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Confirmation



Taking the Gospel to the World

CONFRATERNITY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE BROKEN BAY

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Taking the Gospel to the World

FROM THE

A Deep Thank You

As I write this article, I am mindful that this week is Working with Children Week and it has provided me with a moment to reflect on the role of our SRE catechists in the Diocese of Broken Bay who tirelessly dedicate time, talent, patience and their very hearts and souls to teach the Catholic faith to Catholic students who attend public schools. Your dedication to nurturing the spiritual growth of children and young people ensures that the love of Jesus Christ continues to echo in the hearts of the next generation.

The ministry of volunteer SRE catechists is intimately woven into the very life of the Church. To volunteer as an SRE Catechist is to answer a unique, beautiful call to evangelisation and catechesis. You share the beauty of Scripture, the Sacraments, and the joy of the Gospel through your own lived example. You are on mission.

Pope Leo XIV views catechists as living witnesses who “make the Word of God resound” through their daily lives. He believes that their primary mission is to accompany others on their lifelong journey of faith and to awaken within them the Gospel and the needs of the poor.

The term catechist comes from a Greek word meaning “to teach aloud.” Therefore, a catechist is primarily someone who proclaims the Word through the witness of their own life. Your witness is the most valuable teaching tool that you selflessly share with the students each time you enter their classroom. Catechists are not just classroom teachers; they accompany their students through their formative years and provide them with a focus on a loving relationship with Jesus rather than just memorising facts and information.

Pope Francis noted that volunteering in the name of Christ is based on a personal experience of his love, and it profoundly strengthens the faith of the whole community. Every lesson prepared, every prayer offered, and every patient moment spent in the classroom plants seeds of faith that will bear fruit in the vineyard of the Lord.

Volunteering as an SRE catechist is not always easy. It often means balancing personal, family and professional commitments to turn up each week and teach the students. Yet, you consistently turn up, well prepared and make a difference in the lives of the students and their families. Your efforts can translate directly into changing lives.

In term 3, many of our parishes will be preparing children to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. This edition of Connections has resources and articles on the Gifts and Fruits of the Spirit. There are additional lessons on the Sacrament of Confirmation on our CCD website which are suitable for Years 3-6. Feel free to use these lessons if you have students in your class who are preparing for Confirmation. They will support what is happening in the Parish Sacramental Program. They can be found at: <https://www.bbcatholic.org.au/mission/ccd/curriculum/wwj-supplementary-sacramental-lessons>



Alison Newell

HEAD OF CCD

to our Catechists



LEVEL 3 SRE DIPLOMA – FAITH IN MINISTRY

Our Level 3 SRE Diploma course for 2027 provides us with an opportunity to support catechists who have previously commenced Level 3 but were unable to complete the course having missed one or more units. The most recent topic which we presented in Level 3 was on the Book of Psalms. CCD has developed units on the Psalms which can be completed individually by catechists who have missed some of the course allowing them to finish Level 3 and receive recognition for their achievement. The CCD team will be available to provide individual support should you require it.

If you began Level 3 over the past few years and were unable to complete it, please contact Alicia at our Registrations Desk registrations@bbcatholic.org.au

WATCH THIS SPACE

The CCD Team is currently working on a new Level 3 Course which will be presented in 2027. We have some inspiring ideas that we believe catechists will find both engaging and enriching. We will reveal the topic in Term 4 this year and provide dates for 2027.

World Day for Grandparents & the Elderly

The World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly was instituted by Pope Francis in 2021. It is celebrated on the fourth Sunday of July, close to the feast of Saints Joachim and Anne, the grandparents of Jesus.

The celebration of this day provides an opportunity for the Church, at all levels, to draw close to the grandparents and all older people; to celebrate their unique communities; and to reach out to those who may feel lonely or forgotten. The theme that Pope Leo has chosen for the 2026 World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly is

"I will never forget you." Isaiah 49:15

World Day for grandparents and the elderly coincides with the feast of St Anne and St Joachim. According to Catholic tradition, St Anne and St Joachim were the parents of Mary and therefore, grandparents to Jesus. While their names are not mentioned in the canonical bible, they are celebrated as models of faithful parents who raised their daughter to know and love God. Together, they are the patron saints of grandparents and their feast is celebrated on 26 July each year. There are resources such as these prayer cards available from the [Archdiocese of Brisbane Ministries](#). There is also a liturgy idea which you might consider for your class.

The celebration of the World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly is also an opportunity to rediscover that the Church is called to be a mother to all and that at any age it is always possible to recognize ourselves as sons and daughters of God.

Pope Leo XIII **Messge for World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly.**



TERM 3 SPECIAL DATES

Wednesday 22 July

Mary Magdalene

Sunday 26 July

World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly

Thursday 6 August

The Transfiguration of the Lord

Saturday 8 August

St Mary of the Cross (Mary Mackillop)

Saturday 15 August

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Tuesday 8 September

The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Sunday 13 September

Safeguarding Sunday

Sunday 27 September

World Refugees and Migration Day

Tuesday 29 September

Saints Michael, Gabriel and Raphael the Archangels



One of the greatest blessings of our Catechist community is the way we care for one another. Every week, I see quiet acts of generosity taking place. When a Catechist is unwell, away, or facing family challenges, someone willingly steps in to teach a lesson while others offer the support of prayer.

These simple acts are a beautiful witness to the love and unity Christ calls us to live. Our ministry is never about one person working alone. We are a community of disciples, sharing the mission of proclaiming the Good News to children. By supporting one another, we ensure that our students continue to hear about God's love while reminding fellow Catechists that they are valued, appreciated and never alone.

Recently, I was teaching a lively Year 3/4 class. One lovely girl with learning difficulties, discovered a tiny tub of playdough in the classroom. My first instinct was to redirect her, but this time I simply checked that she was still listening and let her continue quietly. At the end of the lesson, I asked what she had made. She proudly held up a tiny book with the letters "J" and "G". "What do they stand for?" I asked. "Jesus and God," she replied with a big smile.

It was a gentle reminder that we never know what is happening in a child's heart. God reminded me to assume the best, ask questions before making assumptions and to see each child through the eyes of Christ. Just as we care for one another as Catechists with patience and compassion, we are also called to see Christ at work in every child entrusted to our care. God bless you all.

Powerpoint loaded? Check. Lesson plan? Check. Slightly revised plan five minutes into the lesson? Also check. Every catechist knows that something else is always at work in the classroom, and it's not just classroom management. The Holy Spirit brings a whole mix of charisms that shape how we teach, connect, and share faith with children.

Yes, teaching and evangelisation sit right at the heart of what we do. We are there to hand on the faith, open up the Scriptures, and help children discover Jesus as someone they can know and follow. In a special way, we also accompany students as they prepare for sacraments like Confirmation, where they are strengthened by the Holy Spirit to live as young disciples in their everyday lives.

But anyone who has spent time in an SRE classroom knows it doesn't stop there.

Many catechists are quietly operating in the charism of encouragement: helping a child feel confident with a simple "well done" or a reassuring smile. There is also pastoral care at work, even if we don't always name it. Noticing and responding so children feel safe and included.

Then there is mercy (especially on the days when the lesson goes sideways), service (the unseen preparation and follow-up), and leadership for those who support or coordinate others.

And woven through it all are gifts like faith, wisdom, discernment, and communication that are helping catechists respond in the moment and make the Gospel real for the children in front of them.

Most catechists don't set out to "use charisms". It just happens. And perhaps that's the point: the Holy Spirit is far more interested in working through willing people than perfect plans.

Dear Catechists and Friends,

I am so happy to be back after having a wonderful three-week break in my hometown. It had been quite a while since I last visited the Philippines because of COVID and some personal matters, so this trip was very special to me.

I can truly say it was an amazing time catching up with my family and friends. The never-ending chats, sharing meals together, laughing, and simply enjoying each other's company made every moment so memorable. There was never a dull moment. At the same time, I noticed there have been many changes in the community since my last visit. Three weeks felt like it went by so quickly—it was simply not enough time to see everyone and do everything I wanted.

The warm welcome I received made my heart so full. I was deeply touched by how people made time to visit, reconnect, and hear about my life here in Australia. They were especially interested in hearing about my work with CCD. I shared with them how blessed we are to have the opportunity to teach Special Religious Education in state schools through the parents' choice. It reminded me once again what a privilege it is to be part of this ministry and to work with CCD.

Now, before we know it, we are welcoming Term 3. Time really flies, and soon we will be preparing for the final term of the year. Thank you for your faithful commitment in sharing God's love with the children each week. May the Lord continue to bless you with strength, joy, and a generous heart as you serve in this beautiful ministry.

God bless your heart.

Sue-Anne Sherwood
NORTHERN BEACHES

Kristy Komadina
NORTH SHORE

Maricel Malapira
COMPLIANCE OFFICER



How did you come to faith? Most Catholics were born into it and baptised as babies. But if you are like me, the journey of faith has not always been smooth. There have been ups and downs, highs and lows.

Being raised in a Catholic family, attending Sunday Mass and going to Catholic schools provided a strong foundation. However, I became personally committed to Jesus as a teenager through youth retreats. My engagement with the Church was tested as a young adult, but my faith in Jesus Christ grew stronger during those difficult years. Personal prayer and an awareness of Christ's presence in my daily life were instrumental in that growth.

Like many people, my faith has been strengthened in times of difficulty when I turned to God and experienced his support. My work as a teacher also gave me opportunities to study Scripture and theology, deepening both my understanding and my relationship with Christ. Teaching religion and accompanying students in their faith journey has continued to enrich my own.

Our personal faith story is foundational to catechist ministry. While our lessons communicate Scripture and Church teaching, it is our witness that brings those lessons to life. *Walking With Jesus* provides engaging activities through stories, games, music, art, prayer and liturgy, but catechists can make these even more meaningful by sharing their own experience of faith.

Our ministry also extends beyond the classroom. One parish recently invited Catholic SRE students and their families to a Family Mass, with around 40 people attending and sharing morning tea afterwards. Other parishes are inviting families to Alpha and parish events. Term 3 is an ideal time to explore how your parish can continue sharing the Gospel beyond the SRE lesson.

John Donnelly
NORTH SHORE

Hi everyone,

We have passed the halfway mark of the year, and many of the teachers with whom I have been speaking have commented on how quickly the year is flying by.

Term 3 is a great time to look for new members for the team. There is time to get the paperwork completed and the training begun, which could have new people working alongside experienced catechists in the classroom in Term 4. If you know someone who may have a heart for sharing their faith with children, why not invite them to come along and find out more? A personal invitation is often the encouragement someone needs to take that first step into this rewarding ministry.

Those of you who completed the ongoing training during the last school holidays will remember that we are now gathering feedback from students about what they liked—and perhaps didn't like—about the lessons. Listening to the voices of the children is proving to be incredibly valuable. Their insights are helping us identify what engages them most and how we can continue to improve our resources. We are using this feedback to help make the fourth edition of *Walking With Jesus* an even better tool for taking the Gospel into the classroom.

And finally, in Term 3, for those of you who are looking to complete your Level 1 training, or for those who would like to refresh their teaching strategies, our Tools for the Classroom workshop will be presented in August. It is always a practical, enjoyable day of learning, with plenty of opportunities to share ideas with fellow catechists. Morning tea and lunch are provided, and we would love to see you there.

Blessings everyone,

Michael Tebbutt
CENTRAL COAST

Welcome to Term 3. We're now in the second half of the year and whilst the weather is still cool, the days are getting longer and we can feel the hope of Spring in the air!

I hope you enjoyed the school holidays and had a chance for some down time, or perhaps even some time away. It's always nice to get away and have a break from the usual routine.

It was lovely to see many of you at our Ongoing Classroom Management training in the school holidays. Thank you to those who came along to renew this important training. Even though I am in touch with many of you via email or phone, it's always lovely to meet you in person or see your face online. It makes me smile when I'm able to connect with a familiar name!

In Term 3, we will be offering our Level 1 'Tools for the Classroom' course. Learn how to use prayer, miracles and parables, listening and questioning techniques, as well as music, story-telling and drama in your lessons. The course includes three evening Zoom sessions (29 July, 5 and 12 August), and a full day Workshop (17 Aug at Chatswood or 24 Aug at The Entrance). Contact registrations@bbcatholic.org.au if you are interested.

Don't forget to 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 3.

Alicia Klein
COMPLIANCE OFFICER

The Holy Spirit In My Life: Gifts, Fruits and Charisms

It is time to consider the role the Holy Spirit plays in our lives. We all know that we first received the Holy Spirit at Baptism, and that the gifts of the Holy Spirit were strengthened and brought to fullness when we were sealed with the Holy Spirit in the Sacrament of Confirmation. In our everyday lives, though, how often do we consciously reflect on these gifts and rely on the guidance of the Holy Spirit?

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states:

1830 The moral life of Christians is sustained by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. These are permanent dispositions which make us docile in following the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

1831 The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. They belong in their fullness to Christ, Son of David. They complete and perfect the virtues of those who receive them. They make the faithful docile in readily obeying divine inspirations.

In the Bible, the Holy Spirit is actively involved in the creation of the world, hovering over the waters and bringing order out of chaos. Do we allow the Holy Spirit to bring order out of the chaos of our 21st-century lives?

As a catechist taking the Word of God into state schools, I regularly call on the Holy Spirit to inspire me in my lesson preparation and to guide me as I work with students. When important decisions need to be made, I once again ask the Holy Spirit to be with me throughout the decision-making process. Looking back, I can often identify times when one or more of the gifts I received in Confirmation played a significant role.

Take some time to reflect on how you invite the Holy Spirit into your own decision-making.

In *Walking With Jesus* there are eleven lessons, and in *Pathways of Discipleship* there are eight lessons, that focus on the Holy Spirit. These lessons explore the Holy Spirit's role in the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, the gifts of the Holy Spirit and how they help students live as true disciples of Jesus, and the fruits of the Holy Spirit, which are seen in the way we live and treat one another.

So, what are the fruits of the Holy Spirit? There are twelve: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity.



The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says:

1832 The fruits of the Spirit are perfections that the Holy Spirit forms in us as the first fruits of eternal glory. The tradition of the Church lists twelve of them: "charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity."

These fruits are perfections formed within us by the Holy Spirit and are described as the "first fruits of eternal glory" (CCC 1832). Through prayer, the reception of the Sacraments, and God's grace, we are guided to live virtuous lives centred on Christ. We are called to manifest these fruits in our daily lives, in our relationships with others, and in the moral decisions we make.

The question I pose is this: What fruits of the Holy Spirit would our family members, friends, or work colleagues recognise in us?

Likewise, what fruits do we see in others? I challenge you to consider whether you have ever told your family members, friends, or colleagues which fruits of the Holy Spirit you see reflected in their lives. Such encouragement can be a powerful affirmation of God's work within them.



St. Philip Neri by Giandomenico Tiepolo
(St Philip Neri had the charism of discernment of spirits)

Finally, let us consider the charisms of the Holy Spirit. These are perhaps the most overlooked of the Spirit's gifts. What are they?

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us:

799 Whether extraordinary or simple and humble, charisms are graces of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefit the Church, ordered as they are to her building up, to the good of humanity, and to the needs of the world.

800 Charisms are to be accepted with gratitude by the person who receives them and by all members of the Church as well. They are a wonderfully rich grace for the apostolic vitality and holiness of the entire Body of Christ, provided they are genuine gifts of the Holy Spirit and are exercised in keeping with charity, the true measure of all charisms.

Charisms are not given primarily for our own benefit, but for the building up of the Church. They are gifts we receive from the Holy Spirit so that we can serve others and strengthen the Body of Christ.

There are many recognised charisms, including apostleship, evangelisation, communication, teaching, and mission. For example, if teaching students each week in your SRE class is something you genuinely look forward to and is a highlight of your week, you may well have the charism of Teaching or Evangelisation. If you generously give your time and talents and find that doing so brings life to both yourself and your faith community, you may have the charism of Generosity.

My final challenge to you is to visit [this website](https://www.stjohnsindy.org/uploads/5/3/2/8/53287757/st_john_spiritual_gifts_descriptions_revised.pdf) and spend some time exploring the charisms of the Holy Spirit. Prayerfully discern which charism, or charisms, God has given you for the service of the Body of Christ, the Church.

https://www.stjohnsindy.org/uploads/5/3/2/8/53287757/st_john_spiritual_gifts_descriptions_revised.pdf

Michael Tebbutt
CENTRAL COAST REGIONAL COORDINATOR

LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

Name: _____



Fruits of the Spirit are the outward signs that the Holy Spirit is working within us. When we plant a fruit tree, we need good soil, fertiliser, lots of water and sunshine to grow good fruit. It's the same for the Fruits of the Holy Spirit. In order for these to grow within us, we need to feed them by being strong in our faith, loving towards one another and kind to those around us.

Choose one fruit of the Holy Spirit that you would like to see grow more in your life. Write down how you might help that fruit to grow? What will you do or change in your life so that fruit has the best chance to become big and strong in you?

The fruit I choose is: _____

I will help it grow by _____

Can you think of people in your life who have these beautiful qualities within them?

List them here!

gentleness	_____
faithfulness	_____
self-control	_____
patience	_____
kindness	_____
joy	_____
generosity	_____
peace	_____
love	_____

Thinking about growing in Spirit...

Things grow! Plants, animals and even CHILDREN! When things start to grow they usually start tiny and get bigger. Think of the ways that you have grown so far. You started as a baby and now you are so big. As a baby you didn't know how to do very much, but now you can walk, talk and read.

God gives us his Holy Spirit as a gift of love in our lives. We can also grow spiritually; our love and faith can grow.

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit...

are like special tools God gives us when we're baptised and confirmed. These help us love God more and make good choices. It's like getting a superhero toolkit to help us do good things!

The Fruits of the Holy Spirit are what grow in our hearts when we use those tools. They are the good things people can see in us—like love, joy, peace, and kindness—when we live the way God wants.

So:

Gifts = the tools God gives us.

Fruits = the good things that grow in us, that others see. when we use our gifts well.



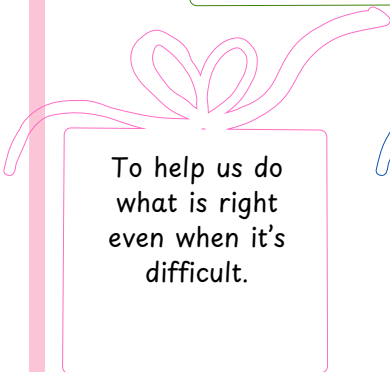
To see things the way God sees them.



To help us know the true meaning of what we are taught



To help us make right choices.



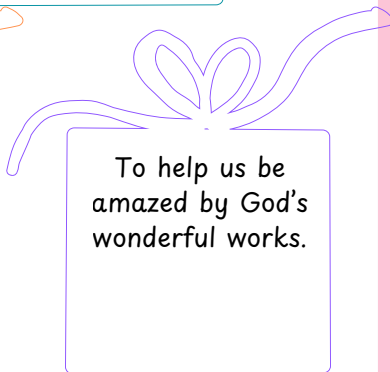
To help us do what is right even when it's difficult.



To help us know who God is in our lives.



To help us respect God's greatness.



To help us be amazed by God's wonderful works.

Using the following list of God's Gifts of the Holy Spirit, write the name of the gift in the box, to show that you understand the meaning of each word.

FEAR OF THE LORD WISDOM FORTITUDE UNDERSTANDING COUNSEL PIETY KNOWLEDGE

To complete at home this week:

Find out some facts about the life of the Saint you are choosing as your Confirmation name ☐ (tick)

List some of the ways you helped your spirit grow this week. _____

A Life Poured Out for Others

Honouring Catechist Gillian Hawkins

Gillian Hawkins was never someone who sought attention for herself. She simply saw what needed to be done and did it. She understood instinctively that a life of faith is not primarily about prominence, but about service. For decades, Gillian allowed God to do extraordinary things through ordinary acts of love. In doing so, she became a living witness to Jesus' compassion, always seeing a need and acting upon it, while consistently giving more than what was expected.

Her recent passing has left a profound void in the community. At her funeral Mass, Father David Ranson, Parish Priest of Chatswood, captured the depth of this collective grief: *"Gillian was so much a part of the fabric of our Parish life. In so many ways she was the soul of our Parish. And so there is a part of each of us that has died along with her."*

Gillian truly lived her life by a simple, universal truth made famous by the Beatles: "All you need is love." That love radiated first and foremost within her own family, as she lived a life in total service to her three children and her many grandchildren. Yet, her maternal heart extended far beyond her immediate family, reaching out to strangers, the searching, and the vulnerable within the wider community.

Since 1974, Gillian served as a dedicated Catechist in Dee Why, Collaroy, Chatswood and beyond. She held a deep passion for helping form young hearts in the love of God. Her commitment to this mission was unwavering. Even through periods of severe illness and gruelling medical treatments, Gillian continued to work. When she was feeling very unwell, she still stepped in for others, continuing this selfless service until very recently this year.

Her ministry took many vibrant forms. Through the Alpha program, she warmly welcomed people who were searching for faith, companionship, and meaning. Through her work with Streetwork, she could be found running BBQs at Bunnings, reaching out to young people and families with practical generosity and a genuine spirit of friendship. Gillian found immense personal comfort in her faith, but she found her ultimate purpose in helping others and connecting with her community.

Yet, for all her dedication, Gillian was never rigid or somber. She was delightfully fun-loving, carrying a deep affection for music, dancing, the arts, and sharing a good laugh. She brought joy into every room she entered, proving that a life of faithful service is one of abundance and celebration.

Gillian loved Christ, loved His Church, and she loved His people. Her legacy stands as a beautiful testament to the true greatness of a life spent in faithful service. While CCD Broken Bay deeply mourns her absence, the seeds of faith and love she planted in so many hearts will continue to bloom for generations to come.



Kristy Komadina

THE ART OF STORYTELLING



As we begin to write lessons for the Fourth Edition of ***Walking With Jesus***, I am reminded of the enduring power of story. Alongside the many Gospel accounts and parables, the program also includes purpose-written stories created by experienced catechists, such as *Mikala Mouse* and *Lachlan's Story* by Gayle Caulfield.

The Bible, particularly the Gospels, is rich with narrative that reveals the unfolding covenant between God and his people. Some passages stand alone as powerful reflections on the nature of God, our relationship with him, and our relationships with one another and the wider world. The parables of Jesus remain the most profound examples of storytelling, conveying sacred meaning through accessible and memorable images.



At the heart of effective catechesis lies the art of storytelling. If we do nothing more than faithfully proclaim the story within our lessons, we are already engaging in authentic catechesis. Children and young people are naturally receptive to story and are able to listen, imagine, and interpret with ease. When presenting Scripture, it is often necessary to provide historical or cultural context so that students can fully appreciate the message. However, such explanation is not an end in itself—the primary work of the catechist is always to lead students to Jesus Christ and, through him, to God our Father.

Recently, our team attended a demonstration on storytelling in Religious Education, presented by members of the Catholic Schools Broken Bay (CSBB) Religious Education team. Wooden figures were used to illustrate and bring the narrative to life, engaging students' imaginations and drawing them more deeply into the story. One particularly striking technique involved moving the figures before the reading of the action—for example, the Good Shepherd moving out from the fold to gather the sheep, followed by the sheep being returned one by one. This created a sense of anticipation that enriched the listening experience. After the story was read slowly and deliberately, students were invited to respond with “I wonder” questions, encouraging reflection and deeper engagement.



Almost every lesson in the *Walking With Jesus* program contains a story, and some units centre on a narrative that unfolds over several lessons. Our colleagues in CSBB also highlighted the importance of establishing a receptive listening environment—quieting the classroom through music or guided breathing, and inviting each child by name to come and gather in the learning space in preparation to hear the story, allowing time for students to settle around a prepared sacred space. They demonstrated a deliberate and measured style of proclamation, noting also the importance of using language that is appropriately simplified for the age and developmental stage of the students.

John Donnelly

As we continue to develop and teach these lessons, we are reminded of the central role of storytelling in catechesis, and of our ongoing responsibility to refine and deepen the way we proclaim the story of faith.

FROM THE REGIONS

Families Welcomed Home at Hornsby Cathedral Mass for SRE

On Sunday 28 June, the faith community of Hornsby Cathedral Parish, Our Lady of the Rosary, witnessed a beautiful convergence of school, parish, and family. Catechists and students came together for a special Sunday Mass, marking a highly successful initiative aimed at bridging the gap between Special Religious Education classes and the wider worshipping community.

The spark for this initiative emerged from a catechist meeting, where Catechist Coordinator Donna Fernandez discussed what the team wanted for their ministry. Their ultimate goal was inviting SRE families "home" to regular Mass attendance. The team opted for the vibrant 9:30 am Mass to ensure families could easily join the parish community for morning tea afterward.

To welcome families, Donna prepared a colourful newsletter sent directly to schools. It addressed common questions about coming to Mass and included an encouraging message from the parish priest, along with information on upcoming sacramental programs. On the day, despite some rain, a welcome table was set up. Assisted by Donna's family, around 20 public school students and their parents were greeted, welcomed by a couple of student welcomers, and gifted a set of rosary beads. To accommodate younger children, a box of holy picture books was created for them to access during Mass.

The event also served as a wonderful way to bring together all the catechists with most of the catechists attending. It provided a highly connecting space for them to bond with each other and meet their students' families.

The parish priest, Father Brendan, welcomed each school by name. During the Mass, the children were beautifully integrated into the liturgy through their various liturgical roles. For the Offertory, students carried up prayer boxes. This touch was inspired by catechist Debbie Wiggins, who invited her students to write their intentions on cards to be brought to Mass. The children also confidently read the Prayers of the Faithful and joined the congregation in singing Immaculate Mary—an old, well-known hymn, giving a nod to Our Lady of the Rosary Parish.

Moving forward, the parish plans to make this an ongoing initiative four times a year. This practical outreach is backed by a deep commitment to pray for public school families to return to Mass regularly.



Training and Formation

Voice of the Students - Voice of the Catechists

In the last school holidays, the CCD team undertook a synodal listening process as part of the fourth edition review of *Walking With Jesus: Pathways of Discipleship*. Using the *Conversations in the Spirit* model, catechists from across the Central Coast, Northern Beaches and North Shore deaneries were invited to participate in structured listening sessions held in person and online during the school holidays.

Rather than simply gathering feedback, these sessions were framed as a prayerful process of listening and discernment. Catechists reflected on their experience of using the current curriculum, shared what was supporting student engagement in faith, and identified areas for growth. What emerged was a strong sense of shared mission and deep commitment to the children they teach, along with thoughtful and constructive insights for the curriculum's ongoing development.

Building on this, catechists were also formed to use a similar synodal approach with their students, gathering children's voices and experiences of learning about faith in the classroom. While this stage is still underway, early responses are already offering valuable insight into how students engage with the curriculum.

This experience has strengthened a sense of hope. It has shown that when we commit to genuine listening and shared discernment, we not only improve what we produce, but deepen the relationships that sustain our ministry. We continue this work with gratitude and confidence that the Holy Spirit is guiding the journey.



Upcoming Formation & Training

CCD LEVEL 1 TRAINING



Our Level 1 'Tools for the Classroom' course continues! This optional course is suitable for Green card catechists who have completed our CCD Ministry Induction (CCDMI) course. Topics include Prayer in the Classroom, Miracles and Parables, and Listening & Questioning. We also include a full day hands-on Workshop where catechists will learn how to incorporate Music, Stories and Drama into lessons. For dates and more details, visit the training page on our website to view the flyer or ask your parish coordinator.

To register, contact CCD Registrations on 02 8379 1643 or email registrations@bbcatholic.org.au.

Calling All High School Catechists: Save the Date

CCD is offering a High School Catechist Workshop Day on Friday 25 September 2026 at Caroline Chisholm Centre, Pennant Hills.

More information and a personal invitation to high school catechists to come early in Term 3 – please mark your calendars. We look forward to seeing you...



Grace, Free Will, and the Power of the Sacrament

We have all witnessed it. After months of preparation, the big day arrives. The candidates step forward, the Bishop anoints them with Sacred Chrism, and the parish celebrates the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Then the standard routines of life resume. For many, the visible fruits of the sacrament - the zeal, the active faith, the sudden maturity, seem entirely absent. It leaves us asking a heavy question: ***If the sacraments are real, why are their effects so invisible in some, while so transformative in others? Did the sacrament fail?***

According to Catholic theology, the answer is a resounding no. The sacrament didn't fail, but to understand why, we have to look at the beautiful tension between God's perfect generosity and human free will.

The Objective Gift vs. The Subjective Response

The Church explains this using two foundational concepts: ***ex opere operato*** ("by the very fact of the action's being performed") and ***ex opere operantis*** ("from the agent's activity").

When a sacrament is validly celebrated, God never holds back. The grace is objectively delivered. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC 1303), Confirmation always achieves five real, permanent spiritual effects on the soul:

1. **It roots us more deeply in the divine filiation which makes us cry, "Abba! Father!"**
2. **It unites us more firmly to Jesus Christ.**
3. **It increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us.**
4. **It renders our bond with the Church more perfect.**
5. **It gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ.**

Every single candidate walks away from the altar with these five gifts indelibly marked upon their soul. The seed is planted perfectly. So, why the lack of fruit?

This is where ***ex opere operantis*** comes in. The fruitfulness of the sacrament depends entirely on the disposition of the recipient. God is a lover, not a dictator; He offers grace but never forces compliance.

The Sun, the Windows, and the Seeds

Think of God's grace like the radiant Australian sun. If you pull thick, heavy curtains across your window, your bedroom stays pitch black. The darkness isn't proof that the sun is a myth or lacks power; it's simply proof that the window is blocked. Many young people, often receiving the sacrament out of cultural routine or to please family, have the "curtains" of their hearts drawn shut.

Jesus explained this Himself in the *Parable of the Sower*. The seed is perfect, but if the soil is rocky, neglected, or choked by thorns, the plant cannot grow.



Our Mission as Catechists

This reality shouldn't discourage us; it should reframe our vital ministry as catechists. Our job isn't to create the grace - that is Christ's job. Our job is to help our students prepare the soil and pull back the curtains.

We must remember that grace has no expiry date. Theology teaches that if a person undergoes a genuine conversion later in life, a dormant sacrament "revives." The gifts of the Holy Spirit, packaged and waiting in the soul for years, finally burst into bloom.

Next time you are with your class, don't be discouraged by a lack of immediate, visible fireworks. Trust the objective reality of the sacrament. You are helping to plant seeds that God will water for a lifetime.

Kristy Komadina

2026 Diocesan Medal Awards

As the Diocese of Broken Bay marked its landmark 40th anniversary, the community came together and celebrated the extraordinary catechists whose decades of devotion shaped the hearts and minds of public school children in NSW.

At the Anniversary Diocesan Awards Gala Dinner, held on Friday 29 May at The Epping Club, Archbishop Anthony Randazzo, Apostolic Administrator, honoured 14 catechists with the prestigious Diocesan Medal. This medal recognised more than 40 years of unwavering service to the ministry of Special Religious Education (SRE).

Deepest gratitude and congratulations were extended to Carol Real, Valerie Donovan, Therese Adamski, Frances van Schie, Carmel Smith, Rita Biviano, Therese Gorman, Maria Sproats, Robyn Nevin, Barbara McCarthy, Dorothy Fulton, Cecilia Kean, Gloria Anne Wiggins and Mary Luci, whose medal was proudly accepted posthumously by her three daughters.

In addition, there were seven award recipients in other award categories who had also served in the Ministry of SRE, including Geoff and Norah Marland (Wyoming), Janette Merrotsy (Terrigal), Kerry Bugden (Wyong), Owen Casey (Kincumber), Ann Cartwright (Kincumber) and Louise Spencer (Hornsby).

The evening shone a bright light on Louise Spencer from the Cathedral Parish of Hornsby. She received a Papal Blessing and the Benemerenti Medal for 30 years of dedicated service to the Church, which included her profound impact on the catechist ministry. The diocese shared immense pride in Louise, the Diocesan Medal recipients, and all the awardees who served as the hands and feet of Christ in local schools and parishes.



Turn to the back page for more photos of the awardees



Award recipients