



Teaching is my ministry in the Church

By Anita Biddle

In Sunday's Gospel reading from Matthew 28: 16 - 20, I see Jesus as the great teacher. He has the attention of his disciples and once again encourages them to deliver his message far and wide. The men and women present at that moment, must have felt a sense of encouragement knowing that their leader is one who speaks the truth. As a teacher Jesus listened with compassion and showed genuine care for those he met. I also believe great teachers are willing to learn from others, as Jesus often demonstrated. One particular example is seen in Mark 7, where the Syrophenician woman changes Jesus's mind. Here I see a leader who listened with respect and discerned that he can do more from what he just heard and witnessed.

I believe Jesus addressed diversity and endeavoured to be inclusive. He demonstrated that healthy and respectful relationships were key in engaging with people. Many men and women of the ancient Church learnt from Jesus and presented themselves as sincere and committed disciples. It is my hope that as a society we can emulate these actions of human connection.

Two important events have occurred in recent weeks that have made me reflect on my ministry for the Church which I consider to be teaching. I taught for 21 years with Brisbane Catholic Education prior to beginning my role with the Safeguarding team in the Chancery of Broken Bay. I was fortunate to have taught a number of different year levels at both primary and secondary school, this also included my time as the REC for middle school students. I now have the privilege of communicating with Clergy, staff and volunteers of the Parish and colleagues of the Chancery. I see these interactions as opportunities to deliver an important Safeguarding message that incorporates my faith, and at the same time learning from all who participate.

Since moving to Sydney I have met and continue to meet many wonderful people, especially some very empowering women of the Church. These interactions and relationships strengthen my role as a Christian woman, a teacher and also my relationship with God. My work with Safeguarding however does, at times, present some personal challenges, particularly spiritually.

The first significant event that presented itself was when someone on Twitter retweeted information about a scholarship the Good Samaritan Sisters were offering, I did not hesitate in submitting my application.

The Good Samaritan Study and Mentoring Leadership Program aims to promote women's leadership within the Church. It offers support to mature-aged (age 30+) Catholic women as they undertake undergraduate or postgraduate theological or spiritual study at a recognised theological institution. I was successful in receiving this scholarship. I am very excited to be a

part of this program as not only will I be able to do further study, connect with inspiring women but also receive spiritual direction. I am very much looking forward to this.

Recently, Pope Francis issued “*Antiquum Ministerium*”, Instituting the Ministry of Catechist. He states in his letter, “From the beginning, the Christian community was characterised by many different forms of ministry carried out by men and women who, obedient to the working of the Holy Spirit, devoted their lives to the building up of the Church.”

What Joy I felt, when I read that both lay men and women have an opportunity of being formally recognised in the Church for their contribution to the mission of catechesis. Pope Francis states “*that the ministry of Catechists in the Church is an ancient one. Theologians commonly hold that the first examples are already present in the writings of the New Testament. The service of catechesis may be traced back to those “teachers” mentioned by the Apostle in the writing to the community of Corinth.*”

As I continue to immerse myself in the Church and learn as much as I can and contribute to the teaching of God’s mission, I am encouraged to... *teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*