



THE BRIDGE

A RESOURCE FOR AUSTRALIAN CATHOLICS
STRIVING TO SHARE THEIR FAITH

JUNE 2019

The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father
will send in my name, will teach you everything
and remind you of all I have said to you.

John 14:26



PRAYER FOR EVANGELISATION

It is the Risen Christ who tells us, with a power that fills us with confidence and unshakeable hope: "Behold, I make all things new" (Revelation 21:5). With Mary we advance confidently towards the fulfilment of this promise, and to her we pray:

Mary, Virgin and Mother,
you who, moved by the Holy Spirit,
welcomed the word of life
in the depths of your humble faith:
as you gave yourself completely to the Eternal One,
help us to say our own "yes"
to the urgent call, as pressing as ever,
to proclaim the good news of Jesus.

Obtain for us now a new ardour born of the resurrection,
that we may bring to all the Gospel of life
which triumphs over death.

Give us a holy courage to seek new paths,
that the gift of unfading beauty may reach every man and woman.

Star of the new evangelization,
help us to bear radiant witness to communion,
service, ardent and generous faith,
justice and love of the poor,
that the joy of the Gospel
may reach to the ends of the earth,
illuminating even the fringes of our world.

Mother of the living Gospel,
wellspring of happiness for God's little ones, pray for us.
Amen. Alleluia!

POPE FRANCIS, 'THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL', FROM PARAGRAPH 288



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Reaching out in faith

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WHAT CHRISTIANS BELIEVE

THE STORY OF GOD AND PEOPLE IN MINIMAL ENGLISH



Anna Wierzbicka started writing 'The Story of God and People' many years ago when she wanted to help one of her grandchildren prepare for First Holy Communion and could not find resources that were adequate. Before she could explain her Catholic Faith to anyone she realised that she wanted to "explain to myself what I believe and be able to put it into intelligible words." This led her to constantly test her "Story" with her grandchildren aged 8 to 13 years.

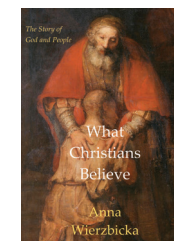
Her underlying motivation is expressed in the preface to her book: "many people today ... are unclear or confused about the essentials of the Christian faith." She turned to 'Minimal English' to "express the same faith in different languages, but also, to ... articulate that faith with greater precision than would be possible in one particular language". Minimal English enables her to 'evangelise' without the use of theological language and relying only on words that are easily understood.

For people with little knowledge of our Faith even key Christian concepts such as 'salvation' or 'grace' can provide obstacles to understanding. Such terms are explained at length as needed, as is done with "cross" in Chapter 26, or with "the kingdom of God is at hand" in Chapter 15.

Anna is Professor Emerita of Linguistics at Australian National University, Canberra. Her book is a resource 'outside of the box' which is of immense value in our multicultural and secular society.

THE BOOK

'The Story of God and People' in Minimal English, with the preface, and 40 short chapters with 12 images, is freely available from:
www.openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/handle/1885/155252



This "Story" is the core of the hardcover book 'What Christians Believe: The Story of God and People in Minimal English'. It has useful introductory chapters and a commentary on each of the 40 chapters.

Available from: www.oup.com/academic
with promotion code AAFLYG6 to save 30%.
Also online in amazon.com.au's Kindle Store.

FROM THE DIRECTOR



TIME TO GET SERIOUS

I remember an incident from when I was a boy, probably about 12 years of age.

It was the practice of my family to attend Mass together on a Sunday morning. I wouldn't say that my brother, two sisters and I were particularly fond of this aspect of family life, but it had been the case for as long as I could remember and none of us really thought to question it.

Yet I had to admit that, by the time my early teens came around, there was a quiet resentment starting to build toward anything the relevance of which I couldn't immediately see. Church seemed to be the obvious recipient of this resentment, largely because it fell on a Sunday morning and surely there were better ways we could be spending our time...

I guess I was mulling these things over as I knelt in church with my family all those years ago. A bit preoccupied and bored, I found myself suddenly paying attention to what was happening up the front. I wondered why the priest was doing what he was doing. It is not a particularly profound thought, but it took me into a space where I was paying attention to more than the merely superficial.

The point in the Mass we were at was the great doxology, where the priest holds up the host and the chalice and proclaims 'through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honour is yours, Almighty Father, for ever and ever...'

EITHER 'THERE'S NOTHING HERE AND NONE OF THIS MEANS ANYTHING', OR 'IT IS DEEPLY TRUE AND THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING'.

The words struck me and two questions occurred: 'what's he talking about?' and 'who's he talking to?' Then the realisation dawned: either 'there's nothing here and none of this means anything', or 'it is deeply true and that changes everything'. I could no longer have it both ways: sort of believe it may be true and yet relate to it as if it had no relevance to my real life.

I don't know why I decided on the side of 'this is deeply true and that changes everything': plenty of people don't. I recall the English comedian, Ricky Gervais, saying that he gave up on the existence of God when his older brother laughed at his faith. Ricky seemed suddenly certain that none of it was real and that he was somehow ridiculous for believing that it might be.

I believe we all need to go through that moment of questioning and decision. A child's faith in the existence and love of God is a beautiful thing to behold, but it cannot take most of us through the complexities of the adult life. The fact is, this is true of almost any aspect of human experience: our view of ourselves, our relationships, our sense of purpose, our understanding of the world etc. etc. all evolve and deepen as we grow. If they do not grow and develop we are somehow stunted as human beings.

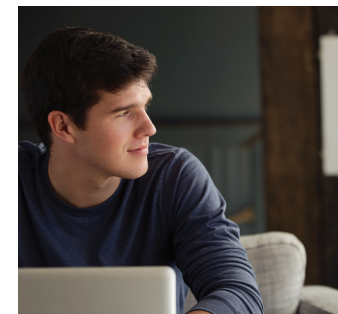
So why should we be surprised that the same is true when it comes to our relationship with God? The moment needs to come for all of us when we acknowledge that our naïve faith, as beautiful as it might have been, is but one stage on a journey that we need to undertake the whole of our lives, and which will take us into eternity. Eventually we have to choose: either we reject that early faith because we can't see how it helps us make sense of our experience, or we go on the journey toward deepening our awareness and understanding of God. Which will it be?



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MISSION PROJECTS



Another one of the joys of working at the Catholic Enquiry Centre is our contact with young people. As the CEC improves its web and social media presence, more young people are finding their way to either our 1300 number or our website where they can ask a question.

We often receive questions from students in the upper years of high school and, more often than not, they are working on assignments for their religious education classes. We get lots of questions about ethical and moral issues and what the Catholic Church's view might be on them. Most students seem happy enough to be provided with a basic response and maybe some links to useful resources, such as the Catholic Catechism. On the odd occasion we will get someone say, 'But why?' This is more challenging, but very rewarding as we delve a little deeper into the topic they are enquiring about. Young people certainly get to study more interesting things than I did way back in the 70's!

We also receive enquiries that are sometimes a bit harder to work through. As our enquirers can remain anonymous, they have the freedom to ask questions they might be too embarrassed to ask of people who know them. Some examples of these questions are about the Church's teaching on occult practices, abortion, sexuality and same sex marriage. Sometimes it is clear the enquirer needs to seek professional health care advice and/or counselling. Others seem prepared to chat (or email back and forth) about the reasons why the Church has certain beliefs. For our team it's a matter of 'expect the unexpected', and expect that the Holy Spirit will turn up to assist us as we do our best to respond to these young people.

Please keep these people in your prayers – they are often searching for 'something'. I'd like to hope we can help them in their search.



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INSPIRATION

AMBASSADOR FOR CHRIST



GOD WAS THERE IN ALL THE DETAILS: WHEN WE WENT THROUGH THE FIRE GOD WAS THERE IN THE FIRE WITH US.

It happened quite suddenly for Michelle, her husband Peter and their family of four daughters. It was an ordinary day in their Victorian country town of Bairnsdale and all was well, until later in the afternoon Peter's heart went into complete failure and he was flown to the Alfred hospital, over 300 kilometres away in Melbourne. Within weeks Michelle chose to relocate her family somewhere close to the hospital and find new schools for her daughters, so she could support her sick husband.

Michelle knew no-one in Melbourne and Peter was in hospital for most of their 10 month stay in the city. By God's grace, somehow her family "did life and school" while they were supporting Peter. From her new parish and school community in St Kilda, people came out of nowhere to give rent money and cooked meals, while her Bairnsdale parish and school community continued to pray for Peter's healing and keep in contact with the family. These two parishes worked together to help support the family, emotionally, spiritually and physically. Michelle says that God provided a safe place to land and she could see the Body of Christ coming alive through the compassion of others. She appreciates that she was also able to meet Christ daily in Mass in Melbourne, which became an anchor of hope.

Of these days Michelle says she "saw the invisible God becoming visible". This ongoing support became a "platform" which gave her faith "vibrant, real hope". She saw "God was there in all the details: when we went through the fire God was there in the fire with us."

The second chance at life, a heart transplant, finally became possible for Peter through the generous gift of an anonymous organ donor. With Peter's new heart, the miracle of no rejection or infection was more than she could possibly imagine. At the end of this long ordeal Michelle felt she had "been to the wilderness and come back."

Michelle says everything started with prayer, that she has seen too much that medical science cannot explain. She feels that while Peter received a physical heart transplant she received a spiritual heart transplant.

Back home in Bairnsdale she applied for the Sacramental Coordinator job. Now in that role she says: "I am active in supporting families within the community in their faith formation through the Sacraments of Initiation, initiatives with the GodStart program and teaching Children's Liturgy at Sunday Mass."

Michelle chose 'GodStart' for a parish-based post-Baptismal program for parents "to help teach their children about the love of God." Together with family Masses and themes such as blessing of the Cribs and blessing of the Crosses, she "honours" the anniversary date of the Baptism by sending out a card annually for over six years: "I want to acknowledge the day their child was adopted into God's family."

In sacramental preparation she uses a family-first parish-school model. The parish reaches out to Catholic families from the parish and state schools using personal invitations. She is persistent in inviting. Each sacrament has three interactive and engaging workshops which strive to create an environment for an encounter with Jesus to make faith real and authentic. Michelle is the face of the Parish, and works alongside teachers and families, as she prepares candidates to receive their Sacrament.

Parents are reminded that their families are their first congregation and that they need to share their family story to show God's goodness, just as she tells of her own experience of God's faithfulness in her life. Her challenging message is that our relationship within the family is an echo of our life with God.

Through all her work she believes in sharing her real-life experiences with people in order to share her faith. She sees her testimony is just like that of the Woman at the Well who was so moved by her encounter with Jesus that she rushed back to tell everyone about it.

HOW DO I SHARE MY FAITH? WITH YOUNG PEOPLE



THE YOUNG ARE CONSTANTLY CALLED TO MAKE DECISIONS THAT GIVE DIRECTION TO THEIR LIVES; THEY WANT TO BE HEARD, ACKNOWLEDGED AND ACCOMPANIED.

SYNOD OF BISHOPS, 2018: YOUNG PEOPLE, THE FAITH AND VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT, PARAGRAPH 7

- Little by little, over time, share your story with your children. Notice how God has taken care of the family in both good times and bad. If you are unsure about how to speak to your child seek advice from someone who talks to young people about God such as a catechist, religion teacher, or youth minister.
- Patiently listen to the young and ponder their words. If you do not have an answer or solution just say so and come back to them later after you have reflected.
- Learn about accompaniment. This can greatly help the young in the choices they make. The 2018 Synod on young people includes families in this:
 - As well as family members, those called to exercise a role of accompaniment include all the significant persons in the various spheres of young people's lives, such as teachers, animators, trainers, and other figures of reference, including professional ones. Paragraph 93
 - As the account of the Emmaus disciples shows us, accompanying requires availability to walk a stretch of road together, establishing a significant relationship. Paragraph 92
- Turn the everyday into a faith-filled life. What about praying grace before meals, having religious symbols in the house that speak to your children, and looking for gifts that have a religious focus (see our Resources section below).

GOOD MUSIC FOR THE YOUNG (AND NOT SO YOUNG)

As we know music is a beautiful way to pray. For many young people music can provide an entry point into our Catholic faith. In this issue we provide you with details about Catholic musicians. You might consider recommending or buying this music for the young people in your life, of if you are involved in parish music ministry then these musicians might be worth a listen.



STEPHEN KIRK

is based in Canberra and has released a number of albums, including Mass settings. His music can be purchased through online music stores (Apple, Spotify, GooglePlay etc.). To find out more, and listen to some of his music, including the Mass settings, go to: www.stephenkirk.com.au



GENEVIEVE BRYANT

is a young singer/songwriter based in Melbourne. Her music can be purchased from iTunes, Spotify and YouTube. To read more about Genevieve check out her new website: www.genbryant.com

Other Catholic musicians worth listening to are listed below. You can hear them on YouTube, and then purchase their music through iTunes and Spotify.

FR ROBERT GALEA (Australian)
www.frgministry.com/store/au

MATT MAHER (Canada/US)
www.mattmahermusic.com

AUDREY ASSAD (US)
www.audreyassad.com/store

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC YOUTH FESTIVAL – PERTH

If you're looking for a great Christmas gift for a young person why not gift them with a ticket to this great youth event? If you're a member of a PPC why not sponsor a young person to attend this festival – invest in the future! Visit www.youthfestival.catholic.org.au



GOOD BOOKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



HAVE YOU HEARD OF THE YOUCAT SERIES?

This is an inspiring set of resources comprising books and digital downloads for young people. Many parishes are recommending the purchase of these books as gifts for young people celebrating their Confirmation and as an excellent resource for class discussion and youth groups. The developers of this series write: "YOUCAT wants to make the contents of faith, as they are given in Holy Scripture and in the Catechism, shine anew".

The first book in the series was published in 2010 with a forward by Pope Benedict XVI. The YouCat, or Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church, presents the catechism in a language suitable for young people, using a question and answer format, with commentaries, pictures, definitions of key words, citations from Sacred Scripture and quotations from saints and other teachers of the faith.

The DoCat is a great little app that a young person can have on their phone (or in a book format) that helps them to understand, and live out, the social doctrine of the Catholic Church.

TITLES AVAILABLE IN THE YOUCAT SERIES

- YouCat Catechism
- YouCat Bible
- YouCat Youth Prayer Book
- YouCat Confirmation Book
- YouCat for Kids
- YouCat Reconciliation
- YouCat What to do
- DoCat (App for phones)

Visit www.youcat.org (official website) or www.freedompublishingbooks.com.au to purchase.