The following is a summary of an article published on Zenit, a news service from Rome.

Pope Benedict XVI in an address to 500 000 young people at a gathering in Loreto commented on Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta's spiritual suffering. He said, ‘God speaks even when he doesn't say anything’. “With all her charity, her strength of faith, Mother Teresa suffered the silence of God,” he said.

The Pope referred to the book "Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light," written by Father Brian Kolodiejchuk, postulator for the cause of canonization of Mother Teresa. The book, published ten years after the nun's death, is a compilation of her letters and writings.

"On one hand, we have to endure this silence of God, partly in order to understand our brethren who don't know God. On the other," he said, "we can always yell out again to God: 'Talk, show yourself!' And without a doubt, if the heart is open, we can discover the great moments of our life in which the presence of God is truly perceptible, even to us."

The Pope explained how it is possible to see God, "the beauty of creation is one of the sources in which we can touch the beauty of God, we can see that the Creator exists and is good, that it is true what sacred Scripture says in the creation account."

It is also possible to perceive the divine presence "listening to the word of God in the great liturgical celebrations, in the great music of faith."

Benedict XVI then told the story of a woman who converted to Christianity after having listened to the music of Bach, Handel and Mozart.

One can discover God through "personal dialogue with Christ. He doesn't always respond, but there are moments in which he really responds," the Pontiff said.

A last way of discovering God, is "friendship, companionship in the faith. Friendship creates a companionship of journeying persons. We experience that all of this does not come from nothing but has a source, that the silent God is also a God who speaks, who reveals himself, and above all, that we can be witnesses of his presence, that our faith truly brings about light, even for others."

The Pope added: "On one hand, we have to accept that in this world, God is silent, but we shouldn't make ourselves deaf when he speaks, when he manifests his presence on so many occasions, above all in Creation, in the liturgy, in friendship within the Church. And, full of his presence, we can also give light to others."

May the words of Our Holy Father and the inspiration of Mother Teresa bring us peace and joy as we journey towards Christmas and the mystery of the birth of Our Saviour.

Happy Christmas and blessings to all in this beautiful season!

Do you have a faith question, a teaching suggestion, or an amusing or touching anecdote that you would like to share with other catechists?
Contact Mary Carolan at mary.carolan@ccdsydney.catholic.edu.au
PO Box A286, Sydney South, NSW 1235
St Cecilia was a cultivated young patrician woman whose ancestors loomed large in Rome's history. Although she had vowed herself to God, her parents married her to Valerian of Trastevere. Cecilia told her new husband that she was accompanied by an angel and in order to see the angel, he must be purified. He agreed to the purification, and was baptised. Returning from the ceremony, he found her in prayer accompanied by a praying angel. The angel placed a crown on each of their heads, and offered Valerian a favor. The new convert asked that his brother be baptised. The two brothers developed a ministry of giving proper burial to martyred Christians. In their turn they were arrested and martyred for the Faith. Cecilia buried them at her villa on the Apprian Way, and was arrested for the action. She was ordered to sacrifice to false gods. When she refused, she too was martyred.

The Acta of Cecilia includes the following: "While the profane music of her wedding was heard, Cecilia was singing in her heart a hymn of love for Jesus, her true spouse." It was this phrase that led to her association with music. She died a martyr around 117.

The executioners tried to suffocate her and when that didn’t kill her, she was beheaded. Her grave was discovered in 817, and her body removed to the church of Saint Cecilia in Rome. When her tomb was opened in 1599, her body was found to be incorrupt.

Feast of the Immaculate Conception

Feast Days Of Our Saints...

November
21 Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Temple
22 St Cecilia
25 Christ the King

December
3 St Francis Xavier
6 St Nicholas
7 St Ambrose
8 The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary
13 St Lucy
14 St John of the Cross
26 St Stephen
27 St John the Apostle
28 The Holy Innocents

January
1 Mary Mother of God

Mother Teresa’s Daily Prayer ...

DEAR JESUS, help me to spread Thy fragrance everywhere I go. Flood my soul with Thy spirit and love. Penetrate and possess my whole being so utterly that all my life may only be a radiance of Thine. Shine through me and be so in me that every soul I come in contact with may feel Thy presence in my soul. Let them look up and see no longer me but only Jesus. Stay with me and then I shall begin to shine as you shine, so to shine as to be a light to others.

Cardinal John Henry Newman
No man can say "God became man" unless it is the Spirit within him who prompts that act of faith. So when we celebrate a great feast our attitude must always be one of helpless humility, recognising that it is never by any power of our own that we can take one step of progress in our understanding of the things of God.

It is a gift, and one for which we must ask earnestly, sincerely and constantly.

If we do not believe, we remain in the dark and the dark brings fear and sadness. If we do not believe, we miss the true meaning of life and the future has no hope.

How, for example, do we see our celebration each Christmastide? What is our belief? Do we go the whole way and kneel at the crib and say, "Yes, God became man in Jesus Christ"? For it is that which we celebrate on Christmas night; that and nothing less. To believe in the fact that God became man is not to walk in doubt and illusion, it is to step into the world of God and so into reality.

The Christmas celebration, like all great feasts of the Church, is a celebration of the mystery of God's love for us. It is often easier to understand the love we have for others in our hearts; it is less easy to understand, or guess at, the love which others have for us. That is true about human love; it is even more true when we come to think and talk about the love of God. God so loved the world that He sent us His only begotten Son.

That is a familiar truth, which contains mystery. It is made richer still by the fact that God who became man was prepared to lay down his life for us. No greater love has any man than the love which prompts him to lay down his life for his friends. But what of the love that will die for the worthless, the enemy? The characteristics of Christian love are: to dedicate ourselves to others, our Lord lived that kind of love to the utmost limit. He showed us what God should mean to us, and what we mean to God.

Taken from the Salesian Bulletin December 2002

Cardinal Basil Hume OSB
Bankstown Area

Margaret Philpot,
St Joseph’s Parish, Belmore

When asked why she decided to become a catechist, Margaret confidently replies that “you didn’t decide, you were chosen”. She recalls a friend who was a catechist confiding that she didn’t feel she could continue. Margaret thought it would be a great shame if she were to give it away and offered to help her in the classroom. Thirty years later and she is still at the same school!

What keeps Margaret going is the fact that she didn’t get a Catholic education as a child and had to be taught by the Teresians. She affirms, “I owe my faith to them.” Her parents didn’t take her to Mass, it was the Teresians. She fondly remembers how they would pick her up and take her home. Their witness and goodness still inspire Margaret today. She sees herself in those little children she teaches at the public school. She says, “I was one of those little kids! That was me!”

Imogen Hitchings,
St Joseph’s Parish, Enfield

Imogen started as a catechist as part of her Legion of Mary work. She remembers collecting the children preparing for their first Holy Communion at 6am every Sunday morning. At one point, she was one of two catechists teaching 100 students of a Tuesday morning at Redfern Public School. Imogen was never afraid to tackle the controversial topics and teach the truth, irrespective of the ramifications. She reflects very warmly upon incidents which were turning points in the spiritual lives of her students because of her courage. Imogen’s impetus has been the preservation of the faith. She believes in the supreme importance of passing on the beauty and reality of the Catholic Faith to children.

Angela Taylor,
St Joseph’s Parish, Enfield

Angela’s parish priest was appealing for catechists one Sunday and she reflected, “I’m not a teacher!” He then continued to say that the only two requirements were “a love for children and a love of the Lord!” She then considered, “Yes! I have them!” The priest closed with, “And we’ll train you!” This gave her the confidence to answer the call.

Angela believes that through the children, she is able to evangelise the parents and thus engages the children in activities they can take home and show their parents. Her strong faith and belief in ‘planting seeds,’ gives her the strength to carry on. She will gear her students towards the importance of having a personal relationship with God and prays that the seeds planted are watered. She encourages the children to call upon the Holy Spirit in the same way she does as she acknowledges that she couldn’t do it without Him. She says, “I prepare but then I go in and say it’s up to You!”

Suzanne Sams,
St Luke’s Parish, Revesby

Suzanne started thinking about being a catechist when she was 16 after an appeal by her parish priest. She felt called and decided that she would do it as soon as she was able. When her first child was eighteen months, she started team teaching for one year. By her fourth child, she had completed the accreditation courses during which her children would accompany her. Suzanne has been a parish coordinator for twenty two years and feels blessed that she can be a witness to her faith, but more importantly, that she was open to the call.

Her motivation to persevere in this call has been her desire to help students understand how much Jesus loves them and that He can be a part of their everyday lives. However, she believes that to be able to teach the faith, one must be true to it and has enjoyed attending the spirituality and in-service days over the years. Suzanne believes that being a catechist is too big a role to take on alone, and that we must allow the Holy Spirit to work through us. It is so much a part of her now that she cannot imagine not doing it!
Mary Tabone,  
St Luke’s Parish, Revesby
When Mary was first asked to be a catechist, she said, “No thanks!” But she had her faith, and with a little help from a nun who accompanied her several times, she got used to it. She learnt that all she had to do was show the children love and faith; she felt sorry for those who didn’t even know how to do the sign of the cross, and realised they needed her. Her desire to share the faith she loved so much has been her motivation. She says, “If we don’t teach them, the parents won’t…and when I see them at Mass, I think it’s worth it.” After 30 years, she “still enjoys it very much”, although she says, “I don’t know how I did it!” Mary always calls upon God to help Ann Patricia Connor,  
St Patrick’s Parish, Revesby Heights
Ann, a former teacher, was newly married with two children when they were appealing for helpers at her parish. A strong faith as well as a desire to return to the classroom led her to say ‘yes’ to the appeal. She would take her children along and as they got older, they would join in! She got her own class in her second year following completion of the first accreditation course, to which she would also have to take her children! Although it has been a very rewarding ministry, Ann admits that it has been difficult at times. Through faith and prayer she is able to persevere. She particularly enjoys meeting the children and sharing her faith with them. Seeing them outside the classroom and being greeted by them also brings her joy. She has found the friendship and support of other catechists very helpful throughout the years.

Dawn Poole,  
St Patrick’s Parish, Revesby Heights
Dawn owes her Catholic education to the Teresians. She says, “I got my faith from them.” When asked what inspired her to be a catechist, she simply replies, “I thought I had a debt to pay!” She started by teaching a kindergarten class and today, 30 years later, she is still teaching kindergarten. She absolutely loves the little ones! Staying a catechist is Dawn’s way of bearing witness to her faith and it has become something of a habit for her. She believes that to be able to impart one’s faith is somewhat of a privilege and feels as though she would be sad if she wasn’t doing it.

City Area

Kenneth Patrick Finn,  
Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Parish, Randwick
Ken began as a Catechist in the high schools over 30 years ago as he liked the idea of passing on the Faith. He is happy to teach anyone and is especially aware of the little ones who come from homes completely devoid of anything Catholic. Coming from a big family who were the pioneers of Randwick Parish and with relatives who are priests and nuns, in places all over the world, he thought he should make himself useful. In fact passing on the Faith had always seemed the most natural and obvious thing to do. When he first started teaching the other denominations were very strong so he thought, why not have a go. There has always been good rapport and never any animosity. Educated by the Brigidine Sisters, then the Marists, he and his family have been very involved with the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. A good friend of Bishop Doyle, he helped design a Church in Samarai a part of Sideia, an island off New Guinea in 1955.
In 2007 the CCD visited 762 Catholic students in state high schools in the Sutherland-St George Area and students were given a WYD show bag. We are hoping to reach a further 320 students in the first two terms of 2008. These students heard a WYD presentation. Catechists teaching these students have been kept up to date on WYD events. Catechists are hopeful that some of the students will attend the *Journey of the Cross and Icon* when they come to Cronulla on 22 December.

Pictured are some of the catechists who attended the high school catechists in-service day at Miranda CCD centre last term.

High School catechists posing for a happy snap.

Alf Zammit, Bill Hofrichter and John Russell who teach at Wooloware High School.

Sr Patricia Ryan, Steve De Vine from St George Girls High and Elaine Maher (in red) who would like to be involved in high school catechetics.

Catechists at the WYD in-service
Why not try the following Spiritual beauty hints?

**SPIRITUAL BEAUTY HINTS**

**FOR WRINKLED BROWS**
Try the well-known cream
SWEETNESS OF TEMPER
It tones up the facial muscles, reduces wrinkles and is very uplifting.

**FOR THE LIPS**
Use the marvelous lipstick
SILENCE
It is particularly good for lips that have been distorted by uncharitable gossip.

**FOR LOVELY HANDS**
There is really only one preparation
GENEROSITY
Get a large size jar.

**FOR FACIAL TONE**
Expose the face to the morning air
HOLY MASS is particularly refreshing and uplifting.

**FOR CLEAR EYES**
Faithful care with tried and true protective preparation
MODESTY
For best results we recommend that you carry it wherever you go.

An ideal conditioner and beautifier
HOLY COMMUNION.

A wonder cleansing agent
CONFESSION.

*Ecclesiastes 7:1* - A good reputation is better than expensive perfume...

*1 Peter 3:4* - Your beauty should consist of your true inner self, the ageless beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is the greatest value in God's sight.
**World Youth Day Update**

Please check the [WYD website](http://www.wyd2008.org) for the latest news and information updates.

We are encouraging students over 16 years of age to register as part of a parish pilgrim group. The registration package includes meals, free transport around Sydney, the pilgrims bag and updates on WYD activities.

Pilgrims are encouraged to register and become part of a group where they can share the WYD experience, before, during and after WYD. Some of the money raised from registrations will assist the pilgrims coming from less advantaged countries.

**Western Area**

Spirituality Day 10am-2pm

**Friday 30 November 2007 at Mt Schoenstatt**

Conference and Retreat Centre,

230 Fairlight Road, Mulgoa.

Car pooling will be available at John the Baptist Catholic Church, Mount Street, Bonnyrigg at 9am for 9:20am departure.

To register please contact Teresa Culjak on (02) 9390 5122 by 27 November 2007.

Please bring a plate to share and don’t forget your Bibles!

All are welcome.

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**SYDNEY CATHOLIC BOOKS & RESOURCES**

Is now **ON LINE**

Purchase your resources and Christmas gifts now by visiting:


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**Catechist Ministry Certificate:**

N.B courses require a minimum of 10 students to run.

Bookings are required two weeks in advance

**The Fathers of the Church** (MI10) Robert Haddad

CCD Office, Hoxton Park

Monday & Tuesday, 10am to 3pm

December 10 & 11