

# CONNECTIONS

2026  
TERM 1

CATECHIST  
SUNDAY  
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13 TRAINING &  
FORMATION

VOL 30  
ISSUE 1



*Lent & Easter*



Taking the Gospel to the World

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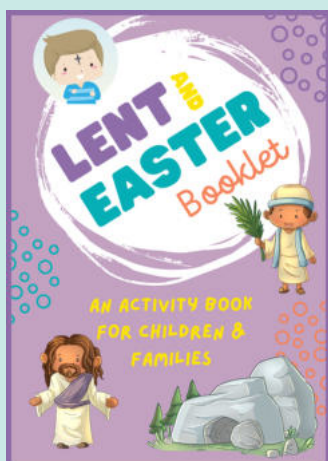
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**DOWNLOAD  
OUR LENT &  
EASTER  
BOOKLET**

# FROM THE

Sent forth as disciples



One of the things that I have most cherished over the past two decades of working with CCD in Broken Bay is the faith of SRE catechists. Catechists respond to their Baptismal call to holiness by spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ to the Catholic children of our parishes who attend public schools. In September last year during the Holy Year of Hope, Pope Leo spoke the following inspiring words to catechists across the globe:

“The name of your ministry comes from the Greek verb ‘katēchein,’ which means ‘to teach aloud, to make resound.’ This means that the catechist is a person of the word — a word that he or she pronounces with his or her own life. Just as we learned our mother tongue, so too the proclamation of the faith cannot be delegated to someone else; it happens where we live, above all in our homes, around the family table.”

Let’s break this profound statement down a little.

“... ‘katēchein’ ..... to teach aloud, to make resound.... A word that he or she pronounces with his or her own life.” The Word of God is proclaimed in both word and witness, as you do in your classrooms each time you enter.

“...the proclamation of the faith cannot be delegated to someone else.” In Paul’s Letter to the Romans (Chapter 10:14-15 *How will they know unless someone tells them?*), we see an emphasis on the need for people to be preached to or taught in order to hear, believe, and call upon God for salvation. People can’t call on someone they haven’t heard about or believe in. They can’t believe if they haven’t heard about the person or message. They can’t hear unless someone tells them. And finally, people can’t tell others unless they themselves are sent to do so. This is what you have been sent forth from your parishes to do... and to be.

“It happens where we live” – in our communities and in our parishes where we are nourished with the Eucharist and sent forth to do our ministry. “.... above all in our homes, around the family table” – thank God for our families who support us in our ministry to children and young people. When we gather around the family table, we re-live the gathering which takes place around the table of the Eucharist at Mass where we are nourished in faith and love. When we gather with the children and young people we teach, we are responding to the instruction from the priest or deacon at the end of Mass to go out and live the mission of Christ – the “sending forth”.

In the Hymn “Go Now You Are Sent Forth”, composed by Australian Franciscan Friar Leo Watt in 1969, the words instruct us:

GO NOW  
YOU ARE  
SENT FORTH  
TO LIVE  
WHAT YOU  
PROCLAIM  
TO SHOW  
THE WORLD  
YOU FOLLOW  
CHRIST  
IN FACT,  
NOT JUST  
IN NAME.



# HEAD OF CCD

of the Lord



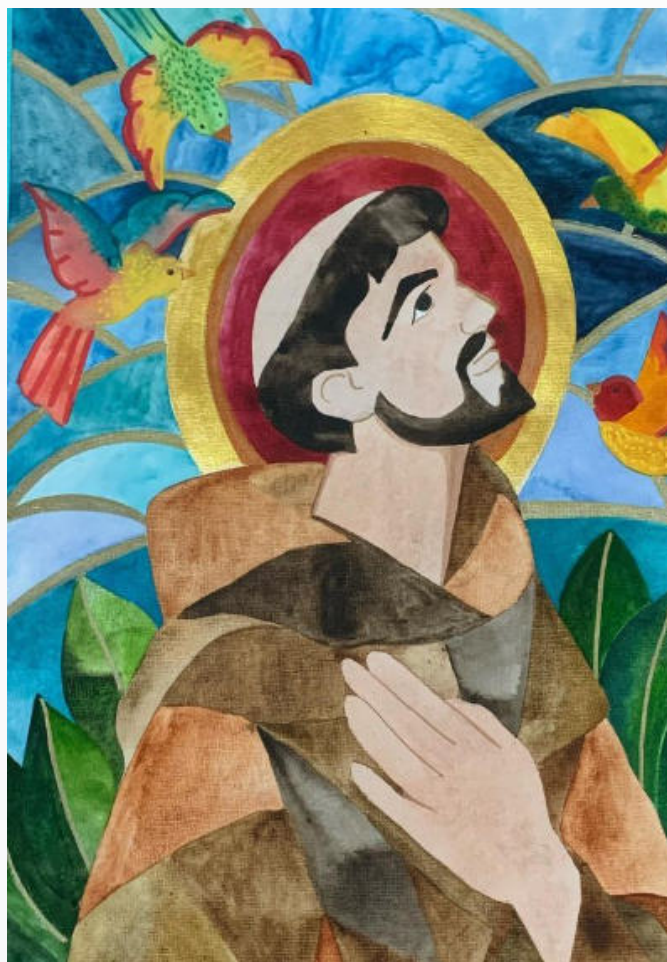
There is a saying attributed to St Francis of Assisi, which reflects his example of living the Gospel: *"Preach the Gospel at all times; use words if necessary"*. This inspired the often-heard phrase: *"Actions speak louder than words"*. It does not undermine the importance of words to proclaim the Gospel, rather it calls on us to live the Gospel we proclaim through our actions. The old saying: *"Do what I say not what I do"* will not work with the students of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. They will detect a lack of authenticity in no time at all. There's no value in telling students that Jesus loves them and not giving witness to that Christian love in the classroom. Let our message of love, forgiveness and hope be clear; we never want to give students a mixed message that might confuse them.

This week, Pope Leo declared a special Jubilee Year of St Francis on the occasion of the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Saint's death. In doing so, Pope Leo called for a return to the Gospel through simplicity, peace and fraternity, urging Christians to imitate St Francis by becoming peacemakers and witnesses to charity in a divided world, focusing on a deeper spiritual life, rather than spectacular events.

In 2026, let's take that peace into our classrooms as we witness to authentic Gospel living and counter division through both proclamation and living the Word of God. Let prayer be our pathway to spiritual renewal, not necessarily more prayer but a deeper prayer that will lead to a more intentional and intimate relationship with God. Let us encounter Jesus' presence in our hearts in order to transform our inner selves and our understanding of life in our homes, our communities and in our classrooms. Then offer your transformed self to the students you teach.

May God bless you and yours, as you either begin teaching SRE for the first time or continue serving in your ministry. May our Catholic students in public schools be blessed by your presence in their classrooms.

Happy New Year to all catechists and friends of CCD. I wish you every blessing for the year ahead.



Alison Newell

## Service Award Applications

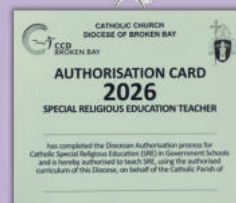
Have you been a Catechist for a number of years? You may be eligible for a Service Award at our Annual CCD Mass.

An application form can be downloaded from our website:  
<https://www.bbcatholic.org.au/mission/ccd/resources/forms>

If you're not certain about how many years of service you have recorded, please give Maricel a call or send her an email and she will happily help you find out.  
02 8379 1638  
[ccdadmin@bbcatholic.org.au](mailto:ccdadmin@bbcatholic.org.au)

## SRE Teacher Name Badges

Names badges are required to be visible when SRE teachers (catechists) are attending a public school in NSW. Catechists in the Diocese of Broken Bay are provided with an authorisation card annually, which includes the catechist's name and the name of the Approved SRE Provider (Catholic Church Diocese of Broken Bay). This should always be worn in the lanyard (supplied) whilst on school grounds. Please ensure that you read and sign the SRE teacher's undertaking on the back of the authorisation card.





As we step into Term 1, I'm reminded of the quiet hopefulness that comes with a new school year. Before my first class, I pause for a simple ritual: I breathe deeply and pray for each child who will walk through the door. It's nothing elaborate, but it helps me begin with openness, to be ready to notice, to listen and to welcome. This year, I'm focusing on being more present. Less rushing and more noticing.

I'm learning that presence is a gift we offer our students – to truly see them, meet them where they are, and create a space where they feel safe to wonder, question and grow. Often it's in the small moments that the deepest learning happens.

This early part of the year also leads us gently toward Lent. Children have a remarkable capacity to grasp the heart of the season when it's expressed in the language they know best: kindness, fairness, saying sorry and starting again. I'm also hoping to practise what we are encouraging you, our Catechists, to do. I'll be keeping notes in my manual to jot down lovely, funny, or grace-filled moments from the classroom to share in *Connections*. We hope you'll share your stories too. These glimpses of joy and insight always renew my sense of purpose.

The work we do as Catechists matters because it touches hearts, shapes lives and opens pathways to God (beyond what we can see, yet in ways that truly last). It is an honour to be the face of Jesus to these students.

May this new term bring fresh energy, gentle beginnings and many moments of grace for each of us.

*Sue-Anne Sherwood*  
NORTHERN BEACHES

Do you make New Year's resolutions?

I've never been very good at making promises to myself for a whole year. It feels like too much pressure, and honestly, I don't always trust myself to keep them. Instead, I prefer to give myself a *theme* for the year – something I can keep coming back to. That way, if I slip up, I don't have to beat myself up. I can simply pause, reflect and begin again.

This year, my theme is ***“Doing my best”*** or ***“Going the extra mile.”*** For me, that means putting in a little extra effort and being more intentional about how I approach the situations life throws my way. It's about showing up, even when it's hard, and choosing to give just a little more than what feels comfortable. Jesus encourages us to do this when he says, *“If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two”* (Matthew 5:41).

As we journey toward Lent, I'm also thinking about how sometimes we give something up that we don't always see through. This year, I'm committing to *more prayer, more connection with God, and a stronger focus on family relationships*. I'm reminded of Jesus' words, *“Remain in me, as I remain in you”* (John 15:4). These are not quick fixes, but daily choices that take time, grace and perseverance.

I'd love to challenge you to do something similar. What could your focus be this year in your ministry as a Catechist? How might this flow into other areas of your life – your family, friendships and faith journey? *“Whatever you do, do it with all your heart”* (Colossians 3:23) – perhaps your small, faithful steps will make a bigger difference than you realise.

Wishing you a fulfilling year as a Catechist.

*Kristy Komadina*  
NORTH SHORE

Dear Catechists and Friends,

Another wonderful and meaningful year is ahead of us.

Are you familiar with New Year's resolutions, where people list the things they want to achieve for the year? I remember from my younger days when we returned to school on the first day of the year, our task was to write our New Year's resolution. (FYI, our academic year finished in March or early April.) We were asked to write a personal commitment to improve ourselves or change a habit as we began the new year. We could focus on areas like health, finances, relationships or personal growth.

To be honest, I was really fed up with this task after coming back from the Christmas holidays. Most of the time, I wasn't truly committed to what I had written. For me, one thing was sure – I just needed to make it sound good to get marks.

Now in my adulthood, I think about it differently. I try to do it in my own little way. I reflect on what I need to change to improve myself as a person, and which habits I should focus on to become better. This time, there is no pressure to complete a resolution. It is more about free will and personal growth. I invite you to do the same.

As catechists, you have been doing an amazing job, but there will always be room for improvement. Treasure the time you spend with your students as you share our faith. Like me when I was younger, they may not yet realise the importance of your lessons because of their age. Just keep going. When they reach adulthood, they will become more aware of how important faith is in their lives.

Have a happy and exciting Term 1 of 2026.

*Maricel Malapira*  
COMPLIANCE OFFICER





Welcome Back to the New School Year.

It never fails to surprise me how much excitement and enthusiasm are generated at the start of each year of SRE. New classes, new lessons, new resources and, especially, new students.

Some students may be new to the school – either in Kinder or Year 7, or perhaps they have moved from another school or place. New students to SRE are a precious gift for us to nurture and encourage. It might even be a good idea to offer them a student mentor or buddy.

Some catechists may also be new to the SRE ministry. They too may benefit from mentors. If you are new to being an SRE Catechist, can I suggest you take it easy and do not expect too much from yourself. It takes months to settle in and years to really feel comfortable in a school, within a stage group and with a class of students. Go gently and seek advice and assistance as you need it.

Starting something for the first time can be challenging. Drawing on the experience of others is always a good idea – far better than stressing or reinventing the wheel. Starting something new can also be very rewarding, so enjoy the experience.

I recently began an exercise class and was pleasantly surprised by how welcoming the existing members were, how encouraging the instructor was, and how readily I learned the routine when I relaxed into the environment and embraced the support of others.

As we navigate new paths, it is worth remembering what Proverbs 3:5–6 tells us: *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.*

I hope and pray that each of us gets to experience something new this year, and that we do so with a spirit of adventure and service. Happy New Year!

*John Donnelly*  
NORTH SHORE

Welcome to the new school year!

As we begin another year of SRE, it's a wonderful time to pause and reflect on the opportunities ahead of us as Catechists. Each year brings something new – new students, new experiences and fresh moments of grace in our classrooms. Whether you are just beginning this ministry or have been walking this path for many years, your presence makes a real difference in the lives of the children you teach.

One of my favourite Gospel stories is the Road to Emmaus. The disciples were walking along, feeling confused and disappointed, when Jesus joined them – although they didn't recognise him at first. It was only later, in the breaking of the bread, that they realised who had been with them all along. Their journey was suddenly filled with surprise, joy and renewed hope.

In many ways, our work as Catechists can feel like this. Sometimes we don't immediately see the fruits of what we are doing. The children may not always show it, but God is walking with us in the classroom, working quietly through our words, our actions and our presence. Then, often when we least expect it, we witness moments of understanding, kindness or faith that remind us why this ministry matters so much.

As we move into Lent and Easter, let's stay open to these Emmaus moments – the unexpected encounters where God reveals himself in simple and beautiful ways. May we teach with hearts full of hope, ready to recognise Jesus in our students, our colleagues and in the everyday moments of our ministry.

Here's to a year filled with surprise, joy and the reassurance that Christ walks beside us on the journey.

*Michael Tebbutt*  
CENTRAL COAST

Dear friends,

I hope you enjoyed a happy Christmas and a relaxing break in these Summer school holidays. I was fortunate to spend a week in Tasmania over Christmas, relaxing and catching up with family. It reminded me how important it is to purposefully disconnect from the day-to-day busyness of life. I hope you have also had the chance for some down time before our busy ministry begins again in 2026.

This year is one of new beginnings for me, with my eldest daughter starting uni, my son starting Year 11, and my youngest daughter starting high school. I'm sure there will be challenging days, but I also look forward to supporting them and sharing in their new experiences and opportunities. With a positive attitude and a growth mindset, change can be a wonderful thing.

In Term 1, we'll be offering the CCD Ministry Induction course on Zoom twice – daytime and evening. Catechists who need to do this course will receive an email providing details of the sessions.

Register by calling 02 8379 1643 or email [registrations@bbcatholic.org.au](mailto:registrations@bbcatholic.org.au)

Later in the year, we'll be offering our Level 1 'Tools for the Classroom' course, and our Level 3 course; both are optional. We will distribute details in future issues of Connections, on our website, and via your Parish Coordinator. We encourage you to register for one or both of these courses, when the time comes.

Don't forget, we use our Cycle A curriculum this year, so head to our website to download our Walking With Jesus Cycle A Powerpoints and Quizzes. 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 1.

*Alicia Klein*  
COMPLIANCE OFFICER

# GROWING YOUNG FAITH

## *The Three Pillars of Human Spirituality*



## Helping the Students to Develop Their Spirituality

As SRE Catechists walking with the children in our parishes and schools, how do we help them grow in a living, joy-filled relationship with God?

If we want to help the children develop a healthy relationship with God the Father, Jesus His Son and the Holy Spirit, the lessons we teach need to be child centred. We need to allow the students, whether in primary school or high school, the chance to respond to God in their own way.

A child’s or young person’s way of relating to any member of the Trinity is not our way. It will involve play and use of their imagination. Children need to have connection with the world and nature — human, animal and plant. Through this connection, their spirituality will grow with a sense of awe and wonder, with compassion, creativity and with positive values. It is from all this that students’ positive relationship with the Trinity will grow and blossom.

As teachers, we do not have to be afraid of using elements of creation in our lessons or sacred spaces. A picture of an animal or a potted living plant in the sacred space will catch the students’ attention and help bring the message of the lesson to life for them. For example, begin Lent with simply a purple cloth, a purple candle (or a white candle with a purple ribbon attached) and a bowl of ashes when teaching about Ash Wednesday. As you progress through the Lenten lessons, add an element for each lesson, leading up to a plain cross for the Holy Week lesson or Good Friday lesson. Each of the items in the space will be a reminder of what has already been learnt and therefore, will reinforce these lessons.

Similarly for the Easter lessons, begin with a white cloth and a picture of Jesus emerging from the tomb. As you work through the Easter lessons, add symbols of new life e.g. an egg, some sprouting seeds, and even some flowers as well as a picture or two of the Scripture stories used in the lesson.

By doing this, the Sacred Space becomes an integral resource for teaching the main points of the lesson and the students can be encouraged to bring in similar symbols for the following week’s lesson. This will encourage them to take the learning from the classroom to the real world. This would be tapping into both personal and communal aspects of children’s spirituality.

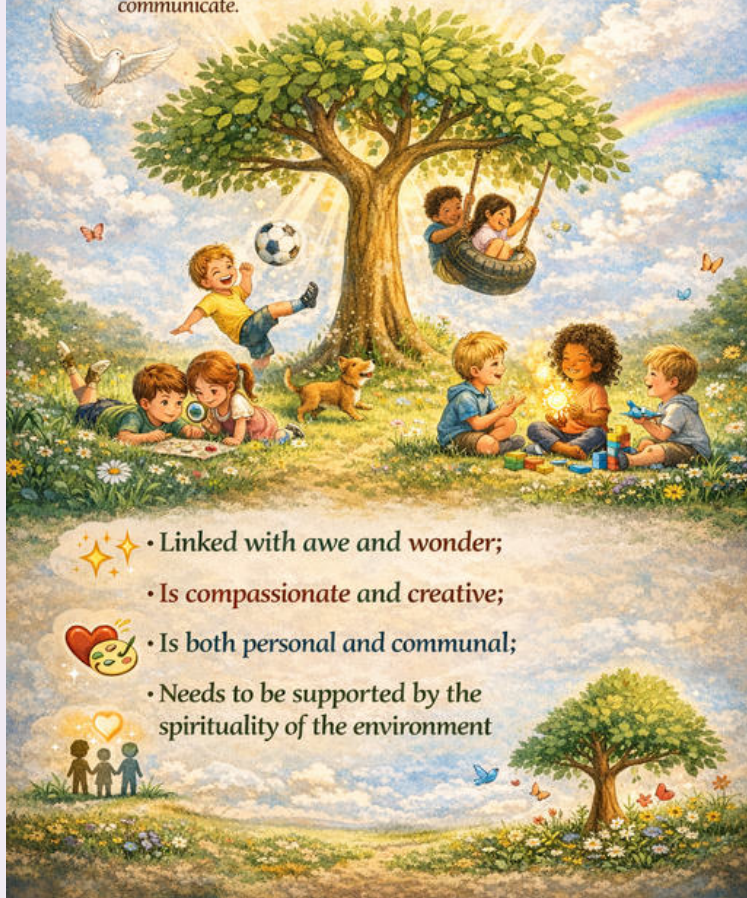


To tap into the student’s creativity, after proclaiming an event from a Gospel reading, e.g. Jesus in the Desert, have some quiet time allowing the students to imagine that they are with Jesus in the desert and lead them into imagining what it would be like, living away from home, in a place where they will experience the heat of the desert and will be thirsty and hungry. This will help them develop their compassion for what Jesus experienced while he spent time in the wilderness. You might like to take in some blank paper and have them either write or draw what they experienced during this mini meditation. This will help them to tap into their own creativity and they will have something to take home and share with family members and/or display during Lent to remind them to prepare for Easter.



## What is Children's Spirituality?

The spirituality of the child or teenager will not look like ours but will be that individual's way of being with and responding to God. It will often involve play which is how they learn and communicate.



- Linked with awe and wonder;
- Is compassionate and creative;
- Is both personal and communal;
- Needs to be supported by the spirituality of the environment

This strategy can be applied also to one of the Resurrection stories, e.g. The Emmaus Story or meeting Jesus on the beach and having breakfast with Him. You might like to focus on the elements of surprise and joy at meeting the Risen Jesus.

A technique to employ in the area of prayer is to take a few minutes of quiet encouraging them to focus on something they would like to develop in themselves, or to consider people they would like God to help or to recall something for which they are thankful, e.g. a great time with friends on the weekend, a surprise visit from a friend or relative or an enjoyable time out in the garden or on the beach or in creation. This type of prayer will help develop their relationship with God and their awareness of God's presence in the world, and is both personal and communal, each being part of our spirituality and the students' developing spirituality.

These are a few ideas to use in the first term for next year. Hopefully by initiating these strategies, your own creativity will grow and your lessons will become as much lessons in which they learn about being Catholic, as well as being opportunities for the student's spirituality to develop.

Michael Tebbutt  
CENTRAL COAST REGIONAL COORDINATOR

## Caritas Lenten Resources

Caritas Australia has once again shared warm and meaningful teacher and student materials for catechists. CCD has created lesson plans and student activities for Kinder/Stage 1, Stages 2 and 3, and Stages 4 and 5, all built around these resources. Each set helps students explore important social justice issues in our world, including war, debt, care for the earth and climate change.

All lesson plans, activities and videos will be ready to download from the CCD website in early February. Each resource is made to suit the age group it's designed for, so please choose the set that best fits the students you teach. In 2026, the focus is on the stories of Sisilia from Tanzania and Monoranjon and his family from Bangladesh.

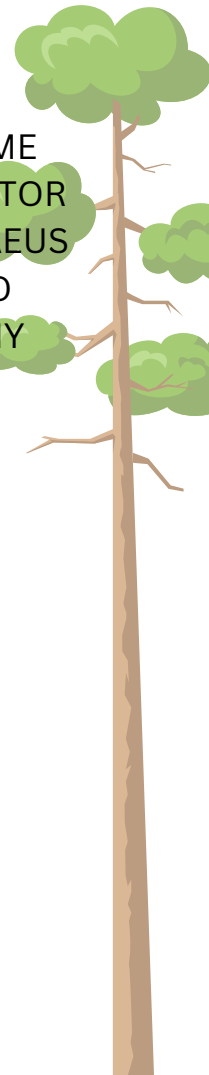
Talking about challenges to health, wellbeing, safety and care for our world can be tough for some students. Please take care in your approach and guide conversations toward the hopeful and positive impact of the outreach work of Caritas.



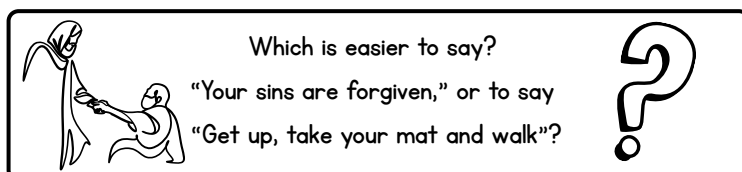
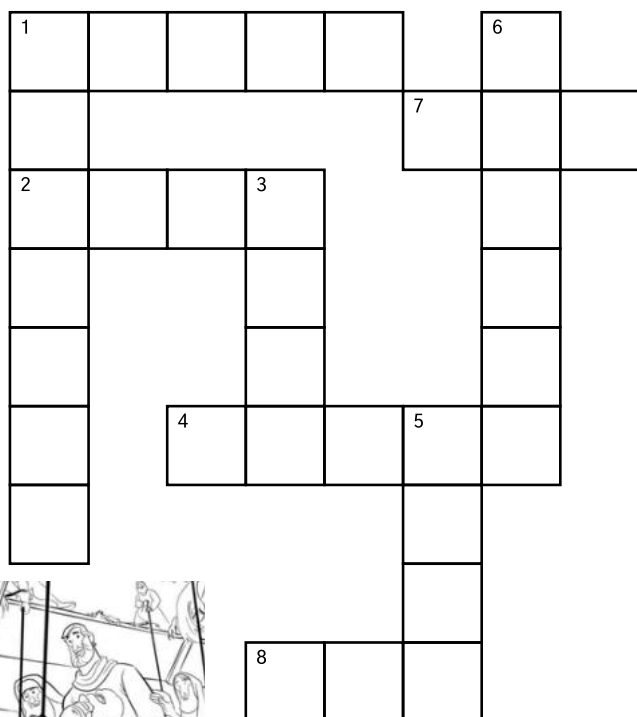
## JESUS HELPED ZACCHAEUS CHANGE

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

WELCOME  
COLLECTOR  
ZACCHAEUS  
JERICHO  
WEALTHY  
SINNER  
HOUSE  
CLIMB  
GUEST  
SHORT  
CHIEF  
CROWD  
SEEK  
LOST  
DOWN  
TREE  
COME  
POOR  
SAVE  
TAX



## JESUS CURES THE SICK



Which is easier to say?

"Your sins are forgiven," or to say

"Get up, take your mat and walk"?

## Across:

1. Jesus saw their \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The men lowered their friend through a hole in the \_\_\_\_\_.
4. They could not get to Jesus because of the \_\_\_\_\_.
7. The paralysed man was lying on a \_\_\_\_\_.
8. The people were amazed and praised \_\_\_\_\_.

## Down:

1. Jesus has the power to \_\_\_\_\_ sins
3. The paralysed man was carried away by \_\_\_\_\_ men
5. Jesus preached the \_\_\_\_\_ to the people
6. The man got up and \_\_\_\_\_ out.

CROWD

MAT

WORD

ROOF

FOUR

FAITH

WALKED

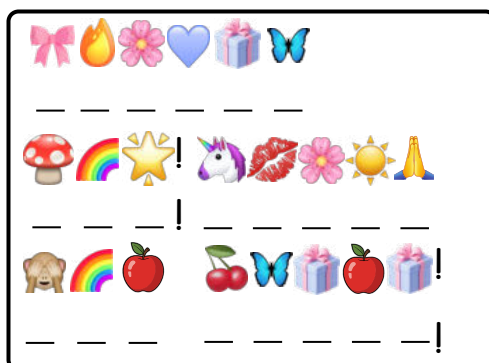
FORGIVE

GOD



# JESUS HEALS THE TEN LEPERS

Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem when he met ten men who all had a harmful skin disease called leprosy. The men called to him, "Jesus! Master! Have pity on us!" Jesus sent the men to go and show themselves to the priests, and while they were on their way they discovered they had been healed. Everyone had something to say then! Use the code to discover what the ten men and Jesus said.



## INVITATION TO CARE

Jesus says we meet him when we help others. Draw a line to connect & fill in the missing word to tell us what Jesus said:

When I was...

you....

HUNGRY



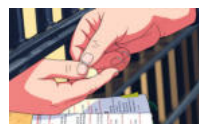
THIRSTY



STRANGER



NO CLOTHES



SICK



IN PRISON





# From Student to Storyteller

## Jess Jakubek's Journey of Faith

When Jess Jakubek reflects on her earliest memories of Special Religious Education (SRE), what rises to the surface isn't workbooks or lessons, but stories: vivid, imaginative, and alive.

"The stories about my Scripture teacher's 'friends' definitely stood out," Jess recalls.

Week after week, she listened as her teacher shared tales that unfolded like scenes from a movie: "I remember one about her friend who led his village out of the desert and through the sea, and another about a friend who fed thousands with a single basket of food." At the time, Jess didn't yet realise these stories came from the Bible.

What mattered most was the excitement of encountering something new each week. "The thrill of hearing a new story each week was a real highlight for me," she says.

That sense of wonder made SRE a cherished part of Jess's primary school experience, one that quietly shaped her faith in lasting ways. Sundays added another layer of discovery, when she noticed that her parish priest seemed to know the same "friends" her teacher spoke about. Slowly, the pieces came together, and Jess began to understand that these stories were part of a much bigger story, one shared by the Church across time and place.

While Jess always loved Scripture as a student, it wasn't until her high school years that she began to imagine herself in a different role. Through her involvement in youth ministry, she was invited to assist one of her former Scripture teachers as a student Catechist. Stepping into the classroom alongside someone who had once taught her was a defining moment.

"This opportunity made me realise it was something I could do too," Jess explains. "I knew I'd take it up as soon as I graduated." Helping to teach lessons and accompany students in their learning gave her a new appreciation for the quiet, faithful work of Catechists and the impact they can have.



Now a young adult and a fully-fledged Catechist, Jess finds herself teaching in the same space where her own love of Scripture was first sparked. It's a full-circle journey that highlights the long-term fruits of SRE ministry. What was once freely given to her has become something she now joyfully passes on.

For Jess, the heart of her ministry lies in giving students the same opportunity she once received. "Scripture was a highlight of my primary school years," she says, "and it matters to me that other children have the same opportunity, to be inspired and to feel the same sense of wonder I had as a student."

She is especially mindful that many of the children she teaches may not practise the faith at home. Rather than seeing this as a barrier, Jess sees it as an invitation. "Even if our students' families don't practise the faith," she says, "I hope the children still go back and share the stories they heard in class — just as I once did."

Jess knows first-hand how powerful those conversations can be. As a child, she eagerly retold Scripture stories at home, and over time, her enthusiasm had an unexpected effect. "Hopefully," she says, "they give their families a reason to start going to Mass, just as mine did when they saw how much I was actually absorbing."

For Jess, success as a Catechist isn't measured in numbers or outcomes, but in moments of sharing. "If even one student leaves class and tells their family or friends something they learnt, I'll know I've done something right," she reflects.

Jess Jakubek's story is a gentle yet powerful reminder to Catechists that their ministry truly matters. The seeds planted through storytelling, presence, and faithfulness can grow in ways unseen for years. Today's SRE students may well become tomorrow's Catechists, carrying forward the stories, the wonder, and the faith that once captured their hearts.





# LENT & EASTER 101

A Catechist's cheat sheet for curious students



**WHY DO WE  
RECEIVE ASHES ON  
ASH WEDNESDAY?**

Ashes remind us that we are human and that we need God. They help us remember to turn back to God, say sorry, and try again. When we hear the words "Turn away from sin and believe in the Gospel," we are being invited to start fresh.

You might say to children:

*"The ashes are a sign that we want to change and grow closer to God."*

## WHY IS GOOD FRIDAY SAD?

Good Friday helps us remember that Jesus died. It is a quiet, reflective day where we think about His suffering and His great love for us. But we also remember that the story doesn't end here...



The cross reminds us how much Jesus loves us. Jesus gave His life for us, even though it was hard and painful. The cross shows us that love sometimes means making sacrifices for others.

You might say:

*"The cross reminds us that Jesus loves us no matter what."*

**WHY IS THE  
CROSS  
IMPORTANT?**



## WHY DO WE CELEBRATE EASTER?

Easter is the happiest day in our Church year! Jesus rose from the dead – He is alive! This means:

- **Love is stronger than hate**
- **Light is stronger than darkness**
- **Life is stronger than death**

Easter gives us hope and reminds us that God is always with us.



**WHY DO WE  
LIGHT THE  
PASCHAL  
CANDLE?**



The Paschal Candle represents Jesus as the Light of the World. When it is lit, we remember that Jesus' light shines in our hearts and in the world, even when things feel dark.

**WHY DO WE USE  
THE COLOUR  
PURPLE DURING  
LENT?**



Purple is a colour that reminds us to slow down and reflect. It helps us remember that Lent is a time to think about our choices, pray more, and practise kindness.

## A GENTLE REMINDER FOR US

Our traditions are rich with meaning, but they come alive through our witness. When children see us pray, forgive, try again, and show kindness, they learn what faith really looks like.

*Every question is an invitation.*

*Every answer plants a seed.*

*And God does the growing.*



**HELP US GROW OUR CATECHIST COMMUNITY**  
Do you know someone who would be great?

One invitation could change a life. Think about who you could personally invite to join SRE as a

Catechist this year. CONNECTIONS

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Email: [ccdadmin@bbcatholic.org.au](mailto:ccdadmin@bbcatholic.org.au) for more information.





# CLASSROOM STORIES

## Easter Assemblies

At many schools, there is an opportunity to present an assembly at Easter time, either at the end of Term 1 or when you return from school break early in Term 2. Often there is collaboration between the Christian providers to come together as one, or perhaps there isn't currently an assembly at your school and you'd like to introduce the idea.

If you're looking for an idea, we have a resource available to download. [CLICK HERE](#) on the digital version of Connections, otherwise please email [ccdadmin@bbcatholic.org.au](mailto:ccdadmin@bbcatholic.org.au) and we will happily send the link to you.

Last year, one of our Catechists from the Arcadia Parish, **Miriam Brown**, successfully used and adapted these ideas for her own assembly.

Miriam wrote: "Just thought I would share this photo from our Combined Easter Assembly this morning. This was our focal space to catch the kids' attention. (I did turn the hot cross buns around so as not to show the label, but didn't get a photo of that).

I used the [Assembly idea you sent out](#) but I adapted it to use large plastic eggs with the props inside. I numbered each egg as suggested with a palm leaf in Egg 1, coins in Egg 2, etc.

We asked one boy to sit in as Jesus and put the items around him as we opened the eggs to show the Easter story.

It went very well. I think the students enjoyed it and felt involved. The other Christian SRE groups were very happy with it. Thanks for sending it out!"

We have additional assembly ideas from our archives that have been shared with us over the years, if anyone is interested, get in touch and we'll gladly send them to you.

Easter assemblies are a wonderful opportunity to share the message of hope, new life and love with the whole school community. Simple visuals, creative storytelling and student involvement can make the story of Easter come alive in a powerful way. We encourage you to be bold, try something new and trust that God will work through your efforts. You never know whose heart might be touched through your witness.



## When God Turns Up in a Puzzle

I don't know about you, but my SRE students just love find-a-words and crossword puzzles. I have to hold them back like wild horses to prevent them from doing all the puzzles in their activity books ahead of time.

Luckily I often bring a printed puzzle with me to give to students who finish their work quickly. One particular day, a table of mischievous boys were racing each other to find all the words in the puzzle when one of them stood up and shouted gleefully, "I found God! I found God!" I was VERY pleased he found God in my class! - **Anon**

## 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](mailto:ccdadmin@bbcatholic.org.au) and you may be published in *Connections*.



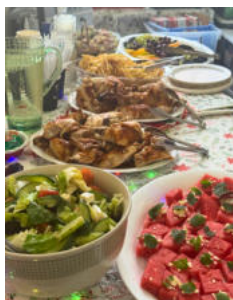


# Training and Formation

## Recap: Guided By The Stars Advent Reflection Days

Towards the end of last term, we were fortunate enough to have the gifted spiritual director and retreat facilitator **Caitlin Douglas** join us for 3 very popular reflection days across our regions. Participants were expertly guided through 3 different contemplation exercises, looking to the stars to inspire prayer about relationships, about being created to shine in this world and about challenges and obstacles we face. Retreatants were inspired through stunning imagery, gentle words and quiet music. They were also encouraged to move and give thanks at the end of our time together. And of course, we all gathered at one table to feast and celebrate another year as catechists in this ministry.

Stay tuned for more reflection day opportunities in 2026.



## Upcoming Formation & Training

### CCD Ministry Induction (CCD MI) training for new catechists

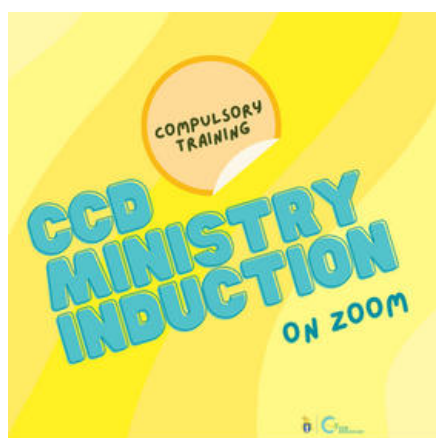
Our CCDMI course is being offered again in Term 1. The sessions will be held on Zoom, across eight (8) Monday mornings, from **10am-12.15pm** as well as 8 Wednesday evenings from **6:15pm-8:30**. These will commence from 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> February. Please [check our website](#) for further details.

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](mailto:registrations@bbcatholic.org.au) if you have any questions.

### Lent Reflection Days

Details to follow.

Keep an eye in your email inboxes for details regarding Reflection Days slated for the North Shore and Northern Beaches on 20<sup>th</sup> March and for the Central Coast on 27<sup>th</sup> March. This year the theme will be Stations of the Cross.



**SAVE** 20TH  
the &  
**DATE** 27TH  
MARCH



# Acknowledgement and Affirmation

Back in the 60's and 70's when I attended school, the teachers were mostly religious brothers and nuns. As an ordinary student, it seemed to me, that their jobs was to teach the 'one and only' way to do things then test us in following those instructions.

Rarely in those days did teachers acknowledge or affirm good behaviour, they seemed to be more interested in catching students out and pointing out our mistakes. As a teacher myself in the 80's and 90's our focus was more on correcting and redirecting students. Showing them where they had fallen short in their answer or task and guiding them closer to the mark or suggesting how they might fill out their response.

As Catechists in the 2020's, we are encouraged to catch students doing the right thing. Students who are listening attentively, or getting on with their bookwork or following instructions about where to move for an activity, all provide us with an opportunity to acknowledge the desired behaviour. This may be a single student, a table group or indeed the whole class. For example *'these students are ready to watch and listen'*.

In the busyness and pressure of our short SRE lessons, the danger is that we overlook the correct behaviour and focus our attention and comments on the students who are misbehaving. It can be more effective to publicly affirm those following instructions as a means of setting the desired standard and then privately correcting those who still have not complied with the instructions.

When setting tasks for students it is often helpful to set a standard for completion. For example – *"complete the find a word together as a table group with table talk"* or *'give yourself and others some quiet time to reflect and write a draft response to these questions'*. Another option is to allow students a limited time to talk with a few classmates about the questions and agree on a response to share with the whole class.



This kind of instruction not only sets the task but also the method and the time allowed. Having set these parameters a wise teacher will acknowledge students who are following them. For example *'I can see these students are engaged in good discussion – I look forward to hearing their answers'*.

Similarly, the standard of work can be set by instruction like – *"this is just a draft or a practice"*. Conversely, *"please do your best work on this drawing as I will be collecting them to look at later"*. Even secondary students seem to lift the standard of their written responses when the teacher indicates they will be reading them.

Creative ways of affirming students include stickers and stamps, rewards such as stationery items and bookmarks. Christian bookshops like Koorong, are a great source of supply of these types of rewards.



John Donnelly



# Faith Conversations With Teenagers

Talking about faith with teenagers can feel intimidating. For many catechists, it raises familiar worries: “Will they actually talk?” “What if they challenge everything I say?” “Am I equipped to answer their questions?” But recent experience and research suggest that teens are already thinking deeply about faith — they just need space and approaches that resonate with them.

## Teens are thinking about God in big ways

Like many young people navigating adolescence, Sebastian, a 15-year-old student, reflects honestly about his relationship with God: “Sometimes I do wonder whether God is actively involved in the things we do every day, or if He is more distant. It sort of links to the idea of freewill... and how much human choice weighs against divine plan.” This kind of reflection echoes broader trends in adolescent faith development: teenagers are not afraid to grapple with serious theological questions when given room to do so.

He himself notes that these questions aren’t abstract or detached — they are tied to *real experiences of life and justice*: “All of the suffering and genocide ... especially wars and injustices that seem endless ... make that question ‘Where is God in this?’ unavoidable today.” Rather than withdrawal from faith, these questions reflect a search for meaning in a complex world.

## What teens appreciate in faith conversations

Research and practical guides on talking with young people about faith emphasise similar themes: teens engage best **when they are heard and not judged, when questions are welcomed, and when dialogue is real, not scripted**. Asking for their opinions, then listening with genuine curiosity, helps shift the focus from catechist lecture to teen exploration. For example, instead of asking “Did you enjoy this reading?” consider: “What part of this scripture made you think?” or “What do you think God might be saying to us in that reading?” — and then listen before you respond.

Another key element is *modelled vulnerability*. Experts encourage adults to share their own faith stories, including struggles and uncertainties, not as definitive answers but as invitations into authentic conversation. This builds trust and shows teens that faith is a *living journey, not a checklist of beliefs*.

## What makes a conversation feel safe and real

Sebastian articulates what many teens implicitly want: honesty. “A conversation about faith feels real when people are open about what they believe ...

and comfortable admitting there are things they don’t know or feel certain about,” he says. Conversely, he finds it unhelpful when faith is presented as a checklist of beliefs rather than an ongoing process of trust and relationship.

This dovetails with classroom research into effective pedagogy in Religious Education: avoiding presumptive language and allowing space for inquiry helps students think, reflect, and respond authentically rather than feel boxed into predetermined answers.

## Practical tips for catechists: facilitating faith conversations

Here are some classroom-ready strategies grounded in both teen voice and research:

### 1. Ask open-ended questions first.

Questions beginning with why, how, what invite deeper reflection and show you value their thinking before offering answers.

### 2. Create a safe conversational space.

Choose settings that don’t feel like interrogations — a circle of chairs, small groups, or paired discussions. Let silence sit so teens can formulate their thoughts.

### 3. Be genuinely curious, not corrective.

Follow up with, “Can you tell me more about that?” rather than jumping to doctrinal explanations. Curiosity encourages ownership of faith.

### 4. Model your own faith journey.

Share some uncertainty or struggle from your own experience — not as an authority, but as a companion walking with them.

### 5. Connect to real life, not just lessons.

Link topics to current world issues, relationships, justice, and personal experience — where teens already live and wrestle with questions.

### 6. Celebrate small steps.

Even brief moments of reflection, honest sharing, or respectful listening are wins in faith formation.

Teenagers crave honest, *respectful, and authentic conversations about faith*. They want space to wonder, to question, and to explore — not sermons, but dialogue. By creating opportunities where their voice is valued and their questions are taken seriously, catechists can help teens move from *faith as information* to *faith as relationship* — a journey of the heart and mind.



# annual mass highlights



Friends and families from across the Diocese of Broken Bay gathered to celebrate the ministry of Catechists at the Annual CCD Mass and Awards, held on the memorial of St Cecilia. Bishop Anthony Randazzo reflected on faith that is nourished and renewed, thanking Catechists for standing "in that sacred space where life and faith meet." The celebration honoured long-serving volunteers marking 15 to 45 years of service, alongside three Catechists who received their Diploma of Special Religious Education. Together, these moments highlighted a deep commitment to faith, formation, and the generous witness of those who guide young hearts toward Christ.

