



your charity

JULY 2009

Students One Day, Teachers the Next

Twelve students in their final year at Cronulla's De La Salle Senior College have turned the tables and taken over as teachers.



Volunteer catechists from De La Salle Senior School, left to right: Anthony Bava, Ashley Plakedis, Jake Bracken, Maree Cullen (religious education co-ordinator) Scott McConnell, Jemma Aziz.

In between their own classes, Year 12 seniors at De La Salle teach Bible Study and Scripture to Year One and Year Two pupils, and according to Maree Cullen, Religious Education Co-ordinator at the school, are having a ball.

"The main reason they volunteered as catechists was to experience classroom teaching," Maree says. However after taking classes for several weeks, the students say their faith has deepened and preparing for each class, has made them think about their faith and find the best ways to present their ideas to their young charges.

The students at De La Salle and at three other Sydney Catholic high schools volunteered to train as catechists after a recruitment drive by the Archdiocese of Sydney's Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) earlier this year.

"The response from young people was terrific," says CCD's director and the mastermind behind the recruitment campaign, Robert Haddad.

In all, more than 49 students signed on. Trained to become religious educators by their particular schools, the young catechists are now giving scripture classes at secular primary schools across Sydney.

"Many of our catechists are ageing so it is important that we have young people interested and eager to begin training," Robert says.

The CCD, the agency that oversees Sydney's 1,700 catechists, provides training and support and also resources including detailed curriculums, books, videos and whatever else a catechist might need in the classroom.

Along with De La Salle Senior College, students in years 11 and 12 from "Fairfield Pats", as the Patrician Brothers College is affectionately known, Bethlehem College, Ashfield and St Charbel's College Punchbowl, have also become religious educators to infants at state schools in their area.

"Our students are really enjoying teaching infants and the entire experience," says Maree Cullen, adding that De La Salle hopes to make volunteer catechists part of the school tradition.

"In Term three, Year 12 students will begin preparing for their Higher School Certificate and will pass on the responsibilities as catechists to interested students from Year 11. That way our involvement can be sustained and continue as an important part of our Ministry program."

According to Maree, having senior students teach Bible classes is very much in the tradition of St John Baptist de La Salle, the patron saint of Christian teachers.

"It is also a wonderful connection with the school's parish," she says.

For more information on becoming a catechist log on to www.ccdsydney.catholic.edu.au

WHOOOPS!

A YEAR after World Youth Day 2008, Sydney's deaf community at the Ephpheta Centre is still laughing. Seems that languages whether spoken or signed can cause problems for the unwary, as Fr Martin Kershaw, chaplain for the Deaf in Liverpool, England, discovered to his chagrin.

In Britain, the deaf use BSL (British Sign Language) while in Australia we use Auslan (Australian sign language.)

"The two languages share the same signs for the same words about 70 percent of the time. But as with any language, slang and dialects develop and certain signs can mean something completely different depending on which country you are in," says Nicole

Clark, assistant to the Director at the Archdiocese of Sydney's Ephpheta Centre.

In Sydney for WYD08, Fr Kershaw celebrated a Mass for the deaf who attend the Ephpheta Centre.

As the Mass drew to a close, he signed: "God Bless all you people" to the congregation. The only problem was that the sign for "people" in Britain has a completely different meaning Down Under. But it wasn't until after the service that Fr Kershaw learned that when translated into Auslan, what he had signed was not "God bless all you people," but instead "God bless all you bastards."

"Fr Kershaw was mortified but Sydney's Deaf Community was delighted and thought it was a huge joke," says Nicole who adds that eventually Fr Kershaw saw the funny side and regaled the deaf back in Britain with the story.

Letter from the CWF Chairman, Fr Philip Linder

My Dear Friends,

For more than 35 years, parishioners throughout the Archdiocese of Sydney have given their generous support to the Charitable Works Fund (CWF) Appeal. Unreservedly opening their hearts Sydney's Catholics have raised just under \$3 million a year since 2004 and made a profound difference to the lives of more than 100,000 men, women and children across the city.

The agencies funded by the CWF offer a wide range of services. Donations are used to help families in crisis, teenagers find jobs and refugees settle into their new lives. Funds also go towards helping members of the Stolen Generations heal and provide Scripture, Bible study and Masses in sign language for Sydney's Deaf community. In addition, your generosity helps train our future priests at the Seminary of the Good Shepherd and provides administration and resources for the 1,700 volunteer catechists at the State's primary and secondary schools.

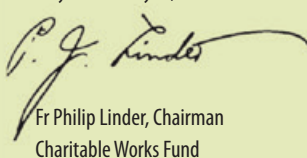
CWF funds also go towards maintaining the important work carried out by the Catholic Aboriginal Ministry at La Pouse and Redfern, and at its Aboriginal Healing House at Picton. Support for our chaplaincies at Sydney's secular universities is another part of our work.

In this our first newsletter, we want to give you an insight into what we do and introduce you to some of those on the frontline. People like Marisa Donato, one of CatholicCare's foster mothers. You will also meet Barbra Asplet, who runs the Aboriginal Healing House at Picton, Brenda O'Donnell and Elsie Heiss of the Catholic Aboriginal Ministry, Nicole Clark at the Ephpheta Centre, Father Anthony Percy, the new Rector of the Seminary of the Good Shepherd and other extraordinary people who have devoted their lives to helping others.

As we launch our Winter Appeal for 2009, we are aware the strain the economic downturn has put on families and working people. Donating has become much more difficult as budgets tighten and the country sinks into recession. But for those on the margins, life has become even tougher, and our programs and pastoral care are needed now more than ever.

Thank you once again for your kindness towards CWF and special thanks to the parish priests of the Archdiocese, who promote our Appeals, telling you about our work and how it is made possible by your very generous donations.

May God bless you,



Fr Philip Linder, Chairman
Charitable Works Fund

Convict Chalice Still in Use

The Archdiocese of Sydney's Prison Chaplaincy is the oldest chaplaincy in Australia dating back to the early nineteenth Century when convicts were still being transported to Botany Bay.

Almost as old as the chaplaincy is the silver chalice used by priests ministering to those in the overcrowded cell blocks behind the thick forbidding walls of Darlinghurst Gaol.

"We still use the chalice today," says Fr Peter Carroll, chaplain at the Long Bay Correctional Centre. "The silver is thin and it's very fragile and for this reason it is only used occasionally. But when it is, those we minister to feel a very special connection."



Thanks to the generosity of St Vincent de Paul, Epping Conference, the chalice has recently been resilvered and restored. A treasured item of the Prison Chaplaincy, the chalice is engraved on one side with the words "R.C. Vestry," under which is written: "Darlinghurst Gaol."

A detailed history of the chalice is lost in the mists of time but it may well date back to 1841 when the first cellblocks at Darlinghurst Gaol were completed. With Irish Catholics making up the majority of Australia's population of convicts, the Catholic chaplaincy was all-important, as were the visits by the Sisters of Charity who began visiting Sydney's prisons three years earlier, shortly after their arrival at Sydney Cove.

Built to house 732 male prisoners and

156 females, the prison was notorious for overcrowding and by 1850 had three times that number.

Darlinghurst Gaol which conducted public executions on a makeshift gallows outside the main gate on Forbes Street, was home to some of Australia's most notorious criminals including bushranger Captain Moonlight, alias Andrew Scott, Jimmy Governor aka Jimmy Blacksmith, John Knatchbull and Louisa Collins. John Knatchbull was an upperclass Englishman transported to Australia for stealing. He later was sentenced to hang after a robbery in which he murdered shopkeeper, Ellen Jamieson in the most gruesome of circumstances.

Louisa Collins was even more infamous and made headlines across Sydney during her trial where she was accused of killing two of her husbands by poisoning them with arsenic. She was hanged outside

the gaol in 1887 and was the last woman executed in NSW.

But not all inmates were evil and infamous. Many were in gaol for minor offences such as stealing bread to feed a family or as happened to poet-author Henry Lawson, put behind bars for drunkenness and vagrancy.

Darlinghurst Gaol was closed in 1912 and prisoners transferred to the newly-built Long Bay Penitentiary. And along with the prisoners went the historic chalice.

The old gaol then became a World War I internment centre and finally in 1921 became East Sydney Tech, the city's renowned art school.

The gaol may have closed but the tradition of prison chaplaincies continues.

Ephpheta Celebrates 30th Birthday

Highly regarded internationally, Sydney's Ephpheta Centre has helped change the lives of the city's deaf and hearing impaired. Now with expanded new premises in Punchbowl, the Centre is preparing to celebrate its 30th birthday on 2 August and plans to pull out all the stops.

The 500 plus members of Sydney's deaf community are unafraid of hard work. When the Archdiocese of Sydney's Ephpheta Centre made the move from Flemington to Punchbowl earlier this year, there was no shortage of volunteers.

Proud of their new home in the grounds of St Jerome's Catholic Church, they moved furniture, unpacked boxes, sorted out filing cabinets, stocked cupboards, arranged the sacristy and organised the Centre's small but beautiful new chapel.

But the hard work didn't stop there and in April when a call went out from a fellow Catholic agency to help out with a two day working bee in the bush, more than 25 members of Ephpheta put up their hands.

Full of enthusiasm, the Ephpheta working bee took off a short time later for Mt Razorback near Picton to give some long overdue TLC to the Archdiocese of Sydney's Aboriginal Catholic Ministry's Healing House.

Joining forces with Aboriginal Catholic Ministry (ACM) coordinators, Barbara Asplet and Brenda O'Donnell, the team from the Centre spent all day Saturday and all day Sunday cutting back undergrowth, clearing tracks through the bush, cleaning out gutters, digging and planting a vegetable garden, installing a proper irrigation system and sprucing up and

■ Members of the Ephpheta Centre's working bee assisting the ACM (left) and the Ephpheta Signing Choir (right).

repairing weather damaged outdoor furniture. The working bee also fixed up the llama

enclosure on the property.

The hard work continued during daylight hours but by evening on Saturday there was a chance to relax over an all-you-can-eat-dinner prepared by Barbara and Brenda. Then it was time for an exchange of stories which was when those from the Ephpheta Centre realised to their amazement that many of them shared a similar past to their hosts and had undergone the same heartbreak and confusion.

"Saturday night was a very moving and significant evening," says Nicole Clark, interpreter and assistant to the director of the Ephpheta Centre, and a member of the weekend working bee. "Barbara and Brenda are both members of the Stolen Generations and that night they shared their personal stories.

"Most of the deaf had never heard stories of the Stolen Generations first hand, and were extremely moved. Some also saw similarities with their own childhoods. Born deaf, they had been taken from their families at two or three years of age and sent to special boarding schools for the deaf. They understood what it was like to be separated from siblings and loved ones and a real connection was made."

Thankfully the tradition of sending deaf children to specialist boarding schools at two or three years of age has been discontinued. But for some of the younger members of Ephpheta, who were part of the working bee, this was the first time they had heard these stories and until then, had had no idea that separating deaf children from parents had once been common practice.

The decision by members of Ephpheta help out at the ACM property near Picton began as a Lenten promise.

"We decided to try different forms of prayer, this year, including individual meditation, group prayer and prayer

in action," Nicole explains, describing the formation of the working bee as part of the Centre's "Prayer in Action" commitment.

What the volunteers didn't expect was that in return for all their hard work, the ACM would offer the Healing House as a venue for the Ephpheta Centre's special retreat in September as part of its 30th birthday celebrations.

But before the retreat gets underway there are two important dates on Ephpheta's calendar. The first is on the afternoon of 25 July when the Archbishop of Sydney, Cardinal George Pell will bless the new Ephpheta building at Punchbowl and celebrate a Mass in its tiny chapel.

"Afterwards, the Cardinal will meet with members over afternoon tea," Nicole says, adding that the city's Ephpheta community is very excited and very much looking forward to the event.

The next big date is 2 August, the official birthday of the Ephpheta Centre when Cardinal Pell will celebrate a special Mass at St Mary's Cathedral in honour of Ephpheta's 30 years of service to the deaf community, providing sacramental and pastoral care, counselling, support, advocacy services and signed Masses as well as Auslan (Australia's sign language) for weddings, funerals and baptisms.

With its own signing choir and regular mother's club and family get-togethers, the Ephpheta Centre has its own chaplaincy team and with the use of Auslan, brings the deaf and hearing impaired closer to the Church, giving them a very real sense of involvement.

Serving the Catholic deaf and hearing impaired throughout the Archdioceses of Sydney and Parramatta, and the Diocese of Broken Bay, the Ephpheta Centre was founded in 1979 when Sister Helen Gaffey was appointed to work with the Sydney's deaf and hard of hearing. Establishing the first Centre in Paddington at the Sisters of Charity's former commercial premises, the Sydney Archdiocese gave it the name, Ephpheta, from the words Jesus used when he cured a deaf man and said "Ephpheta," meaning "be open."

For more information on the Ephpheta Centre, its members and the work it carries out, log on to www.ephpheta.org.au



The Dreaming, the Church and Reconciliation

A small brick church at Yarra Bay, La Perouse has become the spiritual home for many of Sydney's Indigenous Catholics. Here, thanks to the efforts of the Archdiocese of Sydney's Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, Indigenous people are able to worship God in a way that resonates with their culture and innate spirituality.

From the moment worshippers step inside La Perouse's Church of Reconciliation, they are struck by the Aboriginal artist, Richard Campbell's spectacular paintings. One is a beautifully painted Black Madonna while another is a series of outstanding paintings which depict The Stations of the Cross. Traditions handed down through generation to generation by Australia's Indigenous people are also incorporated into the church's Sunday Mass.

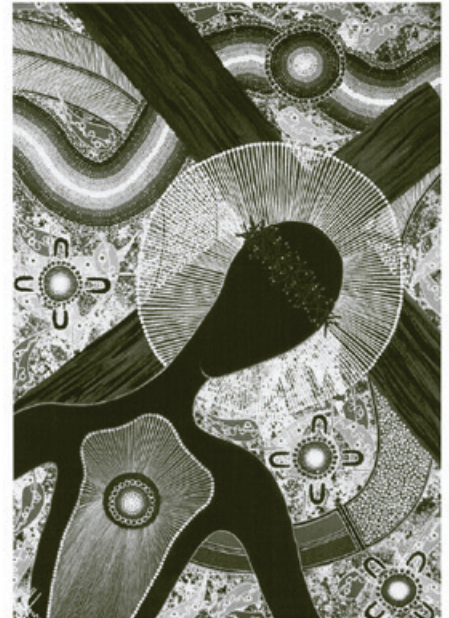
"We wanted to make the church warm and welcoming and filled with the spirit of Aboriginal culture and art," says Elsie Heiss, one of the driving forces behind the establishment of Sydney's Aboriginal Catholic Ministry and in particular, the church at La Perouse.

"Although the church is run by Aboriginal Catholics, everyone is welcome and often we have as many non Aboriginals as Indigenous Catholics," she says.

Mass at the Church of Reconciliation, which is part of the Parish of St Andrew's at Malabar, is held on the first Sunday of every month and features Aboriginal liturgies which often include the evocative sounds of the didgeridoo, the handing over of a Message Stick and during the offertory, gifts such as Clap Sticks, boomerangs, woomeras as well as Aboriginal paintings.

"The formation of the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry is fairly recent but Aboriginals have been Catholic over many generations," Elsie says, and adds that although her mother was Catholic along with the rest of her extended family, they did not feel part of the Church.

"We were committed Catholics and prayed the Rosary together. But although we lived in a country town for 12 years, we never went inside the local Catholic church because we didn't feel the doors were open to us. And they weren't in those days," she says.



■ **Aboriginal artist, Richard Campbell's Stations of the Cross** During Pope John Paul II's visit to Australia in 1986, he visited Alice Springs where he spoke to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, telling them that they were part of Australia and Australia was part of them. His Holiness then went on to say that the Church in Australia would not be fully the Church Jesus wanted until "you have made your contribution to its life and that contribution has been joyfully received."

For Elsie that was the turning point. "The Holy Father came out and talked about our

Dreaming and our spiritual contribution and that's when things began to change."

Brisbane led the way setting up the first Aboriginal Catholic Ministry. This was quickly followed by Sydney. Then in 1989 the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Catholic Council (NATSICC) was established.

With elected representatives from each state, NATSICC works closely with the Church to actively support and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation. The national Council also sponsors Indigenous youth who wish

to attend World Youth Days whether in Australia or other venues.

A leading participant at last year's WYD08 in Sydney, was Elsie's youngest son Mark. A teacher with the Christian Brothers High School, Lewisham, Mark was one of the Indigenous group to give a traditional welcome to Pope Benedict XVI.



■ **Elsie Heiss**, Later the Archbishop of Sydney, Cardinal George Pell arranged for Mark to present the Message Stick, which had toured Australia with the WYD Cross and Icon, to Pope Benedict XVI in Rome in April this year.

"I couldn't be there to see the handover but I saw all the pictures and took them with me to a State meeting of NATSICC in May. That's when I read Mark's report to the elders and showed them the actual event on my computer," Elsie says. "We were all struck by the Holy Father's interest and the way he listened so intently as Mark explained the meaning of the Message Stick."

Currently, Elsie is chairperson of NATSICC and says one of the Council's most recent projects was producing the liturgy for this year's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday, which is held each year on the first Sunday in July.

Taking "Spirit of Our Ancestors," as its theme, the liturgy includes specially written Aboriginal hymns and prayers with suggested Penitential Rites including the Aboriginal Rite of Water Blessing or the Aboriginal Rite of Smoking. The liturgy also offers alternate suggestions for parishes with no Indigenous people among their congregations on how to celebrate the day.

"The Mass on our special Sunday is one of the highlights of our year at the church in La Perouse," says Elsie. "The church is always packed and the service gives us a real pride in our faith and in our people." www.aboriginalcm.cathcomm.org/aboriginalCM

Holy Icon to Return

The scarlet and gold Icon of Mary Seat of Wisdom, patron saint of universities, has spent the past three and a half months in Sydney as a gift from the Vatican. The Holy Icon is currently on tour of universities interstate but will return in October when a special farewell Mass will be held.

Commissioned by Pope John Paul II in 2000, and created by contemporary artist and Jesuit priest, Fr Marko Ivan Rupnik, the Holy Icon began its eight month visit to Australia in March this year.

Prior to its arrival, a delegation led by the Archbishop of Sydney, Cardinal George Pell and comprised of six young Australians representing their university, student associations or university chaplaincies, flew to Rome. There at a special handover ceremony, the Icon was entrusted to the young Australians by Pope Benedict XVI. The ceremony took place during a special service at St Peter's Basilica during a Mass for young people celebrated by Cardinal Agostino Villani.

"Most of us had never been to Italy and to be there at St Peter's and hear His Holiness speak was an enormous privilege," says Kelly Edmunds, a student at the University of Sydney and an active member of the university Chaplaincy's Society of St Peter.

"To be chosen to represent my university was a tremendous honour and our five days in Rome were amazing and something I will never forget," she says.

Designed to inspire students to search for the truth and to imbue them with the Christian spirit, since its creation nine years ago, the Holy Icon has toured universities and educational institutions in Greece, Russia, Spain, Chile, Peru, Ecuador, the Ukraine, Ireland, England, Poland and Romania.

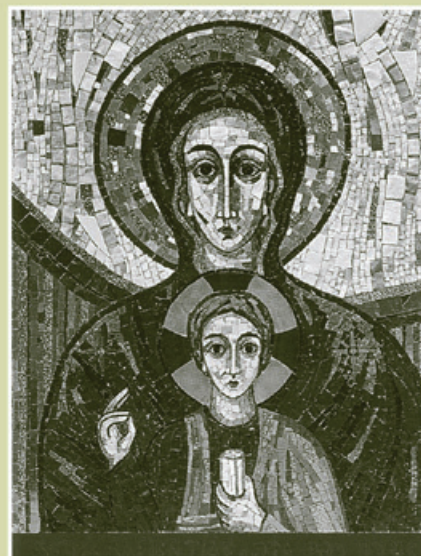
The Vatican's decision to send the Icon on its first-ever visit to Australia came in the wake of World Youth Day 2008 and was an initiative of the Archdiocese of Sydney and the Australian Catholic Students Association. The delegation in Rome hoped to return with the Icon but due

to customs regulations, the Icon had to go to Canberra and it wasn't until March 2009, that it arrived in Sydney.

Put under the care and management of the Chaplaincy at UNSW, the precious artifact travelled to Sydney's universities to inspire students.

After its time at the University of Notre Dame (Sydney), the Icon spent several weeks at Macquarie University before moving on to the Australian Catholic University, the University of Sydney and the University of NSW.

At each university the Icon was displayed within the university's chapel but was also made available for special gatherings and events, much as the Cross and Icon of World Youth Day 2008 were made available last year.



"The response to the Icon has been really wonderful," says Ana Maria Palacio of the UNSW Chaplaincy. "Students have been genuinely inspired."

The response from Sydney's young people in fact was so great that plans are now afoot for the Sancta Maria Sedes Sapientiae - as the Icon is also known - to revisit the University of NSW when it returns to Sydney in October.

Plans are also well underway for a farewell Mass for the Icon before it makes its journey back to Rome. A short time after its arrival there, the Vatican will send it on yet another journey to inspire students in yet another country with the Christian spirit and a love of learning.

To find out more about Sydney's university chaplaincies check out University Chaplaincies at www.sydney.catholic.org.au/education/university_chaplaincies.shtml or by emailing thomas.waugh@usydcc.org

Sydney Foster Mums – our Unsung Heroes

ACROSS THE CITY, 80 CATHOLIC MOTHERS OFFER THEIR HEARTS, THEIR LOVE AND THEIR HOMES TO CHILDREN IN NEED.

Sydney mother of three, Marisa Donato is used to urgent phone calls in the middle of the night.

“We have an emergency,” a voice from CatholicCare will say.

A short time later a baby, toddler or maybe a five-year-old will arrive.

Marisa might have had less than 30 minutes’ notice, but she is always prepared.

“Our house is packed with feeding bottles, baby food, nappies, a cot, a pram, a bassinette and two strollers,” she says. This is despite the fact that two of Marisa’s own children are now adults and her youngest is in his final year at school.

For the past 11 years, Marisa has been one of more than 80 foster mothers for CatholicCare, and as a short term carer, is ready for any emergency.

fives,” she explains, adding that over the years these have ranged from young babies to toddlers to three, four and five year olds.

While some of CatholicCare’s foster families undertake long term care,

“Whatever their problems the majority of parents of foster children love their children very much.”

others like Marisa step in when there’s an emergency, caring for a child overnight, over a weekend or for as long as 18 months to two years.

“In permanent care the child usually



■ **Marisa and her family** “It all started when I read a parish bulletin back in 1998 asking for families willing to foster children,” she says. “Talking it over with my husband and children, we decided we had room in our hearts and room in our home, and volunteered.”

At the time the couple’s children, Analise, Michael and Dominic ranged in age from six to 13.

“CatholicCare’s policy is to place children a little bit younger than your youngest child. So with my youngest only six years old, I became a foster mum to the under

remains with their foster family until they leave home and marry,” Marisa says, describing this form of care as similar to adoption.

But short term care is equally important, she says.

Contrary to popular myth, quite a few of the children needing temporary fostering come from stable loving homes. In some cases, a parent has become ill or hospitalised. Or it might be that a single parent has relocated to Sydney and, without backup support from family and friends, needs a safe place for their children to stay. Nevertheless, Marisa

admits that the majority are from families who are temporarily unable to care for them because of alcohol, drugs or mental problems.

“This does not mean the children are unloved,” she stresses. “Whatever their problems, the majority of parents of foster children love them very much.”

Astute and attuned, Marisa can immediately tell which children have come from a loving background. “These are the ones who respond quickly to love and affection,” she says.

But tragically some of the children Marisa fosters have never known love and have undergone tremendous suffering. Arriving at the Donato household, they are often traumatised, suspicious, full of pain and distrust. Such children can be a challenge and often exhibit difficult or destructive behaviours.

“There’s no china left in my house and my children learned early on to put their precious things away or out of reach,” Marisa says with a smile that tells you that none of that is important. What is important is the child and helping through whatever trauma they may have faced.

To win the trust of these damaged children, patience, compassion, sensitivity and an awareness of the child’s specific emotional and physical needs are all important.

“But I couldn’t do any of this without the support and help of my husband and my three kids,” Marisa says. Describing her own children as “my rocks” and “chief support,” she says the important role birth children play in a foster family is often over looked.

“The entire family is involved and all play an important part,” she says and gives credit to her own children’s sensitivity to the needs and difficulties of those she has cared for. “Without my telling them, they seem to understand how to approach them and how to win their trust.”

Immensely proud of Analise, Michael and Dominic and their generosity and their unselfishness, Marisa believes looking after foster children has helped shape them and brought her family even closer together. Marisa, who now also helps train prospective foster parents for CatholicCare, says even with its challenges, and occasional heartbreak, fostering has brought her family immense joy.

Foster care is just one of the many services offered by CatholicCare. If you wish to find out more about CatholicCare programs, pastoral care or to volunteer as a foster family, call **02 9390 5377** or go to www.catholiccare.org.au.

Inspired by the People they Serve

“Student Priests, Expectant Fathers” says the sign hanging on Fr Anthony Percy’s door at the Seminary of the Good Shepherd, Homebush.

“A good priest needs a lot of faith and a lot of humour,” he says with a smile.

As Rector, Fr Anthony is in charge of 42 young seminarians in training for the priesthood. “It’s wonderful to be able to try to help them with their aspirations and their development as young men so they become good priests.”

The priesthood is a vocation like no other, he says.

“The Lord said give and it shall be returned 100 fold and this is true when it comes to the priesthood.”

“The sheer goodness, even holiness, of many parishioners inspires priests to continually strive for that same goodness,” he says.

“As a priest you are able to see God bringing something positive and good out of circumstances that seem impossible or disastrous. It is quite extraordinary to see faith guiding people through difficult or pastoral situations and observe the wonders of God in what at first seem to be hopeless situations.”

After a drop in numbers of those entering the priesthood in the 1980s and 1990s, more and more young men are once more seeking a vocation as priests.

This year four from the Seminary of the Good Shepherd were ordained as priests. Another five, all in their fifth year at the Seminary, were accepted as Candidates for the priesthood at a special ceremony at St Mary’s Cathedral in May. And in February when the Seminary year began, 13 would-be priests began their first year of training.

“Young people are discovering the post modern culture has no value and are turning to the Church which articulates spiritual traditions which go back more than 2,000 years to the time of the Apostles,” says Fr Anthony. “They are looking for something to hang on to and finding this in the Church, and in God.”

This new-found pride in faith and desire to serve God as priests is attributed in no small measure to the success of World Youth Days over the past decade. An initiative of Pope John Paul II, who exhorted young people to evangelise their

faith and spread the Word, these special events have instilled youth with a spirit of generosity and “self-giving.”

Although Fr Anthony says the results from Sydney WYD08 won’t be seen until 2010, previous WYDs have had an impact, revitalising young people, strengthening their faith and having them consider the priesthood as a vocation.



■ Fr Anthony Percy, Rector of the Seminary of the Good Shepherd. Those currently studying at the Seminary of the Good Shepherd come from all walks of life.

Some began their training after leaving school or attaining a degree at university. Others found their vocations after pursuing

careers in law, finance, banking, insurance or in one case, as a rock’n’roll drummer. What they all have in common is a deep and profound faith and a desire to serve God and to spread His Word. “The exceptional priests I have known have not been the high-powered ones but very humble, very human and very aware of their own weaknesses and frailities.”

Now as the Year of the Priest begins, and tributes are paid to priests throughout the world as our unsung heroes, the Seminary is embarking on a series of what it describes as “priestly gatherings.”

The first will be held on 4 August, when Cardinal Edward Cassidy who will speak on “The Priest: A Man of God and a Man of the Church.”

At 84, Cardinal Cassidy is now retired but for 35 years he was a diplomat with the Vatican, a close associate of Pope John Paul II, and was president of both the Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity and the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews.

Other presenters in the lecture series include Bishop Timothy Costelloe, Auxiliary Bishop of Melbourne; Bishop Kevin Manning, Bishop of Parramatta; Archbishop Mark Coleridge, Archbishop of Canberra & Goulburn; Fr Ed Travis, Spiritual Director at the Seminary and Sr M. Isabell Naumann, a member of the Pontifical Council of Culture.

“The lectures which will be held throughout the year are open to all priests throughout the Sydney Archdiocese as well as other dioceses, country areas and any other part of Australia,” says Fr Anthony.

To find out more log on to www.sgs.org.au

Bro WILLY’S in the Dog House

THEY say you can’t teach an old dog new tricks. Not that William the Conqueror is an old dog. At six, this golden lab is in the prime of his life. The only problem is that since Willy moved to Sydney from Goulburn in December last year, when his owner Fr Anthony Percy took over as Rector at the Seminary



of the Good Shepherd, he has packed on the kilos. Not that Willy lacks exercise or willing walkers. With 42 Seminarians, the big golden lab has no shortage of admirers or those offering to take him for runs.

But until last month, there was also no shortage of between meal snacks and special treats. The Seminarians couldn’t resist, and Willy, being a Lab, couldn’t say “no.” Besides, with a name like William the Conqueror, he was convinced tidbits were simply part of his due. In no time Willy’s weight ballooned which is why he’s now in the doghouse on restricted rations and water. Since early May Willy has had no snacks and no second helpings.

“So far he’s lost 2 kilos of the 4.5 kilos he needs to lose,” Fr Anthony reports and says twice daily walks are now a part of Willy’s new regimen. “Not that Willy’s a power walker,” he admits with a grin. “But we’re getting there.”

In the Classroom and on the Road

When Irene Taylor was 27 and working in an air conditioning factory, her local church put out a call for catechists.

"I had no children and had never faced a classroom but I decided to volunteer," she says.



Thirty one years later, Irene is still spreading the Word and as she says, "having the time of my life."

One of her favourite stories is about a six-year-old, who during a lesson on the Ten Commandments, couldn't get her head around the fact that Love Thy Neighbour didn't just mean "Love Mr and Mrs Jones next door".

As a catechist, Malta-born Irene has taught Bible Study and Scripture to thousands of children at Fairfield's secular primary schools. She has also coached and helped them present their own Nativity scenes and has even taken several of these on the road.

"I've done a lot of work with nursing homes in the area and I thought it would be fun for the children as well as for the residents to see our Nativity plays," she says.

"The elderly people love it and so do the kids".

Like all catechists in Sydney, before Irene entered the classroom she took the Basic Accreditation Course offered by the Archdiocese of Sydney's Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD). She followed this up with further courses at the CCD, moving to the Intermediate then to the Advanced level. Although individual parishes frequently undertake training of their catechists, certification at all levels is overseen and administered by the CCD which also provides resources, teaching aids, detailed syllabus and class outlines, books, CDs, DVDs and interactive training for those teaching special religious classes in city schools.

Today there are more than 1,700 volunteer catechists in the Archdiocese who give instruction at the city's secular primary

schools to an estimated 24,000 students. Classes are also conducted at secondary schools.

"It's less than an hour out of your time each week," says Irene who believes her three decades of teaching have brought her closer to God and made her a more "caring and loving person."

Her obvious love of children led to her taking on a job at a local daycare centre. "I really enjoy being around children," she says and is delighted when some of the young mothers drop their kids off at the centre, then do a startled double take.

"Do you remember me?" they ask, telling Irene she'd been their scripture teacher at primary school.

"I don't always recognise them as they're grown up with children of their own, but they all seem to know me," she laughs.

Encouraged and supported in her catechist work by Robert, her husband of 35 years, Irene urges anyone able to spare 40 – 60 minutes each week to sign on as catechists.

Local parishes within the Archdiocese of Sydney are always



Irene Taylor (upper left) and (above) Irene 31 years ago taking one of her first classes as a catechist. looking for volunteers, she says, and suggests that for someone whose children are now off their hands, or a grandparent or even a student at university, becoming a catechist is rewarding and with young students and their questions, always unexpected and fun. "There are never enough of us to spread the Word and it's a wonderful way to evangelise," she says. "Becoming a catechist has enriched my life and deepened my faith and made it stronger." www.ccdsydney.catholic.edu.au



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