Awakening to the Spirit of Advent

Mindfulness is one of today’s buzzwords!
Everywhere, people are rediscovering a practice that lies at the heart of many traditions: staying in the present moment and cultivating an inner tranquility which has remarkable health benefits, brain-changing capacity and the potential for deep healing. Those who are mindful are aware that their attentive living also has a ripple effect of sending out peace in ever-widening circles—surely one of the most crucial tasks of our time.

A worldwide ecumenical movement The Christian Meditation Community has, for many years now, been practising mindfulness but one which is tangibly attentive to the presence of Christ and his coming reign of peace and justice. Initiated by John Main OSB and now led by his confrere, Lawrence Freeman, it emerged through a rediscovering of the ancient treasure of our tradition: the wisdom of contemplative, silent practice—now accessible to everyone.

Meditators understand that engaging in such practice, ideally for 20 minutes twice daily, and using only one word, the mantra Maranatha translated as ‘Come Lord Jesus’ (the Christian Advent cry), we open ourselves to the power of Christ to heal, transform and make whole. In silently repeating the mantra, we believe, and come to know, that the reign of God is coming to birth.

Recently, about 60 people gathered at The Living Waters Meditation and Spirituality Centre at The Junction to honour Sr Carmel Moore RSJ, whose initiative to begin a centre for Christian meditation in Newcastle has greatly multiplied.

In between two powerful periods of contemplative silence and an animated morning tea on this day, meditators from across the diocese attested to its lifechanging nature. Thank you, Carmel, for this remarkable beginning in Newcastle and to Anne Cuskelly, our current coordinator.

In the forthcoming Advent/Christmas season when we are asked to ‘stay awake’ and be attentive to the signs of God’s presence all around us, meditation is a powerful way of engaging in the peace and promise of Christ’s coming.
Maranatha! Come Christ Jesus!
Spirituality across the lifecycle

Spirituality of Ageing

Three coming seminars

Every phase of our lives has intrinsic value – with distinctive markers, features, questions, choices, and aspects to let go or insightfully embrace. *Spirituality in the Ageing* process, now an expanding area of reflection and study, has many resources and skilled people to help us better address its particular characteristics. We would not leave a younger generation to sink or swim – preferring, rather, to be aware of current theories of learning, behaviour and need.

So, it matters that individuals, families and aged care providers become more informed about the significant role of spirituality in the ageing process, so that we can enter this phase of life better prepared to embrace its particular invitation.

Dr Elizabeth MacKinlay, a renowned practitioner and author of well-known text: *The Spiritual Dimension of Ageing*, will be in the diocese for three days in 2018:

- **Tue Feb 20**: Calvary Mater Newcastle Hospital
  9am - 4pm  Especially for pastoral/healthcare professionals
- **Wed Feb 21**: Calvary Muswellbrook Retirement Community
  1 - 4pm  All welcome including healthcare professionals
- **Thu Feb 22**: Forster Parish Hall
  6 - 9pm  All welcome including healthcare professionals

**Diploma in Ageing, Pastoral or Spiritual Care** is available ONLINE through Holy Family Services
P 9678 8200 E rfo@holyfamilyservices.com.au
www.holyfamilyservices.com.au

For those interested in understanding more about the pastoral and spiritual care of older people, the Australian peak body for spiritual care and ageing, **Meaningful Ageing Australia**, has a monthly eNewsletter
meaningfulageing.org.au

Spirituality of Creation

‘Care for Our Common Home’ is the subtitle of *Laudato Si’*. Pope Francis’ encyclical on the environment.

In our last edition we wrote of the subsequent international prayer and action campaign: *Season of Creation* (from 1 September - 4 October). Parishes were invited to let us know how they celebrated.

Tighes Hill community of St Benedict’s Parish had an inspiring, concluding ritual in their growing community garden. Colour, music and word engaged participants as waning twilight gave way to full moon. With texts and songs from many traditions there was a sense of gratitude for blessings of our earth and a hope to tend it responsibly.

Varieties of herbs and flowers were planted to serve, nourish and refresh the community across the year. It was a wonderful embrace of Pope Francis’ heartfelt desire that we honour and delight in our common home.

Perhaps next year, with plenty of time to prepare, many more diocesan communities will share in what is gaining increasing worldwide momentum. Read more about this campaign at seasonofcreation.org.

Christmas words of St Francis

SISTERS AND BROTHERS MAY WE ALL BE MOTHERS TO OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST BY GIVING BIRTH TO HIM IN THE ACTIONS OF OUR LIVES.

Paraphrased from St Francis of Assisi’s First Letter to the Faithful 1221 AD
Spirituality of the Child

Date claimer for July 2018 seminars

Long gone are the days when children were seen and not heard. Dr James McEvoy who visited the diocese in May, reminding us of the fundamental call of the church to dialogue with the world, has also initiated, with ACU, a course that enables educators to look anew at the role of spirituality within a holistic perspective of a child’s development.

Recall the prominence which Jesus gave to children, understanding their capacity to reveal to us what is of the essence in God’s eyes.

This is an emerging field in education and will be fascinating for educators, catechists and parents.

**Dateclaimer**

**Mon Jul 23**

**Venue TBA**

9.30am - 3pm For catechists, parish staff & parents

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Spirituality Resources

Some recommendations.


**Hidden Wings**. Margaret Silf, a renowned spiritual practitioner, uses the analogy of a caterpillar becoming a butterfly to show us how we can plot our spiritual path when the world and values we have lived by seem to be collapsing around us. Approx. $23. Publisher, Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, UK.

**Richard Rohr OFM** has a daily/weekly website very worth a subscription (free). Richard and some of our finest current writers are exploring the expanding interest in the interconnection of faith and science, drawing upon the writings of Teilhard de Chardin SJ and his contemporary followers. Find out more at the Center for Action and Contemplation [https://cac.org/](https://cac.org/).

**Come, Drink Deep of Living Waters: Faith Seeking Understanding in the 21st Century**. With the wisdom of years, Barbara Fiand explores how we can understand our Christian faith in this new time. Publisher, The Crossroad Publishing Company.

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Valuing Connection

The Adult Faith Formation Office intends that the values identified by its Council ‘take flesh’.

In preparation for Year B we have travelled widely to offer, ‘face to face’, eleven seminars combining an introduction to the Gospel of Mark and the Advent Word.

If further parishes wish to explore Mark’s gospel, so as to enhance its understanding across 2018, this can be easily arranged.

The Adult Faith Formation Office is here to resource, at any time, requests from parishes for their ongoing faith formation. Enquiries welcome P 4979 1134.

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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
Integrity in the Service of the Church

Every church worker/volunteer across the diocese is required to become familiar with the booklet, Integrity in the Service of the Church, compiled by the National Professional Standards Office of the Australian Catholic Bishops’ Conference. The booklet offers the framework for our ministry and guidelines for its practice.

There will be a 3-hr February seminar for those in the Morisset area.

Fri Feb 9  Callinan Centre, Morisset Parish, 60 Yambo St
9.30am - 12.30pm  All welcome. Free of charge.

Those who haven’t completed Units 1 and 8 of the broader Christian Ministry course are especially encouraged to participate.

Enquiries and registrations to the Adult Faith Formation Office.

Christian Formation Course

If you are looking for an opportunity to explore your faith within the Catholic tradition or develop your confidence for ministry, then consider the Christian Formation Course in 2018.

The Christian Formation course is a face-to-face learning experience. This one-year, systematic course introduces participants to scripture, theology, church history, sacramental life and spirituality.

The course consists of eight units over four school terms. Each unit of four week’s duration, comprises one 3-hour session per week. Sessions of a Thursday evening from 6 - 9pm at Newcastle West.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>2018</th>
<th>Unit of study</th>
<th>Dates</th>
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<tr>
<td>Term 1</td>
<td>Speaking of God</td>
<td>Feb 1 Feb 8 Feb15 Feb 22</td>
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<td>Living with God</td>
<td>Mar 1 Mar 8 Mar 15 Mar 22</td>
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<td>Term 2</td>
<td>Old Testament</td>
<td>May 3 May 10 May 17 May 24</td>
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<td>Term 3</td>
<td>People of God</td>
<td>Aug 2 Aug 9 Aug 16 Aug 23</td>
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<td>Church from Age to Age</td>
<td>Sep 6 Sep 13 Sep 20 Sep 27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term 4</td>
<td>Sacramental Life</td>
<td>Oct 18 Oct 25 Nov 1 Nov 8</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Liturgical Life</td>
<td>Nov 15 Nov 22 Nov 29 Dec 6</td>
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<td>Retreat &amp; Review</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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Course fee: $480 payable in full or instalments (by term, unit or session). Fees negotiable in event of financial difficulty.

Enquiries and registrations to the Adult Faith Formation Office.

Advent Grace

Thank you, ever-renewing God, for the fruits of land, water, family and friendship.
May we who know these gifts in abundance open our hands and hearts to those who cry out to be heard, so that Your Son’s reign of love may come to birth in our time and place.
Come Lord Jesus, Come.

Adult Faith Formation Office

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