Ten facts about the new Pope

At 2.06am Western Australian time, Thursday 14 March, white smoke billowed from the chimney atop the Sistine Chapel announcing to the world the election of a new Pope. Below are a few facts you might not yet know about Pope Francis:

- Pope Francis, Jorge Bergoglio, was one of five children.
- His parents migrated from Italy to Argentina and his father was a railway worker.
- He is the first Jesuit Pope.
- He has a philosophy degree from the Catholic University of Buenos Aires and a masters degree in chemistry.
- During the last conclave in 2005, he was reportedly runner-up to the man he is now succeeding, Benedict XI.
- He is known for his humility, doctrinal conservatism and commitment to social justice.
- He has been critical of liberation theology.
- He is fluent in Spanish, Italian and German.
- In Argentina, he has been accused by anti-clericalists as being ‘medieval’.

Pope John Paul II made him a cardinal in 2001. He has served on the Congregation of Clergy, Congregation of Divine Worship and Sacraments, Congregation of Societies of Apostolic Life and the Commission on Latin American and the Family Council.
Mary Full of Grace

It was a pleasure for me to present two retreats on Mary as part of our Lenten preparation this year. About 60 people attended the retreats, one of which was held in the Chapel of St Michael the Archangel at the Catholic Education Centre and the other in the Perth hills at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Lesmurdie.

The day focused on three of the key images that the scriptures give us of Mary. The first is Luke’s account of the young adolescent girl who receives an unimaginable ‘annunciation’ that she thoughtfully and graciously accepts. The second, also from Luke, is Mary’s visit to her cousin Elisabeth, which is the context for the Magnificat – Mary’s proclamation of a God who inverts worldly values and regards, shows mercy, lifts up, feeds, helps and remembers those who need him. Finally we looked at the sorrowful mother at the foot of the Cross in John’s Gospel whose sharing of her Son’s suffering has led generations of Christians to seek Mary in their troubles and through her companionship to have a glimpse of the compassionate heart of God.

Participants were able to explore the humility, joy, gratitude and grace reflected in Mary’s life and to reconsider their own need for these precious things. They were also able to reflect on the fact that Mary’s work of giving birth to Christ was both uniquely and exclusively hers, and in a different sense, the work of every human being and the desire of every heart. In Mary the Church contemplates the purpose for which it exists – to cooperate with the Spirit in bringing the life of Christ into the world.

The rewards of the day for me personally were summed up in two comments that I heard: ‘learning about Mary taught me much about myself’ and ‘reflecting on Mary helped me understand the depth of God’s love for me’. Mary, who proclaims the greatness of God in the simplicity of her life, helps us to look at our ordinary and sometimes fragmented lives through the look of divine love and speaks of a God who desires to dwell with us.

Pina Ford

From the Coordinator

The journey from Lent to Easter this year had its own particular poignancy and richness given that it coincided with unexpected events in Rome. At about the same time that we acknowledged our human frailty with the familiar cross of ashes on the forehead, Pope Benedict having humbly acknowledged his own physical frailty began the journey to retirement. It was not long before Pope Francis was elected - his words and actions in the first important weeks of his papacy intertwining with our Lenten liturgies and observances and adding to their meaning.

As we prepared to join ourselves more deeply to Jesus’ great outpouring of love and his passing through death to life, Francis’ profound words and simple gestures were a striking witness to the Good News that Jesus offered the world. The media babbled about red shoes and such curiosities but Francis’ homily at his inaugural Mass on the feast of St Joseph reflected on the role of protector: ‘Let us not forget’, he said ‘that authentic power is service’, a service whose culmination is the Cross for ‘only those who love can protect’. Addressing the leaders of other faiths who were in Rome at this time, Francis referred to the yearning of the human heart for the transcendent and affirmed his commitment to promoting friendship between men and women of different religious traditions.

At the beginning of Holy Week, as on virtually every other occasion, Francis referred to the ‘little’ ones that Jesus cherished. ‘He awakened so many hopes in the heart, above all among humble, simple, poor, forgotten people, those who don’t matter in the eyes of the world.’

In these early days of his pontificate Francis has communicated gently and joyfully the values which identify the Kingdom of God. He has called upon all of us to live and to share the risen life of Christ:

‘Today too, amid so much darkness, we need to see the light of hope and to be men and women who bring hope to others. To protect creation, to protect every man and every woman, to look upon them with tenderness and love, is to open up a horizon of hope.’

Pina Ford
Coordinators’ Breakfast

Thirty Catechist Coordinators met for a networking breakfast on Monday 18 February at the Catholic Education Centre. The morning began with Mass in the Chapel of St Michael the Archangel and following that Catechists enjoyed a healthy breakfast in the grounds of the Centre. Coordinators appreciated the time to relax, socialise with each other and chat about common issues. Some of the discussion resulting from the networking was:

‘Loved the breakfast’ (Jennifer Watts)

‘When in doubt ask the Catechist Service’ (Cathy Gawen)

‘What to do about parents wanting to skip pre-Confirmation’ (Monique Gintzburger)
Over 70 Catechists and Parish Priests, some from as far as Moora and Bruce Rock, gathered in James Nestor Hall to listen to the address of Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB and participate in the rest of the day’s program.

In his address, ‘A royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people’, the Archbishop led the audience in considering matters which are at the very heart of our faith. He spoke with clarity about the meaning and importance of the ‘New Evangelisation’.

He affirmed that it is the same evangelisation in so far as the task is the same: to make disciples of all nations; the message is the same: that God so loved the world that he sent his only Son so that everyone who believes in him might not be lost but might have eternal life; the basic strategies are the same – namely prayer, sacraments, community and outreach to those in need.

What is new, however, is the context. Despite many points of convergence with society there is a large and growing gap between the values of the Gospel and those espoused by the world in which we live.

Archbishop Costelloe asked the audience to consider whether there is an identity crisis at present: Who are we as Church? Who are we as Catechists? Who are we as evangelisers?

To evangelise others, he said, it is important to resolve this identity crisis because ‘we cannot give what we don’t have’.

In being evangelisers in our time, the Archbishop proposed that we need to be clear about three key areas that demand our fidelity. First there must be fidelity to our beginnings; that is, to the self-revelation of God in Jesus communicated in the gospels. This fidelity requires not only knowing about Jesus, but knowing Jesus and being in relationship with him.

Secondly we need to have fidelity to our story – to the guiding work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church through history. Finally we must also have a fidelity to our present; that is, to the people of our own time and their right to hear the gospel in a language they can understand.

Overlooking any of these or favouring one over the other creates imbalance. ‘Going back to Jesus’ for example and ignoring 2000 years of tradition creates fundamentalism. Adjusting our story to accommodate whatever is currently in or out of favour distorts the message.

Communicating in language that is incomprehensible disrespects the fact that the gospel is intended for the people of our times. Ignoring that our origins are in Jesus who is himself the Good News would make evangelisation pointless.
Archbishop Costelloe continued to explore core elements of our Christian identity. He considered the sacraments of Initiation – Baptism and Confirmation through which we are brought to new life in Christ and empowered to transmit that life to others. He spoke of the Eucharist where we celebrate the memory of Christ who poured his life out for us and through which we do the same – as we become and recognise ourselves as the Body of Christ given for others.

The Archbishop explored the meaning of Church and explained that our identity as Christians is not to be individuals. We exist because we are corporate – a communion with God and one another formed by the Holy Spirit in Christ.

The audience was left with the challenge that all who evangelise must face: to be faithful to the historical Jesus of the Gospels, to the guiding of the Holy Spirit in our history and to communicate a message that the children understand. Underneath this challenge lay the absolute necessity of allowing Christ to be Christ. The Archbishop referred to the fact that even Peter tried to remake Jesus into someone more personally ‘comfortable’. Christ is at the centre of all our efforts as the Way, the Truth and the Life. [John 14:6]

If you want to find the way, let me show it to you.
If you want to know the truth, let me reveal it to you.
If you want to find life, let me give it to you.

Pina Ford

Sharing about Scripture in the Classroom

My name is James Rodgers and I am a Catechist from the Wanneroo Parish. I was commissioned in 1993 when I was sharing my faith with the children at the Whitfords Parish. I was a Catechist there for about 10 years.

In 2012, I attended the Scripture in the Classroom Course as part of my ongoing formation and found it very enriching. Just like the reading of a superb book, the talks invariably leave you wanting more. This year, I have been inspired to keep going and enhance my knowledge and learning new skills to make the lessons more interesting for the children.

I find each and every member of this Catechist Service very accomplished and extremely well led by Pina Ford. The team members are so affable and willing to answer all your questions. Scripture and drama in the classroom was so interesting. I cannot wait for next year to put into practise these new found skills. The liquid pictures and mime were particularly of interest to me.

I am from the very old school where we were told not to read the Bible because it was too complex to understand. We learned from the Green Penny Catechism parrot fashion, and that is why I am still able to recite and recall the old answers. However, after attending all the classes this year, it has made a profound difference in my thinking and understanding of the Bible. During the Scripture course I learned that Jesus was not afraid to be controversial. Carmel’s talk on the customs at the time when ‘The Prodigal Son’ was written just blew me away.

In conclusion, I am looking forward to choosing new courses in 2013 and rekindling the acquaintances with the Catechist Service. May God bless the team and shower upon them all the graces and assistance they require to perform their superb jobs.

James Rodgers
New Coordinators’ Course

An enthusiastic group of Catechists attended the New Coordinators’ Course in March. Despite the plethora of information they encountered, they remained cheerful and committed at the end of the two days.

Topics discussed included:

• formally defining the Coordinators’ role
• successfully liaising with the Parish Priest and the parish school
• developing finance and safety policies for individual parishes
• encouraging ongoing formation and understanding; and
• implementing the Archdiocesan Sacrament Policy.

Training in designing the program for an individual parish was an important element of the course. Time was allowed for individual queries about the specific challenges already encountered with running PREP. The new Coordinators were assured of the ongoing support from the Catechist Service Team. We wish them every blessing as they undertake their new leadership roles.

Passing the Baton 2013: Children’s Workers’ Training Day and Expo

Children’s Ministry Network (CMN) this year again presented the conference ‘Passing the Baton’ in February. The main thrust of CMN Conferences is to present Catechists or teachers of scripture classes with ideas, strategies and resources to aid them in their teaching.

The 15 Catechists who attended found this a very useful day and appreciated the input of the main speaker, Simon Hood. He presented his talk using the novel idea of a puppet to help him. One of his main ideas was talking about Kids’ Games which is an international movement of bringing Jesus to children through non-threatening group games.

There was also a presenter who used ‘Godly Play’ as his technique for presenting the story of Noah. The conference had many electives from which to choose and had many displays set up which allowed the purchase of resources. All the Catechists who attended were credited with half a unit towards Religious Education.

Michele Purcell from the Catechist Service also presented an elective on how to present the scriptures to children which was very well received.

CMN will be conducting another Passing the Baton Conference next year on Saturday February 15. Look out for the flyer towards the end of this year.

It makes all the difference whether we believe Jesus is alive today or not. If Jesus is only someone who lived and died a long time ago, who was compassionate and heroic and gave us wonderful teachings to follow, his story belongs to the past and is completed. If he is alive, his story continues.

Interestingly, Jesus’ disciples initially saw themselves as the ex-disciples of a dead prophet. But then something began to happen. Many began to experience Jesus – see him, talk with him, eat with him and be guided by him. Diverse though the Resurrection stories are in the four Gospels, they strongly affirm three basics: Jesus is alive; he is not alive in the same way as before, he has been transformed (not just ‘resuscitated’); he is not just a memory or a product of collective wishful thinking (hence the scriptures that dwell on his substantial, ‘bodily’ presence).

The fourth ‘basic’ to note about the Resurrection stories is that the disciples are profoundly affected by the experience. The Resurrection stories begin to communicate that transformation in Jesus’ followers that we associate with the outpouring of the Spirit. Their cowardice, fear, despondency, disbelief, guilt, disunity, give way to a sense of courage, passion, hope, belief, forgiveness and community. They stop mourning Jesus’ loss and instead celebrate a relationship that is far more intimate than the one they had when they walked the dusty roads of Palestine with him. They recognise that relationship as the source of their new life and joy and they can’t help but share their Good News. The rest is history – our history!

We do not need to have been present in the aftermath of Jesus’ death in Palestine to be witnesses to the Resurrection. As with Paul, who experienced the Resurrection in his own unique way, Christ comes to meet us in many and diverse ways in our own life journey. He comes not only as a memory of someone who lived long ago, but as the living God who invites us into relationship and offers us his new life.

To be a Christian means that we fundamentally believe that death and destruction does not have the final word – in Jesus’ life or in ours; that the love of God revealed in Jesus and poured out by him on all creation can heal, restore, reconcile, renew and transform every havoc, hatred, sorrow, darkness, division and even death itself.

“To say, [as in the Creed] ‘I believe in Jesus Christ...who rose from the dead,’ is to say I believe that the Resurrection goes on and on forever. Every time Jesus rises in our hearts in new ways, the Resurrection happens again. Every time we see Jesus where we did not recognise him before – in the faces of the poor, in the love of the unloved, in the revelatory moments of life, Jesus rises anew. But that is not all. The real proof of the Resurrection lies not in the transformation of Jesus alone but in the transformation awaiting us who accept it.” (In Search of Belief, Joan Chittister, p134)

Pina Ford

Who is Jesus?

How would you answer the question ‘Who is Jesus?’ In this Year of Grace and Year of Faith, as we contemplate the face of Jesus, you are invited to share your response to these questions:

- Who is Jesus for you?
- What is your relationship with Jesus – in prayer and in life?
- What is your image of Jesus?
- What scripture stories about Jesus are significant to you? Why?

GUIDELINES: Your response should be about who Jesus is for you – a personal response. It should be a maximum of 250 words; we may edit responses before publishing. Please include a few sentences about yourself and a photo (optional) to give readers a context.

SEND TO: Echoing the Word, Pauline Electronic Publishing, 58 Homebush Road, Strathfield NSW 2135
Four Useful Songs for PREP Lessons

Why take the time and effort to teach a song or a hymn to your PREP children?

Here are four good reasons:

- A song can be a shared experience which gathers the children in your class and gives them a feeling of community.
- A song can reinforce the theme or learning from a previous lesson and help to connect the four lessons in a module.
- A song adds joy to the learning experience and is something children can take away with them and sing again whenever they like.
- Some songs learned in the classroom are suitable for Masses and Liturgies of the Word.

The Directory for Masses with Children (#22) states:

The principles of active and conscious participation are … even more significant for Masses celebrated with children. Every effort should therefore be made to increase this participation and to make it more intense. For this reason as many children as possible should have special parts in the celebration … for example, singing … and playing musical instruments.

Four useful songs which have been successfully used in lessons and in Liturgies are:

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<th>Title</th>
<th>Composer</th>
<th>Useful for</th>
<th>Available in</th>
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<td>Come Together</td>
<td>Michael Mangan</td>
<td>Gathering for lessons / Liturgies</td>
<td>As One Voice For Kids</td>
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<td>Let's Celebrate</td>
<td></td>
<td>Entrance Hymn Mass</td>
<td>CD and Book MUS 080 ASO</td>
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<tr>
<td>These Hands</td>
<td>Andrew Chinn</td>
<td>As a prayer during appropriate lessons</td>
<td>These Hands</td>
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<td>Presentation of Gifts Mass</td>
<td>CD and Book MUS 676 CHI</td>
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<tr>
<td>That's Just How it's Supposed to be</td>
<td>Monica Brown</td>
<td>Gathering for lessons / Communion</td>
<td>Praise and Blessings</td>
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<td>Hymn Mass</td>
<td>CD and Book MUS 470 BRO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Walk in the Light</td>
<td>Carey Landry</td>
<td>To end a lesson Recessional Hymn Mass</td>
<td>Hi God 4</td>
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REMINDERS OF COURSES, INSERVICES AND EVENTS

TERM TWO

For full details of all courses see the Catechist Formation Program Booklet.

INITIAL FORMATION – PART 1

Date: Wednesdays 8 May – 10 July
Time: 9.30am – 1.00pm
OR
7.00pm – 9.30pm
Venue: Newman Siena Centre
Facilitator: Michele Purcell
Accreditation: Provisional

TRINITY: A COMMUNITY OF LOVE

Date: Tuesdays 14 & 21 May
Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm
Venue: Newman Siena Centre
Presenter: Dr Pina Ford
Accreditation: Full Unit Theology
Cert I/II

THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES: OUR STORY BEGINS

Date: Fridays 21 & 28 June
Time: 9.30am – 2.30pm
Venue: Newman Siena Centre
Presenter: Dr Pina Ford
Accreditation: Full Unit Scripture
Cert I/II

PRIESTS AND COORDINATORS DAY

Date: Tuesday 25 June
Time: 9.30am – 1.00pm
Venue: James Nestor Hall
Catholic Education Centre
Presenter: Dr Tim MacDonald
Director, Catholic Education in WA

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Date: Friday 5 July
Time: 9.30am – 3.00pm
Venue: James Nestor Hall
Catholic Education Centre
Presenter: Dr Jan Grajczonek
Accreditation: Half unit Religious Education
Cert I/II

CATECHIST SERVICE

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