



NETWORK NEWS

Winter 2020

Christian Initiation
Australia Network

Words from the Chair



Dear Friends

Welcome to the winter edition of Network News 2020. As I write these words Victoria has closed its borders because of an increase in COVID-19 cases, and many of us are feeling emotionally affected by the strict lockdown of people in high-density government housing in Melbourne. This is the high cost that many people are paying during this difficult time.

At our most recent CIAN Executive Team meeting, we commenced with prayer, and then, as we usually do, heard from each member about how things are going in their local faith community. With six States being represented at the meeting, it was interesting to hear about the variety of ways parishes and dioceses are dealing with liturgies, especially the Sunday Mass. Naturally, close to the heart of those working in RCIA teams, has been the issue of how to celebrate the initiation ceremonies for their catechumen and candidates. Some parishes have already held their initiation liturgies, but because of COVID restrictions, these have been very pared back. Thank heavens for video technology! Other parishes are waiting until restrictions ease, allowing for a larger number of people to be involved.

At this same meeting we also discussed what plans are being put in place for people who are enquiring about the faith now, and who might wish to join the RCIA process. This is of particular concern to many of us. In the work I do with the [Catholic Enquiry Centre](#) I have recently received calls from people who wish to become Catholic, but have been told by the local parish that there is no 'program' running this year because of COVID-19. Similarly, I have had RCIA practitioners contact me to get an understanding of what directives are being given by dioceses about commencing the process in 2020. Some have been told, that even though they have people keen to begin, they won't be offering anything. Surely there must be creative ways we can welcome these enquirers into our community? If your parish is finding ways to help enquirers, feel free to post your initiatives on our [Facebook page](#). Thanks to Clare Schwantes from Brisbane Archdiocese for sharing some of their initiatives in this issue.

I encourage all our financial members to ensure that our Biennial General Meeting on Monday, 14 September, 5pm (online) is in your diary. Meeting documentation will be emailed to you 30 days before the meeting.

Stay safe, and with every blessing

Sharon

Contents

TeamRCIA Membership – A great opportunity for two parishes	2
Biennial General Meeting (BGM) Details	2
CIAN Executive Team News	3
RCIA in a COVID World	3
Confirmation—Holy Family Parish, Albany	4
Book Review —Faith Course: Understanding what it means to be a Christian	4
Pyjama Catechesis” — Connecting with Seekers beyond COVID-19	5
Brothers—What Must We Do? The ACBC National Men’s Gathering	6
A Prayer for Economic Justice	6
Improve parish worship by teaching households how to speak with symbols.....	7

Christian Initiation Australia Network seeks to support all those who share the vision of the RCIA

TeamRCIA Membership – A great opportunity for two parishes

For many years TeamRCIA, a ministry based in the USA, has been supporting RCIA practitioners with resources, webinars, inspiring social media and as international guest speakers.

They last visited our shores in winter 2019 and were able to travel to a number of dioceses. Married couple Nick Wagner and Diana Macalintal, co-founders of TeamRCIA, have also produced a number of books aimed at forming people involved in the work of accompanying people on their journey to full initiation in the Catholic faith. They are particularly mindful of the different cultural societies that they work in, and certainly, show a solid understanding of the situation in Australia.

During the COVID-19 crisis, they have been maintaining contact with their extensive network and providing support and ideas about how to continue with the RCIA process in this difficult time.

A few months ago, TeamRCIA announced that they would be putting in place a paid membership scheme. Whilst many of their resources are free, by increasing financial support, they hope to be able to provide even more high quality resources to their financial members.



CIAN would like to announce that they wish to sponsor two parishes in Australia by providing them with one year's membership to TeamRCIA.

It would be expected that the parish already has people enquiring about the faith, and ready to commence the RCIA process. If you wish to put in a bid for the membership you will need to:

1. **Email** Sharon Brewer, mission@nce.catholic.org.au indicating your interest.
2. In one to two short paragraphs **why** it would be helpful for your parish to have this subscription (note, we are certainly interested in hearing from parishes where finances would otherwise prevent them from having a membership).
3. **Applications close** Thursday, 30 July, 2020. We will contact the successful parishes as soon as possible after that date. We will make an announcement on social media.
4. The successful parishes would be **requested to prepare a small article**, or be prepared to be interviewed, about how the membership has helped them. This would be printed in Network News.

Thank you to the [National Centre for Evangelisation](#) for also assisting with this financial sponsorship.

If you require further information, please contact Sharon Brewer – details on the back page.

Biennial General Meeting (BGM) Details

The details for our BGM are as follows:

1. The BGM will be held on **Monday, 14 September at 5pm**, via a teleconference (we will be using ZOOM).
2. The BGM will have as its agenda:
 - a) Chair's Report
 - b) Treasurer's Report
 - c) Voting on the new version of the CIAN Constitution (final draft can be found on the CIAN website)
 - d) Election of Executive Team
 - e) Option for members to ask questions, put forward ideas etc
2. For those of you who would like to attend via Zoom, but are not confident of how to do this, we will offer some 'practice' time on Monday, 7 September, 12 noon – 1pm. You will need to email Max Norden to arrange this: mnorden@iprimus.com.au
3. If you are unable to attend, you will be able to vote via a proxy. Proxy forms will be emailed to financial members at least 30 days before the BGM. This means that you can have someone vote on your behalf. That person can be a financial member who you know will be joining the meeting, or you can name the Chairperson. Your proxy form must be received by our Secretary by 5pm, Friday, 11 September, 2020.
4. If you wish to nominate to be a member of the Executive Team, a nomination form will be sent out with the abovementioned documentation (see next page).

CIAN Executive Team News

Would you consider nominating for the Executive Team?

At the BGM members of the current Executive Team will step down. Some have already indicated that they will re-nominate, while others have come to the end of their term. We are very keen to bring on a member from Brisbane or Queensland, and a member from one of the Sydney dioceses. Roles such as Chair, Secretary and Treasurer for the next 12 months are decided at the first meeting of the Executive.

Meetings are held by teleconference once a month. For the Network to remain effective, there will be some tasks to be completed between the meetings. A passion for the RCIA process and evangelisation is essential. Experience with running the RCIA process is highly desirable.

If you would like to know more, please contact Sharon: mission@nce.catholic.org.au.

Financial Membership

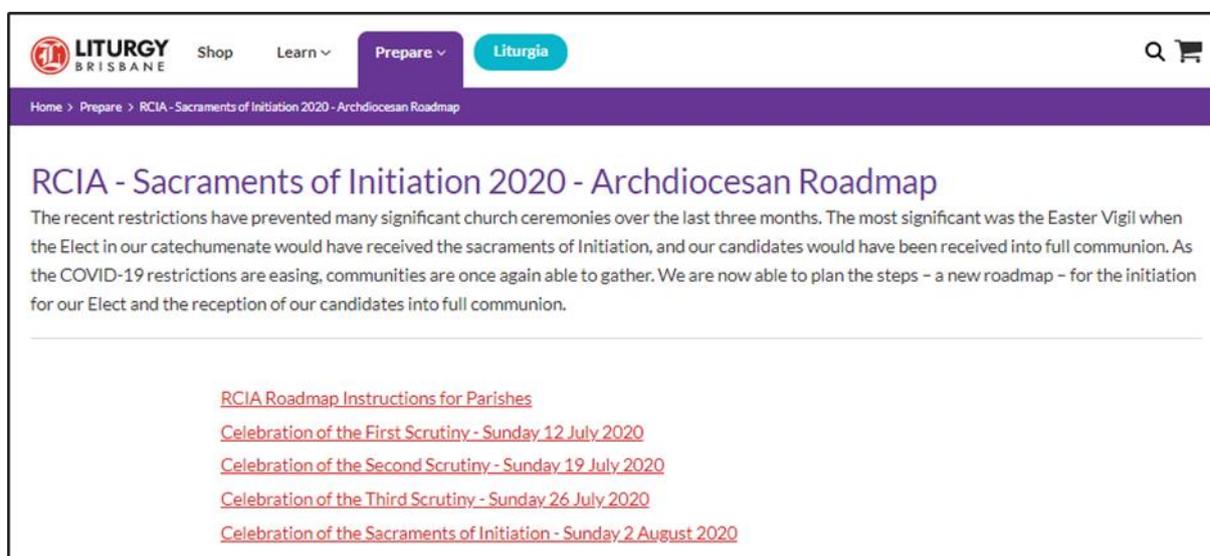
Thank you to the approximately 100 people who have kept their membership up-to-date, and will be able to vote at the September BGM. Renewal notices will be sent to financial members in the coming months. If you would like to support CIAN financially, then please go to: <https://www.cianetwork.net/membership>. Please note that our membership period runs from 1 October to 30 September. If you are not a financial member, and wish to vote at the September 2020 BGM, then please contact Mandy Robinson, Treasurer, to enquire about a reduced fee for the remainder of this membership period: treasurer-cianetwork@outlook.com

RCIA in a COVID World

The recent restrictions due to COVID-19 have prevented many significant church ceremonies over the last few months. The most significant was the Easter Vigil when the Elect in our catechumenate would have received the sacraments of Initiation, and our candidates would have been received into full communion.

As the restrictions are easing, communities are once again able to gather. The Archdiocese of Brisbane has developed an RCIA roadmap for the initiation of our Elect and the reception of our candidates into full communion. It would be symbolic to have parishes celebrating these rites at the same time.

The suggested timeframe for celebration of the three scrutinies and the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation encompasses the four Sundays from July 12 until August 2. These dates were chosen due to the highly appropriate nature of the assigned readings of the day for Christian Initiation. Complete liturgies have been prepared for these days. These liturgies, along with the RCIA Roadmap document, are available for download from the [Liturgy Brisbane website](#)



The screenshot shows the website interface for Liturgy Brisbane. The navigation bar includes 'Shop', 'Learn', 'Prepare', and 'Liturgia'. The breadcrumb trail is 'Home > Prepare > RCIA - Sacraments of Initiation 2020 - Archdiocesan Roadmap'. The main heading is 'RCIA - Sacraments of Initiation 2020 - Archdiocesan Roadmap'. The text below the heading explains the impact of COVID-19 restrictions and the new roadmap. A list of links is provided at the bottom of the page:

- [RCIA Roadmap Instructions for Parishes](#)
- [Celebration of the First Scrutiny - Sunday 12 July 2020](#)
- [Celebration of the Second Scrutiny - Sunday 19 July 2020](#)
- [Celebration of the Third Scrutiny - Sunday 26 July 2020](#)
- [Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation - Sunday 2 August 2020](#)

Confirmation—Holy Family Parish, Albany, Western Australia



RCIA Candidate Confirmation at Holy Family Parish, Albany, Western Australia on Pentecost Sunday, May 31 2020.

left to right back row—Deacon Ron Webb and Father Christian Saminal OSJ. Front row (L-R) Mrs Ilonka du Toit, Mr Robert du Toit, Mr Neil Banks, Mr Peter Yuswak, Benjamin O'Dea and Oliver O'Dea.

Book Review

Faith Course: Understanding what it means to be a Christian (Australia and New Zealand)

(From the makers of the YOUCAT series)

Imprimatur: Very Reverend Joseph Caddy AM, Vicar General, Melbourne

Publisher: Freedom Publishing Books

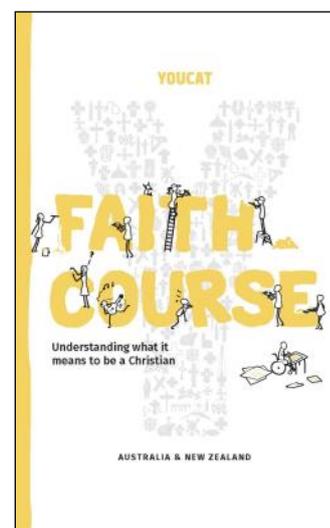
Author: Bernhard Meuser, the author of YOUCAT

Date: 21 April 2020

ISBN: 9780648725145

Price: \$27.95

Available from: Freedom Publishing



Faith course: Understanding what it means to be a Christian is a recent addition to the YOUCAT series of books, written by Bernhard Meuser and translated into English. Its style is similar to the YOUCAT: bright yellow cover, useful notations, quotes and questions in the margins, and good use of images. Older teenagers and young adults will find the book suited to their demographic. However, there is no reason why it couldn't be used as a tool in RCIA ministry settings.

The first chapter suggests that the course can be “done alone”, but that it might be better to use it within a group. I agree. I attempted to read it through like a novel, but found that the questions in the margins kept catching my attention. Also, some of the quotes needed reflecting upon. To my mind, this book is a resource to be used within the context of an accompaniment model. The topics covered need teasing out as well as having some free flowing conversation to allow further exploration of the material.

To assist the accompaniment process, a free Study Guide is available for download (www.youcat.org). This would help the teacher, catechist or youth group leader to skilfully lead a small group through the material.

The resource has 26 chapters, focusing on issues pertinent to this age group, for example:

- ◆ What sets me free? What restricts me?
- ◆ Why do we need the Church?
- ◆ Why is there suffering?
- ◆ What does getting married mean in the Church?

Given our current restrictions around meeting in groups physically, I can see how this little book might lend itself to teleconference discussions. You could easily pick out one of the chapters and break open the contents over 40 minutes, bookending the session with prayer and fellowship. Certainly, another very useful resource from the makers of the YOUCAT series.

Is your RCIA open all year-round? Embracing “Pyjama Catechesis” — Connecting with Seekers beyond COVID-19

By James McGlynn

Let's be honest—many of our parishes do a poor job of connecting with and communicating with their communities. Not just with their regular parishioners, but especially with those whom we want to attract and bring into our communities—our seekers, our catechumens, and our candidates.

One of the inadvertent gifts of COVID-19 was bringing this challenge into sharp relief and forcing us to respond and engage with the vast array of communications tools at our disposal. For parishes that already had a good handle on communications and technology, the leap to streaming Mass and online meetings wasn't too difficult, but for many parishes, it became a trial by fire. I'm happy to say that of those parishes I've seen personally, many were able to weather this storm well. But what of going forward?

Your RCIA process can't go back to “business as usual”

I like to hope that all of us in initiation ministry have learned that going back to “business as usual” isn't going to work. Not in the near-term as many communities still deal with COVID-19 restrictions, but even after we have a vaccine, “business as usual” just isn't going to get us where we need to be in our ministry, for both us and our seekers.

We truly live in a blessed time when a small device in most everyone's pocket can literally connect us with the world. Yet for all the ease and convenience these devices offer, the institutional church has been quite slow in adopting communications technologies and strategies to reach out to the faithful or to those seeking faith. An announcement in the parish bulletin is no longer sufficient.

We all understand that “God meets us where we're at,” but church isn't always there with us. Sometimes I feel like church is a mile behind yelling at us to come back. It's a shame that it took a pandemic to show us that as church we can't just stand there yelling at the road ahead, we need to run to catch up. Many parishes have done this. Many parishes are doing this. But some still need to run to catch up.

The tools your RCIA process needs in this new moment

So what is my point? Simple—many of the tools and techniques we're being forced to embrace because of stay-at-home orders and social distancing are tools we should continue to keep and use even once this pandemic crisis is over. There is more than one way to deliver catechesis. There is more than one way to reach

out and talk with seekers, catechumens, and candidates. There is more than one way in which the parish community can connect with those seekers. We cannot and should not limit the initiation process to Thursday nights at 7:00 pm (or whenever it was you used to gather regularly for catechesis).

I was talking with a colleague recently about how the participants in our processes were doing so well with our “Zoom” sessions. Engagement was better, conversations were easier and more relaxed. In a lot of ways our sessions seemed better. Part of this, we realized, was because people seemed more comfortable in their own homes. There was no need to dress up, go out, arrange childcare, or interrupt their already busy schedules. They could join in our sessions while still in their pyjamas! Thus we coined the term, “pyjama catechesis.” Put another way—we were meeting them where they were at. Not only that, in a lot of ways, it was easier for us as catechists too.

New times call for new approaches

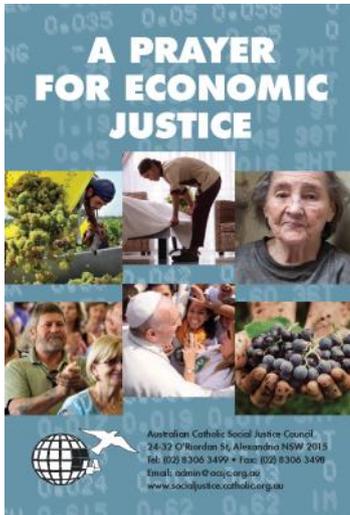
To be clear—there is no substitution for a face-to-face meeting nor for gathering a group of people in the same room together. But it's not the only way, nor should it be the only way. Years ago when I started in initiation ministry I remember there would be seekers coming to us wanting to join us or wanting to complete their sacraments, only to be turned away because they couldn't make it on Thursday nights, or because their job or their school or their children prevented them from attending group sessions regularly. We would say to ourselves, “If they really wanted it, they would make the time.” While there is a certain truth to that which cannot be denied, it's also a simplistic, naïve, and dismissive approach that is not worthy of us as church.

The Holy Spirit has called these people to our door. We, like Christ, need to make the effort to meet them where they are at. If e-mail, text messages, group chats, live stream Masses or Zoom meetings help us to get there, we should continue to make use of these tools even once the pandemic crisis is over. Becoming “fishers of men” is not what it used to be. It's not always as simple as throwing out a net and waiting for the fish to come. There are a number of ways to catch a fish, all dependent on a variety of factors.

If we limit ourselves to just one way of fishing, we limit the catch. If we actively reach out and offer alternatives as needed, we can reel them in.

Your turn

What new tools has your ministry started using over the last several months? What tools and practices are you going to need for the future? Share your thoughts on our [CIAN Facebook page](#).



During this time of COVID-19 pandemic, you may wish to share this prayer from the Australian Catholic Bishops' Social Justice Statement for 2017–18 entitled 'Everyone's Business: Developing an inclusive and sustainable economy'. In the statement the Bishops called for an economy that is founded on justice and offers dignity and inclusion to every person. As we struggle to deal with the health and economic fallout from COVID-19, you may find this prayer relevant, and as a useful reflection.

God of justice and compassion,
 whose light shines into our hearts
 and into our nation's halls of power,
 strengthen our faith as we acknowledge
 the enormity of our task:
 to include all in the prosperity of this land.

We pray for your spirit of generosity
 in challenging greed and neglect.
 Give us your grace to reach out
 to the lowest paid workers,
 families subsisting on meagre incomes,
 people who are homeless,
 the dispossessed First Peoples of this land,
 so that we may achieve change,
 inspired by the Gospel,
 that leads to human flourishing.

We pray for your spirit of truth as we place
 our own economic choices before you,
 reflecting on our own motives as we strive
 to give and to keep,
 to save and to spend,
 to invest and to speak out
 in ways that honour every human being.

We pray for your spirit
 of fierce love and determination
 as we seek to assist and empower
 the most vulnerable,
 to create jobs and opportunities
 where they are most needed,
 to build an inclusive economy
 that enables government and business
 to champion a society
 where justice and equity abound.

May we be instruments of your compassion
 as we take up the needs of the poor,
 May we be instruments of your mercy
 as we bring truth to greed and neglect,
 May we be instruments of your creative spirit
 as we seek to make our world anew.

In Christ and through the Spirit we pray.

Amen



MEN'S GATHERING 2020 and 2021

The [ACBC National Catholic Men's Gathering](#) for 2020 is being offered as a free event for registered participants. This modified program will be delivered in four pre-recorded sessions of approximately 1 hour in length, **available from Saturday 15th August 2020.**

Registration is free
[Register Here](#)

Each session will offer input from a variety of speakers and musicians, along with a response and questions for group discussion or individual reflection. **The program offers flexibility so that you may participate individually or gather with others from your parish/diocese or men's ministry group.**

As an initiative of the Australian Catholic Bishops, the aim of the ACBC National Men's Gathering is to inspire and encourage men with a vision for personal discipleship, service and mission in the family, parish/diocese and the world. The online program hopes to reinforce that it is important to gather as men in the faith environment of the Church and be challenged to ensure the Gospel is alive in our homes, parishes/dioceses and our communities.

Cost: FREE
 Registration: Open Now

Event Program:
 Available from Saturday 15th August, 2020

Go to: bit.ly/cmj2020event

Improve parish worship by teaching households how to speak with symbols



What will happen when we are finally able to gather again for public liturgy? Will people return with such great anticipation and excitement that they will participate in the liturgy at deeper levels than ever before? Or will it be a bit like Easter Sundays in the past—lots of excitement and joy for a week or two and then a slow decline back to normal?

During this lockdown period, we have an opportunity to improve public worship. For liturgy to work at its best in our parishes, parish households must be engaged in regular prayer. Ideally, the prayer in the households flows from and leads to the Sunday Eucharist. That is to say, household prayer needs to be liturgical.

Liturgy in the home

Parishioners might be uncomfortable thinking their prayer at home has to be liturgical. But if you use language like “seasonal prayer” or “family rituals,” their discomfort will ease. A key element in liturgical prayer is the use of symbols. To understand liturgy, households need to communicate in symbolic language regularly. We do this all the time, and often we just need to help families name what they are doing. Giving birthday gifts is symbolic language. Saying, “I love you” or “I’m sorry” is symbolic language. Most families are adept at using symbolic language. However, they may not always know how to reflect on that language in a way that affects the way they worship.

What we mean by “symbol” is something that means more than we can say. For example, a wedding ring is a symbol of a marriage, a life together, a commitment, a family, a love relationship, a partnership. It is also a

symbol of struggle, of fears, of challenges, of doubts, of pain, of uncertainty. And it is a symbol of much more besides.

Anyone who has been married or known married people can look at a wedding ring and “know” what it means. At the same time, we can never completely “know” what it means because the meaning of any given marriage is still unfolding.

Conveying deep meaning

A symbol, in the sense we are speaking of here, is also powerful and profound. We may have a lot of Catholic “stuff” in our homes. But there is a difference between decoration and symbols. A symbol conveys deep meaning. A symbol gives us a window onto the divine mystery. Some things that might serve as symbols in our homes include:

- ◆ light (candles)
- ◆ water
- ◆ oil
- ◆ meals
- ◆ touch (hugs, handshakes, caresses, kisses)
- ◆ Bible
- ◆ Songs

Part of what makes these things into symbols is the way we use them. A candle in a drawer is not much of a symbol. A candle that is blessed and lit every night before night prayer is a powerful symbol of Christ breaking apart the darkness.

Don’t pass up this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to improve your parish worship. While we are all confined to our homes, find ways to help households improve their domestic church worship. Begin by helping them name the symbolic actions in their lives and begin to add to them. As parish households improve their vocabulary of symbols, they will return to public worship much more willing and able to participate fully in the parish liturgy.

Reprinted with permission, written by Nick Wagner and published originally in *Liturgy Life*, 22/4/2020. Photo by Laura Allen on Unsplash



Christian Initiation
Australia Network

NETWORK NEWS

Network News is the quarterly bulletin of the Christian Initiation Network Australia.

The Christian Initiation Australia Network (CIAN) is a support network of those who share the vision of the catechumenate. Its purpose is to promote the practice of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) through sharing ideas and challenges.

CIAN Membership is open to all who have a commitment to and/or work with the RCIA in Australia.

Thank you to all who contributed to this issue of *Network News*.

To send feedback or get further information about items in *Network News*, contact the editor:

Max Norden
Editor, CIAN Network News
PO Box 293, Corrimal NSW 2518

M: 0414 733 823
E: mnorden@iprimus.com.au

The next issue will be circulated in October 2020.

Please send stories to share, news or events to publicise, articles to contribute or resources to recommend by end of September, 2020 to the editor, Max Norden, (contact details above) or to the CIAN chair:

Sharon Brewer
National Centre for Evangelisation
GPO Box 368, Canberra ACT 2601

M: 0466 013 534
E: mission@nce.catholic.org.au

Christian Initiation Australia Network seeks to support all those who share the vision of the RCIA