ at Christmas and enjoy a summer break from the busyness of life. We have much to be grateful for, so let's remember those children and families in the world who are not as fortunate as us and consider as a family what we can do to ease their suffering, with prayer and giving.

As we conclude our SRE classes, let's encourage our students, young and older, to develop a gratitude for what we have and an awareness of others in our communities and world who need our prayers and compassion.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you both individually and as a community of intentional disciples spreading God's love, joy, peace and hope in your words and actions in our SRE classrooms. Thanks also to your families who support you in this wonderful work. May God bless you richly for your generosity of spirit and your faithfulness.

Wishing you and your families a blessed Advent and a very happy and holy Christmas season.

Alison Newell





Term 4 is always a busy time. Co-ordinators are meeting with principals to confirm 2026 start dates and begin recruiting. Catechists are completing Ongoing Training and Level 2 formation, while new recruits start their induction training.

With only six or seven classes left, your thoughts may be turning to nativity plays, carols, crafts, and maybe even a small gift for your students. Don't forget to include the Jubilee bookmarks and pins with Christmas cards if you haven't distributed them yet.

We help students encounter the true meaning of Christmas - not the commercialised version, but the story of God's love revealed in Jesus.

Congratulations on the relationships of trust you've built with your students! You've created a safe space for faith to grow, questions to be asked, and hearts to be opened. As Bishop Anthony reminded us at the Jubilee of Catechists:

"Your ministry is needed now more than ever. You accepted the call from God and God will empower you. Your witness flows on into families and communities. Catechists are a bridge between the gospel and the daily lives of those who hear it. You journey with the students, but you don't need to plant the seed, cover the hole, water it and watch it grow. Go plant the seeds. You are a servant of hope through your steadfast presence, gentle encouragement and quiet confidence in God's mercy. Help the students discover that they are not alone and there is purpose in their lives. Every seeker who you come into contact with will experience the personal love of Jesus through us. Our job is to be faithful, open and available.'

Bishop's blessing for you: "May the Lord renew your strength and bless your efforts. May you always find in Him your hope and know Him as the fire of your compassion."

Thank you for the love, energy, and faith you've shared with your students throughout 2025. Even if you haven't seen immediate results, know that the seeds you've planted will grow in ways you may never witness.

As your teaching year comes to a close, have you thought about how to end the year as well as you can? Before the rush of Christmas present wrapping takes over, first think about the way you will *wrap up* your year as a Catechist – with **gratitude**, **celebration**, and **reflection**.

Take a moment in your final lesson to pause and give thanks. A simple prayer of **gratitude**, inviting the children to share something they are thankful for, can bring a beautiful sense of closure. You might bless the class before they head off for the holidays or send each child home with a small prayer card as a reminder of God's love.

Consider marking the end of your time together with a moment of **celebration**. This could be a fun activity like a "gratitude tree," where students write or draw something they've learned or enjoyed about SRE on leaves or ornaments. And don't miss the chance to share the true meaning of Christmas – that God's greatest gift to us is Jesus – perhaps through a short nativity story, reflection, or carol.

Finally, take some time for personal **reflection**. Jot down a few quick notes on what worked well this year, what you might do differently, and any bright ideas you'd like to try next year.

As the final bell rings, know that your ministry has made a difference. May this Christmas bring you rest, joy, and the deep peace of knowing you've served faithfully and well.

It was such a delight to see so many of you at the Jubilee of Catechists Reflection Day with the Bishop. The smiles on each face were so welcoming, the conversations we heard around the discussion tables and lunch area were truly inspiring, and the joy of catechists reconnecting across different parishes was remarkable to witness.

We deeply appreciate you giving up your time to attend this once-in-a-lifetime event in the CCD community. We know that for some of you, this meant taking leave from work or setting aside other important duties in order to spend a day in formation and fellowship. We hope you were encouraged by the Bishop's words and that you recognise the importance of your presence in both the classroom and your parish community.

We look forward to seeing you again at our CCD Annual Mass on **Saturday, 22 November**. You'll find the details at the back of this magazine. Let's once again fill the atmosphere with your presence as we celebrate the presentation of service and training awardees. During this Mass, we will also honour our catechists who have recently passed away through the moving rose ceremony. I always find this moment deeply touching, especially as friends and family carry a rose before the Mass in memory of their loved ones. It is a powerful reminder that their faithful work has not been forgotten by the CCD Ministry.

As we approach the end of the year, I hope you find your work as a catechist both fulfilling and inspiring.

We encourage you to share your experiences with friends and invite them to become part of this wonderful ministry. Finally, we extend our heartfelt thanks to your families for supporting you in this mission. We pray that you will be blessed with energy and good health as you continue sharing the Word of God with the next generation.

Sue-Anne Sherwood
NORTHERN BEACHES

Kristy Komadina
NORTH SHORE

Maricel Malapira
COMPLIANCE OFFICER



Greetings Catechists and supporters.

It occurs to me that very few of us operate alone in the SRE ministry or any of the great ministries of the church. More often than not we are supported by co-workers, team members, friends and family as well as prayer partners if we are fortunate to have them.

The Gospels illustrate this clearly in the ministry of Jesus who called disciples, followers and supporters around him. It is interesting to note that people such as Simon, Andrew, James and John (Matt 4:18-24) were already in relationship with each other when they began to follow Jesus. Similarly, people such as Mary, Joanna and Susanna (Luke 8:1-3) came to know each other through their relationship with Jesus. None of these supporters, followers, disciples or apostles had an exclusive relationship with Jesus – they were all close to Him, but he also insisted they love one another, despite their desire to put them first, sometimes.

All this may give us occasion to pause and give thanks for the people we work with in our parishes and schools, parish priests, secretaries, reception staff, coordinators and teachers. To appreciate family and friends who support us by working around our class times each week, give us a listening ear for good and bad experiences and fellow parishioners who pray for us on an occasional or regular basis. As we head towards the end of the school year, perhaps it is time to express our appreciation for these people.

Blessings!

Hope everyone has been enjoying a well-earned break from the classroom during the school holidays. Here on the Central Coast, third term has been no less busy than any other of the terms this year. Many parishes have been recruiting, some with greater rewards than others. I have been kept busy visiting more classes than usual but still be pleasantly surprised by the welcome from the schools and the enthusiasm of the students to learn more about Jesus and the Good News message for us all.

The Tools for the Classroom workshop, was not lacking in enthusiasm, fun and laughter. It was great to see catechists have great ideas in the implementation of the tools that were presented and also hearing from them as to how these newly acquired skills were received by their students.

Looking ahead to Term 4, Level 2 will draw to a close. I have enjoyed presenting some of the sessions and being challenged with the questions and ideas that were presented by the participating catechists. It is great to see people mulling over what is being presented and making sense of the material in their own way.

I hope that you are enjoying the Pilgrims of Hope poster, the challenges and marking each one with the Luce sticker. I find that the students I am working with are looking forward to each of the challenges and are eager to share with the class what they have done to successfully complete the challenges.

In no time at all, we will be organising Christmas Assemblies. Each team of SRE catechists will hopefully be working with each other to present the story of Jesus' birth, with a choir of angels, the humble shepherds and a flock of sheep, with the mysterious magi and their prophetic gifts all vying for a place on the school hall stages.

Dear friends,

I hope you are enjoying a restful break in these Spring school holidays and you're ready for a great term ahead. On a personal note, my eldest daughter is doing her HSC exams in the coming weeks, so it's an important time in our family life. Please keep her and all HSC students in your prayers.

It was wonderful to meet many of you at the Jubilee of Catechists Reflection Day with Bishop Anthony on 26 September. I hope those who attended enjoyed the session with Bishop and the opportunity to catch up with other catechists.

In term 4, we'll be offering another CCD Ministry Induction course. Catechists who need to do this course have been contacted by email, so please reply if you haven't already. Register by calling 8379 1643 or email registrations@bbcatholic.org.au. We'll also be continuing our Level 2 'The Church in the 3rd Millennium' course on Zoom on Friday mornings. The course has been excellent so far, with just three sessions to go.

We hope you have enjoyed using the 'Pilgrims of Hope' resources with the children in your SRE classes. We also have some lessons available to coincide with the canonization of Carlo Acutis in September. Click here to access these lessons which can be used any time this year: <https://www.bbcatholic.org.au/mission/ccd/resources>

We've added more Quizzes to our collection of Powerpoint lessons. Click here to access them:

<https://www.bbcatholic.org.au/mission/ccd/curriculum/walking-with-jesus-powerpoint/walking-with-jesus-powerpoints>

Wishing you all a wonderful Term 4.

John Donnelly
NORTH SHORE

Michael Tebbutt
CENTRAL COAST

Alicia Klein
COMPLIANCE OFFICER



Advent in the Jubilee Year of Hope



In this jubilee Year of Hope, how can we be messengers of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love this Advent?

As a family, you may like to arrange an Advent Wreath in a prominent place in your home and set aside one evening in the week when you will gather as a family to celebrate the lighting of each of the candles of the wreath and take time to reflect on ways of being Advent people in this Jubilee Year of Hope.

After this time of prayer and reflection, enjoy a meal and conversation together as family.

Week 1 - Hope



In this first week of Advent, we are called to be people of hope.

As we light the first candle of the Advent Wreath, we pray that the light of the Candle of Hope reminds us of the light of Christ. We pray that the light of Christ will guide us each day and burn brightly in our hearts, giving us faith and courage to work towards a brighter future.

(The Hope Candle is lit)

Reading

Romans 13:11-14

Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light; let us live honourably as in the day, not in revelling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy, instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Invite those gathered to share ways that they can be people of hope in the first week of Advent.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy spirit.

As it was in the beginning, Is now and ever shall be, World without end, Amen.



Week 2 - Peace

In the second week of Advent we are called to be people of peace.

As we light the second candle of the Advent Wreath, we pray that the light of the Candle of Peace brings us inner peace which we can share with all whom we meet this coming week. May we be ambassadors of Peace of Christ which will transform us and those we meet.

(The Peace Candle is lit)

Reading

Corinthians 1:3-9

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind — just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you — so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Invite those gathered to share ways that they can be people of peace in the first week of Advent.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy spirit.

As it was in the beginning, Is now and ever shall be, World without end, Amen.



Week 3 - Joy

In the third week of Advent, we are called to be messengers of joy.

As we light the Candle of Joy, let us embrace the joy of the birth of Jesus, our Lord. May our lives reflect the joyous song of the angels, 'Glory to God in the highest' and the joy experienced by the shepherds seeing the newborn king. May we enthusiastically proclaim the Good News through our word and our witness. We pray that this joy will help transform the world.

(The Joy Candle is lit)

Reading

James 5:7-17

Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. Beloved do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

Invite those gathered to share ways that they can be people of joy in the first week of Advent.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy spirit.

As it was in the beginning, Is now and ever shall be, World without end, Amen.



Week 4 - Love

Week 4 – Love

In the fourth week of Advent, we are called to be bearers of Christ's love.

As we light the Candle of Love, let us focus on the transformative power of love. We pray that with the love of Christ in our hearts, we can break through barriers that separate people from each other and from the Lord

(The Love Candle is lit)

In this final week of Advent, let us extend acts of kindness and generosity to all whom we encounter. In our world today, that is broken by war, distrust and misunderstanding, it is so important that we be ambassadors of love. May we share the love of Christ.

Reading

Romans 1:1-7

Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. Beloved do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

Invite those gathered to share ways that they can be people of joy in the first week of Advent.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy spirit.

As it was in the beginning, Is now and ever shall be, World without end, Amen.



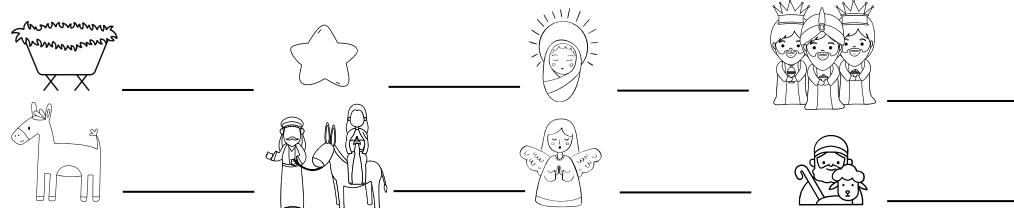
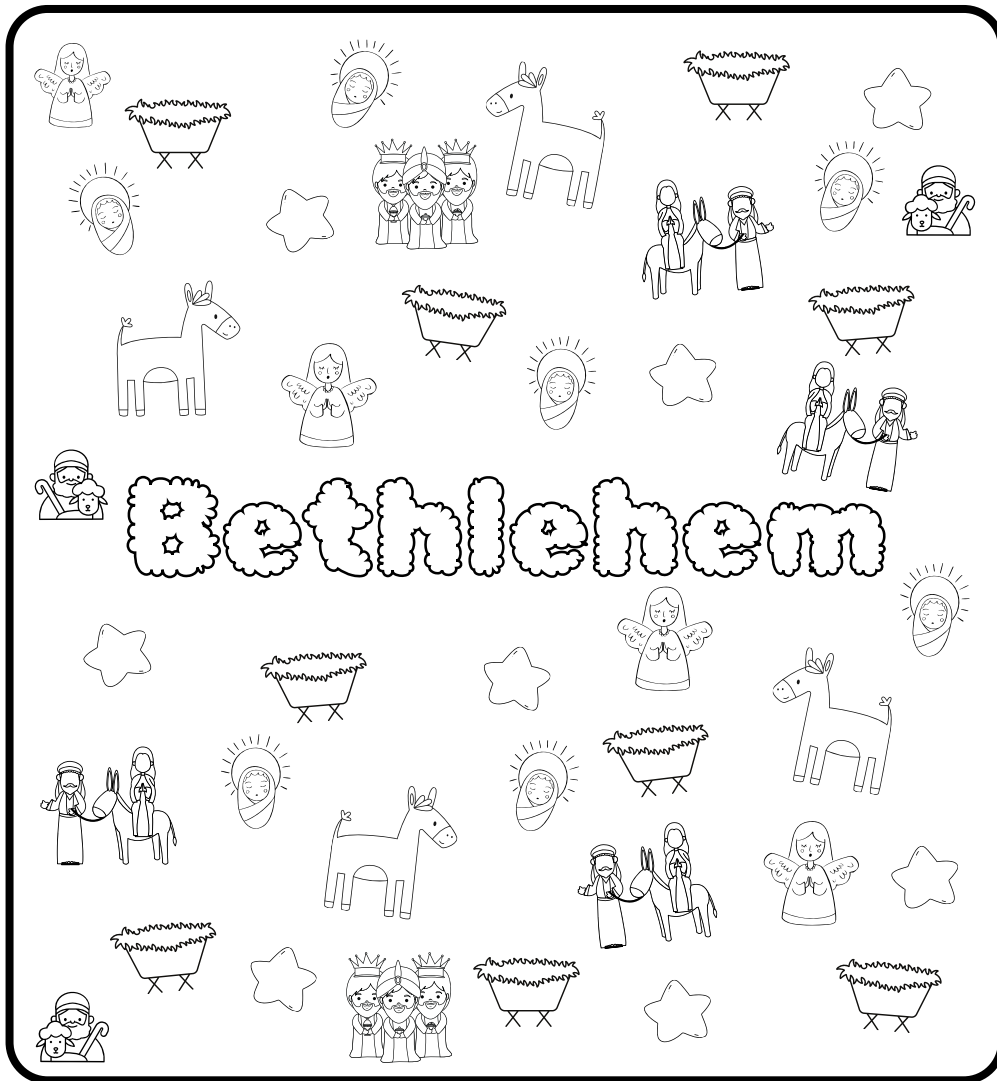
Michael Tebbutt

CENTRAL COAST REGIONAL COORDINATOR

Celebrating All Saints and All Souls

We all know how much the celebration of the secular and commercialised holiday Halloween is playing an increasing part in the lives of primary school-aged children at this time of year. Wouldn't it be great to shift the focus for one lesson and explore the origins and meaning of Halloween and how it ties to the very important feast days of All Saints and All Souls? We have created two lessons titled: **Holyween** to use with your class if you wish. There are lesson plans, powerpoints and worksheets for Stage 1 and Stage 2-3 for you to download from our Resources page on our website. Find them at bbccatholic.org.au/mission/ccd/resources

Colour & Count



Can you help Mary and Joseph find their way to Bethlehem?





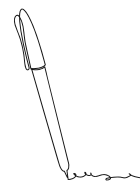
Advent, an Invitation to Prepare



Z	H	G	B	N	E	U	A	Y	D	M	N	Q	W	R	J	V	V	A	R	F	Y	U	W	E
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STRAIGHT
 INCARNATION
 FORGIVENESS
 SALVATION
 WATCHFUL
 SHEPHERD
 GOODNEWS
 PROPHET
 WAITING
 JUSTICE
 COMFORT
 PROMISE
 PREPARE
 MESSIAH
 BAPTISM
 COMING
 ADVENT
 DESERT
 REPENT
 JESUS
 LIGHT
 GLORY
 PEACE
 GRACE

Choose three words from the Find-a-Word (for example: repent, hope, prepare). What do these words mean to you, and how could they guide the way you get ready for Jesus during Advent?



Jubilee of Catechists Reflection Day

As the Church continues its journey of pilgrimage in the Holy Year of Hope in 2025, catechists from across the Diocese gathered on 26 September for a special morning of prayer, reflection, and conversation with Bishop Anthony Randazzo. The event, held in the Railway Room at the Caroline Chisholm Centre in Pennant Hills, formed part of the Jubilee of Catechists – a unique opportunity to pause, reflect, and be renewed in their shared mission of handing on the faith.

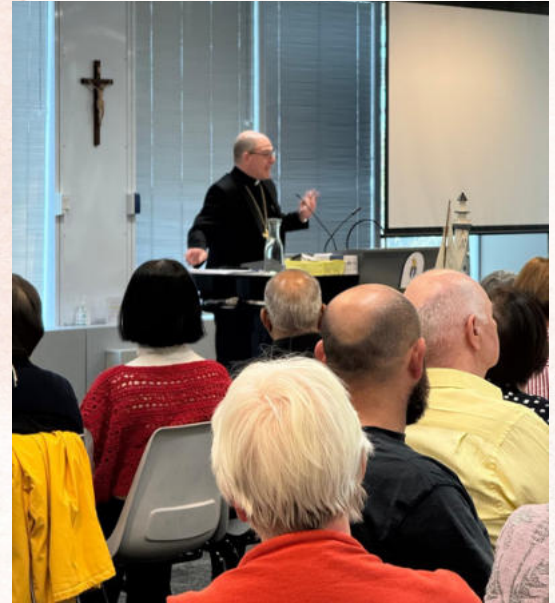
The morning opened with prayer and scripture, creating a space of quiet attentiveness to God's presence. Bishop Anthony gave two inspiring talks throughout the morning, encouraging catechists to reflect on the theme of hope and the vital role they play in nurturing the faith of the next generation. The catechists then spent time speaking and listening to one another, breaking open the talks further amongst their small groups.

In his opening session, Bishop Anthony reminded everyone that we are all called to teach the faith. With warmth and encouragement, he said, "I'm a catechist too. Together we are disciples in the Lord." He spoke about the great thirst for Christ that exists in our local community, particularly among the thousands of Catholic students in public schools, calling catechists a vital bridge between the Gospel and the daily lives of God's people.

"Before all else," he said, "a catechist is someone who lives the faith."

He encouraged catechists to see their role as companions, walking patiently alongside students, listening deeply, and sharing both their lives and their knowledge. "A catechist is called to open the door to mystery," Bishop Anthony explained. "We draw students into a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, accompanying them into the mystery of faith."

The Bishop also reminded participants that catechists communicate not just information, but the living truth of the Gospel in ways that young people can understand and connect with. This relational approach reflects Jesus' own model of teaching: "He sees them, He loves them, and He teaches them."



Nourished, Inspired, and Sent Forth



In his second session, Bishop Anthony focused on Hope as a theme and reflected on the incredible privilege and responsibility of being a catechist. “You may be the first face of Jesus Christ that these students encounter,” he said. “That’s both terrifying and exhilarating at the same time.” He spoke of the catechist as a servant of hope, whose love must flow from the overflowing love of Christ within them.

“Christ looks through your eyes,” he reminded the group. “Remember, you are the face of Jesus.”

The Bishop encouraged everyone to focus on being faithful, available, and open to the work of the Holy Spirit, allowing their ministry to be guided and renewed by God’s grace. In his concluding words Bishop Anthony left the Catechists with these words: “My heart is filled with joy because this is where God has called me to be. Working with you, ministering with you, missioning with you, is precisely where God has called me. It’s the most wonderful vocation.” Bishop Anthony then urged all Catechists to seek out what God is calling them to do, so that the kingdom of God will be visible in the world in which we live.

The day left a deep impression on those who attended. Linda Gaze reflected, “Coming here today has left me feeling spiritually nourished. It was such a privilege to be here.”

Another catechist, Amelia Lee, shared, “I see students as souls wanting to be loved.”

Catechist Michelle Hirschhorn beautifully summed up the mission of catechists when she said, “It is a meeting of the hearts - the heart of the one in front of you and the One who created them.”

As the day concluded, catechists departed renewed in their calling and inspired to continue their vital work. Bishop Anthony’s words served as a powerful reminder that through their faith, witness, and love, catechists help young people encounter Christ - the very heart of the Gospel.

Kristy Komadina





CLASSROOM STORIES

Pilgrims of Hope

My combined Year 1/2 class is halfway through their Pilgrimage of Hope so last week I handed out the bookmarks to “mark” the occasion.

This week one of the girls came up to me after class and said – “You know the bookmark you gave me last week. When I’m feeling angry, I read the prayer and it calms me down”.

A true celebration of Hope!! - **Alicen van Bokhoven**

Making a game out of learning

Last week I had to step in at the last minute to teach a class that isn’t normally mine. I noticed that they had just finished a unit of work in their books, so we spent the first five minutes doing the interactive quiz powerpoint as a class. The kids loved getting up and selecting the correct answer on the board and the class had a hoot discussing which answer was the right choice. It set us up for a wonderful lesson and served as a great icebreaker activity, particularly for the kids to be comfortable with me as their teacher when they didn’t know me already. I’d highly recommend using the quizzes if you haven’t already tried them. - **Stephanie Veil**

Do you have a classroom story?

The Catechists who read *Connections Magazine* would love to hear your success stories from the classroom. If you have an interesting, funny or heartwarming story that will inspire others, send in your story to ccdadmin@bbcatholic.org.au and you may be published in *Connections*.



A Dramatic Save!

One Wednesday, after attending the Level 1 Music, Stories and Drama in the Classroom training, due to the absence of their usual Catechist, I unexpectedly had Kinder to year 6 in class. Nearly 40 students! I used the Daughter of Jairus storytelling/drama routine as we had practiced in the workshop. It was something they could all join in and after some preparation with them, I stood back while they performed. They were brilliant! Thank you so much! - **Bronwyn Edwards**

Inspired to try different approaches

I really enjoyed the Music, Stories & Drama workshop. It has given me more confidence in the classroom. Yesterday I followed the **Saint Carlo Acutis** plan for my grade 2 class. I had a superhero cape and asked the children to take turns wearing it while saying what super holy action they were aiming for this week. Responses included putting dirty socks in the wash basket without being asked, not annoying their siblings and being kind to others in the playground. Some even said going to church which would be great as I think only 2 in the class attend mass regularly.

For the recent learning about church lesson 1.17.2 I asked the children to line up outside the classroom and then to enter using the holy water dish I provided to make the sign of the cross before praying. They all love to participate. I also have a church in a box from Veritatis Publishing. As many of the children had never been into a church they all enjoyed picking up the pieces as we learned the names eg altar, ambo etc. I did try the balloon activity for one of the Holy Spirit lessons as suggested in the teacher planning folder. It was a bit out of control though! I am planning to try the echo mime technique next week for a scripture reading. I also brought in my carved cross as suggested in the workshop. The children all wanted to touch it and pass it around before putting it in the sacred space.

- **Lisa Blythe**

Training and Formation

Level 1 Workshop Days Inspiring Music, Storytelling and Drama in the Classroom



This term, two Level 1 workshop days were held – one in Chatswood and one at The Entrance – and both were very well attended. These hands-on sessions gave catechists the opportunity to explore creative ways to bring their lessons to life through music, storytelling, and drama.

Participants not only learned new techniques but also had the chance to practice their skills in a fun and supportive environment. Catechist Barbara McMullen shared, *“As well as the novel ways of engaging with our students, we were given many really practical tips to ensure successful storytelling, incorporating drama that is sure to be fun for everyone.”*

It’s always a joy to gather in person, share ideas, and be encouraged by the energy and creativity of fellow catechists.

Upcoming Formation & Training

Advent Reflection Days

Get ready for a truly special Advent Reflection Day! Your Connections mailout includes a flyer with all the details. This year’s theme, “Guided by the Stars” invites us to pause, reflect, and be guided by the divine light in our lives and ministry. We’re excited to welcome Caitlin Douglas, a gifted spiritual director and retreat facilitator, who will lead us on this inspiring journey. As always, places are limited and book out quickly, so secure your spot by contacting CCD Registrations on 02 8379 1643 or email registrations@bbcatholic.org.au

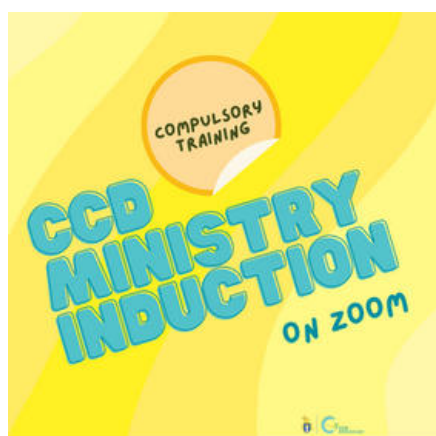


CCD Ministry Induction (CCD MI) training for new catechists

Our CCDMI course is being offered again in Term 4, commencing **Monday 13 October**. The sessions will be held on Zoom, across eight (8) Monday mornings, from **10am-12.15pm**.

CCD Registrations will be in touch before the course commences if you have units to complete. Contact CCD Registrations on 02 8379 1643 or email registrations@bbcatholic.org.au if you have any questions.

To view the dates and unit names, please click the [Flyer](#).



Shaping Young Hearts Through SRE

Paul El-Chaar shares his 20-year journey of inspiring students and mentoring fellow SRE Catechists.

When speaking with Paul El-Chaar, it is clear just how passionate he is about Special Religious Education (SRE). Paul has been teaching SRE for over 20 years, a journey that began when his wife Paula invited him to help teach Kindergarten Scripture — or, as Paul puts it, “she insisted, saying, ‘*You have a spare hour, come with me!*’” From that moment, he has been deeply involved in SRE ministry. Over the years, Paul has also supported the work of the Galston Christian Education Association (GCEA) and is now proud to be teaching at Galston High School (GHS), representing 12 different churches from various Christian denominations. Paul describes this role as challenging, exciting, and deeply rewarding. Looking ahead, his great passion is to encourage and mentor both new and experienced SRE teachers, helping them discover the meaningful role they can play in shaping young lives through this important ministry.

1. What motivates you to teach SRE at Galston High?

I'm motivated to teach SRE at Galston High because I believe young people need a safe space to respectfully explore their faith, values, and life's big questions.

I'm passionate about diving into the Bible and sharing the Christian message in a way that's engaging, relevant, and age-appropriate. Teaching SRE is a great way to support students as they grow in their understanding of Jesus through the Bible, while also developing character, compassion, and a sense of purpose. It's my privilege to be part of their journey.

2. What do you personally find exciting about SRE?

What excites me most about SRE is connecting with students and helping them think about purpose, values, and life's big questions—topics they might not explore in other subjects.

I love those moments when something clicks, or when students feel safe to ask honest questions. I call these the “big smile moments.”

It's exciting to share the Bible and the Christian faith in a way that feels real and relevant, and to be part of conversations that can shape how students see themselves and those around them.



3. What's one aspect of SRE that you find particularly important for young people?

One aspect of SRE I find particularly important is helping young people develop a strong sense of identity, purpose, and a foundation for reading and understanding the Bible.

In a world that often sends mixed messages or promotes an “anything goes” mindset, SRE provides a safe space to explore hope and reflect on values like love, forgiveness, care for others, and respect.

These values are central to the Christian faith and vital for building healthy relationships and caring communities in Australian society. I believe hope is especially important during the teenage years, helping young people stay grounded as they navigate life's challenges.

4. What impact do you hope to see through SRE?

I hope to see young people grow in their understanding of the Bible, their Christian faith, and how it connects to their everyday lives. More than that, I want them to feel valued, supported, and encouraged to think deeply about life's big questions.

I hope that through SRE, students develop a strong moral foundation, learn to treat others with kindness and respect, and discover that they are deeply loved by God and have a unique purpose in life.

Finally, I pray that even if some of their friends don't share the same beliefs, they will leave SRE with a sense of hope and identity, and with the Bible as a trusted guide to navigate life with purpose, reason, and compassion.

John Donnelly

L to R: John Donnelly (CCD), Karen Shepherd (Principal, Galston High School), Paul El-Chaar (Catechist at Galston High School)

Creative Christmas Classroom Games

As we head towards the festive season, it's a wonderful opportunity to share the true meaning of Christmas with your students. Here are some fun, hands-on activities that are simple to prepare and can help children engage with the story of Jesus' birth in a meaningful way.

Pass the Parcel – Christmas Story Edition

This classic party game can become a powerful way to teach about the Nativity.

- Wrap several layers around a small central gift.
- Between each layer, include a picture or figure from the Christmas story for younger children, or a Bible verse or phrase for older children.
- As each layer is unwrapped, pause to explain its meaning or have the children piece the story together.

For the final gift, consider something the whole class can share, such as bookmarks with a Christmas prayer, holy cards, or a small children's book about the Nativity.



Shepherds and Angels – A Christmas Action Game

1. Read a gospel account of Jesus' birth from **Luke 2:1–20**.
2. Create fun actions for key figures in the story such as:
 - *Shepherds* – crouch down and “tend sheep.”
 - *Angels* – stretch arms wide like wings and say, “Glory to God!”
 - *Wise Men* – bow and present gifts etc...
3. Call out commands, and children must quickly do the matching action. Those who are too slow are out. This game is both high-energy and a great way to reinforce learning.

(This is an adaptation of a game called “Captain’s Coming”. Perhaps google and watch a few videos online to get the gist of the game.)



Mary’s Yes! - Peg Game

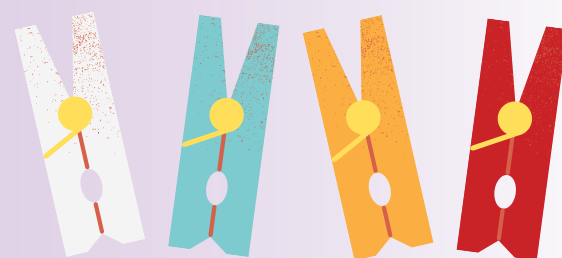
This exciting game helps children recall the story of the Annunciation, when the Angel Gabriel visited Mary with the message that she would be the mother of Jesus. As they answer questions about the story, children will compete to earn points for their team – but watch out for the “peril peg”!

You Will Need:

- A small bag filled with coloured pegs (or ping pong balls).
- Assign each colour a point value:
 - White = 5 points
 - Blue = 10 points
 - Gold = 15 points
- One “peril peg” in a distinct colour (e.g., red). If a team draws this peg, all their points are lost!
- A list of questions based on Luke 1:26–38.

How to Play:

1. Read or retell **Luke 1:26–38**, pausing to highlight key moments: Gabriel’s message, Mary’s response, and the promise of Jesus’ birth.
2. Divide the group into two or more teams.
3. Ask a question to one team.
 - If they answer correctly, one team member draws a peg from the bag without looking.
 - Add the points to their team’s total according to the peg’s colour.
 - If they pull the peril peg, their score goes back to zero!
4. Continue asking questions and tallying scores until time is up. The team with the highest points at the end wins.



Sample Questions:

- **Who was the angel God sent to Mary?** *(Gabriel)*
- **What town did Mary live in?** *(Nazareth)*
- **What message did Gabriel bring to Mary?** *(That she would be the mother of Jesus)*
- **What was Mary’s response to God’s plan?** *(“Here I am, the servant of the Lord.” or “Yes” to God)*
- **Who did Gabriel say would overshadow Mary so she could conceive Jesus?** *(The Holy Spirit)*
- **What did Gabriel say about God’s power?** *(“Nothing is impossible with God”)*



The Most Rev Anthony Randazzo DD JCL
Bishop of Broken Bay

&

the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine
extends an invitation to

**CATECHISTS OF THE DIOCESE,
THEIR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF THE CCD**

to attend the

**2025 CCD Annual Diocesan Mass
& Presentation of Awards
Ceremony**

Saturday 22 November 2025 at 11:30am

Please arrive by 11:15am

Our Lady of the Rosary Cathedral

23 Yardley Ave, Waitara

Light refreshments to follow

It would be greatly appreciated if you could advise if you or any family members will be attending

Please RSVP to:

Alicia or Maricel by Friday 7 November 2025

Phone: 8379 1642 or 8379 1638 | Email: ccdadmin@bbcatholic.org.au