



Children's Ministry Update

Year of Grace

YEAR A : MARK

Volume6 Edition 2: 2012

From the Editor

Greetings everyone and welcome to a special edition of the 'Children's Ministry Update' newsletter. This edition is centred on the 'Year of Grace' and it is my aim to provide you with useful information and practical resources to help explore the 'year of grace' in your ministry with children and families. As you are aware, the bishops of Australia have invited us to celebrate a 'Year of Grace' from Pentecost 2012 until Pentecost 2013. For Christians, the word 'GRACE' conveys great hope and comfort in knowing God's love. *"Grace is poured upon your lips, therefore God has blessed you forever" Psalm 45:2* During this coming year we are asked to **'start afresh from Christ'** in the hope that refocusing on Christ will help us draw inspiration from him to transform our own lives. Each one of us is invited to contemplate the face of Jesus so as to experience a new wave of grace, allowing the light of Christ to illuminate more brightly our daily lives. Attune our hearts and minds to the presence of the Holy Spirit, to our Church being transformed, to our relationships being healed, and to our nation growing in compassion and justice. To those who have been chosen as ambassadors for the Year of Grace, congratulations! The role of the ambassador provides our parish communities with meaningful opportunities to reflect on God's presence and grace in the lives of people.

I draw your attention to a few upcoming worthwhile events :******"We live inside a story"***
PRIMA Conference, July 2012- Megan McKenna. Come along and spend two days with internationally renowned theologian, storyteller and writer Megan McKenna at The Village Well, Aldgate exploring the connectedness of God, the World, yourself and each other on July 30th and 31st .For details click on the following link: <http://online.cesamet.adl.catholic.edu.au/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-19538>
****National E-Conference Vatican II – An Event of Grace** which will focus on the 50 years since the Vatican II Council and will be held at CEO on the **10th October**.
****National Godly Play Conference, July 7-10** being held in Belair offering training, experiences of story telling and a free expo. Why not consider going to the expo for a short time and experience the process and listen to guest speakers. Further details are found on the attached flyer. I also draw your attention to the attached flyer explaining initial information about **'LicenSing Online'** which offers churches and many Catholic organisations a pastoral and legal means of accessing over 100,000 hymns and songs for use in liturgical, catechetical and ministry settings. Also attached is the winter issue of **'Sparks of Life'** which focuses on enhancing prayer and rituals with children.

I am currently leading an inquiry project commissioned by the Council of Priests to look at the partnerships between parish/ school/ families in the sacramental catechesis within our Archdiocese. You would have received a survey to complete earlier this year but there are still a few outstanding. I ask that you fill out the survey ASAP as it is vital that I collect as much data as possible. If you require another copy, email me and I will happily send it to you. Many thanks to those who have responded. A new initiative this year is the offer of a Cathedral tour and an audience with the Archbishop for parish children who have or are completing their sacraments of initiation. The date is Saturday 25th August 9-10:30am. Attached a flyer with further details. It is a wonderful experience!
May you feel God's embrace in your work... Blessings, Carmen



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Diary Dates

- **GODLY PLAY EXPO**
7th July
- **SMG EXPO**
18th July
- **PRIMA CONFERENCE**
30– 31st July
- **REFLECTION DAY**
Encounters with Jesus
17th August
- **CATHEDRAL TOUR for PARISHES**
25th August

YEAR OF GRACE

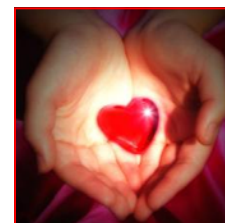
WHAT IS GRACE?

Think about what is more comforting than friends, more healing than good health, more awe-inspiring than beautiful music and more joyful than happiness? For many people, it is grace which is easy to recognise, but not easy to define. The word 'grace' has many meanings such as; beauty, charm, mercy, harmony, and divine love. It is the indescribable experience of unconditional love when one experiences an inner balance with oneself, with others and with their Creator God. It is the harmonious blending of body, mind and spirit with God. Grace is the spiritual freedom that appears when one realises that life is a gift!

THE GRACE OF GOD

Is often found in the *big* events of life – in the miracle of birth; the unity found in community; recovery from illness, it is obvious. We see the grace of God at work when people support each other through tragedy or through joy. Surprisingly, the helping hand, the grace of God is *always* found in the everyday of life; in the simple ways we help one another revealed through the daily miracles of nature and life. When I think of the grace of God, I think of steadfast love, compassion, mercy—an unconditional acceptance that differs from human love. The gift of life includes the wondrous gift of being human and finding ourselves

in the midst of the larger gift of creation. That is the core of grace—creation, life, human being. As humans, we are placed in an irreplaceable position in the created order. We have been given the wondrous creation stories in Genesis as offering ways of celebrating this original grace whereby God announces all creation including humankind is full of grace.



What is the Year of Grace ?

A blessed time given by God to start anew from Christ and contemplate his face and listen to God's Word with new ears that Jesus may heal our hurts unite our divisions and make us splendid in hope so that we can show his face to others and speak God's Word to the world in wonderfully enriching new ways. The inspiration for the 'Year of Grace' has come from Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Letter 'At the Beginning of the Third Millennium.' 'Year of Grace' is not a program or a series of events but a call to prayer and a listening to the Spirit.

Why a Year of Grace ?

- To provide opportunities to seek a new and deep grace to build future pathways.
- To continue on with the great graces of WYD 2008 and the canonisation of St Mary MacKillop in 2010.
- To invite Australian Catholics to join their bishops on a spiritual journey.
- To seek an understanding of Christ.
- To name and reclaim grace in our everyday lives.
- To grow in wholeness in the signs of Christ's presence.

What does the Year of Grace ask of us ?

- Pray daily seeking the mind and heart of Jesus.
- Ask for forgiveness for the areas in which we have fallen short individually and as a community.
- Ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- Focus on our own prayer life.
- Take on the prayer forms of 'Lectio Divina' and 'The Examen' when reflecting on the events of daily life to discover God's presence.

The grace of Christ can inspire us in such a transformative way to change our awareness of ourselves, of our potential as human beings and as humankind, and of our awareness of God's gracious purpose for us and through us for all creation. It is this changed awareness which recognises a still more specialised form of grace—the grace made available to all who choose to serve God's hope for all in Christ. This is the grace which makes us disciples and is available as spiritual power for goodness' sake. Jesus showed this kind of power and challenged us to do the same. *Grace* might be said to be our experience of God, especially of God's free and undeserved gifts – gifts like our very existence, our being redeemed by Christ, our participating in God's Word and sacraments in the Church, our personal vocation as God's adopted children.

Every God-given opportunity is a grace, from life itself to our family and friendships, from work and leisure to our participation in all that is true and good and beautiful. The centrality of prayer is a feature of the 'Year of Grace'. *Everyone has been created to share in the gift of grace and we do so by our participation in the gift of love.*

MOMENTS OF GRACE

PRACTICAL WAYS TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S GRACE

- Recite the Year of Grace prayer daily
- Take 5 mins a day to read a Gospel story of Jesus
- Pick a favourite image of Jesus and explain why it is so
- Name your daily graces during family prayer
- Read a picture book about Jesus
- Ask family and friends for forgiveness of past hurts
- Share where you see signs of Christ's presence in our world (eg random acts of kindness, courage, love in the news)
- Set aside time to reflect on your relationship with Jesus
- List the qualities needed to be the face of Jesus to others
- Draw a scene that shows grace in creation
- Make a list of what 'grace' means to the children
- Contemplate the icon below that highlights the two faces of Christ and discuss the two halves that show Christ's divinity and Christ's humanity



Children's prayer:
 Thank You, God, for your grace. We know we do not do anything for the gifts you give us.
 Thank You for loving us.
 Thank You for giving us Jesus. We love you.
 AMEN

PRACTICAL WAYS TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S GRACE

- Help the children become more aware of Jesus in the Eucharist
- Ask the Holy Spirit daily for wisdom to live justly
- Utilise an online prayer site for praying at the computer (prayasyougo.com)
- Listen to songs about 'grace' on your iPod
- Share/ draw a 'graced' moment in your life
- Get up early to sit and watch the sun rise or watch it set and take time to thank God for the beauty of creation
- Teach the children a new style of prayer (eg: Ignatian examen or lectio divina)
- Create a list of the 'graces' in your life and place it where you can see it every day
- List how love can be shown in our families
- Write an acrostic poem for 'GRACE'
- Make a 'GRACE' wall hanging by having the children draw where God's grace is found
- Cut the letters G-R-A-C-E and glue onto a strip of coloured border tape to wear as a necklace
- Draw a chalk mural on the cement showing how God's grace is received
- Create your own bookmark for the year of Grace
- Teach the children a new song about God's awesome love
- Go for a nature walk to appreciate God's creation
- Have a gift box filled with 1 large picture of Jesus and enough smaller pictures for the children. Explain that grace is a gift of God's kind love. Have a child open the gift box and explain that God gave us Jesus as a gift

Resources

Prayer Cards— explains the steps for both forms of prayer we are asked to use: 'lectio divina' and 'the examen'.

.Prayer Booklets – contains scripture readings, followed by a reflection and prayer based on each reading. It is recommended that copies be distributed to groups who meet regularly in your parish. Prayers can be the means of introducing these groups to the 'Year of Grace'. There are also prayers for Communion to the sick.

Website Addresses - parrayearofgrace.org.au

- www.yearofgrace.catholic.org.au

- <http://online.cesnet.adl.catholic.edu.au/docushare/dsweb/View/Collection-5205>.

Office for Family & Parish Based Catechesis

Catholic Education Office
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Thebarton

PO Box 179
Torrensville Plaza
SA 5031

Ph: 08 8301 6873/ 6110
Fax: 08 8301 6870



We're on the web

www.adelaide.catholic.org.au/sites/ParishandFamilyBasedCatechesis

"And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all." Acts 4:33

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Detailed Diary Dates 2012

- **GODLY PLAY EXPO**
Saturday 7th July
Nunyara Conference centre
5 Burnell Drive, Belair
- **SCHOOLS MINISTRY GROUP EXPO**
Wednesday 18th July
Christian Family Centre
185 Frederick Rd, Seaton
- **PRIMA CONFERENCE**
'We live inside a story'
Monday 30th– Tuesday 31st July
Nunyara Conference Centre
5 Burnell Drive, Belair
- **REFLECTION DAY**
Encounters with Jesus
Friday 17th August
Sophia: 225 Cross Rd,
Cumberland Park
- **CATHEDRAL TOUR for PARISH CHILDREN/ FAMILIES**
Saturday 25th August
St Francis Xavier Cathedral
Wakefield St, city

Your Parish Story

Altar Serving in the Lefevre Catholic Community

As part of their preparation for the Sacraments of Confirmation and First Holy Communion, the children are invited to become altar servers once they have celebrated the sacraments.

At the final family workshop, current altar servers come and speak to the children about their experiences. Their audience is always fully attentive, as we hear the excitement and joy in their voices as they talk about why they enjoy their ministry so much. They explain the training they receive, the significance of what they wear, and they share their thoughts on why this ministry is so important to them. They also talk about the fun they have when they meet socially, especially the pizza nights. But when it comes to their first time serving at Mass, it's not only the child standing proud, but parents as well. There have been tears from very proud parents as they watch their child process in and take their place on the sanctuary.

With the help of our parish coordinators and some initial training sessions, the children begin 'on the job' training and they are asked to be included on the mass rosters at our parish churches. They are also invited to serve at other celebrations such as Good Friday, Easter Vigil and Christmas Vigil. Many of the children also serve at school masses. At the end of a probationary period, the children who continue to serve are awarded the Altar Servers Cross. They wear them very humbly.

Judy Fernandez, faith Family Co-ordinator



Catechist Personal Prayer Page



The Bishops of Australia have invited the whole Church to a **Year of Grace** which commenced at Pentecost, 2012. During this year we are invited to remember and share the good news, that God's love for us is total, unconditional, absolute and forever. The state of grace - God's attitude toward us - is eternal and we are invited to respond to this deep love of God and to recognise its presence in the everyday events of life.

You are invited to spend some quiet times with the prayer below.

Gracious God,

*You have blessed this ancient land
with many gifts, especially its people.*

*We thank you for the Year of Grace,
a time to start afresh from Christ.*

*You invite us to contemplate the face of Jesus your Son,
that we may experience a new wave of grace,
and that the light of Christ may burn more brightly in our lives.*

*Attune our hearts and minds
to the presence of your Holy Spirit,
that our Church may be transformed,
our relationships be healed,
and our nation grow in compassion and justice.*

*With the intercession of St Mary MacKillop,
who showed us new ways of living the Gospel,
we make our prayer
through Christ our Lord.*

AMEN

