

Welcome to our December Faith Formation Newsletter
A Year in Review.

December 2023 | No.19



In 2023 we welcomed Mary O'Connor as librarian to the Diocese. Books from various collections have been collated and catalogued at the Lochinvar location since 2020. The Formation and Education team worked incredibly hard to pack 300 boxes of resources, supervise the move of the items from Lochinvar to Newcastle West and then unpack and arrange these items throughout the library space.

In 2024 the library will welcome members in the building at 12 Tudor Street, Newcastle West, on Monday and Friday between 10am and 6pm and Saturdays between 10am and 2pm. Fridays in the library will be a day of gathering, with pre-school story time, formation opportunities and other educational events scheduled throughout the year. The library website, emails, parish bulletins and social media will ensure you are kept up to date with library happenings. Membership is free and open to all who wish to have access to spiritual, theological and life affirming resources. Email domnlibrary@mn.catholic.org.au to find out more about registering to become a library member or upcoming events or check out the Library website: <https://library.mn.catholic.org.au>.

Important information

For **upcoming events** information go to:

<https://www.mn.catholic.org.au/church-mission/catholic-life/faith-formation/upcoming-events/>

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Lookout for our next newsletter in February 2024

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Graduate Certificate in Mission and Culture

On 14 October a Recognition of Graduation Ceremony was held for those who have recently completed the Graduate Certificate in Mission and Culture. In partnership with the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy at the Australian Catholic University (ACU), the Diocese offers the innovative and integrated formation and education program to support the leadership development needs across the diocese. The program is designed to provide participants with the capabilities required to think critically and creatively around their participation in and support for the Catholic character and ethos of the Diocese. The course focuses on foundational theological insights while promoting authentic practice in the workplace and encourages participants to articulate and contribute to the mission of the Church. We are looking forward to seeing those in leadership positions from across the diocese complete the course in the future.



Guest Presenters



The Diocese was blessed to have several guest presenters visit us in 2023. In August Father Richard Lennan provided workshops at Maitland and Forster titled, “The Church: Foundations, Challenges and Possibilities” where he unpacked with participants key elements of the Church, the challenges of life in the Church, the Church’s mission, eucharist and mission and a spirituality of Catholicity.

Father Richard met with the middle managers of the Operational Managers Group of the Diocese to explore concepts around the contextual challenges for the Church, the pilgrimage of faith and hope through his presentation “The Church: A Present Day, Past-Informed, and Future-Facing Perspective”.

During the Cathedral lecture Father Richard spoke about “Shaping the Church’s Future: The Grace of Creative Faithfulness” and presented to the clergy, “Co-Responsible Ministry in a Synodal Church” addressing the themes of co-responsibility, synodality and ecclesial ministry.

In September Sister Michele Connelly engaged both teachers and parishioner in Rediscovering Joy through the Gospels. Michele helped us examine how rich and life-giving Scripture can be, revealing a God whose story intends to renew our lives and calls us to actively engage with the world.

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In November we explored the Gospel of Mark with Dr Debra Snoddy. She informed, nourished, and challenged us to hear Mark's words in ways old and new. She provided an overview of the Gospel and a detailed treatment of some of the most illuminating texts from the Gospel of Mark.

Advent Program 2023: With Anticipation and Joy



We are called during this holy time to wait with anticipation knowing the joys of what is to come with the arrival of Christ. With Anticipation and Joy is a Diocesan resource that invites all members of the community to gather a circle of people – family, friends, colleagues, ministry teams to reflect mystagogically on the Advent Gospels and associated artworks. This is an opportunity to encounter Christ where we are, to pay attention to what Christ reveals in the scripture and the living tradition of our faith, to share this, to connect it to our life now and to be changed by it. To access the resource, go to: <https://www.mn.catholic.org.au/church-mission/catholic-life/liturgy/liturgical-year/>

The **2024 Lenten Program** is also available at <http://mn.shor.tn/LentenProgram24>

Community Engagement



Throughout 2023 the Formation and Education team have engaged with the diocesan community in various ways to nourish their faith and spirituality.

From guest presenters, reflection and spirituality days, formation and education courses, pilgrimages and community walks. It is wonderful to receive feedback from those who have attended.

"The event was well organized, photo's, morning tea & lunch just perfect. The speaker was great, handouts/pens, video's, questions, sharing, reflections & I've just received the attachments sent with email, how good is that! Thank you, Formation and Education Team. I haven't been along to these type of days for a while, but it was just what my Spirit needed!!"

"It has been a lovely opportunity for participants to connect with others. Nice to have the outdoors included and the suggestion to just 'be present' and not chat with anyone else when we first went outside really relaxed me."

"Everyone needs to nurture their faith. The aMeN caMiNo gives you hope that there is so much more to church than attending Sunday Mass. The experience renews you and inspires you to be a hopeful, joyful force within your own faith community. I will be sending staff, as many as I can. Very proud that our diocese offers this. Thank you to all the team involved. I can only imagine the work behind the scenes."

"Spending time with others from parishes and other diocesan branches was fulfilling in sharing their faith journey."

"It was a lovely day of gentle reflection. There was a message of hope and self-acceptance and I got the impression everyone felt at ease and safe within the group."

"Great opportunity to journey and grow in faith."

"I enjoyed the conversations I had with fellow pilgrims as they shared their lives and beliefs. I also had plenty of alone and quiet time to reflect, think and contemplate. The scenery was stunning and truly inspiring! I loved being outside all day and was truly nourished both physically and spiritually by the magnificence."

"Thanks so much, I felt relaxed, grateful, and blessed to be part of the day. I loved getting creative through art journaling again."

"My faith in God grew as I was encouraged to take my burdens to God."

"It was a wonderful opportunity to nourish myself spiritually, connect with nature, and step away from the busyness of everyday life."

"It provided important time to reflect and consider life, God and spirituality. A safe group to explore this in own time. It was a much-needed time for me that was not realised until complete."

"The day provided time to stop, reflect and connect with what is important, I will take away a greater sense of calm and purpose."

"I have taken away that there is hope for me and us all, human and nature and it all starts with me."

"I really enjoyed the opportunity to slow down, reflect and connect with my own spirituality."

"I have never learnt so much about the Gospels and I am learning to have a deeper relationship with Jesus."

"I felt renewed in my faith and the connection with the land brought a sense of mission in my life."

"It's local, it's different, it's well formed and supported. Retreats are often indoors, and you can become sluggish. I enjoy the combination of activity and spirituality."

"It is a deep journey into the soul. The physical side is complemented by all the emotional and spiritual support along the walk."

We are looking forward to accompanying the diocesan community with formation and education in 2024.

Calendar 2024			
Date	Event	Venue	Time
19 February	Lenten Program	Diocesan Resource Centre	10am – 11.30am
20 March 17 April 15 May	Tilling the Church – theology of an Unfinished Project	Online	7:00pm – 8:30pm
6-10 July 3-7 August	aMeN caMiNo pilgrimage		
7-8 September	aMeN caMiNo weekend		