



THE BRIDGE

A RESOURCE FOR AUSTRALIAN CATHOLICS
STRIVING TO SHARE THEIR FAITH
FORMERLY AUSVANGELIST | MARCH 2019

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan
and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for
forty days he was tempted by the devil.
Lk 4:1,2



PRAYER FOR EVANGELISATION

Father, through Jesus Christ you have charged us with the mission of preaching the gospel to all people.

May the Holy Spirit, your gift to us through Christ, move us to renew our own lives and to strive always to respond to your call to holiness so that we may effectively do the work you have given us to do.

Give us an experience of your presence in our lives and give us the enthusiasm and courage we need to share it with others.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, Amen.

POPE FRANCIS ENCOURAGES US TO PRAY AS WE
EVANGELISE: THE HOLY SPIRIT ALSO GRANTS THE
COURAGE TO PROCLAIM THE NEWNESS OF THE GOSPEL
WITH BOLDNESS (PARRHESÍA) IN EVERY TIME AND
PLACE, EVEN WHEN IT MEETS WITH OPPOSITION. LET
US CALL UPON HIM TODAY, FIRMLY ROOTED IN PRAYER,
FOR WITHOUT PRAYER ALL OUR ACTIVITY RISKS BEING
FRUITLESS AND OUR MESSAGE EMPTY. JESUS WANTS
EVANGELIZERS WHO PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS
NOT ONLY WITH WORDS, BUT ABOVE ALL BY A LIFE
TRANSFIGURED BY GOD'S PRESENCE.

THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL, #259

If you love your printed copy, that's great. But if you'd like to use less paper then email us today and we will email your next issue.



**National Centre
for Evangelisation**

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THE NCE IS AN AGENCY OF THE AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE
THE CATHOLIC ENQUIRY CENTRE IS A WORK OF THE NCE

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AGENTS OF EVANGELISATION NETWORK (AEN)

Since the middle of 2018 we have been encouraging people to join this network. Membership is open to anyone who wishes to contribute to the task of evangelisation in Australia either by sharing their wisdom, resources or time, as well as those who are seeking assistance with how to go about sharing their faith.

As people have signed up we have asked them to provide:

- A short biography
- Who they are interested in sharing their faith with (e.g. family, work colleagues)
- What they want to learn more about (e.g. Catholic spirituality, how to talk about tough issues)

It has been a privilege to read through the biographies of those who have responded. I have been inspired by the number of very ordinary Catholics doing extraordinary things in their own quiet way. I have also been encouraged by those who desire to share their faith but have indicated to us what prevents them. Some feel that because they aren't 'theologically' trained they aren't confident to talk about their faith, let alone, speak in defence of it. Many feel they cannot propose the Catholic faith to others because they are embarrassed and hurting by the sexual abuse scandals that have rocked our church. Some have indicated that it's hard to evangelise and invite someone along to their parish when the welcome/liturgy etc might be fairly ordinary.

The question is, how can we support each other? How can we cut through the reality of the scandals and parishes that lack vitality and get to the heart of what we are evangelising about – Jesus Christ? Well, here are a few suggestions:

If you aren't already a member of the AEN, sign up today (<https://nce.catholic.org.au/registration-form>)

If you are aware of great resources or events that can help people grow in their faith, and their desire to spread the good news, let us know (go to www.nce.catholic.org.au and look for links to how to get a resource/event listed). This month we have provided a number of resources from the NCE, a conference on mission that you could consider, details for a network of people interested in RCIA and links to Lenten resources (a way for you to grow in your own faith life).

We hope The Bridge will become a key resource for supporting you as you strive to share your faith with others.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Why 'the Bridge'? The newsletter of the Catholic Enquiry Centre, previously known as 'Ausvangelist', has served us well. As the title suggested: it sought to inspire those who are interested in supporting the mission of evangelisation in Australia. It became 'Ausvangelist' in 2001, building on previous publications from the CEC extending back 60 years.

'The Bridge' builds on this tradition, seeking to engage Catholics in supporting the work of the Centre and to consider ways in which they too might think about sharing their faith with others. Financial support is one valuable way of doing that, but there are others.

But why 'The Bridge'? Some time ago now, the Catholic Enquiry Centre (CEC) was integrated into the National Centre for Evangelisation (NCE). The NCE was set up by the Australian Catholic Bishops to provide leadership and resourcing in the mission of evangelisation in Australia. The connection between the two agencies was obvious. The CEC is primarily concerned with responding to people who are either not Catholic, yet interested in learning more about the Catholic faith, or people who may have been baptised Catholic, and yet who don't know a lot about the faith into which they have been baptised.

On the other hand, the NCE was set up to resource practicing Catholics as they sought to share their faith with others. Whether this is as someone employed by the Church in one of our parishes, schools, hospitals, social welfare agencies etc., someone in some sort of Church ministry, or as a parent or grandparent seeking to share their faith with the next generation. This is because it is central to who we are as baptised Catholics that we live what we believe – which means being able share the 'reason for the hope that we have' (see 1 Peter 3:15) with those we encounter on the way.

It is beyond the resources of both agencies to respond to the needs of all the people each has been mandated to serve in a country this size. The most effective thing we can do is provide a connection between those seeking to know more about our faith with those seeking to share their faith with others. The staff of the CEC and NCE (we are in fact one and the same) act as a "bridge" between interested Catholics and those who are in need of assistance as they journey towards a deepened understanding of the Catholic faith. Hence the title of this new resource.

You are central to this work. While always grateful for your financial and prayerful support, the most useful thing you can do is witness to your faith to those who are around you. For most of us, that will not involve doing anything explicitly 'evangelical'. Instead it involves a change in mindset and starts with an acknowledgment: that as a baptised Christian, my life must reflect my faith in everything I am, say and do. The way we live should raise questions for those who enter our lives. This isn't about 'preaching' to people, or about forcing our point of view on them. Far from it. It is about living our faith authentically and then, as the questions arise, being prepared to have a respectful conversation about why we believe what we believe.

Each of us must find our own answer to that question. Can you take the time to locate that answer now? If a stranger were to ask you the reason why you believe what you believe, what would you reply? Could you do it in a sentence or two? Is there an experience that you would refer to? Or perhaps an insight you once received that helped you make sense of your faith? Can you articulate that simply and in a non-defensive way?

To provide you with assistance in your task we have set up what we refer to as the "Agents of Evangelisation Network". Its primary purpose is to support and resource Catholics as they seek to grow in their understanding and awareness of their baptismal vocation. If you would like to know more about it I invite you to take a look at <https://nce.catholic.org.au/networks/agents-of-evangelisation-network>. And, if you are not already a member of that network, I invite you to sign up.

Wishing you every blessing as you seek to live the faith that you have.



SHANE DWYER
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MISSION PROJECTS

It's been terrific to be part of the project to rejuvenate our newsletter and to see our subscriber list grow as we welcome more members to our Agents of Evangelisation Network (AEN). We are grateful to see those who have supported the Catholic Enquiry Centre for many years, via their donations and prayers, continue their interest in the work we do. This column tends to report on that work, and in a way holds us accountable to you, our supporters. The Bridge will also become a significant resource that will assist you in sharing your faith.

Over recent months we have asked our AEN members to let us know how we can support them in their efforts to evangelise. Many have asked for resources or ideas to help them share or propose the faith to their children and grandchildren, family and friends, work colleagues and those who have become disillusioned and disconnected from the Catholic faith. We will do our best to honour these requests.

The following update provides the work we do responding to enquiries.

- In 2018 we gave out 669 free copies of *Call and Response: An Introduction to the Catholic Faith*. Over the next couple of months we have set ourselves a challenge to reconnect with all the people who received a free book in 2017 and 2018. It will be interesting to see how their various journeys have unfolded.
- In 2018 we received about 500 phone and 340 email enquiries. This is an increase of about 150 enquiries from 2017. The enquiries are hugely varied. About a third of them are questions about the faith (for example, how do I become a Catholic), a third are fairly practical (for example, where will I find my baptism details) and the other third often reflect what is happening in the secular world and where that intersects with the Catholic faith (for example the Royal Commission into Institutional Abuse).
- In the first six months of 2019 we will be upgrading our CEC website. This is a large task and at the appropriate time we will be keen to get your feedback. This site is predominately for seekers and enquirers about the faith. Last year we upgraded the National Centre for Evangelisation website. Both are good resources for you to know about.

Thank you again for financially and prayerfully supporting us – we couldn't do it without you! Until next month, God bless you.



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INSPIRATION

A RESTORATION PROJECT FOR WOMEN



For Kate Cleary 'The Farm' at Galong, NSW, started when she met women who had been through domestic violence and drug abuse, were estranged from their families, and had their children taken away as they had been incapable of looking after them or themselves. At first Kate would simply accompany them to appointments, but she could see the task at hand demanded more than bandaid treatments.

In prayer while on a retreat in 2011, she discerned God was asking her to completely restore these people. This was a project bigger than she could imagine; she was determined to be led by God, at each step asking "is this what you really want?" If God wanted it, he would provide.

She spoke of the needs of these women with her diocesan leaders and gained the support of Archbishop Christopher Prowse who offered an aged care facility that was empty and in need of refurbishment, but whose country setting provided the necessary quiet and secluded environment away from the pressures of life.

Building a firm foundation for this emerging project involved approaching people with both the women's needs and her vision. People and organisations freely offered their services to a project they understood as necessary and worthwhile. For Kate this was a sign from God that this was the way forward.

Today 'The Farm' is a residential therapeutic community for women who have exited rehabilitation facilities and are seriously seeking renewal in their lives and those of their children. The rhythm of meditation, manual labour, study, and counselling brings restoration in a community where people learn to nurture each other and journey to become the people they are meant to be. Through self-awareness they gather the courage to ask, "I've been through all this, what is God asking of me?"

When people finish their 'Farm' experience, Kate connects them to new communities where they can develop support networks. She turns to local parishes and speaks of the need at Sunday Masses and through seminars. She looks for volunteers who want to be involved in a mission, who will take on the role of mother, like Mary at the foot of the cross, mother of the suffering Jesus. Above all she searches for people who can come on board with the same love and commitment as the current workers. She feels that individuals who respond with this level of commitment are truly sent by the Holy Spirit.

For workers in this program once-off visits are insufficient; only constancy in accompaniment and teaching life skills can show their love is authentic. Kate has found that when the women see that you really care what happens to them they are open to advice that can really change them. She has found an openness to Christian faith and that the women are very attuned to Mary. But, she says, we have to be bold enough to share, we need to know what we have to offer and not be afraid to say, with confidence, that the Catholic faith can provide the fulfilment and connection that people seek in their lives. She believes that in talking about our faith we have don't have to dumb down what we offer, for people are already lost in a culture that dumbs down.

Kate experiences what Pope Francis says: "I see the Church as a field hospital after battle." Kate sees the Holy Spirit is active in the people who are inspired, Christian or not, to work for the unmet need. This is the spiritual aspect of evangelisation.

To support go to <http://www.thefarmingalong.com.au/donations/>

HOW DO I SHARE MY FAITH?

WITH MY FAMILY

WE ARE CALLED TO BE LIVING SOURCES OF WATER FROM WHICH OTHERS CAN DRINK

POPE FRANCIS, THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL, #86

- When talking about someone you know – like your mum or dad, a grandparent, a friend – don't just say they do a good job. Using examples, explain how they are constant in their accompaniment of people, how their love is authentic and how their commitment can be relied upon. Then talk about why they are like this – how God has touched their lives. Speak about their journey in faith and how they have grown as people of faith. Then share how they inspire your own faith.
- When someone is deeply moved by an event – either distressed or overjoyed – look for a moment when you, like Kate, can suggest to that person that this is a graced moment in their life, and encourage the question: "What are you asking of me, Lord?" Urge patience with this question, and if possible, share how you once received an answer to this question.
- Encourage your children, or your friends, to talk about the people they know who show a deep level of commitment to the welfare of others. Explain to them how this shows that they are inspired and sent by the Holy Spirit.
- We need to know what we have to offer when talking about our faith: "How does my Catholic faith provide fulfilment and connection for me? What is the basis of the hope that I have?" To share our faith we need to be able to talk about these things, and in just a few words, for we never know when we'll be asked to do this.
- Pope Francis says: "I see the Church as a field hospital after battle." God constantly calls us to heal the wounds in the people whom we encounter in our day to day lives. We need to remember that we share our faith through the witness of our lives as we persevere, even struggle, in our efforts to transform the lives of those near to us.

THE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR EVANGELISATION



CALL AND RESPONSE:

An Introduction to the Catholic Faith

This book is designed to assist you to learn about the Catholic faith. Written by John Collins in 2008 for the Catholic Enquiry Centre, it is useful for both the enquirer and catechist.

Enquirers about the faith can receive one free copy from www.catholicenquiry.com

Parishes/individuals may wish to order copies for \$8.80 +p&h via the ACBC online store (see link on www.nce.catholic.org.au). Purchase of this book allows us to provide free copies to our enquirers.



DISCOVERING PRAYER: A 30 day prayer journey of encountering God, and love

This book is designed for those learning to pray and those wishing to reignite their prayer life. It is an excellent gift for senior students, RCIA catechumens and candidates, staff in Catholic agencies.

The book is available for purchase from the ACBC online store (see link on www.nce.catholic.org.au) for \$3.00 +p&h. Discounted rates for bulk purchases apply. If you would like to see a sample copy prior to bulk purchase please contact us.



ABOUT THE CATHOLIC FAITH

These pamphlets come in packs of 10 for \$2.75 +p&h. They provide a succinct description of what the Catholic faith is about. This pamphlet can be placed in church and school foyers or in information packs for parents of children beginning to celebrate the sacraments.

Pamphlets are available from the ACBC online store (see link on www.nce.catholic.org.au)



SHARING THE FAITH CARDS

Looking for a simple way to start a conversation about the faith? Or maybe you have been asked a tricky question about the Catholic faith and you don't want to miss the opportunity of pointing the enquirer in the right direction. Then, you need a set of these cards. Maybe your parish could buy a box of these mixed cards and share them with the parishioners.

A box of 250 cards is available for \$22.00 +p&h from the ACBC online store (see link on www.nce.catholic.org.au)

EVENTS



Since 2014 Churches around the world have joined Pope Francis in 24 Hours for the Lord. This Lent you are invited to participate in 24 hours of time with the Lord in prayer, reflection, Eucharistic adoration and the Sacrament of Penance. Open to all, our Churches become a concrete sign of mercy and welcome to all people.

Diocesan links:

1. Adelaide: jgallio@adelaide.catholic.org.au
2. Broken Bay: faith.formatio@bbcatholic.org.au
3. Parramatta: office@ifm.org.au
4. Rockhampton: pastoral.projects@rok.catholic.net.au
5. Sydney: encounter@sydneycatholic.org

Resources:

- a. www.sydneycatholic.org/24-hours-for-the-lord
- b. <http://www.osv.com/Portals/4/Documents/PDF/24%20Hours2018.pdf>

RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS



CHRISTIAN INITIATION AUSTRALIA NETWORK (AND NEW ZEALAND) (CIAN)

Now is the time when many parishes are deeply engaged in bringing new people into the Catholic faith. Are you aware that there is a network operating in Australia to support those involved in the RCIA process? CIAN organises a national conference approximately every two years and its website provides a number of useful references. Recently added are some beautiful video testimonies from people who have experienced the RCIA process. These can be used in your parish (with acknowledgement) for free. 02 6201 9829 www.cianetwork.net

LENTEN RESOURCES



RESOURCES FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

At the time of printing the following resources were available:

1. Wollongong: 'Trust' from www.dowshop.org.au
2. Brisbane: 'Compassion' from <http://evangelisationbrisbane.org.au/shop-online/>
3. Broken Bay: 'Discerning the Way of Jesus' from www.bbcatholic.org.au

DO YOU HAVE RESOURCES TO SHARE?

Resources and Events can be proposed through our website nce.catholic.org.au