

Lifelong learning

The Adult Faith Formation Council (AFFC) has just renewed its Mission, Vision and Values, aiming to 'respond flexibly to personal, parish and group needs for education in faith' - recognising that we are all both 'lifelong teachers and learners'.

Learning is lifelong and diverse, as ordinary experience attests. Sometimes it is formal and organised, such as a Superannuation seminar, a *Probus* speaker, a course, or a school information session. At other times, when the ground has shifted, life is our ongoing teacher, inviting us to rethink our certainties: How do I move through this illness or grief ... or respond when people or an organisation I love has let me down? Experience, and hopefully some wise, spiritual and encouraging guides are then our teachers and we make the path by walking — learning gradually, a step at a time, open to the change or transformation the experience asks of us.

This is also the Church's journey in Advent and beyond. The ground is shifting. Pope Francis reveals, unquestionably, that the Spirit of God is actively stirring the pot of our living tradition, inviting us to enter into our time of change wholeheartedly, in a spirit of 'pastoral conversion' (EG). And his new letter on *Mercy* reminds us to do this as people of joy, hope and mercy —rather than 'sadden the Spirit, who constantly points out new paths'.

Misericordia et misera, 20/11/16.



Conversations About Catholics, a new course enthusiastically trialled at a 2017 kindergarten orientation session, St Benedict's Primary School Edgeworth.

*'Pope Francis has said that 'when you want to know **what** the Church teaches you go to the Magisterium ... but if you want to know **how** the Church teaches you go to the faithful people.'*

Missed Opportunities. © 2016 Gabriel Moran. iUniverse.

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Adult Faith Formation Council Values

- God's presence permeating all reality
- God's Spirit alive & active in each person
- Jesus Christ at the heart of all we do
- Openness to all
- The journey that is life
- The human thirst for what is good, true and beautiful
- Receiving and sharing the living tradition
- Face to face engagement

Why an Adult Faith Formation Council?

As one of the diocesan Councils designed to both implement the Pastoral Plan and advise about future directions, the AFFC has recently reformulated its Vision and Mission so as to do this more effectively. This will soon be available on the diocesan website.

Courses, seminars, retreats and conversations help us reflect on what it might mean to walk the new paths and be open to the 'pastoral conversion', Pope Francis emphasises. The Adult Faith Formation Office, executive arm of the Council, is available to assist communities in shaping local direction. A planning afternoon on Feb 28 will align the new Vision with goals for the year. Please inform us of any adult faith matters you would like to be considered.



Sam Hill, Family
Community Faith
Coordinator and
AFFC member, at
the recent Christian
Ministry course.

*Face to face
engagement*

Formal learning opportunities

Thanks to the Sisters of St Joseph at Lochinvar the Tenison Woods Education Centre has resourced people across the diocese to better understand themselves as faith-filled people.

Many readers will have completed the *Christian Formation Course*. Following a time of review it is decided that from 2017 this course will run across one year only: beginning in Term 2 and concluding in Term 1, 2018 - managed by the Adult Faith Formation Office.

In addition, *Christian Formation: Integrity in the service of the Church* will be offered once in 2017 at Hamilton.

These two courses are foundational pathways for all engaged in parish ministry. They can also be conducted in local areas — with individual units tailored to local need. Leadership formation courses are also available. Detailed brochures are available through the parish, AFF Office or diocesan website.

For those seeking online or higher faith formation courses we are able to suggest a range of opportunities — from short, basic units to more formal graduate or undergraduate learning.

Look out ...

for all upcoming formation opportunities via the diocesan website at

<http://www.mn.catholic.org.au/catholic-faith/spirituality-faith/coming-events>

Formal courses 2017

Christian Formation Course

Thursday evenings, 6 - 9 pm
Broadmeadow

8 course units across a year
from Term 2, 2017 to Term 1, 2018
4 weekly sessions per unit

\$480 payable in full, by term or by unit

Our journey of Faith
How God is revealed
Old Testament
New Testament
Church in the world
Church history
Sacraments
Liturgical life

Christian Ministry: Integrity in the service of the Church

four Saturdays, 9 am – 4 pm
Hamilton

May 6, 13, 20, 27

This course offered at no cost

Reading signs

Science and Faith

An oft-repeated phrase from Vatican II is that the church needs to read the 'signs of the times.' In attending to signs of new life around us we perceive where God's spirit invites our energy.

Constance Fitzgerald, a remarkable Carmelite, has led her sisters into renewal, affirming the urgency of education - but education that will help us come to know our current age:

Ongoing education is key ... to read, learn, and appropriate new materials. While the philosophers and theologians of the 40s, 50s and 60s offered important influences for the last renewal [Vatican II], today we need to look at science and religion, quantum physics, evolution, ecology and the implications of the new cosmology for theology and life.

Transformational Leadership, p18. Ed. A Sanders ihm. © 2015 Leadership Conference of Women Religious. Orbis Books. ISBN 978-1-62698-138-6.
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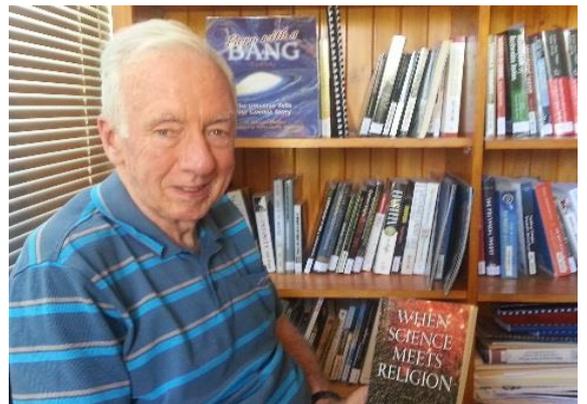
The human thirst for what is good, true and beautiful

There are remarkable resources at our fingertips: **Youtube clips abound ... lasting from a few minutes.** Try Brian Swimme, Thomas Berry, Ilija Delio, or the Vatican astronomer, Guy Consalmano, recently in Australia. Stay tuned for 2017 forums, or organise one locally!

'Star of wonder ... guide us to your perfect light'



'Nature is a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of infinite beauty and goodness.'
Pope Francis, *Laudato Si* #12



Fr Geoff Mulhearn echoes Pope Francis: 'Without an integrated vision of Faith and Science the people and the planet will perish!'

God's Spirit alive & active in each person

Out and About

Myall Coast Parish is offering a repertoire of parish formation activities: conversations addressing people's questions about life and faith, dinners, film evenings, helpful homilies, ministry formation, sound information sessions, men's discussions, some good theory about what adult education could mean.

There is an increasingly lively awareness that parish learning has many strings to its bow: it engages everyone, can be fun, is outreaching, welcoming, simple, open to surprises, informs, and builds individual and community spirit.



Myall Coast parishioners enjoying the conversation.

Online learning

God's presence permeating all reality

Healing after a time of discord

Boston College has a 3-week online course to enable people to reflect wisely on the emerging trend towards exclusion and division in our world.

At only \$US25 this is a valuable means to more deeply understand our age and ponder current uncertainties. Could be valuable Lenten material.

<http://www.bc.edu/schools/stm/crossroads/courses/healing-after-discord.html>

Date claimers

Receiving & sharing the living tradition

In 2017 two guest speakers will complement each other by assisting us to make sense of some of our questions around living faith in the modern world.

19-25 June: Dr James McEvoy, a priest from Adelaide, will offer seminars in various diocesan venues and the annual Cathedral Lecture, 21 June at 6 pm.

8 Sept: Dr Richard Gaillardetz, of Boston College, will briefly visit Newcastle from 3.30-8 pm, after being keynote presenter at the National Conference of Priests, Pastoral leaders, Planners and Pastoral associates.

Christmas giving

Jesus at the heart of all we do

Online gift catalogues

Pauline Books and Media <http://www.paulinebooks.com.au/>

Garratt Publishing <http://www.garrattpublishing.com.au>

Morning Star Publishing <http://morningstarpublishing.net.au/>

Catholic Mission <http://www.catholicmission.org.au/>

Caritas Australia <http://www.caritas.org.au/>

Sacred Space Daily prayer resource from the Irish Jesuits. Available in hard copy and as an eResource at <https://www.sacredspace.ie/>.

Toronto Retreat Centre

Wide selection of 2017 opportunities. What about a gift to refresh heart and spirit for friends, family, yourself?

<http://institute.mercy.org.au/toronto>

Ph: 02 4959 1025

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Have you heard?

A National Plenary Council is being considered for 2020 to address issues arising in the Australian Church.

Keep informed by accessing [Cathnews](#), [Catholica](#), [Eureka Street](#) or [National Catholic Reporter](#) websites.

Christmas living

Putting flesh on God's desire for a reconciled world

How can we work to bridge chasms? Can we make some difference in a world of such divisions, rather than choose not to speak about the differences as we sometimes do? Can we say, "Let us look at the greater good and what we can foster together"?

Transformational Leadership, p31.



Diocesan photo: *Inclusive Madonna Cambodia*. Catholic Mission.

The journey that is life

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