

# CHRISTIAN FORMATION COURSE

HANDBOOK 2024



Flame image © Dorothy Woodward rsj. All rights reserved.  
Used with permission within the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle



**All those who, through Baptism,**  
*have been initiated into the community of the Church  
have the right and duty  
to participate in its life and mission  
as a response to the Spirit in their lives.*

*(See Diocesan Pastoral Plan, 1.00: Our Mission as Church) cf. LG #31*

## Contact Details

### Course Coordinator

Rose McAllister

Email: [rose.mcallister@mn.catholic.org.au](mailto:rose.mcallister@mn.catholic.org.au)

Phone: (02) 4979 1346 Mobile: 0414 962 922

### Course Administration

Jenny Harris

Email: [Jenny.Harris@mn.catholic.org.au](mailto:Jenny.Harris@mn.catholic.org.au)

Phone: (02) 4979 1334

### Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle

[www.mn.catholic.org.au](http://www.mn.catholic.org.au)

841 Hunter St, Newcastle West NSW 2302 | PO Box 756 Newcastle NSW 2300

# CONTENTS

<b>FOREWORD</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>DIOCESAN CONTEXT</b>	<b>5</b>
Vision .....	5
Mission.....	5
Values.....	5
<b>COURSE DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>COURSE OUTCOMES</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>COURSE PRACTICALITIES</b>	<b>7</b>
1. Course Structure.....	7
2. Course Requirements .....	7
3. Supporting Experiences .....	8
4. Certification.....	8
5. Diocesan Resource Centre.....	9
6. Christian Formation Course Staff .....	9
7. Enrolment Procedure .....	10
8. Fees .....	10
9. Venues and Dates.....	10
<b>COURSE OVERVIEW</b>	<b>11</b>
Unit 1 – Living with God: Journey of Faith.....	12
Unit 2 – Speaking of God: Revelation of God.....	13
Unit 3 – Hearing the Word of God: Revelation in the Old Testament .....	14
Unit 4 – Hearing the Word of God: Revelation in the New Testament.....	15
Unit 5 – The Church from Age to Age: Messenger of Revelation .....	16
Unit 6 – Living the Word of God: People of God .....	17
Unit 7 – Sacramental Life of the Church: Signs and Symbols of Revelation .....	18
Unit 8 – Liturgical Life of the Church: Celebrating Revelation.....	19

## FOREWORD

Growing up in a committed Catholic household I was blessed with role models who demonstrated ways of the faith to me from the time I was born. My faith formation continued through my years of schooling, being a teacher, when I entered the seminary and continues today even as your Bishop. I understand all families do not look like mine, and everybody's life journey is not the same as mine, but developing a deeper understanding of what it means to be a Catholic and disciple of Jesus Christ is a lifelong learning process for everybody.

At the heart of Christian formation is our deepening understanding and acceptance of the kerygma, that is, the initial proclamation of the Gospel which leads to the encounter with Jesus Christ that offers us the gift of a new life and provides us a vision of seeing the world with loving, compassionate and merciful eyes. The way in which Jesus formed his disciples creates the model we are invited to follow: he did not merely impart teaching, but he shared his life with them and invited them to "follow him", that is, to imitate him in word, action, and attitude. He taught them to pray not only in words but in actions.

The Christian Formation Course has been a great contributor to Catholic life in this diocese, with over 250 people formed since 1993. The course is based on adult learning methods that involves on-going dialogue and engagement with the material and the staff. The course encourages participants to witness the revelation of God through the human experience, which is most manifest in Jesus, the Christ. Participants will explore their life's faith journey and understandings about Jesus, and inspiring them to live more deliberately as his disciples. It is through this exploration that participants share in the enrichment that comes from more fully gaining an understanding of what Catholics believe and why.

It is my hope that many people engage with the Christian Formation Course as a beginning or continuance of the journey of their living more informed and engaged with Christ in their life.



A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'M' followed by a cursive 'Kennedy'. The signature is written on a white background.

**Bishop Michael Kennedy**

# DIOCESAN CONTEXT

## Vision

We would see Jesus (Jn 12:21)

Becoming fully alive in Christ Jesus. (cf. Jn 10:10)

## Mission

To allow participants to explore their life's journey and understandings about Jesus through a program of education within the Catholic Tradition, inspiring them to live more deliberately as his disciples.

## Values

### **Life is sacred**

- each voice is a significant voice;
- God is in a loving relationship with each person;
- the Spirit is alive in each person for the good of all.

### **Faith grows**

- human beings ache for God and seek God
- faith is a trusting journey into mystery
- questioning, listening and discerning are vital for growth in faith
- human authenticity is a head-heart-hand reality
- good news is liberating; knowledge is freedom
- human experience, reflected upon, is revelatory of God
- Sacred tradition is there to be claimed
- tradition is a living ongoing partnership between the Spirit of God and the community of faith.

### **Education is a holy enterprise**

- all are teachers and all are learners
- adults come to the course richly resourced in human experience
- adults have a right to know about and claim their faith heritage
- presenters love what they share and share what they love
- neither distance, lack of money or formal education are barriers to inclusion in the course.

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Christian Formation Course (CFC) is a face-to-face learning experience that allows participants to explore their life's journey and their faith within the Catholic Tradition. This one-year course introduces participants to scripture, theology, church history, sacramental life and liturgy.

- The Course runs across twelve (12) months and comprises eight (8) units
- All who complete the Course are awarded a diocesan **Certificate in Christian Formation.**

## COURSE OUTCOMES

By engaging in the course, it is hoped participants will:

- explore their relationship with Jesus and feel the call of discipleship
- grow in their capacity to reflect on life's journey in the light of Christian faith
- become more confident in articulating their faith
- realise that Christian faith is nurtured in community
- experience together the power of God's revelation in the sources of Christian Tradition
- engage in forms of learning which affirm and deepen their baptismal call
- be affirmed in their gifts for participating in the life of the faith community
- grow in awareness of what it means to be a responsive member of the faith community.

# COURSE PRACTICALITIES

## 1. COURSE STRUCTURE

The *Christian Formation Course* (CFC) has a multifaceted structure, engaging a variety of formation opportunities across a twelve-month period.

- Eight (8) units over five (5) school terms.
- Usually two (2) units per school term.
- Five (5) consecutive weekly sessions per unit.

Each session is of 3 hours' duration.

## 2. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### **Prerequisites**

No prerequisite formation or qualification is required for this course.

### **Attendance**

The CFC is a face-to-face mode of learning.

With only 5 sessions per unit, consistent attendance is necessary.

Formal attendance records are maintained for the award of diocesan CFC certificate. Participants may miss only one session per unit for the receiving of a certificate.

### **Absences**

As far as possible, absences need to be communicated in advance, either to the unit presenter or the Course Coordinator.

Participants wishing to receive a certificate will need to discuss with the presenter the task required in lieu of attendance.

### **Participation**

The CFC invites a dual commitment from participants: to their individual learning and to the learning project of the group. Significant learning takes place within the group through exploring personal experience within the context of course work.

## Learning activities

### Course work

Participants are required to contribute to all activities including prayer; listening; reading; reflecting; sharing experiences, insights and questions; and attending to input.

### Reading

Personal reading between sessions is an important part of the learning process. Pertinent readings are provided for each unit.

Participants are also encouraged to use supplementary texts and library resources. Ideally, participants would devote 3-5 hours per week to reading.

### Assigned tasks

Participants will be required to demonstrate what they have learned by completing the assigned task/s for each unit.

Assignments will reflect:

- an understanding of the unit content
- an effort to critique the material provided
- an appreciation of the unit's significance for Christian living
- a willingness to integrate new learnings into life.

Should an assignment not meet the requirements of the unit, the participant will be invited to discuss it with the presenter.

## 3. SUPPORTING EXPERIENCES

A final day of *Retreat and Review* will conclude the Course.

Participants are encouraged to take further opportunities throughout the year to foster spiritual and contemplative being (e.g. retreats, spiritual direction).

## 4. CERTIFICATION

Participants who complete eight (8) units and satisfy requirements will receive a Diocesan **Certificate in Christian Formation** and a transcript of units studied.

At the end of each unit, participants who have not met attendance and/or assignment requirements will be notified.

As the course progresses, those who are unable to complete all the requirements, or who choose not to complete the full requirements, need to consult with the Course Coordinator. They will receive a **Statement of Participation**.



## 5. DIOCESAN RESOURCE CENTRE

The Diocesan Resource Centre is located at the corner of Parry and Tudor Street, Newcastle West. See the website for operating hours.

[www.mn.catholic.org.au/places/library/](http://www.mn.catholic.org.au/places/library/)

Online publications of *La Croix* and *The Tablet* are available as well as extensive eBook Theology and Religion Collection.

## 6. CHRISTIAN FORMATION COURSE STAFF

**Course Coordinator:** Rose McAllister

**Presenters:**

Teresa Brierley	Fiona Duque	Gerard Mowbray
Steve Britt	Uta France	Michael O'Connor
Fr Anthony Coloma	Louise Gannon rsj	Cathy White
Fr Andrew Doohan	Rose McAllister	

**Administration:** Jenny Harris

Whilst the **Course Coordinator** will be responsible for the overall co-ordination of the program, the presenters share the responsibility for implementing it.

Each **Presenter** will be responsible for the implementation of his/her unit and will be the first reference point for the participants in his/her classes. Issues of concern within a unit should be raised with the Presenter.

The Course Coordinator will become involved in issues only if required.

## 7. ENROLMENT PROCEDURE

An *Expression of Interest* form is available online at [www.mn.catholic.org.au/church-mission/catholic-life/faith-formation/christian-formation-course/](http://www.mn.catholic.org.au/church-mission/catholic-life/faith-formation/christian-formation-course/) or contact the Course Administration via *Contact Details* on page 2 of this handbook.

A letter of acceptance will be issued upon finalisation of enrolment.

## 8. FEES

### **\$480.00 course fee (\$60.00 per unit) Payment flexibility**

- payable in full of \$480
- by unit at \$60/unit

### **Payment methods**

Online (preferred) – secure card payment at [www.mn.catholic.org.au/about/parish-payments/](http://www.mn.catholic.org.au/about/parish-payments/)

- Select 'Diocesan payment';
- For 'Select Your Parish', choose Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle
- Payment Note should say 'CFC 2024'
- Cheque to 'Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle'
- Cash to Catholic Community Fund, Monday to Friday, 9:00am-4:30pm.

The Diocese believes that everyone should have the opportunity for faith formation, therefore, fees are negotiable in the event of financial difficulty. Participants can contact Course Administration for fee assistance.

## 9. VENUES AND DATES

Three-hour unit sessions are held weekly during school terms at the Diocesan Resource Centre, Corner of Parry and Tudor Streets, Newcastle West from 6pm-9pm on Tuesdays.

At conclusion of the course a day of *Retreat and Review* will be held.

# COURSE OVERVIEW



## Certificate in **Christian Formation**

### **Unit 1:**

Living with God: *Journey of Faith*

### **Unit 2:**

Speaking of God: *Revelation of God*

### **Unit 3:**

Hearing the Word of God: *Revelation in the Old Testament*

### **Unit 4:**

Hearing the Word of God: *Revelation in the New Testament*

### **Unit 5:**

The Church from Age to Age: *Messenger of Revelation*

### **Unit 6:**

Living the Word of God: *People of God*

### **Unit 7:**

Sacramental Life of the Church: *Signs and symbols of Revelation*

### **Unit 8:**

Liturgical Life of the Church: *Celebrating Revelation*

## UNIT 1

### LIVING WITH GOD: JOURNEY OF FAITH

**Duration:** Five sessions (15 hours)

**Rationale:**

God is with us addressing us in our lives. This unit focuses on the theoretical and practical issues of ourselves as communicating persons on the journey of faith; exploring the self, the other, and the process itself.

**Outcomes:**

It is hoped that participants will have:

- a sound grasp of the process of communication
- become aware of themselves as communicating persons and the factors which contribute to their own effective communication
- have practised skills for effective communication
- skills and strategies for dealing with blocks in communication
- become more self-reflective in all forms of communication
- have had opportunities to open to God-within who comes to us disguised as our life
- a sense of where they are on their faith journey.

**Content:**

This course will focus on:

- Human Relating
- Basic Communication Skills
- Significant life experiences, both personal and societal; reflection on such experiences in the light of faith
- Participants' experience of encountering God in life
- Participants making sense of their own faith journey (stages of development – emerging from their experience).

## UNIT 2

### **SPEAKING OF GOD: REVELATION OF GOD**

**Duration:** Five sessions (15 hours)

**Rationale:**

This unit stands firmly on *Dei Verbum*, Vatican II's *Constitution on Divine Revelation* and on an awareness that Christian faith is profoundly respectful of the revelation of God through human experience which is most manifest in Jesus, the Christ.

**Outcomes:**

It is hoped that participants will be:

- affirming of God's self-revelation through human experience
- aware that reflection on human living in the light of faith undergirds the Christian belief in God's word in both Scripture and Tradition
- responsive to God's self-revelation in their lives.

**Content:**

This course will cover the following content:

- Introduction: Human images of God; Nature of Faith; Mystery
- Essence of Divine Revelation. God's ultimate revelation, the person of Jesus Christ who reveals to us both fullness of God and the fullness of our human personhood.
- The Word of God handed on in the Living Tradition of the Church
- Understanding the Old and New Testaments: Inspiration and Interpretation
- Sacred Scripture in the life of the Church; Catholic understanding of revelation viz-à-viz Fundamentalism.

THE FIRST BOOK OF MOSES, CALLED  
**GENESIS.**

**CHAPTER 1.**

Creation of the solar system. 20 Creation of animal life. 26 Creation of immortal man. 29 The appointment of food. beginning God created the heaven

lesser light to rule the stars also. 17 And God set the of the heaven to give 18 And to rule over the night, and to divide darkness: and God 19 And the evening

UNIT 3

**HEARING THE WORD OF GOD: REVELATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**

**Duration:** Five sessions (15 hours)

**Rationale:**

This unit is a general introduction to reading Scripture in the light of *Dei Verbum* and the Church's Tradition. It approaches the Hebrew Scriptures as the story of the Hebrews' relationship with the God who claimed them as God's own people; God's word in dialogue with human experience; a story lived and celebrated before ever it was written down; a story born of a specific time and culture with implications for life now. It is the story that we as Christians have made our own and brought to completion in Jesus of Nazareth.

**Outcomes:**

It is hoped that the unit will nurture in the participants:

- an awareness of biblical origins, culture and literary forms
- a desire to read scripture in the spirit of *Dei Verbum*
- a dynamic relationship with God – gradually revealed in the Hebrew scriptures
- an appreciation of the Hebrew Scriptures as foundational to Christian prayer.

**Content:**

This course will cover the following content:

- The nature of God revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures
- The different types of literature found in the Hebrew Scriptures
- The cycle of biblical themes: creation, call, covenant, exodus, exile
- The call of the prophet
- Biblical prayer.

## UNIT 4

### HEARING THE WORD OF GOD: REVELATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

**Duration:** Five sessions (15 hours)

**Rationale:**

This unit offers an overview of the Christian Scriptures in the light of *Dei Verbum*. Although written for the early church communities as they pondered the ongoing significance of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, they are also 'our' story foundational for our contemporary journey in faith.

**Outcomes:**

It is hoped that the unit will nurture in the participants:

- an informed approach to reading the scriptures – their context and purpose
- an awareness of the continuity between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith
- a deeper desire to engage in God's coming reign
- a helpful interweaving of scripture, prayer and daily living.

**Content:**

This course will cover the following content:

- The context, content, scope and purpose of the New Testament
- Reading and understanding Scripture
- Encountering Christ through the lens of one Gospel
- Paul's letters in the context of the expansion of Christianity
- Praying and living the Scriptures: helpful practices and guides for formation.



## UNIT 5

### THE CHURCH FROM AGE TO AGE: MESSENGER OF REVELATION

**Duration:** Five Sessions (15 hours)

**Rationale:**

This unit seeks to further the process of personal and group reflection on life in the light of the gospel and Christian tradition by focusing on the Church's Story from the earliest times until the present day. The personal story of participants is the background against which the larger story is viewed with the intention of discovering the continuing relevance of Christian faith in a changing world.

**Outcomes:**

By the end of the Unit it is hoped that participants will have:

- a basic knowledge of the story of the Church
- an understanding of some key events and themes
- an appreciation of the developing nature of the Church
- an ability to assess critically past and current events in the life of the Church
- an empathy with the Church as it continues in its struggle to be faithful to the intentions of Jesus and the praxis of the early Church.

**Content:**

The Church from Age to Age:

- The Beginning: Finding an identity
- The Imperial Church: Pomp and Power
- Through the Dark Ages to the Age of Faith; Middle Ages: Monasticism and Mysticism
- Reformation and beyond: New beginnings and old prejudices
- The Modern Age: Infallibility and Infamy; Saints and Sinners.





## UNIT 6

### LIVING THE WORD OF GOD: PEOPLE OF GOD

**Duration:** Five sessions (15 hours)

**Rationale:**

This unit seeks to develop the vision of the Church as presented in the documents of Vatican II: the Church as *Communio* presented in *Lumen Gentium*, engaged in dialogue with the post-modern world, deeply rooted in Tradition and reaching out in mission to the world.

**Outcomes:**

It is hoped that by the end of the unit participants will:

- be conversant with the vision of the Church in *Lumen Gentium*
- be able to articulate their understanding of the Church's Mission
- have clarified their understanding of the role and nature of the structures of the Church
- have developed an understanding of the local Church and its intercommunion with the universal Church
- have developed an appreciation of the priesthood of all the faithful.

**Content:**

This course will cover the following content:

- Context of the Contemporary Church – the Centrality of Vatican II; Mission of the Church
- Church as Organisation; Hierarchical structure; Local Church of Maitland-Newcastle
- Role of the Laity: Gifts and Ministries
- The Church in the Modern World: *Gaudium et Spes*
- Catholic Social Justice Teaching.

## UNIT 7

**SACRAMENTAL LIFE OF THE CHURCH: SIGNS AND SYMBOLS OF REVELATION**

**Duration:** Five sessions (15 hours)

**Rationale:**

The notion of sacrament is core to the identity of the Catholic Church. This unit explores a wide understanding of sacramentality including consideration of Jesus and Church as sacrament – the foundation a rich appreciation of the sacramental life of the Church.

**Outcomes:**

By the conclusion of this unit participants will have had an opportunity to:

- deepen their relationship with the God of Jesus Christ
- reflect on and deepen their understanding of sacrament through consideration of historical developments and current theology
- appreciate the centrality of sacrament to Catholic identity and spirituality
- become familiar with sacramental rites
- deepen their appreciation of the use of symbols in prayer and liturgy
- reflect theologically on lived experiences of Sacraments
- apply renewed understandings to practice in parish life.

**Content:**

This course will cover the following content:

- The sacramental, revelatory nature of human life
- Foundations for Sacramental theology in the Paschal Mystery: Jesus Christ's life, death, resurrection and sending of the Spirit
- Sacraments within the liturgical life of Sacred Tradition
- Key understandings regarding the sacramental nature of liturgy
- Our lived experience of revelation through the sacramental life of the Church", that is if you think that would be OK based on what others are doing.

## UNIT 8

### LITURGICAL LIFE OF THE CHURCH: CELEBRATING REVELATION

**Duration:** Five sessions (15 hours)

**Rationale:**

Eucharist stands at the centre of the Church's liturgical life and is the source and summit of Christian life. (CSL a. 5, LG a. 11)

This unit will focus on the structure of the celebration of eucharist as the lens through which to explore our understanding of Catholic liturgy and its place in the life and mission of the Church.

In many ways this unit pulls together all that has been covered in the Christian Formation Course.

**Outcomes:**

By the end of this unit participants will have had an opportunity to:

- deepen their relationship with the God of Jesus Christ
- pray with and reflect on some the Eucharistic texts
- develop their understanding of the structure and elements of the Mass as the model of all Catholic liturgy
- consider the meaning and use of key symbols and rituals in the celebration of eucharist
- develop their knowledge and understanding of sections of the Missal and its General Instruction
- consider the nature and role of liturgy within for disciples and the life and mission of the Catholic Church
- apply their theological understanding to practical liturgical issues/questions
- appreciate the limitations of what has been explored and the consequent need to keep developing their understanding.

**Content:**

This course will cover the following content:

- The process of mystagogical reflection
- The Introductory Rite of Mass
- The Liturgy of the Word
- The Liturgy of the Eucharist
- The Concluding Rite.

