



CWL Registered Charity
No. 250120

Our Lady's Catechists Notes and News 2016

MISSION STATEMENT

As Mary brought Jesus to us all, we hope to bring Him to those individuals - adults or children - who are unable to use other resources. We do this directly by postal courses, through the catechists we train and support, and in occasional meetings.



Maureen Walker

Past Chairman, Secretary,
and Treasurer of OLC
Died November 27 2015

Older members will remember Maureen. She was a dynamic worker for OLC and over the years was Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. During her time, she broadened the vision of Our Lady's Catechists, improved its resources and outlook, and set it on a course to what it is today.

It was while she was Chairman that we became associated with Fr John Redford. During that time, we started our Conferences at Plater, resourced our Speakers from Maryvale, and opened up work to Prisoners, Duke of Edinburgh Awards, and Special Needs etc. Then all these adult courses were realigned to CCC and Dei Verbum now become the focus of OLC work.

Maureen was God's gift to OLC, a woman of much larger vision and complete disinterested dedication; at the time, she was so much needed. As officers on the Committee were always in short supply, Maureen was there as Secretary and later Treasurer.



A WORD FROM BERYL

It is my pleasure to introduce our new Chairman. You already know Elizabeth Dixon as a former CWL Representative to OLC and current Registrar for our newest Course *Mysteries of the Christian Life*. Elizabeth has agreed to serve for the coming year, and I welcome her most enthusiastically. She has already proved a great asset to OLC but now I will let her present her own message to you.

I would like to thank all of you for your support and prayers during the last four years, especially Sue Andrews who works so willingly. God Bless you all. Elizabeth, over to you.

Beryl Wakefield

MESSAGE FROM OUR NEW CHAIRMAN

Dear friends,

May I start my term of office by letting you know that I will keep you in my prayers and hope that you might consider keeping me and the members of Our Lady's Catechists executive in yours? On the subject of prayer, please continue to say Our Lady's Catechists prayer daily, because as we all know, prayer really does work and with your help and that of our dedicated tutors, we will get the message of God's love to as many people as possible.

This year the, Year of Mercy, we have been given a great opportunity by our Holy Father. We have opened our churches and cathedrals so that people can walk in. However, we must also welcome the people into our hearts and be ready to really listen. I would also like to invite you to look again at the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy; I feel that these, are God's way of setting us on the right path.

May I take this opportunity to thank Beryl for all the work that she has done as Chairman over the last four years. Of course her work is not over as she will continue to be an important part of the Executive. I hope that with your help and support we will continue to build on the excellent work that has been achieved over the past 93 years, spreading the Christian message and helping those seeking to deepen their knowledge of the Catholic Faith.

Elizabeth Dixon

CONGRATULATIONS

Diploma Course

Regina Gottschalk South Africa

Foundation Course Final Assessment

Carol Stephenson Middlesbrough

Foundation Course: First Assessment

Carol Stephenson Middlesbrough

Pam Aherne Salford

Angela Ashby East Anglia

Completed Part 3 without Assessment

Inez Dann Plymouth

Certificates of Completion issued to:

CATHOLICISM MADE SIMPLE

Louise Laggan, Hexham & Newcastle.

Louise Watkins, Portsmouth

Ann Henry, Brentwood

Wesley Hawryliw, Nottingham

Hazel Hare, Clifton

Angela Francisco, East Anglia

MYSTERIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Plymouth Diocese:

Claire Gatehouse Marian Tewsbury

Maureen Ponling Valerie Howard

Ray Mulligan Pauline Mulligan

John Crean Jackie Crean

Ann Hunt Sue Wakley-Stoyle

Paula Parkyn Carol Russell

Joyce Whiting Pat Turner

Nottingham Diocese:

Kay Allen Elisabeth Cooper

Ann Criddle Glenise Ellis

Antoinette Faulkner Audrey Hopkins

Winnie Hopkins Lesley Noakes

FUTURE EVENTS

AUTUMN DAY

Venue: St Ann's. Alcester St. Digbeth, Birmingham on 15 October 2016

Speaker: Fr Udress.

Theme: The life of G. K. Chesterton

Registration: 11am; Close 3:30 pm. Please bring a packed lunch

Contact: Sue Andrews: suem.andrews@hotmail.co.uk for details

CWL AGM: Sept 30-Oct 2 2016, SOUTHPORT

For further information contact the
CWL Secretary at natsec@cwlor.uk

OLC CONFERENCE and AGM 2017

Date: 21st to 23rd April

Time: Registration from 4pm Friday – finishing after lunch on Sunday

Cost: £143.50

Deposit of £20 to be sent in by 8 December please to enable us to secure rooms

To Mrs Sue Andrews suem.andrews@hotmail.co.uk for details. Speaker: to be advised

OBITUARIES

Maureen Walker (1923-2015)

Marie Francis, who knew Maureen well writes, I first knew Maureen when I attended Harbourne Hall in 1988, with Trevor, my husband, who felt like a “fish out of water”. Maureen came and spoke to him. Maureen took on Chairmanship in 1985, and with Marion King as Treasurer in 1986; they were a formidable partnership. During her period as Chairman, we were without a Secretary, so for some years, Maureen covered both roles. She continued as Chairman until 1990 and then became Treasurer in 1992; I joined the Executive as Secretary, where I got to know Maureen better. She always had a sense of humour.

When she was Editor of Notes and News, she and her husband, used to count, and take to the Post Office, every Diocesan Rep package for onward delivery.

When she left as Treasurer in 1999: she wrote: “*this is the Silver Jubilee of my membership of Our Lady's Catechists, 20 of which have been served on the Executive and I have enjoyed every one of those years...*”

Maureen attended Autumn Day 2011 at the St. Richard Reynolds Centre, Blessed Sacrament Church in Exeter.

She was a dynamic yet kind and generous person, with a mischievous smile; she will always be in my heart. May her gentle soul rest in peace. Maureen will be greatly missed.

Sister Eileen Bogues (1929 -2015)

Administrator for our students in South Africa

Our Lady's Catechists owes much to the work of Sister



Eileen, who belonged to the Assumption Convent, Ballynahinch. On 17th May 2002, Rt. Rev Bishop Michael Coleman (RIP) gave approval for our courses to be used in the Diocese of Port Elizabeth, South Africa. Since then Sister

Eileen and Josephine worked tirelessly to spread our courses in their dioceses, which includes, Port Alfred and East London. The CMS course was translated into Afrikaans and Xhosa, and we had numerous students. We had a few students on the Diploma Course, many of whom are catechists, ministers of the Eucharist and help the priest in significant ways for example they go with the funeral procession to the graveyard and bury the dead. Wilhelmina Williams did this for Sister Eileen. In 2004 Sister Eileen and Josephine came to the UK and the then Executive met them for lunch. In 2007 Sister Eileen and Josephine retired. Sister Eileen celebrated the Diamond Jubilee of her Religious Profession 2011.

Marie Francis

Mrs Ruth Hampson Birmingham

Ruth died in April 2015. She was a retired lay Prison Chaplain who became a tutor on the CMS and MCL Courses. A person of strong Faith, she bore her long illness with fortitude and remained positive to the end. We extend our sincere condolences to her family and friends. May she rest in peace.

John Crean.

Mr Rodney Pylee East Anglia

Rodney was studying the CMS Course until illness made further work impossible. He passed away in November 2015. May he rest in peace. We extend our deepest sympathy to his family and friends.

John Crean.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR, FR. HARRY CURTISS STL

Dear Sisters and Brothers,



A hundred years ago, George Bernard Shaw complained that there were too many productions of Gounod's opera *Faust*, but today it seems that it has almost completely dropped out of fashion. Perhaps it is easy to see why, with its rather sordid and very melodramatic story and over-sweet music, but I confess that I have always enjoyed it,

especially the final scene.

(Spoiler alert!). It is the story of an old man, Faust, who sells his soul to the devil, Méphistophélès, in exchange for his youth and worldly pleasures. He seduces a young girl called Marguerite and subsequently kills her brother in a duel. Marguerite's world falls apart: she is shunned by the world, abandoned by her lover, and has witnessed her brother's death. In despair she loses her mind and murders her baby. (I warned you it was sordid). In the final scene Méphistophélès helps Faust to enter the prison where Marguerite is being held for killing her child, and Faust tries to persuade her to escape with him. But Marguerite recognises Méphistophélès and shrinks from him, preferring to appeal instead to the mercy of God and His angels. The music soars higher and ever more desperate until at last Marguerite pushes Faust away and falls down dead. Méphistophélès is triumphant; it is another soul for hell. "Jugée!" he sings, "She is damned!", but just then a voice on high sings in contradiction, "Sauvée!" ("She is saved!"). The bells of Easter sound and a chorus of angels sings "Christ est ressuscité!" ("Christ is risen!"). The walls of the prison open, and Marguerite's soul rises to heaven while Méphistophélès retreats, thrown into confusion and despair before light and glory of heaven, dragging Faust down to hell.

It is sentimental and I love it! It is a sort of re-telling of the parable of the Prodigal Son who recognises that he does not

deserve the consideration of his father. In the parable, the son has effectively said to his father, "To me, you are dead". Even so, the father in the parable does not fail to love and accept his son when he seeks reconciliation. In the opera, Marguerite does not deserve to be saved; in justice she is guilty of terrible sins. But she throws herself on the mercy of God and through that mercy she is welcomed into the celebrations of heaven. In each case the message is about the mercy of God which is far greater than human justice.

This is a Jubilee Year of Mercy, a time of grace for us all to rediscover how much God loves us and what He invites us to share. As Pope Francis said when he announced the Year: "I am confident that the whole Church, which is in such need of mercy for we are sinners, will be able to find in this Jubilee the joy of rediscovering and rendering fruitful God's mercy, with which we are all called to give comfort to every man and every woman of our time. Do not forget that God *forgives all*, and God *forgives always*. Let us never tire of asking forgiveness."

The other day I was driving along the motorway when I was overtaken by a van. It was apparently a pick-up truck for a scrap metal dealer because there was an assortment of old metal junk in the back. The back of the van was covered with mud, but someone had written in the mud, using large capital letters, the legend "LIVING THE DREAM". It made me smile because driving a load of scrap metal wouldn't be my idea of living the dream, and yet it somehow summed up an idea of freedom which was very attractive. To some, the idea of being forgiven, of being reconciled with God may seem like an impossible dream. But in this Year of Mercy we are all being encouraged to "live the dream" because we can all experience the glorious liberty of the children of God. Let us never hesitate to share that mercy with others.

Thank you for all you do as Catechists to share the joy of the Gospel. Let us pray for one another. May God bless you.
Fr. Harry Curtiss

COURSE REPORTS

DIPLOMA COURSE

The Diploma Course has seen something of a revival in this past year. In July, our South African student Regina Gottschalk completed the course. Her Certificate was presented to her in South Africa. Many thanks go to Marie Francis who tutored her.

We received four new registrations, Margaret Stevens from Middlesbrough, Julia Webster from Birmingham, and Enid D'Cruz from Southwark. Unfortunately,

Margaret Jones, the Assistant Registrar, and I have worked hard over the summer months checking the Diploma Course papers and updating wherever necessary. A few comments have been received concerning the Course to which we have given due consideration. One is that the Course should be simplified, revised and produced in book form. We feel that doing this would entail an enormous amount of unnecessary

work and book form would not add anything to it. As for shortening the course, we feel that this would only take away from its Diploma status. However we will continue to review the

I have received some interesting emails from a previous South African student, Tristan Bailey, who is now a monk at Glenstal Abbey, a Benedictine monastery in Murroe Co Limerick. His superiors have given permission for him to study for a Degree in Theology with a view to him being ordained in the future. We have been able to send him a Synopsis of the Diploma Course, which he passed in 2010 with Distinction, as this may obtain some credits for him towards his degree. I have asked him to keep in touch and let us know how he gets on in the future.

Sue Andrews

FOUNDATION COURSE

Thanks to the continued dedication and support of our tutors, four of our students have completed the course this year. Thanks also to the Assessors for their time. In particular a huge thank you to Marie Harris, who retired due to ill health. Marie has given a huge service to OLC and will be a loss to the students.

Seven new students enrolled this year bringing the total of those working to 31. Twenty-one students have discontinued. Sadly, one of these, Doreen Jarrett (Darwen, Lancs) died after she began the course. Some had been on the course for many years but had not worked for a considerable time. There are three Zurich students and one from South Africa.

I attended the Autumn Day in York last October. Beryl and again attended the annual CWL, UCM and Union of Catholic Mothers joint fundraiser in Bury. The funds going to the Oldham Children's Hospice. A very good night and interesting game of pass the parcel! We also attended the annual Margaret Clitherow Mass at Salford Cathedral.

My own thanks to the Executive and tutors for their support during the year and to Fr Harry for his inspirational talks at our events. Thanks to those who sponsored my Camino Pilgrimage, all monies to OLC.

Pam Comerford

CATHOLICISM MADE SIMPLE

Since the AGM in April 2015, the Course has continued to demonstrate good activity. Twenty-eight new students were enrolled and 18 were removed from the student Register. Seven students completed the Course and have been sent their Certificates. Two students, a married couple, are on hold, one withdrew from study and sadly one died. May he rest in peace.

One of our tutors, Marie Harris, has had to retire due to ill health. She has given long and diligent service to OLC. We extend our thanks for all she has done and wish her much happiness in her retirement.

There is a continued interest in the Course from prisons. Out of a total roll of 43 students, 20 are in prison. An enquiry was received from a prison in Yorkshire; details of the Course were sent but no applications have been received to date. One of our students lives in Dublin.

The students who have completed the Course since April 2015 are listed in at the front of this newsletter.

John Crean.

THE MYSTERIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

This last year has been a little different, with more groups of students working on the Mysteries Course. I am delighted to report that the feedback from the groups has been very positive. Some of the groups have worked with an OLC tutor and others are working with their Parish Priest or a local catechist. Our first ecumenical group from Leeds Diocese started the course in February. It will be interesting to hear their findings. Regarding the individual students, some have decided not to continue with the course at the moment either because of family commitments or poor

health. However, I am delight to report that a student has resumed his course after a brief interlude.

Congratulations go to John Crean and the Plymouth Group. All twelve members completed the course. Also congratulations to Glenise Ellis and her seven ladies who also completed the course. All have received their certificates of completion. Well done everyone!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the tutors for their time and expertise; the feedback from the students has been very positive and they all seem to be enjoying working through the course.

If anyone is interested in the Mysteries of the Christian Life course, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Elizabeth Dixon

CHILDREN'S POSTAL COURSE

-- For home and parish

We try to inspire parents and children with the books and CDs provided by OLC... We have added a new colouring book to help children learn the Rosary. A list of our lesson books and colouring books is available on request.

As parishes seem to be managing to educate the Catholic children in non-Catholic schools there is no longer a need for Our Lady's Catechists to work with young children outside their parish. If you know of any children who attend Mass, but are not receiving their Catholic education, please let your parish priest know.

Anne O'Rorke has retired from her work as catechist and tutor on the postal course and we thank her for the many years of work in this area.

Marie Francis also gave an update on her overseas students
Beryl Wakefield, Registrar

PRAYER CORNER

I am still trying to help prisoners with the C M S course. It is good to see the efforts they make to complete the course. Sometimes it takes a long time because there are many long gaps in between the lessons. I am pleased that I can pray for all who are in need because I have the time now to do so. We have daily Mass in our chapel and evening prayer together when we pray for all the many needs we have been asked to pray for. Every Friday we pray before the Blessed Sacrament exposed in the Monstrance so please ask us if you need us to pray for your intentions.



Sister Joyce Barnes invites to write or email her with your request. All prayers will remain confidential.
Email address: Joyce.Barnes@SNDdeN.org Telephone: 01704 568361.

Address: Sister Joyce Barnes SND, 21 Weld Road, Birkdale Road, Southport PR8 2AZ

NBRIA AGM Report



Our Lady's Catechists, (OLC), is an Associate Member of the National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisors, (NBRIA). In December 2015, I represented OLC at the NBRIA Annual General Meeting, held in London. The meeting was hosted by CAFOD and Chris Bain, its Director, welcomed us.

Bishop Marcus Stock, the new President of NBRIA introduced himself and spoke of his background in education, both as a teacher and as Head of the Schools Commission.

Monsignor Kevin McGinnell, summarised the main achievements of NBRIA over the last year including a presence on the RE Council which will give NBRIA an opportunity to contribute to the wider RE debate, Two problems for our Catholic schools emerged from the meeting. Firstly, the shortage of Catholic teachers especially in Secondary schools. This could be an opportunity for OLC to contribute to the training of non-Catholic teachers working in Catholic schools, as our CMS course is an ideal introduction to the Catholic faith. Secondly, the need for us all to proclaim the value that our schools and the Church bring to society. The religious education of our children is something that we should all be concerned about and remember in our prayers.

The Keynote Presentation, was given by Martin Foster, Director of the Liturgy Office for the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales. Recent new translations of interest are a revised 'Rite of Marriage', and of special interest to catechists who prepare children for the Sacraments, a revised 'Rite of Confirmation'. These new 'Rites' became mandatory after Easter.

We were given a preview of the new NBRIA website. OLC, as an Associate Member of NBRIA, has a short summary of our work displayed on the website.

The following are a few of the main points taken from the reports given at the meeting:

The RSE, (relationship and sex education), are preparing three documents dealing with, governance, procedures and quality, and content.

The secondary Advisors reported that new GCSE and GCE AS and A Level Religious Studies qualifications are due to be taught from September 2016

The CES and NBRIA are continuing to work with exam boards and publishers to secure the quality of both specifications and supporting resources for the new examinations.

The Association of Catholic Chaplains in Education, (ACCE) advises on the work of chaplains in school and gives advice to employers, explaining the role, advising on training, terms and conditions, job descriptions etc. At present, ACCE is working with the CES to revise existing documentation and provide new guidelines.

CAFOD: Various resources are available for the Year of Mercy and Laudato Si'

The Kairos Forum: Budget reductions have meant a reduction in services and Kairos now runs only 2 days per week, whilst many disabled people have experienced benefit cuts and the need is in fact greater. Kairos still have

several disability training and formation services available for use in schools and adult education.

Missio: Mission Together is the children's branch of Missio – motto, 'children helping children.' They support schools, orphanages, feeding centres and health centres etc. worldwide. Children are encouraged to pray as well as to share. The campaign for 2015/2016 is Malawi

Caritas – St Joseph's: Currently delivering 45 lifelong learning courses, with 200 students. Cuts in disability have affected all students.

Fr David Gibbons invited those attending to visit the Metropolitan Cathedral next door, which has a shrine of Blessed Oscar Romero and St Frances Xavier Cabrini, Patron of Immigrants. They were indeed worth a visit!

Sue Andrews – NBRIA representative

AUTUMN DAY

Our Autumn Study Day 2015, on 3rd October, was held in the picturesque city of York, the place where our patron, St. Margaret Clitherow lived and was martyred. The Study Day was held in St Wilfrid's Church, a stone's throw from York Minster. The day was an uplifting mix of prayer, discussion, socialising, a quiz, and learning.

We began and ended the day with the Prayer of the Church, led by our Spiritual Director, Fr. Harry Curtis, and at



midday we joined the congregation of St Wilfrid's for Holy Mass.

Our speaker was Fr. Kevin Melody O.Carm., who is a Carmelite Friar and Parish Priest of the Church of Our Lady in York. Fr. Kevin spoke on St Teresa of Avila in this, the fifth centenary of her birth, concentrating on the legacy that she has left to us in the present day. Teresa was a Carmelite nun, who exemplified the fundamental Carmelite attributes of prayer, community and service. Teresa wrote books, which told us of her experiences in prayer and on her spiritual journey, not that she wanted us to slavishly follow her way but to encourage us on our spiritual road. For Teresa the point of prayer is to meet Jesus, the Jesus of the Gospels and to open ourselves to be transformed by him. Fr Kevin made us aware that Teresa, a sixteenth century Spanish mystic, can still have a message for us today. Her writings include the books; *The Life*, (her autobiography); *The Book of the Foundations*, (telling the story of the convents that she founded); *The Way of Perfection*, (written for her nuns at their request); *The Interior Castle*, (her great treatise on prayer).

A 'word search', based on St Teresa, kept everyone busy throughout the day, and all those attending appreciated the chance to get together, to pray together and to learn something about a very popular saint, who can be a wonderful example for us as catechists.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

1-3 April 2016 Kings Park, Northampton

At Mass on Friday, our spiritual director Father Harry Curtis asked us to imagine being surprised by the joy of the Risen Lord to those disciples, whose lives were turned around, by following the example of Christ's suffering. We now celebrate the Risen Lord present to each one of us; no sinner, nor any weight of sin cannot be touched, healed and lifted as we allow Him to surprise us with joy!

The evening talk from Father Harry pointed to revised "*Rite of the Order of Holy Matrimony*" and "*A new Rite of the Order of Confirmation*". Catechists need to be aware of the change of language for the gifts of the Holy Spirit e.g. wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord.

The Year of Mercy was also explored by Father, as a Jubilee. We have a mission to show others the loving kindness and mercy of God. The offer is of Eternal Life and Christ coming again!

Fr. Harry asked two questions. "What can you as catechists do in your parish to ensure the Church may render clearer her mission to be a witness to mercy?" and, "what can OLC do as an organisation to assist the efforts of the Church in the Year of mercy?" He implores us to be the hands of Christ, to have a personal relationship, to pray, console and comfort others. Catechists can be practical in both spiritual and corporal works of mercy.

Later that evening, Canon John Minh suggested that catechists could help form those who could not fit into parish life, especially those who need more mercy. There is a way as an organisation to help those with problems, to present them to the Church, to discern and pray together for wisdom.

On Saturday it was our delight to listen to Rt. Rev. Bishop Peter Doyle on his personal experience of attending the Synod of Bishops at Rome October 2015 as Bishop for Marriage and Family Life... Attending a World meeting in Philadelphia, Bishop Doyle heard a pastoral approach from Cardinal Tagley who spoke of the family as being "the home for the wounded heart."

Cardinal Vincent Nichols and he attended the Synod in order to foster closer unity with the Pope and other members. Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Contemporary World saw the consultation process produce large amounts of material of individual experiences. Bishop Peter asks, "How do we find the language of one man and one woman when the law of the land is now written? In order for the church to flourish then there is a need for pastoral care for all.

Bishop Doyle explained the sessions Mon to Sat 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and later 4:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. All done without a common language, yet with the spirit of collegiality, the Bishops spoke with honesty without deference, listening with humility and an open heart. The challenge was to go to discussion groups using The Labouris and working through each paragraph. Later 325 Bishops had spoken Interventions and finally this led to writing out a new document. The Bishops asked, "How could we learn from parents and catechists?" Bishop Doyle attempted to explain the deep level of listening that was required and found the last day the most demanding as it was in Italian. Every paragraph was passed.

The reflections from the Bishop gave us some interesting insights into the variety of cultures, each with their own attitudes to marriage, particularly the African and Asian communal experience as differing from the private and personal entry into the sacrament here. The position of Women in the Church was matriarchal in Africa, multi-faith situations arose from polygamous marriages, aware of the differing church from 'tired' West and Africa and Asia 's 'vibrant joy and life' sat against the Middle East church in a 'dangerous conflict situation'. Here we began to understand the huge differences!

Pope Francis attended all session excepting one. His role was one of encouragement, under Peter's authority. There will be no concern about the unity of The Church, having confidence in the Holy Spirit. A Synodal Church could develop in the third millennium. The Apostolic Exhortation was published shortly after our conference; however, Bishop Doyle has assured catechists there will be a rising of the profile of Holy Matrimony as an indissoluble bond, as a celebration of the Church and community. Focus will include preparation for marriage, in schools, our community, home and parishes. Where any marriages have failed, there will be a parish accompaniment with discernment of what is God's will.

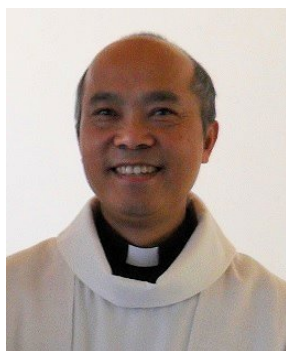
Later, Canon Michael Cooley spoke to catechists regarding the "family focused approach" that is needful in a multicultural parish showing respect to the practical needs of parents forming their child for the Baptism and First Holy Communion. All Baptisms are celebrated within a Mass. The image of the Baptism of Our Lord Jesus Christ as the voice of the Father saying "My Beloved Child" as John the Baptist baptised in a powerful river, helps show parents the need also to navigate their child. This different style is more conversational adapting the baptismal promises to the child who is like a sponge. 40 languages and 26 differing worship places does not make a set pattern workable in this parish for the sacraments.

First Holy Communion's Picnic invites all parents and children to bring their offering of food explore Aylesbury Priory, to have a service while giving their excess to the homeless, so that this becomes not just about what you do in church. Why would one make all, on the same day and same time, when groups get out of hand, i.e. photographs taken during Mass. Programmes have limitations, and dangers if used as a weapon of control, especially as a 'theological' course. Common sense, honour and respect allow any child to make their First Eucharist, as this is a lifelong learning. The ceremony of Light is repeated at Holy Communion, and Canon encourages babies to receive a blessing at Holy Communion. All people are loved knowing that everyone is a child of God, and with the Church accompanying them on their life journey, we are blessed for You are my Father.

Joan Emery OLC 09/04/16.

Don't forget to visit our website on:
www.ourladyscatechists.wordpress.com

The Family Matters to Prisoners



Many people may think that the main duty of a prison chaplain is to talk about God. Hopefully with some new knowledge about God, prisoners may change!

There is no doubt about the religious duties that a prison chaplain has to do: organising Mass and prayer sessions, running Bible or Rosary courses, etc.

However those religious activities are not the only tasks for a prison chaplain. Quite often, a prison chaplain has to deal with family matters such as information about the illness of a prisoner's family member, or breaking the sad news about the death of a prisoner's loved one.

To many prisoners, the word 'family' is the sweetest and one of the first things they are worried about. Talking to prisoners about their families is one of the best ways to break the ice for a meaningful conversation. The worst thing for those who are behind bars is the sad news about their loved ones. They may feel helpless. Therefore a prison chaplain would normally be the first point of contact for prisoners to talk about their families. A prison chaplain does not do the job of a family liaison officer who mainly deals with legal or social aspects of families.

The recent document *Amoris Laetitia* describes both the joys and the sorrows of the family life. The Holy Father's concerns for families are deeply rooted in his vast experiences as a pastor. He would like the Church to show God's mercy to all families, and of course families of prisoners are among his priorities. The pastoral care to prisoners in the light of the post-synodal apostolic exhortation on love in the family is certainly a huge challenge. It requires not only the spiritual and practical experiences, but also the sympathy and compassion from a prison chaplain. Prisoners do not always expect an answer or a solution. They would normally appreciate an attentive ear or an assurance of prayers. When you read these lines, please say a prayer for those who are separated from their loved ones, and for those who look after them. Great thanks!
Fr John Minh, Prison Chaplain and Priest in Charge of St Luke's, Peterborough

CAMINO

Santiago de Compostela March 18th-April 13th 2016

It is said everything comes in its own time so having waited nine years to walk the Camino it finally happened. I began training early 2015 in order to be fit for the walk. It came after a very eventful year of concerns and celebration and it was the icing on the cake for me.

The intention was to take 29 days to complete the Way, walking 18 miles a day and surprised myself by completing it in 26 days.

And what a pilgrimage it was! There was nothing that could disappoint on the whole journey. Every aspect offered enjoyment, pleasure and interest, even climbing the hills!



To say the scenery was a feast to the eyes at every turn would be an understatement and a huge lift to the physical effort it took at times. Nestling villages steeped in age and beauty offered pleasure and refreshment. The people were always welcoming and helpful, especially to people like me with very little Spanish. I pointed and played charades a lot! The churches were spectacular and photos really would not do them justice. The interior beauty of what would look like a simple village church would surprise one every time. I was fortunate to attend Mass in Leon Cathedral and overwhelmed at its beauty.

My fellow pelegrinos were from all over the world and of all ages. Each had their own reason to be there. Some had walked the Camino more than once. I walked many days for hours alone before I would meet other people. The solitude was good, peaceful, welcome and refreshing. Weather wise, I encountered the full range of climate and sometime several aspects in any one day!

I feel fortunate and blessed to have been able to walk the Camino. It gave me much more than I could have expected or anticipated. Thanks to those who have sponsored the event for OLC

Pam Comerford.

Keeping Jesus Company

Some years ago, a Carmelite priest, Fr Matthew McGettrick, RIP, came to Manchester to give a series of talks on Christian Meditation. In one talk, he described something he read in a travel book, which moved him.



Painting: Briton Riviere;
Christ in the Wilderness

About a little girl who kept a beached whale company until it died on the beach. Perhaps we too can think of times when we have been consoled by the presence of one who is in empathy with us. No words are needed when we are with someone we know loves us. The amazing thing is that God allows Himself to be affected by us in a similar way. There are so many examples of this in the Bible. We need only read the account of Jesus with the woman at the well to see this. He is tired, thirsty and hungry when He meets the woman but after she has responded by faith and trust to what He said to her, His disciples are surprised to see that He is no longer tired and hungry.

Fr Matthew taught that we can learn how to 'keep Jesus company' in our prayer. He said that the essence of prayer is the contact of the heart with Jesus and that Grace flows from Him to you in this loving attentiveness. We can picture Jesus in front of us, in any scene we choose and let 'heart speak to heart' just love and be loved. Focus on the Person of Jesus in that scene imagining the details, and trying to understand what Jesus is feeling and just love Him. We can gently repeat a phrase to keep our mind from distractions as we stay with Him, or simply repeat his name. We cannot take away but we can console Him by our simple loving presence. Moreover, we are doing that **in the present** even though we are picturing an event of the past because Jesus is living **now** in our souls. Being God, Jesus is outside of time. What we do NOW affected Him THEN. All the events of His life are timeless.

It is so important to remember that no one else can take your place in the Heart of Jesus. He loves every single one of us

as if there were no other and each of us has a unique relationship with Him.

Pam Aherne

COMMENTS FROM STUDENTS

I'm really far too old to be classed as a student, and have not written essays for many years, but would like to say how much I am enjoying the Diploma Course and how supportive my tutor is.

I began on February 2nd and am finding the notes and recommended reading take me into deep waters, but it is very exciting and rewarding. It increases my knowledge and is a help to my faith.

I admit that at present I am only writing my second essay in Part 1, which as consists of six Test Papers on the Old Testament, but would like to say that with four to six weeks allowed for each assignment I have so far managed this without too much difficulty. It is also a bonus that I am allowed to work online. Although I am only required to send one essay or lesson plan each time I find myself keen to do more, and am glad this is a possibility.

If I continue to feel enthusiastic and to be successful, then I could maybe offer to tell other about the course and encourage more to enrol

Thank you, I am grateful for this opportunity.

Margaret Stevens Diploma Course Student

I have thoroughly enjoyed taking part in the course, although it has been hard work, it's also been very interesting. I have learnt a great deal and many aspects of our faith have become much clearer. I have also had the opportunity to read the Bible, books and other literature that I wouldn't have done. These have all helped deepen my religious knowledge.

I would like to thank Pam and all my tutors for their help during the course. Their time and guidance is very much appreciated.

I look forward to passing on this new found knowledge to others that God may send to me for education.

I would certainly recommend the course to anyone who has an interest in widening their own knowledge or want to pass on the faith to others.

Carol Stephenson, Foundation Course

In many ways the course was much better than I expected, though I suppose I didn't know what to expect...or how much I didn't know! I have learned so much from the written guidance, I now understand so very much, especially about the Old Testament and its fulfillment in the New and about the Truths of our faith and how to live them. As a Catechist, I am much more equipped and confident in passing on the Faith. Also I have grown through persevering on the Course, especially in my realization that the Holy Spirit inspires and guides me when I ask and I have much more enthusiasm for passing on the Faith and following Christ in His Church. I was always keen to read more but didn't get much time. I see that one of the great advantages of learning on such a course is that we force ourselves to make time!

Tutors are sensitive to the fact that we are fitting the course into busy lives, with illness and unexpected absences etc. and therefore understanding and flexible when we explain

our situation. But it is also good that the tutors urge us at times to keep up with things so that we don't lose our learning and motivation as it is quite long. I completed Part 3 and the Assessment and I intend to take up Part 4 as soon as my health permits.

I think everything we studied was important from the different units re Catechism, Old and New Testaments and Veritatis Splendor. I would be hard put to think what could be left out. I thought that Veritatis Splendor, though a bit difficult in parts, was an amazingly good Encyclical. I wouldn't have missed it for the world and I think we need it in today's world more than ever. The units all combine to give us a great education and I really can witness to the fact that the Holy Spirit and Our Lady help us. When I prayed first I found I could have a pretty good go at it. It is great that our tutors pray for us as well as guides us and it's a great blessing that they do it because they clearly want to help the student grow in their faith as they do it voluntarily. I chose the course simple because I could afford it but having done it, I would choose it anyway! Many thanks to the course writer, my tutor and Registrar. God bless them and their work for OLC. May it long continue; this course is so needed, especially these days.



The CMS course, which I have just recently completed after a learning journey that began in November 2013, has, for me, been both surprising and challenging. Surprising, because it played a part in my conversion to Catholicism and challenging

because I soon realised that what I thought I knew, up till then, of the Catholic Faith and Tradition - in the light of rigorous catechism - was revealed to be something quite other, and richly beautiful to me at its heart.

My tutor was warm and skilful and her feedback proved very thought provoking and helpful. Serious study of the Catholic Faith, brings unexpected joys but also, necessarily uncomfortable personal challenges when seeking to sincerely and honestly try to line up one's life with the wholeness and holiness of a living Catholic Faith. And I can see that I have a long road to travel, still, but what a treasured road!

Samara Fairsing, Catholicism Made Simple

It was by chance that I found out about the Catholicism Made Simple course - or so I thought. I registered for the course without realising the significance it would have on my faith journey. I received the materials promptly and found the course materials clear and easy to follow. Because the course is broken down into short chapters, it is quite easy



to fit in the time for studying - even if, like me, you are very busy. I work as a teacher and correspondence tutor myself (in a different subject and for a different audience) so I really appreciated the fact that my tutor, Joan, was carrying out this service voluntarily. Indeed, Joan made all the difference, as she took so much care to tailor her feedback and responses so that the course addressed my questions and

met my needs. It wasn't long before I realised that it was God, not chance, that made me aware of this course. It has had a lasting impact on my faith, and rekindled in me a desire to learn more and grow my faith. Although, at this time, I have decided that I shall remain in the Anglican Church, I do not rule out the possibility of conversion to Catholicism in the future. I certainly intend to continue my studies with OLC. Thank you to everyone at OLC for your important and life-changing ministry.

Rebecca Snell



The course was very educational. I learnt more about my faith. The explanation of each subject and the bible chapters helped me to be closer to God

Ann Henry CMS

It is over a year ago now since the Catholic Women's League in my parish looked at the new course recently launched by Our Lady's Catechists, the Mysteries of the Christian Life, and decided it would be a good subject for group study. They approached our parish priest, who read the course and agreed to tutor the group. The Section decided to throw the invitation open to the parish and very quickly, a group of 12 formed and agreed to meet weekly after Mass.

Interest in the course was good from the beginning but Father's introductions to the chapters with information on the history and social circumstances surrounding the events brought the Mysteries to life. Rumour must have spread because the following week three more people joined the group and stayed with us to the end.

Lively discussion always followed the sessions, over a cup of coffee and I was surprised by how much I learned that was new to me and how much was brought back that I had learned long ago and forgotten over the years. I would not hesitate to recommend the course for individual study or study in a group.

John Crean, Mysteries of the Christian Life

I was delighted when Father Harry said at our 2014 OLC Conference that he was ready to launch The Mysteries of the Christian Life, a new OLC Course. I was immediately drawn to enrol for it.

This is a Course for everyone. Do not be daunted by the 20 chapters, the text is clearly set out with the addition of a beautiful picture relating to the Mystery. In each chapter there is a scriptural basis, some detail of the story and what it teaches us and concludes with prayer intentions.

There are 2 or 3 questions to be answered for each chapter and the answers are to be found either in the text, from the bible or from deep in one's heart or soul. The student is also requested to write a question for the tutor. It is a way of getting the student to think even more deeply about the chapter. It may even be a challenge for the tutor to find the answer!

Some may feel that praying the Rosary regularly is enough, but I found the Course gave me a much deeper understanding of the Mysteries.

Here are some comments from CWL members who are studying the Course:

"I have been converted for three years so I am always interested in learning. We discuss for about two hours and I walk home inspired."

"I have greatly enjoyed being one of the group of OLC. It is very interesting as we discuss the Mysteries in detail and give our views and thoughts. I hope to continue with the study group in further study."

"Studying the Mysteries of Life in a group has been a very enriching experience. We each bring something personal to the discussion and it is wonderful to talk of our Faith to other women in a controlled way,"

Jane Barham, Mysteries of the Christian Life

REPORT FROM SCOTLAND.

Angela Williamson, is a catechist and our Diocesan Representative, she tutors on the Foundation and CMS courses. She reports as follows:

I have been in contact with the Aberdeen Diocese regarding the children's catechesis.

The Holy Family Parish in Aberdeenshire has a very active Kerala community. They have their own catechism and teaching materials and also their own teachers.

The Dominican Sisters in Elgin are also very busy working with young people arranging retreats and also trips away e.g. to Ireland. All very popular with the young people.

I have one student studying on the FC. Renata Fazzolari and she is from the English speaking Catholic mission in Zurich. She is on Part 2B. Due to work commitments she is currently on 'hold'.

Angela Ashby and Pam Aherne have now finished their studies of the FC after successfully completing Part Three. Their certificates have been sent to them. (Pam has said that when her health problems are resolved she may be interested in completing Part 4. Obviously that is for the future)

I have two students currently studying CMS. They got married in the summer and because of this their studies are on 'hold' for a time. John Crean is aware of the situation and said he will contact them in a few months' time.

I have only had one student studying the Mysteries. Steve Harknett. He did very well he finished the course in under two months. No further students have been placed with me.

Catechesis with the local children is ongoing preparing them for first Confession and Holy Communion. Some older children will start preparation for Confirmation in the New Year.

I send my best wishes and prayers to Our Lady's executive committee.

Angela Williamson

REPORTS FROM THE DIOCESES

The Executive of Our Lady's Catechists and Diocesan representatives express their thanks to the League and in particular to Associate Members for their prayers, support and donations.

ARUNDEL & BRIGHTON

We have problems in A&B as at our Branch AGM we could only get one Branch Officer, Treasurer Barbara Elms. With the proposed changes to the League structure we are attempting to keep going as a Branch at least until 2017 with

informal Branch meetings and Sections meetings as usual. I always give a report about OLC and can say that the prayers of our members are always offered for the tutors and students at all levels. Member have always been very interested in CMS courses in HM Prisons and hope that ex-offenders with God's blessing keep up with the work they have started. All Sections have copies of Notes & News to keep informed about OLC in other parts of the country.

I was unable to attend OLC AGM this year as I had hoped, but due to a severe eye infection. It was a worrying time, but improving now thank goodness.

Brenda A Hilliam

BIRMINGHAM

In 2015 there were 11 CWL Sections, from which 111 were Associate Members of OLC - just half of the Branch membership. Associate subscriptions of £222 plus £98 donations amounted to £320, which was the total sent from the Branch. One Section has already in 2016 withdrawn from CWL but has loyally agreed to continue their support of OLC. 8 catechists returned Annual Report Forms: 3 of them act as tutors for the Diploma and Foundation Courses and one for the CMS Course. Only 2 are engaged in traditional parish catechesis, two attend fortnightly Bible Study sessions - also Prayer and ecumenical House Groups. Several are Readers, Eucharistic Ministers, or undertake Sacristan duties. Another works in Uganda, promoting a Pro-life & Childcare Foundation. We send congratulations and best wishes to Valerie Berridge, one of our first Diploma students, who this year completed 25 years of full-time Ministry at the Olde House Retreat Centre in Southam, giving guided retreats and one-to-one spiritual direction. We have 4 students on the Foundation Course and 3 have completed the CMS Course. At the CWL Branch meeting in March, our Chaplain Father Harry Curtis gave a talk on the "Mysteries of the Christian Life" and several expressed interest in taking this Course. Many people feel unable or unwilling to make a regular commitment to longer periods of study, so "Catholicism Made Simple" and "Mysteries of the Rosary" are more popular courses: they aim to help people grow in love and knowledge of God and are a good starting point for religious study but they do not qualify a person as a catechist. Thank you CWL for your loyal support; please continue to pray for all who are learning and teaching the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ann Bayley

BRENTWOOD

Annual Letter was sent to the Rt. Rev. Alan Williams Bishop of the Diocese of Brentwood. He thanked all Catechists and wished them well.

Catechists at the Our Lady of Lourdes, Wanstead prepare children who go to Catholic Schools and Non-Catholic Schools for The Sacrament of Initiation and also in RCIA. They prepare their own material for teaching. They do 'Adult Faith Formation' Courses during Lent and Easter.

At Ilford: SS Peter and Paul Church, I am a 'Special Minister of Holy Communion and visits the Sick and Homebound.

Reports of OLC activities are sent to CWL Branch Meetings, Notes and News are sent to CWL Members of all Sections and CWL-Direct Members. We are grateful for their donation of £190 and £104 for subscriptions of 52 CWL Associate OLC Members.

I attended, with the Brentwood Diocese, The Proclaim'15 Conference at Birmingham, Thank you CWL Brentwood Branch for your support and your prayers.

Dr Rosa Vasquez

CARDIFF

Cardiff has one student and one qualified catechist. Marie Harris the former OLC Tutor and Diocesan Representative has had to retire because of ill health. She has given many years of excellent service to OLC and we thank her for her work and friendship. Please prayer for her as she adjusts to life in a care home.

Editor

MENEVIA

The year has been a quiet one, but OLC information was still circulated and news reported at Branch meetings of CWL. There were 36 Associate members from the sections and Direct Branch members; OLC continues to be remembered in prayer.

Joan Welsh

CLIFTON

We thank sections for their support and kind subscriptions and donations. We currently have a student studying of the Foundation Course.

Margaret Richards

EAST ANGLIA

There is one Foundation Course student and one CMS student. Congratulations to Angela Ashby who completed the Foundation Course. Angela has retired as Diocesan Representative and we need someone from that area to take on the work. Congratulations also go to Angela Francisco, who completed the CMS Course. Well done to both. And thanks to the CWL ladies of East Anglia who continue to support us.

Editor

HEXHAM & NEWCASTLE

Hexham and Newcastle now have 50 Associate Members, an increase of two on 2014 numbers. I am delighted to report that we now have a student studying the Foundation Course and two students registered on the CMS course. Miss Bryony Foley continues to keep the National Registrar for Our Lady's Catechists and I am the registrar for the Mysteries of the Christian Life Course. In the last year we have organised a Branch Prayer Walk at Morpeth. This took the form of a very gentle walk alongside the banks of the River Wansbeck. It was so popular that members have asked if it could be repeated. Morpeth also hosted the annual Rosary Service in 2015 and this year it will be the turn of Sunderland Section.

Elizabeth Dixon

LANCASTER

Lancaster Branch is still without a representative though many members continue to support OLC as associate members and remember OLC Students and Tutors in their prayers.

Sue Gornall

LEEDS

We have 2 CWL Sections in Leeds Diocese. Ten members are Associates of OLC. In June 2015 CWL & OLC Associates attended the Annual Pilgrimage to Ripon Wayside Shrine after attending Mass at St Wilfred's church.

I enjoyed the OLC Autumn Day at St Wilfred's in York. We had a lively discussion about the future plans of the League and OLC. In the afternoon, there was an enlightening talk about St Teresa of Avila, which was very well illustrated with slides. I visited the shrine of St Margaret Clitherow in the Shambles, a peaceful haven.

OLC Associates joined CWL and friends in Harrogate. For Mass, followed by a delicious 3-course meal, prepared and served by members of Barbara Stitt's family, Barbara is our Harrogate Section Contact

Mary Rodwell

MIDDLESBROUGH

My thanks to Elizabeth Rogers for her help and guidance during my first year as the Middlesbrough Representative, I have enjoyed the year.

I have given reports at all the Catholic Women's League Branch Meetings. The Archbishop of Minsk attended the January meeting. I gave him a copy of Notes & News and some leaflets. I gave Bishop Draine his; he seemed to know all about OLC.

I attended the Autumn Study Day in York, and visited St. Margaret Clitherow Shrine in the Shambles. For many years, I have made a monthly pilgrimage to York to pray for the League and now an extra candle for OLC.

We have a Diocesan member who is doing the Diploma Course. She is enjoying it and seems very keen.

There are 90 CWL Associate members. I would also like to thank the donor of a very kind donation of £15.

Lilian M. Finch

NORTHAMPTON

There are no students at present. We thank all our associate members in our Sections for their continued support and prayers.

Jean White

NOTTINGHAM

Congratulations to Wesley Hawryliw who completed CMS this year. Also to the CWL Section who managed to stay open longer by studying and successfully completing the Mysteries of Life Rosary Course. Two members attended the Autumn Day in York and both found this to be a very rewarding experience.

Thanks to all who supported us over the past year, and especially to Glenise Ellis who has now retired as our Representative.

Editor

PLYMOUTH

We have 255 Associate members, 1 Direct Member and 1 non- CWL Associate Member spread over three CWL Branches. We have four OLC students in the Diocese, three in Devon and one in Dorset, made up of two CMS students, and two Foundation Course students.

The Parish group studying the Mysteries of the Christian Life Course in Ottery St Mary, completed the Course and received their Certificates.

I get invited to all CWL Branch Meetings to give a report on OLC. It is an opportunity to bring Branches up to date on current happenings and to answer any questions. The Diocese covers a large area comprising Cornwall, Devon and most of Dorset, so it is not always possible to get to all

the meetings but in all cases reports are sent in advance of meetings

John Crean

PORTSMOUTH

We continue to be active as a CWL Branch, and donate to a number of charities. Eight of my Section attended to Branch AGM and Mary Bowen who is an active member of OLC asked to be remembered to everyone

Audrey Taylor.

SALFORD

There are five CWL Sections – three are Section Members and the others include 30 Associate Members. The Branch and Sections continue to support OLC.

There are three qualified members and all are active in a number of areas for OLC.

Pam works in the Diocese with different organisation to promote our work, including the Salford Diocese Catechetical Group for Adult Formation. We have a display at their Catechists Days and gave a presentation at the May meeting. *Editor.*

SHREWSBURY

I attended and reported at each Branch Meeting. We have one tutor working in the Diocese who is also a Parish Catechist. We have no Students. We thank our Associate Members for their prayers and support.

Joan McCarthy

SOUTHWARK

We have one student on the Foundation Course, and one Parish Group doing the Mysteries of the Christian Life, Rosary course. One member has completed the course.

I have spoken to one Section, which members from a neighbouring Section came to as well.

The Branch is supportive to OLC, and I am always asked to give a report at all Branch Meetings.

Helen Cooley

WESTMINSTER

In 2015 we had 38 associate members, most are members of the Catholic Women's League. Westminster Members have been very generous with their donations to Our Lady's Catechists. Their donation for last year was £450 and subscriptions £74. Associate membership has increased.

I give a report of the work of Our Lady's Catechists at the Westminster Branch meetings and encourage the members to enrol in our courses. I also talk about the various catechists courses to the people in the four parishes of Hemel Hempstead. We have five students enrolled in the Foundation Course. Another has enrolled on the Catholicism Made Simple Course.

One member from the Welwyn Garden City who completed the Foundation Course two years ago is now doing excellent work in her parish. I will be preparing a child with severe learning disabilities for his first Holy Communion this year.

A student from Hemel Hempstead provides music for all the Eucharistic celebrations and the prayer services during Our Lady's Catechists Annual Conference 2016.

Finally, my grateful thanks go to all the members of the CWL Westminster Branch and all those who support us with their prayers and generous donations.

Charmaine Jayasuriya

OUR LADY'S BOOKSHOP

Our Lady's Catechists recommend Our Lady's Bookshop to all our readers, especially students and Tutors of OLC. The shop carries an attractive range of religious books, Bibles, rosaries and holy cards.

Contact: Sheila Chambers: Our Lady's Bookshop, 23-25 Northgate, Hessle, East Yorkshire HU13 OLW.

Tel: 01482 641835.

Email: hesslebookshop@yahoo.co.uk Thank you to all those who have contributed their reports and articles to this edition of Notes & News and to all members and friends of Our Lady's Catechists who help distribute copies. Editor