



THE BRIDGE

A RESOURCE FOR AUSTRALIAN CATHOLICS
STRIVING TO SHARE THEIR FAITH
OCTOBER 2019

Throughout the world, let us be 'permanently in a state of mission'. Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, §25



Caroline Chisholm

PROUDLY
SUPPORTED BY



IN GRATITUDE

Now in its 60th year, the Catholic Enquiry Centre responds to enquires about our Faith by phone, mail and email. It offers information and free materials and connects enquirers to their local church.

As a measure of our sincere gratitude to all who support our work, please be assured of our regular prayers for you and your families. We hope and pray that your giving is richly rewarded, both in this life and in the life to come.

For more information about how to make a bequest please contact us directly.

ABOUT THE COVER

'Caroline Chisholm, The Emigrant's Friend', Sydney, Australia, c.1845.
Artist: Unknown (Alamy).

He called on his Chosen to come:
she listened, and hastened to rise;
And he charged her to build them a home,
where the tears should be dried from their eyes.

Henry Kendall: CAROLINE CHISHOLM. "A perfect woman, nobly planned, to warm, to comfort, and command."
Empire (newspaper), Tue 14 Oct 1862, page 5.

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
(02) 6201 9833

info@nce.catholic.org.au
nce.catholic.org.au
[facebook.com/groups/
AgentsofEvangelisationNetwork](https://facebook.com/groups/AgentsofEvangelisationNetwork)



Catholic Enquiry Centre
1300 432 484
catholicenquiry.com

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

COVER IMAGE: Artist: Unknown (Alamy).

VOL 1 No.8 OCTOBER 2019 ISSN 2209-7287
Permission to copy with acknowledgement

YOUR SUPPORT

To aid the Catholic Enquiry Centre in its mission
in Australia

While our hope is that your main contribution to
the work of the Centre will be a prayer, some may
still like to offer a small donation.

NAME	
ADDRESS	
STATE/TERRITORY	P/CODE
EMAIL	
I ENCLOSE MY DONATION CHEQUE FOR \$	
OR DEBIT MY	MASTERCARD VISA
AMOUNT \$	
CARD NUMBER	
EXPIRY DATE /	
NAME	
SIGNATURE	
DATE	

Post this coupon to:
Catholic Enquiry Centre
GPO Box 368
Canberra ACT 2601

Online credit card donation:
www.catholicenquiry.com
Direct debit:
email: info@catholicenquiry.com

OCTOBER 2019

FROM THE DIRECTOR

HOW DO CATHOLICS RELATE TO THE SCRIPTURES?



FOR THAT IS WHAT THE
SCRIPTURE IS FOR:
TO BRING US INTO
CONNECTION WITH GOD
AND WITH ONE ANOTHER

A while back I was discussing our faith with a young man I encounter on a regular basis. He describes himself as a 'former Catholic' or, more positively, as a 'devout Atheist.' He gave up on the practice of his faith because, in the course of one of the religious education classes he attended at a local Catholic secondary school, he was told that the world was created in seven days. He was instructed that he needed to accept this because the Bible says so. When he questioned this reading of history from a scientific perspective, he was told that science is wrong. He decided then and there that 'belief in God is for idiots.'

More recently I tentatively decided to give my young friend a book: a classic text written by Thomas Merton, detailing his journey from atheism to a deep relationship with Jesus Christ as a Catholic, *Seven Storey Mountain*. Before giving it to him, I tested out whether or not he would be willing to receive a book from me. He was, although admitted to being worried that I was about to hand him the Bible. He said that Christians had tried to do that before. This gave me food for thought. It hadn't occurred to me to provide him with a copy of the Bible: but why not?

Personally, I am not a great fan of inexperienced individuals, unsupported and left to their own devices, being encouraged to read the Bible. We see the harm that it can do when people take passages out of context, with no training and guidance on how those passages are to be understood. A recent example of the harm it causes has come to us via the now infamous social media post by the sporting great, Israel Folau.

More often than not, it is the Bible in the hands of the inexperienced that has led to the situation Christianity finds itself in today. At last count, there are something like five thousand individual groups (or denominations) within the Christian fold. The vast majority of them have been started by individuals, or a handful of individuals, who took hold of the Bible and appointed themselves the authority on interpreting what the particular passages might mean.

These are, by and large, good people. However, the mistake that is made is this: obedience to God and everything that goes with that, is not the same thing as being obedient to my particular interpretation of my favourite passages of Scripture. An entry into understanding Scripture is first and foremost an entry into discipleship with Jesus Christ. We find in Scripture the seeds of understanding what that relationship might mean. It is a relationship in which we are invited into the long process of moving beyond ourselves, our own egos and instinctive preoccupations, and learning to look at the world with the eyes of love with which God looks at the world (John 3:15). With prayer and guidance, we come to understand what Scripture can show us about how to live that relationship in the context of our lives as they are today. We don't do this alone, and we don't set ourselves up as the sole experts on how this is to be lived and understood. We look to our spiritual guides (those in our faith community who are already well along on this journey) and our holy ones (the saints the Church has identified for us) for guidance. We remain humble and open to searching for new and deeper understandings, and we don't imagine that we have all the answers.

No, I wouldn't give my young friend the Bible. Soon, if he were open, I might give him a copy of the gospel according to Mark. I'd encourage him to read that from beginning to end in one sitting, and when he was done, I would talk him through any questions he might have. Once we had worked our way through that, I might give him one of Paul's letters: perhaps Ephesians or Colossians. Gradually we'd get around to more and more of the Bible, but at his pace and only in the context of helping him build his relationship with Jesus Christ and with the Body of Christ. For that is what the Scripture is for: to bring us into connection with God and with one another. It is not a tool to be used to reassure ourselves that we are 'saved' and to cause hurt to others.

Postscript: It is with sadness we advise that Shane Dwyer has resigned from his role as Director of the NCE and CEC. Shane's dedication to the ministry of evangelisation, and his giftedness in expressing the beauty and challenges of our Catholic Faith, will be greatly missed. He is looking forward to working with the Archdiocese of Brisbane in a related role.



SHANE DWYER

Director
National Centre for Evangelisation
Catholic Enquiry Centre
director@nce.catholic.org.au

COMMITTING TO PARISH RENEWAL

I was struck recently by a post on our closed Facebook group. One of our regular correspondents noted, with some frustration, the lack of welcome to be found in many Catholic parishes. He mentioned how he had given members of his parish a certain parish renewal book that emphasised the importance of hospitality. He was fairly sure the book had never been opened. Have you had a similar experience? Are you a committed parishioner who feels frustrated because there seems to be no energy in your parish, even for something as fundamental as the ministry of hospitality?

It is easy to become frustrated and disheartened. But what can you do? Well, one thing I've noticed is the number of parishes and dioceses around Australia committing themselves to some sort of renewal. Each week I read about a parish commencing Alpha or looking at different types of programs that emphasise evangelisation and faith formation or encourage new ways of parish leadership. I wonder if this is a result of the Plenary 2020 process? Are parishes saying that they don't actually need to wait for the results, or the permission, of the Plenary, to step up, and get moving?



An example of this is Bega Parish, located on the south coast of NSW. The NCE recently facilitated a parish formation weekend,

followed by a day's formation for their new PPC. The parish has worked out which values will underpin how they work together and where their efforts should be focused. They are now planning for how they can make their parish a truly great one. They realise this will be messy and not everyone will like the changes. But they are willing to give it a go!

Is this something you would like to do in your parish? Don't know where to start? Then get in touch. We can point you in the direction of good resources, including people who can support you. Christ called us to share his Good News. That's the only permission we need to get on with the task of sharing our faith.



SHARON BREWER

Mission Projects Manager
Catholic Enquiry Centre
mission@nce.catholic.org.au

INSPIRATION

ALPHA IN A CATHOLIC CONTEXT



WE HAVE REDISCOVERED THE FUNDAMENTAL ROLE OF THE FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT, OR KERYGMA, WHICH NEEDS TO BE THE CENTRE OF ALL EVANGELIZING ACTIVITY AND ALL EFFORTS AT CHURCH RENEWAL. EVANGELII GAUDIUM, #164

Lorraine McCarthy's working life began in a medical research lab. When she was 28 years old her husband died and she decided to retrain for something closer to her heart. She had always been involved in her parish and in looking for ways to bring people into a relationship with Jesus. Sr Joan, a friend, suggested she look at a role new to Lorraine: Pastoral Associate in a parish. Thus began a long road in study focusing on adult faith formation.

As a pastoral associate Lorraine has worked out of her passion for adult faith formation which she still sees as the future of the Church. "If people know God and have a relationship with him they'll bring their children with them", she explains. Her heart is centred on seeing parishes become thriving missional communities and in helping dioceses to bring this about.

Lorraine first heard about Alpha in 1998 while working as a pastoral associate. Her younger sister who had been distant from God visited her and enthusiastically filled her in on her new Church; a friend had taken her to Alpha. Lorraine was so impressed that she ran her first Alpha in 1999. Since 2014 she has worked with Alpha Australia, supporting Catholic communities with training and advice.

Lorraine has found Alpha to be a "consistently fruitful way ... for people to come to faith and grow in a relationship with Jesus." It can reach people disconnected from faith and parish life, or refresh the faith within communities.

Alpha is a simple process of ten gatherings, involving a shared meal, a video presentation and a conversation. It helps people to form relationships and build bridges of trust in a Church where trust has been eroded. Rather than beginning with catechesis and discipleship – like planting seeds in concrete - Alpha begins with relationship. That is, an encounter with, and personal decision to follow Jesus. It does this by presenting the kerygma, which Pope Francis calls "the first proclamation: "Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you." (Evangelii Gaudium, #164).

Parishes start by running Alpha with the team that will later lead it. They are supported by its free video resources, face to face training and telephone mentoring from Lorraine. When parishioners complete an Alpha they are encouraged to invite people to come to the next Alpha. In turn these newcomers often become engaged in parish life. After a couple of years of sustained work, and a culture of invitation has been established, a significant number of unchurched people can be reached. Lorraine loves the excitement of Alpha teams as they see people's faith come alive and grow.

Alpha has reached thousands of Catholic parishes worldwide and over 25 million people have done Alpha. This year there have been 260 Alpha courses in Australian Catholic parishes or schools, with over 11,000 completing an Alpha run in a Catholic context in the last three years.

Always on the go training Alpha teams, prayer is a challenge for Lorraine and daily Mass hard to access. She feels more effective in reaching people if she is intentional about beginning the day with prayer. She uses an Alpha app 'Bible in One Year' with a commentary from Alpha's founder, and puts considerable time aside for reflection on it; 2019 is her third time 'round.

Still, she finds evangelising hard as, like other Catholics, she is not hardwired to talk to people about Jesus. Alpha has provided her with a way to do this. In the last few years she has more consciously talked about what her faith means to her with people she meets. She is not "pushing" religion onto people, but, when appropriate, will ask, "Do you mind if I pray for you?"

Visit <https://australia.alpha.org> for more information and to preview Alpha Resources.

Or: <https://australia.alpha.org/catholic-context/home>

If you are interested in running Alpha, contact Lorraine on: lorraine.mccarthy@alpha.org.au

HOW DO I SHARE MY FAITH?

WITH CLOSE FRIENDS WHO HAVE STOPPED GOING TO MASS



THE CHURCH MUST BE A PLACE OF MERCY FREELY GIVEN, WHERE EVERYONE CAN FEEL WELCOMED, LOVED, FORGIVEN AND ENCOURAGED TO LIVE THE GOOD LIFE OF THE GOSPEL. EVANGELII GAUDIUM #114

- When your friend says, I didn't go to Mass on the weekend, gently ask "Why?" Listen carefully.
 - If they say it's a logistics problem, are you able to help them out? For example, do they need a lift or someone to look after an elderly parent or a young child while they go to Mass?
 - If they say, they can't be bothered anymore, or that church has lost its relevance, can you pluck up the courage to challenge this?
 - If your friend offers you a reason, but you don't feel confident or competent to respond, then do something about it. For example, if it is about church teaching, then do some reading on the topic. Practice your response, ensuring it is expressed in a language style that suits the person.
- To be able to encourage others to return to going to Mass may mean doing some self-evaluation. Why are you still going to Mass? Is that reason worthy of sharing with your friend?
- Let your friend know that the faith community is incomplete without their presence. Let them know they are valued, and that they have something to offer the community. And Jesus, in his presence in the Eucharist, certainly has something to offer them.
- Invite your friend to a Mass where you would like their company, for example on the anniversary of the death of a loved one.
- Returning to Mass again can be daunting especially if one has forgotten the words and gestures. So invite your friend to go with you to your parish Sunday Mass. Meet them outside the Church, go in and sit together, and introduce your friend to other members of the parish community. If a 'cuppa' isn't offered after Mass then consider going for a coffee and a chat.

PARISH RENEWAL



ALPHA IN A CATHOLIC CONTEXT

Most people cannot find a door into the church that attracts them. Alpha can be that door. It helps a parish to reach people disconnected from faith and parish life or to refresh the faith of parishioners. Joy is at the heart of the experience of Alpha: in welcoming others, eating together, friendship, simple prayer, the warmth and humour of the talks about our Faith, and in people sharing their own stories.

For an overview: <http://bit.ly/unlockingthesecret>

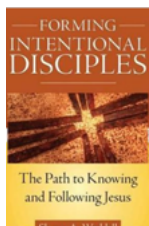
Comprehensive brochure: <http://bit.ly/AlphaBrochure>

Information and preview Alpha Resources: australia.alpha.org

Alpha in a Catholic Context:

<https://australia.alpha.org/catholic-context/home>

If you are interested in running Alpha, contact Lorraine at lorraine.mccarthy@alpha.org.au

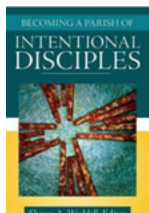


SHERRY WEDDELL: FORMING INTENTIONAL DISCIPLES

How do we equip our faith sharers? This book explains the five key steps for this: starting with trust, then curiosity, leading to openness, then to seeking, and finally to a conscious decision to follow Jesus. How to open a conversation about belief, how to ask thought-provoking questions and we establish an atmosphere of trust, and when to tell the Great Story of Jesus.

Bishop Barron's explanation of these five 'thresholds': <http://bit.ly/BarronIntentional>

About the author: <https://siena.org/our-cofounders>



SHERRY WEDDELL: BECOMING A PARISH OF INTENTIONAL DISCIPLES

A collection of articles:

- The role of intercessory prayer in parish transformation
- How "fireside chats" can help a priest connect with his parishioners
- The co-responsibility of lay people and priests in the work of making disciples
- The revolutionary impact of a discipleship approach to youth ministry
- How one parish successfully fostered a culture of intentional discipleship

PARISH RENEWAL



BUILDING STRONGER PARISHES

A series of six in-depth reports examining parish vitality arising from Australian Catholic Bishops' research into Australian parishes. The six reports are:

- 1) Community Building, Welcoming and Hospitality
- 2) Liturgy
- 3) Spirituality and Faith Formation
- 4) Mission, Outreach and Evangelisation
- 5) Leadership
- 6) Planning

www.catholic.org.au/shop/acbc-shop



TRUDY DANTIS: A HANDBOOK FOR BUILDING STRONGER PARISHES

Australian case studies are presented with down-to-earth examples of what can be achieved in eight key areas that build stronger parishes: Planning, Spirituality and Faith Formation, Liturgy, Community Building, Welcoming and Hospitality, Outreach, Evangelisation, Leadership. Includes reflections, discussion questions, and action sheets.

"This is not a book that one simply reads and puts down. Rather, it invites us to get busy with strengthening our own parish." Bishop Julian Porteous, Foreword.

<http://bit.ly/HandbookBSP>



CATHERINE OF SIENA INSTITUTE IN AUSTRALIA

Called & Gifted™ Discernment Process

The Called & Gifted™ Discernment Process has been used since 1993 by over 100,000 lay, ordained, and religious Catholics and other Christians around the world. It is designed to help Christians discern the presence of charisms, or special gifts of the Holy Spirit, in their lives to share their faith with others.

For example, Caroline Chisholm's gift of wisdom enabled her to find solutions to contemporary social problems, and she arrived at the idea that God had 'called' and 'gifted' her for the task at hand.

Comprehensive brochure: <http://bit.ly/SienaInstitute>

<http://www.sienainstitute.org.au/Home.aspx>

RESOURCES



EXTRAORDINARY MISSION MONTH OCTOBER 2019 - How to live your own Extraordinary Missionary Month

The Extraordinary Missionary Month is to be an opportunity for reflection, prayer and support for the missionary efforts of individuals, communities and the whole Church. As the Pope's official Mission aid agency of the Catholic Church in Australia, Catholic Mission helps Catholics in Australia to live out the call to live God's mission in the world.

<https://catholicmission.org.au/about-emm>



SHARING THE WORD eLibrary

A comprehensive and growing Catholic library at your fingertips with full text and free online access to nearly 12,000 open source ebooks, journal articles and essays, Church documents, theses, podcasts, etc. as well as major relevant websites. Read on phone, download, print.

Begun in 2014 by Hans Arns, a former librarian at the Veech Library (CIS) in Sydney, who says "I hope that Sharing the Word proves to be a useful tool in combating the rising amnesia of the Christian message and its history".

A project of the Pontifical Society of St. Peter the Apostle and led by Catholic Mission.

<http://sharingtheword.info>



MARIAN PROCESSION & YOUTH PILGRIMAGE Sunday, 27 October, 2019

St Clement's Retreat and Conference Centre Galong, NSW. A Multicultural family day of prayer and festivities

9.30am Youth Pilgrimage

10.30am Sacrament of Penance

11.30am Mass with Archbishop Prowse

12.30pm Multicultural lunch

2.00pm Procession to the grotto

Pilgrims should bring food for the day, an umbrella for shade and a chair.

Contact (02) 6239 8500 or

www.marianprocession.org.au