



NORES NEWS

DECEMBER 2016 – The month dedicated The Coming of Christ (The Immaculate Conception)

Diocese of Northampton, Office for RE, Evangelisation, Catechesis & Schools

SUPPORTING CATHOLIC EDUCATION AND FORMATION

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From the Episcopal Vicar

Mgr Kevin

As the Year of Mercy came to an end the Doors of the Holy Year were closed in so many places. It does not mean the end of mercy, however! Pope Francis closed the door in St Peter's Basilica. Bishop Peter closed the doors at the Cathedral and Gerrards Cross. We invited you in schools to use the same prayers as you closed your own doors. It has been a very powerful experience over the last twelve months and has focussed out thinking, because we all need the mercy of God and the mercy of one another, in small and large ways. As an image, the Door captured our imagination and the challenge is to continue the spirit of mercy with renewed vigour.



*Pope Francis has not let it lie there. To pursue his thinking he issued a letter, **MISERICORDIA et MISERA**, which sets out the way ahead. Some of his major points are in these extracts. It is worth reading the entire text on the Vatican website. Just Google the Latin title. We need to think how we can continue this essential work for us in our schools. There is so much more in the letter than is given here. A lot to think about!*

Mercy constitutes the Church's very existence, through which the profound truths of the Gospel are made manifest and tangible. Everything is revealed in mercy; everything is resolved in the merciful love of the Father. *[He speaks of the example of Christ with the woman taken in adultery, the sinful woman who washes his feet with her tears.]* **Forgiveness** is the most visible sign of the Father's love, which Jesus sought to reveal by his entire life. Every page of the Gospel is marked by this imperative of a love that loves to the point of forgiveness. Even at the last moment of his earthly life, as he was being nailed to the cross, Jesus spoke words of forgiveness: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34). Mercy gives rise to joy, because our hearts are opened to the hope of a new life. The joy of forgiveness is inexpressible , yet it radiates all around us whenever we experience forgiveness..... The experience of mercy brings joy. May we never allow this joy to be robbed from us by our troubles and concerns. May it remain rooted in our hearts and enable us to approach with serenity the events of our daily lives.

....Now, at the conclusion of this Jubilee, it is time to look to the future and to understand how best to continue, with joy, fidelity and enthusiasm, experiencing the richness of God's mercy.First, we are called to **celebrate** mercy.

[He explores how we experience mercy especially in the Mass, the sacraments of healing – Anointing the Sick and especially Confession, which he elaborates later.]....**Hearing the word of God** takes on particular significance.....The **Bible** is the great story of the marvels of God's mercy..... Another face of mercy is **consolation**..... All of us need consolation because no one is spared suffering, pain and misunderstanding. And yet God is never far from us at these moments of sadness and trouble. A reassuring word, an embrace that makes us feel understood, a caress that makes us feel love, a prayer that makes us stronger... all these things express God's closeness through the consolation offered by our brothers and sisters..... Sometimes too, **silence** can be helpful, especially when we cannot find words in response to the questions of those who suffer..... Silence also belongs to our language of consolation, because it becomes a concrete way of sharing in the suffering of a brother or sister. *[He then spends time reflecting on marriage, family life, and death.]*The Jubilee now ends and the Holy Door is closed. But the door of mercy of our heart continues to remain wide open. We have learned that God bends down to us (cf. Hos 11:4) so that we may imitate him in bending down to our brothers and sisters..... Now is the time to unleash the creativity of mercy, to bring about new undertakings, the fruit of grace..... works of mercy continue to make God's goodness visible..... Let us make every effort, then, to devise specific and responsible ways of practising charity and the works of mercy. Mercy is inclusive and tends to expand in a way that knows no limits..... **This is the time of mercy.** Each day of our journey is marked by God's presence. He guides our steps with the power of the grace that the Spirit pours into our hearts to make them capable of loving. *It is the time of mercy* for each and all, since no one can think that he or she is cut off from God's closeness and the power of his tender love. *It is the time of mercy* because those who are weak and vulnerable, distant and alone, ought to feel the presence of brothers and sisters who can help them in their need. *It is the time of mercy* because the poor should feel that they are regarded with respect and concern by others who have overcome indifference and discovered what is essential in life. **It is the time of mercy** because no sinner can ever tire of asking forgiveness and all can feel the welcoming embrace of the Father..... We are called to promote a **culture of mercy** based on the rediscovery of encounter with others, a culture in which no one looks at another with indifference or turns away from the suffering of our brothers and sisters.....

ADULT FAITH FORMATION, CATECHESIS and CHAPLAINCY

Alex Heath

School Chaplaincy - Recently I led a training session for Liturgy Leaders in one of our primary schools and have run similar sessions over the last year or so elsewhere. As a diocese, we very much want to encourage the involvement of pupils as members of pupil chaplaincy teams, as myself and Monsignor Kevin outlined in our recent letter to all schools. If any school would like me to come and run a session for your chaplaincy team for either adult or pupil members, please get in touch with me at the NORES office.

Our next **Chaplaincy Day** on 3 February 2017 focuses on Developing our Leadership Skills with Charles Whitehead. It is highly recommended and we hope to see chaplains and chaplaincy co-ordinators for what promises to be an excellent day. Booking forms are available via the NORES website (Events and Courses) or the NORES office.

Catechesis You may have seen the write up of our **Jubilee for Catechists'** event in September which was in *The Vine* last month. If anyone would like a copy of the notes from the wonderful talk given on the day by Bishop John Wilson, please email me and I can send it to you. Also, there is going to be a day offered on **Morning and Evening Prayer** with Fr John Hemer, on Saturday 13 May 2017 (please mark the date in your diaries). More details and publicity will be available soon.

A basic training course in catechesis, '**Being a Catechist**' starts in Bedford from 7.30pm-9.30pm on Friday 10 March & 9.30am for 10am -4pm on Saturday 11 March 2017. Publicity material available soon. If you would like a *Being a Catechist* course (5 x 2 hour sessions on the basics of catechesis) in your area, please talk to your parish priest and contact me – to arrange a suitable time for your group.

Scripture A conference entitled: *Who do you say that I am?* - Images of Christ in the New Testament for RCIA teams and all who engage in scripture in liturgy and catechesis is on 6-8 June 2017 at High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon, Herts. The main speaker will be Ian Boxall. At the heart of our journey of faith is our response to Jesus' question 'Who do you say that I am?' For those involved in catechesis and liturgy the responsibility is to be a witness to Jesus so that others may come to know him. In the New Testament, the different authors witness to Jesus in variety of ways offering us a rich and multi-layered portrait. In this year's RCIA Network Conference Ian Boxall (Catholic University of America) will lead us through the gospels and other books of the New Testament to enrich our knowledge and understanding of Jesus, and also to develop skills in reading the scriptures. Sessions will include: Jesus the Teacher: *Christ in Matthew* | Jesus the Enigma: *Christ in Mark* | Jesus the Merciful Physician: *Christ in Luke* | Jesus the Mystic: *Christ in John* | Jesus the Divine Warrior: *Christ in Revelation*.

The conference is for RCIA teams, anyone involved in Catechesis and Faith Formation, Teachers, Readers, Homilists, Priests, Deacons, Religious or anyone who is

interested in scripture. More details and a booking form are available via: www.rcia.org.uk

Evangelisation Initiatives The Diocesan Evangelisation Team (D.E.T.) is seeking to support parishes that have or are interested in starting parish evangelisation (mission) teams as well as parishes that have recently had a parish mission and are looking to build upon the experience, please get in touch if we can help. Follow the links for FAITH and EVANGELISATION on the diocesan website for background and contact details. Bible Timeline courses continue to grow with Bedford being the latest to host this. The Faith, Coffee and Cake evangelisation project continues at Hunsbury/Towcester. It's a simple but effective model for local outreach. Details are available at: <http://www.northamptondiocese.org/FAITH/Evangelisation/LocalandPracticalInitiatives/ForthcomingEvents/tabid/477/Default.aspx>

If you are interested in running this in your own parish the D.E.T. can help get you started. For more information about how we can support you or with other evangelising please contact me at the NORES office.

CAFOD NEWS

Deborah Purfield



We would like to wish Parishes and Schools a very blessed Christmas and New Year. Thank you for all your support in 2016.

Advent Resources (all found on our website):

- Advent calendars for children and young people.
- Advent service is available for parishes and schools to help us reflect on how we can welcome Christ into our lives, and to pray for those seeking refuge.
- We are encouraging parishes and schools to create a "Trees for life" display in advent to help plant 10,000 trees here and abroad through World Gifts.
- World Gifts resources for children and young people
- Advent Prayers to say in solidarity with our sisters and brothers, that our world may be transformed by love.
- There is still time for parishes and schools who have not yet written messages of hope to refugees to do so this advent. CAFOD will still send them to the refugees.

Schools can still book our volunteers to give an assembly based around the story of the Nativity, using readings and stories from our partners to tell the story and make links with Jesus' birth.

The Lampedusa Cross has been left as a legacy to the Cathedral from the year of Mercy. It is available to borrow. Contact - dpurfield@cafod.org.uk, 01844 274 723

RSE documents on CES WEBSITE

We have been asked if these can be made available as Word rather than pdf documents. Any pdf can be opened by Office 2010 and newer by right clicking on the file and selecting "open with Word". This will open the pdf as an editable Word doc.

SCHOOLS' COMMISSION

Collette Curtis

Nationally recognised good practice - Congratulations to two of our schools : Good Shepherd in Northampton and St Brendan's in Corby who have been selected as case studies in a parliamentary review of education. The schools have been chosen from schools across the country because of their rate of improvement. We all know what a huge amount of work and commitment goes into making such a significant difference to children's outcomes and experience, so well done and thank you to the school leaders and all of the staff. If there is anything you would like to celebrate and share please let me know (curtis@nores.org.uk)

Sharing lessons learned - We are focused on learning lessons from our own MATs and those nationally to support schools as they make that conversion. Church Market Place have produced a spreadsheet for schools on all the financial reviews which they will need to do with questions and suggestions for governors most useful six months prior to conversion. This is a resource produced by a group of school business managers and is offered at a non-profit making cost of £50 to schools

Academy Ambassadors is a free service to support Chairs of a Trust to recruit Directors with specific skill sets you may be lacking. You will work with them to ensure they know exactly what skills and requirements you have, they place a live advert out for six weeks and then support you with the shortlisting and selection. This may be useful for chairs of a Trust who now need to have an accountant as a Director.

Feedback from MATs about ensuring effective governance at all levels within a Trust without duplicating reports and with a view to spending time in meetings efficiently has resulted in the Diocese reviewing the Scheme of Delegation to reflect this practice.

Sir Michael Wilshaw has commended seven academy trusts for "doing an effective job in raising standards and providing a high-quality education for all their pupils". In particular, according to Ofsted, the trusts have common characteristics, including:

- the ability to recruit and retain powerful and authoritative executive leaders;
- a well-planned, broad and balanced curriculum;
- a commitment to provide a high-quality education for all pupils;
- investment in teachers' professional development and sharing knowledge and expertise across
- a strong network of constituent schools;
- clear frameworks of governance, accountability and delegation;
- a cautious and considered approach to expansion.

Sir Michael added, "It is no surprise that for all these trusts, the key to success is the influential part being

played by determined executive leaders, who are entrusted and empowered to make the right decisions to secure improvements." (*Ofsted, Schools Week 11/10/16*)

Catholic Leadership Course - There has been a very positive response to the Catholic leadership course offered through Thomas More Teaching School. The course will start on December 6 and run until July. Feedback from all involved will be useful so that we can develop a program to support Catholic leadership at all levels.

Opportunity to raise career awareness through greater industry links - STEM (science, technology, mathematics and engineering) are promoting a CPD program called STEM insight which raises career awareness among teachers through placements in industry and higher education. Currently STEM are offering to deliver this training through bespoke CPD sessions at a local venue, for groups of participants from MATs or school clusters. "Generous financial support is offered through Project ENTHUSE to cover the costs of participating in the program." If you would like more details, please contact me and I can forward the information.

PRAYING WITH OUR SCHOOLS

PRAYER INTENTIONS – *ask your school to pray with the Pope for his intentions for December*

Universal: End to Child-Soldiers - That the scandal of child-soldiers may be eliminated the world over.

Evangelization: Europe - That the peoples of Europe may rediscover the beauty, goodness and truth of the Gospel which gives joy and hope to life.

FEAST DAYS - pray for the schools who celebrate their feast days this month

8 December – The Immaculate Conception of Our Lady is our diocesan Patronal Feast *as well as that of* St Mary's Caddington; St Mary's Aston le Walls; Our Lady's Amersham.

Last week of Advent: Thomas Becket, Northampton. St Thomas of Canterbury MAT, Northampton

THEOLOGY FOR CATHOLIC ADULTS is a very useful modular course. It offers the chance to spend a day doing theology for yourself, which then becomes invaluable for your teaching. We want to redevelop this in 2017. Its aim is for those who are already teaching RE, perhaps have done CCRS some time ago, and want some refreshment in terms of theological thinking for themselves. There is an old Latin tag which says "You cannot give what you have not got yourself!" "*Nemo dat quod non habet!*" We all need space to think and discuss as adult Christians what our faith, religious views, theology mean for ourselves. We need to internalise how we understand what we then are able to teach in RE.

SECONDARY RE AND INSPECTION

Stephen O'Brien

GCSE RE Training - I apologise to those colleagues who were awaiting the recent training day during which we hoped to look in more detail at *marking and assessment* for the new Religious Education GCSE. I am sorry it was cancelled. I did not feel I could ask outside speakers to present when so few were able to attend. I am planning to offer the day again, this time inviting both AQA and Edexcel [as well as the CAFOD national Secondary Adviser] to join us for a day in mid-January. Once the date is established, I will be asking departments to confirm that each will send a couple of teacher representatives so that the day is viable. It will only go ahead if numbers are sufficient.

People of God – Called to Serve . The final unit of study in the Framework is nearing completion. This Year 9 unit focuses, like the units on Jewish and Hindu identity, on fundamental beliefs, worship and how Muslims put their faith into action in the community. As with all other units, there will be theological notes for teachers, objectives and outcomes at an appropriate level, a comprehensive glossary and a growing number of resources over the coming twelve months. *The People of God - Called to Serve* writing group is now principally focused on producing new resources for the whole framework. You will see a significant expansion of resources linked to particular units during the remainder of this academic year on the website.

The **Extraordinary Year of Mercy** has been a special time of grace for our schools. I have been greatly impressed with the energy and thought that has been given to bringing the year to life in our secondary schools. As the Year of Mercy prayer asks of us - 'May we always be credible witnesses to mercy, professing it and living it as the core of the revelation of Jesus Christ'.

from Bishop Peter's Advent Pastoral Letter 2016 for the First Sunday of Advent, 27 November.

A complete copy is enclosed with this NORES NEWS

"So, stay awake to the presence of Jesus with you in these weeks of Advent, in keeping calm, in helping one another and in making space especially when there is too much to do."

"Prepare a way for the Lord for yourself in prayer and in the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance. Prepare a way for the Lord for others by your patience and your kindness. Then you will see Christ in others and they will see Christ in you."

"The gift that each of us can prepare for this Christmas is a gift based on God's mercy, the gift of peace in our souls and the gift of the hope of that peace for others. It is the gift of Christ himself, who has come, who will come again, and is with us now."

NEWS FROM THE PRIMARY

CORNER

Anne-Marie McIntosh

School Visits for the next term are nearly all confirmed. If you are on the list and have not chosen a date please email me. Thank you.

RE Subject Leader Meetings - Please let me know the dates of these meeting as I really want to attend to work alongside you and support you in your role. Thank you.

RE Subject Leaders Day - Thank you very much for attending the day earlier this month. If you weren't able to be there you should by now have received a copy of all the handouts. The liturgies and the handouts should also be on our website now. Our next day together is in the Lent Term on Thursday 23 March. We will then have a joint day with our Secondary Heads of RE colleagues in the Pentecost Term on Thursday 22 June, 2017.

Year of Mercy - I hope, this year, that you and everyone in your school has come to know God's merciful love anew. If you haven't closed the year yet there is a liturgy on our website based on the Cafod liturgy for the end of the year of mercy.

Inservice - Twilight inservice on '*The Changing Shape of Education*' will take place around the diocese starting, with a session in Slough for all members of staff, on 23 January from 4.00pm – 6.00pm. Watch out for the flier soon to arrive in school with further details.

Live Simply - Thank you for taking part in the '*Live Simply*' Challenge so far. During the month of December we are encouraged to pray more and to pray especially for those who do not have a safe place to sleep or enough food to eat at Christmas.

Email: mcintosh@nores.org.uk

LITURGY RESOURCES for SCHOOLS

From time to time we have sent out various materials as liturgy resources as we did recently for Advent. We hope to develop this especially and devote part of the website to this. We would welcome suggestions for what is needed at levels. Please just email your thoughts.

HEAD TEACHERS' CONFERENCE 2017 – 2,3 March

Book the date now! to be led by Fr Jonathan Veasy, Director of Schools and RE in Birmingham diocese. He wants to explore the way your leadership contributes to the New Evangelisation – and invites your comments. Email Fr Kevin with your thoughts about any areas you might like him to consider.

CATHOLIC CERTIFICATE IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES

The new course in Aylesbury will now start from January 2017. Please contact the administrator Warren Edwards for details: edwards@nores.org.uk

Pope Francis asks us think about a deeper study of the Bible in his Letter Misericordia et Misera [n.7]. It could be a project that we need to reflect on for our schools in 2017.