Acknowledgements

Welcome and Evangelise:
A Parish Resource in Support of
Faith in Our Future 2014-2018
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Welcome & Evangelise:
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“Go, do not be afraid, and serve...”

– Pope Francis
Forwards in Faith

There is much to celebrate since the launch of our Diocesan Pastoral Plan, *Faith in Our Future*.

Our parishes have embraced the task of discerning ways both ancient and new to grow in faith and share that faith with others. We particularly want to thank our priests, religious, lay leaders and youth for their proactive response to our new Pastoral Plan which challenges us all to a renewed heart for service, prayer and missionary outreach.

Our diocesan agencies and ministries have also responded with eagerness. A new Family and Life Office has been established and Catholic Youth Parramatta has been reinvigorated with new leadership and fresh ideas. CatholicCare Social Services is undertaking new projects of service and mercy, and the Institute for Mission, our adult education centre, is leading us in new practices of faith formation.

This good news and dedication among so many of our people expresses the hope and vision of Pope Francis himself who reminds us, “Pastoral ministry in a missionary key seeks to abandon the complacent attitude that says: ‘We have always done it this way’. I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelisation in their respective communities” (*Evangelii Gaudium* 33).

With the aid of our Pastoral Plan we are doing just this, taking the Gospel into the hearts and homes of Western Sydney with fidelity and creativity.

This new resource, focused on welcome and evangelisation, seeks to be a practical source of support for our parishes, migrant chaplaincies, movements and members of our Diocese in living our common mission. It is together in mutual support that our Pastoral Plan calls us to renew our faith in Jesus and in the mission of the Church for the sake of the world.

With great faith in our future,

Daniel Ang
*Director, Pastoral Planning Office*
Welcome and Evangelise

The resources offered in this booklet have been gathered to assist your parish community, parish pastoral council, ministry groups and individual members to put our new Diocesan Pastoral Plan into action.

Since the launch of *Faith in Our Future* (2014-2018) our parishes have been reviewing their life and ministries, discussing the opportunities and challenges of growing and sharing our Catholic faith in a new time, and planning for new forms of outreach in the wider community.

As part of our commitment to supporting each and every one of our parishes, our Pastoral Planning Office offers in this booklet recommended resources in two key areas of parish life – welcome and evangelisation.

In the first months of our Pastoral Plan, many of our communities have focused on welcome initiatives as a concrete step towards building up the life of their parish community. There is good reason for this. We know that when people experience an increased sense of belonging, their active participation in the mission of the parish increases with it and the Church grows in its vitality and witness. We also know that a lack of belonging is one of the reasons that people identify when asked why they have stopped attending Mass.

Welcome is an essential dimension of Christian life and Christian community and whether expressed through accompaniment, service or advocacy it brings to life the hospitality of God which reaches out to humanity in love and with outstretched hands.

Evangelisation is also a priority for our Diocese and, as Pope Francis reminds us, forms the heart of our identity and mission as Church. Parishes exist for this evangelising mission which includes inflaming the hearts of all the faithful in their communities, reaching out to those who may be distant
from the Church, and proclaiming and witnessing to Jesus among those who do not yet know their home is with us (cf. Evangelii Gaudium 14).

As our Diocesan Pastoral Plan affirms, when we grow in faith we will become better witnesses, taking the treasure we have received into the various activities of family, life and society. We hope this parish resource will assist you in your mission.

Thank you for sharing in this journey of renewal and missionary intent across the Diocese of Parramatta. May the Gospel continue to enliven our hearts and our communities as we embark on this new chapter of evangelisation marked by joy.
RESOURCES TO STRENGTHEN PARISH WELCOME
Strategy 1.1
Review and develop welcome ministries and initiatives to foster a sense of belonging to parish family

**ACTION 1.1.1**

Appoint a parish welcome coordinator (volunteer) and ensure trained welcomers for each Mass, with a presence at church entrances and exits to:
- greet all parishioners on arrival
- provide material related to the liturgy
- offer information on parish life and events
- gather details of identifiable newcomers

**RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:**

Parish welcomers are an effective means by which both parishioners and those outside the Church can experience the love of God and the hospitality of Christian community. Ideally, parish welcomers will have an enthusiasm for faith and community, a strong familiarity with the parish and ministry groups, an ability to lead and work with others, be organised and reliable, and represent the diversity of the parish itself.

Recommended resources to support your parish welcome include:

- **Powerful Points for Liturgical Ministers** (CD) by Liturgy Brisbane
  This resource includes sessions for preparing parishoners for ten areas of ministry, including the ministry of hospitality (Session 6), and can be presented by a parish leader (approx. $55)
- **Guidelines for the Ministry of Hospitality**, Diocese of Metuchen, USA
  This resource highlights the role of the welcomer at Mass including preparation, their role before and during Mass, dealing with special circumstances and orientation and training
- **A Welcoming Parish Assessment**, Diocese of Cincinnati, USA
  A checklist for parishes to assess the effectiveness of their welcome initiatives

All of these resources are available from the Pastoral Planning Office.
Phone (02) 9831 4911 or email pastoralplanning@parra.catholic.org.au
**ACTION 1.1.2**

Provide projected or printed versions of the Order of Mass at all parish liturgies to encourage and support unity and active participation in worship, while also encouraging people to learn the Common of the Mass

**RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:**

The Office for Worship is able to provide printed and digital versions of liturgies and assist with the preparation of parish liturgies. The Office for Worship also has available books to support family engagement with liturgy including *Our Family Gathers to Celebrate the Eucharist* and *Eucharist: Parents’ Material*. These resources offer a step-by-step walk through and explanation of the parts of the Mass and cost approx. $3 each. Phone Sr Mary Louise Walsh on (02) 9831 4911 or email mlwalsh@parra.catholic.org.au

Other resources to support active participation in worship include:

- **The National Liturgical Council website** which contains resources to assist clergy, lay liturgical ministers and members of the liturgical assembly. It includes an ‘Order of the Mass’ PowerPoint which is available as a direct download. Visit their website: [http://www.catholic.org.au/national-liturgical-council/parish-resources](http://www.catholic.org.au/national-liturgical-council/parish-resources)

- **LabOra Worship**, a comprehensive electronic library of Catholic liturgical books on CD, together with resources to help prepare the liturgy and to print accompanying booklets. The licence allows installation of the library on all networks, computers and laptops associated with a particular parish site. This fee covers you for copyright and enables you to use all this material for your parish or school. It is updated each year with new translations and resources. It is a recommended resource for every parish. The cost is approximately $195 for an annual site licence. Contact Liturgy Brisbane by phone (07) 3336 9444 or visit their website: [http://liturgybrisbane.net.au](http://liturgybrisbane.net.au)

- Peter J. Zografos, *Lifting Up Our Hearts: Praying with the Third Edition of the Roman Missal* offers 6 sessions of material (liturgical texts, Scripture and reflections) for small faith-sharing groups to use on CD (approx. $8). A CD of hymns for sessions is also available (approx. $13). This resource can be ordered through the website [www.renewintl.org](http://www.renewintl.org) or contact the Pastoral Planning Office for assistance on (02) 9831 4911
ACTION 1.1.3

Assemble and periodically update parish ‘welcome packs’ or kits providing:
- information related to the parish and parish staff
- details of Mass times, Confession and regular devotions (perhaps on a fridge magnet)
- parish prayer cards and other Catholic prayers
- ministry group and pastoral care contact numbers
- parish registration cards to encourage belonging
- communication cards to call forth expressions of interest in ministry or parish groups

Welcome packs to be made available at key evangelising moments including parish Masses, sacramental programs, RCIA, youth gatherings and events, baptisms, marriages and funerals, Christmas and Easter Masses

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:
- The parishes of St Anthony of Padua, Toongabbie, and St Finbar’s, Glenbrook, have developed excellent examples of a welcome pack. These are available from the Pastoral Planning Office. Phone (02) 9831 4911 or email pastoralplanning@parra.catholic.org.au

ACTION 1.1.4

Develop strategies to identify newcomers to parish life and ministry groups and invite registration, for example:
- encourage welcomers and parishioners to look out for new faces at Masses and parish events, to introduce themselves and invite registration
- occasional invitations at Mass from priests or parishioners, inviting registration by newcomers and to get to know their clergy and fellow parishioners
- make available ‘new parishioner’ registration cards and boxes on occasions listed in 1.1.3
- all new names to be submitted to parish office and/or welcome coordinators

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:
- In addition or as an alternative to registration cards for newcomers, parish welcomers can also offer small brochures that list upcoming parish events as a way of engaging newcomers with the life and mission of the parish outside the context of liturgy

- Parishes might consider a welcome stand or area where welcome packs and pamphlets about the ministries and groups active in the parish are offered. Note that it is always better to nominate welcomers to reach out to newcomers with such material rather than relying on the initiative of newcomers to read parish noticeboards, bulletins, etc.

- Examples of a registration card and welcoming letter from a Parish Priest are available on the Faith in Our Future website: www.faithinourfuture.org.au
ACTION 1.1.5

Develop and review on an ongoing basis ‘follow-up’ processes within the parish to keep newcomers connected to parish life. Consider:
- personal contact or letter from parish priest or welcome coordinator in days following registration (parish registration forms should ask whether the new parishioner would like a visit from one of the priests) and provision of welcome packs if not already received
- a roster of welcomers to visit new parishioners in their homes with parish ‘welcome packs’ and other information and resources for faith
- periodic letters from parish group leaders inviting the involvement of newcomers in ministries of the parish (e.g. as catechists) and in parish groups

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:
- The PADRE Parish Database System is designed to assist parishes manage their information and has been adopted by many parishes in the Diocese. Support is available at www.padre-online.com.au. Video tutorials are also available from within the PADRE system. New videos are added as enhancements are made, or following a request from users. The enquiry system can be used to obtain assistance as well as to make suggestions or report issues. For support in making the most of PADRE to maintain connections with parishioners in your parish, contact Peter Hediegger by phone, 0423 734 777, or email pheidegger@padre-online.com
- Send personal invitations to newcomers to gather at different times to account for their varied work or personal commitments. This might include an invitation to a morning tea after Mass, a monthly pizza or welcome night, a social Sunday breakfast outside of the parish at a local cafe or shopping centre, or a Friday wine and cheese night for mature parishioners

ACTION 1.1.6

Provide welcome initiatives after parish Masses to ensure newcomers and others experience hospitality throughout the length of their visit (e.g. tea and coffee)

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:
- It is important that any welcome initiatives in the parish are led by parishioners with the charism of hospitality. As Sherry Weddell explains, “Christians with this charism are unusually sensitive to the presence and needs of strangers or newcomer among us. They are energised rather than put out by the appearance of unexpected company. The local parish or Christian community is a wonderful place to exercise this gift. Studies have shown people are first attracted to a church because of preaching or worship, but they stay because of the friendships they have built there” (Weddell, The Catholic Spiritual Gifts Inventory, 35)
ACTION 1.1.7

Develop and host outreach events within the parish to connect newcomers with one another and established parishioners. This could include a monthly or quarterly ‘Newcomer Sunday Gathering’ or ‘welcome coffee hour’ following Mass (facilitated by welcome coordinator or parish hospitality team) or parish BBQ to foster integration and ongoing participation in parish life.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

• **Alpha in a Catholic Context** is a series of interactive sessions that freely explore the basics of the Christian faith. Typically Alpha has seven to ten sessions and includes food, a short talk and a discussion at the end where participants can discuss their faith. It is a proven and inexpensive evangelising initiative and has been run by a number of parishes in our Diocese with great impact. For more information on running an Alpha program in your parish, contact our Alpha contact Lorraine McCarthy on 0402 217 123 or contact the Pastoral Planning Office on (02) 9831 4911 for more information.

• Alternatively, parishes can host **social events around popular events**, such as a ‘State of Origin’ night or free movie nights to bring existing and new parishioners together as a community. The more personal the invitation made to newcomers, the more effective and attractive such events are likely to be.

ACTION 1.1.8

Parish welcome material, parish registration forms, and accurate parish information to be available online via a parish website, parish social media page or similar, with maintenance and periodic review of content by a parish team member or nominated parishioner.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

The possibilities of social media and technology in the parish are endless and can be a key form of outreach and connection for members and those who are not yet a part of our communities.

• **Updating social media**, including websites, Facebook pages and Twitter accounts, among others, should be as natural a part of parish communications as the weekly bulletin. For support in strengthening your social media outreach contact Adrian Middeldorp by phone on (02) 8838 3432 or email AMiddeldorp@parra.catholic.org.au.

• At a minimum, a **Facebook page** should have all the details about the parish, the address, Mass times and ought to be updated weekly. A parish may want to use Facebook or Google groups for communication between parishioners. Going further, a parish can hold a bible study or discussion using **Google Hangouts** (https://plus.google.com/hangouts), a facility that would enable people to grow in and share their faith in the comfort of their own homes.

• It is highly recommended that parishes form a **communications committee or team** to ensure that social and web media are used effectively. Social media initiatives are a great way to invite new people to participate in parish ministry and outreach to others.
**ACTION 1.1.9**

Mass, Confession and devotional times to be made prominent on parish bulletins, with these same details made visible on parish noticeboards and/or church signs

**RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:**

- Ensure font sizes used in bulletins, on PowerPoint slides and liturgical booklets are appropriate for a range of parishioners, that parish information is regularly updated in bulletins, noticeboards, and on signs, and parish signage is visible and maintained

**ACTION 1.1.10**

Review and ensure adequate and clear signage throughout the parish plant, to allow visitors and newcomers in particular to find their way to church buildings, parish halls, carparking, and amenities with ease

**RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:**

- Conduct an occasional audit with an appointed committee or members of staff to ensure signage to parish facilities is clear and visitors are able to easily find their way to Mass and parish events. Anything that requires ‘insider information’ to access blocks the participation of newcomers and outsiders

**ACTION 1.1.11**

Review and strengthen parish hospitality to aged Catholics, especially the provision of transport services for the aged, to and from liturgies and events in parish and diocesan life

**RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:**

There are a number of ways in which parishes can include and respond to the needs and gifts of aged Catholics.

- **Advertise for or seek volunteers** to alternate pick up/drop off of elderly parishioners to and from weekend Masses and establish a roster through the parish liturgical committee or welcome coordinator
- Ensure elderly parishioners are invited to parish events and **arrangements for transport** are included in the invitation. Advice regarding necessary forms and permissions can be sought from the Chancery
- Ensure there is a **hearing loop** installed in the church, and bulletins and digital projections are in large print
- Seek the advice of **St Vincent de Paul Society** members to ensure the parish is aware of its aged parishioners, their changing needs and gifts
- Consider setting up a volunteer visitation program such as **Blacktown Neighbour Aid** with the aid of CatholicCare Social Services. This service provides a volunteer home visitation and support program in the Blacktown area for the frail aged, younger people with disabilities and their carers, and can be established in other parts of the Diocese. For more information contact Blacktown Neighbour Aid, 51-59 Allawah Street, Blacktown, NSW, 2148. Phone (02) 8822 2238 or contact the Pastoral Planning Office on (02) 9831 4911. This may be a great way to connect your youth group in active service within the community
**ACTION 1.1.12**

Review parish activities and facilities to ensure access, welcome and resources for the disabled and those with special needs as integral members of our parish communities, for example:
- clear signage within and around churches and parish buildings
- the accessibility of parish offices, sanctuaries, halls and meeting rooms
- the availability of hearing loops within the church
- the size of written fonts used in the church, whether in projected or hardcopy material, to cater for the vision impaired
- opportunities for ministry training and formation to enable full participation of the disabled in parish life

**RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:**

Contact Patricia Mowbray from the Australian Catholic Disability Council which is available to assist our Parramatta parishes better welcome people with a disability as full participants in parish life. These include:

- **Guidelines for Parish Communities.** This booklet is a guide to assist parishes in creating accessible communities. It contains checklists that will give parish personnel insight into the issues associated with living with a disability, and how these issues can act as barriers to participation.

- **I Have a Story.** This booklet includes a ‘Process for Reflection’ that can support parish priests and parish leadership teams to consider inclusive practice in parish life and ministries.

Contact Patricia Mowbray from the Australian Catholic Disability Council which is available to assist our Parramatta parishes plan for and make people with a disability welcome and full participants in parish life. Phone (02) 6201 9868, 0408 561 255 or email disability@catholic.org.au. Visit their website: [www.acbc.catholic.org.au/org/disability-council/resources](http://www.acbc.catholic.org.au/org/disability-council/resources)

**ACTION 1.1.13**

Review opening hours of the parish church taking into account the desire for prayer during the day and early evening (this may involve a parish review of security measures to enable longer hours of prayer within the life of the community).

**RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:**

- For assistance in reviewing the security and possibilities for longer hours of opening for your church, contact Kieran Lahey, Director of Property & Infrastructure Services on (02) 8838 3408 or email klahey@parra.catholic.org.au
**ACTION 1.1.14**

Parish teams together with welcome coordinators and teams to ensure welcome efforts and initiatives are re-energised in weeks leading up to Easter and Christmas for all those who return to church at these times (e.g. promotion of times of Masses, Confession and carol events through schools, local press, letter box drops and mailouts). These initiatives can be undertaken in collaboration with neighbouring parishes, making known all options available during these seasons.

**RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:**

- Nominate a member of the liturgy team or parish welcome team to be the coordinator responsible for welcome initiatives during Easter and Christmas. Ideally, planning should begin some months before to ensure the parish can make the most of these events to reach out to those on the margins of parish life.

- Alpha Australia publishes inexpensive booklets which would be appropriate to offer to adults at Easter and Christmas. These include *Why Jesus?*, an evangelising booklet for those who are having their first thoughts about the Christian faith and *Why Christmas?* which explains the sacred meaning of Christmas. Contact our Alpha contact Lorraine McCarthy on 0402 217 123 or contact the Pastoral Planning Office on (02) 9831 4911 for these resources.

- Parishes can also consider emailing parishoners, including newcomers and school parents where possible, with liturgy and Confession times as well as with details of any other parish events taking place during these holy seasons.
Strategy 1.2
Initiate and strengthen parish groups that unite and respond to the needs of families

**ACTION 1.2.1**

Each parish to nominate a family group coordinator, pastoral associate or other to liaise with the newly established Family and Life Office within the Diocese to deliver faith and prayer resources, as well as family, marriage and pro-life materials to our parish families.

**RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:**

The Family and Life Office has now been established and is available to support your parish in the formation and resourcing of family groups in your community. Contact Ben Smith by phone on (02) 8838 3440 or email bsmith@parra.catholic.org.au.

Ideally, family group coordinators would:
- be a married couple or else two people who work well together
- have a strong commitment to their faith and the life of the parish
- be able to liaise with the parish priest, group leaders and the Family and Life Office
- have strong written and verbal communication skills
- have an ability to problem solve
- supply adequate and correct information to new members
- have an ability to train family group leaders and grow participation in the group

These qualities have been adapted from the Passionist Family Group Movement which can be contacted by email at family@pfgm.org or via the NSW Director, Mary Ingham at mary.ingham@pfgm.org.
ACTION 1.2.2

Parish teams and family group coordinators to ensure each parish offers (or collaborates with another parish to provide) access to and promotes:
- an active and regular family group
- a women’s or mothers’ group
- a men’s or fathers’ group
for the social and spiritual nourishment of its parishioners. The needs of single adults also to be reviewed

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

Small groups are an effective way by which people find their way into the heart of the Church, recognising that our liturgies alone are often too large for people to connect with one another intimately.

Recommended resources to support the formation of small groups in your parish include:
- Launching a Small Group Ministry, www.evangelicalcatholic.com/journal/6/launching-a-small-group-ministry. This webpage offers step-by-step guidelines for establishing and resourcing small groups in a parish
- Michael White and Tom Corcoran, Rebuilt: Awakening the Faithful, Reaching the Lost, Making Church Matter (Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, IN: 2013). This book contains a helpful chapter and advice on small groups which a YouTube clip of their ideas also available online at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQUocXUgqu4
- Michael White and Tom Corcoran, Tools for Rebuilding: 75 Really, Really Practical Ways to Make Your Parish Better (Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, IN: 2013). This follow-up book also contains tips on developing small groups for stronger community. For more information, contact the Pastoral Planning Office by phone on (02) 9831 4911 or email pastoralplanning@parra.catholic.org.au

ACTION 1.2.3

Each parish regularly to review the goals, activities, levels of participation and the diversity of members in all parish groups and consider strategies for increased promotion and membership drives through the parish and associated school communities (e.g. a two week information or recruitment drive targeted at new or recently arrived families in local Catholic schools)

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

- Plan to hold a recruitment drive for parish ministry groups at least annually as parish groups can often struggle to grow and foster leadership succession without such a concerted effort
- Allow at least two weeks for intensive outreach to potential new members, through the network of existing members and lay leaders, through Mass announcements, parish and schools bulletins and social media
- It can be helpful to make clear to potential members of a parish group the commitment that the group entails, whether that be a few weeks or months, as this can encourage people to try out a group or ministry in the parish before making a longer term commitment
ACTION 1.2.4

Each parish, with their family group coordinator and school RECs, to develop a ministry team for specific outreach to families within associated school communities, to invite participation in parish-based family groups as well as deliver faith and life resources provided by the new Family and Life Office to these families.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

Collaboration between schools and parishes depends on strong and collaborative relationships between leaders and members of these communities, and identifying areas of common concern and potential.

Initiatives of collaboration that could be discussed include the distribution of family prayer boxes that can be given to all students in local Catholic schools and to children and families participating in sacramental processes as an excellent way of combined outreach to local families. Contact our diocesan Family and Life Office which can assist in developing such resources for the evangelisation of families. Contact Ben Smith by phone on (02) 8838 3440 or email bsmith@parra.catholic.org.au

ACTION 1.2.5

Ensure the parish community offers (or collaborates with another to provide) a parish ‘parent and toddler’ or early years group specifically for parishioners with children under school age, facilitating the mutual support of new parents and strengthening a sense of Church belonging and support.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

There are a number of Catholic Early Learning Centres in the Parramatta Diocese including at Blacktown, Emerton, Glenwood-Stanhope Gardens and Greystanes. More information about these services and full contact details are available at http://www.celc.catholic.edu.au/home

A number of our parishes also have playgroups with which families in the area can connect. These include playgroups at Castle Hill, Emu Plains, Glenmore Park, Greystanes, Kellyville, Lalor Park, Lawson, North Rocks, North Parramatta, Parramatta, Plumpton, Rouse Hill, St Marys, and Wentworthville. Contact the relevant parish for more information or contact details for these playgroups and their coordinators.
**ACTION 1.2.6**

The family group coordinator and sacramental coordinator to work together to initiate and coordinate ongoing gatherings and reunions of parents of the newly baptised (e.g. annually for all those baptised in the previous year). Consider also personalised cards, including a prayer bookmark and saint’s medal, on baptismal anniversaries.

**RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:**

The *GodStart* post-baptismal program assists parishes to take an active role in supporting parents teach their child about the love of God. The introductory kit is free while all other resources need to be purchased. The purchase of *GodStart* material also provides parishes with access to an online portal of resources and support. The complete kit is approximately $14 and a discount is available for bulk purchases. For further information contact the CatholicCare GodStart Office on (03) 9287 5516 or email godstart@ccam.org.au.

**Strategy 1.3**

Develop opportunities for parish and school families to connect faith with life.

**ACTION 1.3.1**

Each parish website or social media page to make available links to family and faith resources as provided by the Family and Life Office, and promote these resources in parish and school bulletins, family groups, as well as announcements at weekend Masses.

**RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:**

The following blurb might be placed in your parish bulletins, websites and school bulletins, raising awareness of this new office in our Diocese: “The mission of the Family & Life Office is to proclaim and support the Church’s teaching on pro-life issues, marriage, family life and relationships among Catholics in the Diocese as well as in the broader community. The Office is responsible for the management, coordination and delivery of resources, programs and events to support its mission in parishes, deaneries, migrant communities and venues across the Diocese in alignment with the family initiatives outlined in *Faith in our Future*”. For more support, contact Ben Smith at the Family and Life Office by phone (02) 8838 3440 or email bsmith@parra.catholic.org.au.
RESOURCES TO STRENGTHEN PARISH WELCOME

ACTION 1.3.2

Each parish to host social events, in collaboration with local Catholic schools, to bring families together in the context of faith (e.g. Mothers’ and Fathers’ Day breakfasts and momentos, Shrove Tuesday pancake mornings, Easter egg painting events, parish Christmas carols and the like). Catholic families that have children in State schools to be included.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

There are a number of web resources that offer ideas for Mothers’ Day, Fathers’ Day and Shrove Tuesday liturgies. For example, see the Diocese of Limerick webpage: www.limerickdiocese.org/liturgy-resources.html, the Catholic Mom website: http://catholicmom.com; as well as Creighton University Online Ministries (http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/online.html)

ACTION 1.3.3

1.3.3 Parish teams to assemble or make available resources for families to pray together. These can include parish ‘prayer boxes’ containing flameless candles, a rosary, ribbon and cloth for prayer spaces in the home, children’s bibles, booklets of prayer including graces for meals, prayers for parents and for children, gratitude journals for children, and resources to promote Sundays as family time and ‘the Day of the Lord’

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

Family life is an opportunity to recognise the grace of God in daily living. Contact our diocesan Family and Life Office who can assist in offering resources for the faith life of parish and school families. Contact Ben Smith by phone on (02) 8838 3440 or email bsmith@parra.catholic.org.au

Some resources available for family prayer include:

• Online resources of Loyola Press in the area of families and faith: http://www.loyolapress.com/living-as-a-catholic-family.htm

• Roll-A-Prayer and Roll-A-Grace provide a great way to prayer with children in the home or around the dinner table. Available from Liturgy Brisbane for approx. $5 each (Phone 07 3336 9444 or contact the Pastoral Planning Office on 02 9831 4911)

• Loyola Kids Book of Everyday Prayers (approx. $30). Contact Garratt Publishing by phone on 1300 650 878 or visit their website: www.garrattpublishing.com.au

• My Little Family Prayer Book (approx. $8) and Faith in the Family: A Handbook for Parents (approx. $13). Available from St Paul’s Book Centre, Parramatta. Phone (02) 9126 8912 or visit their website: www.stpauls.com.au
**ACTION 1.3.4**

Parishes to organise school holiday socials for parish families, including picnics with supervision by parents

**RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:**

The Pastoral Planning Office has resources and information to assist your parish organise these activities. For example, begin organising picnics by convening a small picnic day team including members of both parish and school communities, allow at least a 6 month lead in and book two possible dates with a second as a back-up for wet weather, and consider using school grounds where possible if shelter is available. Other suggested activities include video evenings, family trivia nights and games nights which can connect with families outside of school terms. More information on these activities are available at our website: [www.faithinourfuture.org.au](http://www.faithinourfuture.org.au)

**ACTION 1.3.5**

Parishes to share information about family retreats and programs offered by religious communities, ecclesial movements and spirituality centres in the Diocese (supported by the Family and Life Office and Institute for Mission)

**RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:**

Day retreats for families are a wonderful way of supporting the spiritual development of your parish community. There are a number of retreat venues and organisations that offer programs for families and individuals. These include:

- **The Schoenstatt Community** offers family retreats at their facilities in Mulgoa and will also provide facilitators for parishes on request. Contact the Sisters by phone on (02) 4773 8338 or email info@schoenstatt.org.au
- **St Clement’s Retreat and Conference Centre at Galong** has facilities for family retreats including accommodation and catering. Families can join a retreat program or can arrange their own facilitator. Phone (02) 6380 5222 or visit their website: [www.cssr.org.au/galong](http://www.cssr.org.au/galong)
- **Mt St Benedict Centre at Pennant Hills** offers day talks and longer retreats. Phone (02) 9484 6208 or email mtstbenedict@bigpond.com
- **Benedict XVI Retreat Centre** at Grose Vale offers extensive accommodation facilities suitable for families. Note that family groups would need to arrange their own retreat director. Phone (02) 4572 2899 or visit their website: [www.benedictxvicentre.org.au](http://www.benedictxvicentre.org.au)
- **‘Winbourne’ Edmund Rice Retreat Centre** at Mulgoa offers extensive facilities for groups including families. Groups are welcome to arrange their own retreat director or can contact the Brothers for assistance. Phone (02) 4773 5555 or email manager@winbourne.org
- The website ‘**Goodnight and God Bless**’ also lists a number of Australian retreat and accommodation centres for retreats: [www.goodnightandgodbless.com](http://www.goodnightandgodbless.com)
Strategy 1.4
Encourage parents and families to witness to faith outside the parish

**ACTION 1.4.1**

Parishes to promote community events in which parish families can express their faith within the wider community (e.g. Relay for Life events, local sporting events and competitions, Clean Up Australia days, the St Vincent de Paul Society Winter Sleepout, local fundraising activities, appeals for Catholic Mission, Caritas and other local and overseas missions)

**RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:**

Local community events provide an opportunity for the strengthening of bonds among parishioners as well as an opportunity to take the presence of the Gospel and Church into the wider community. A number of organisations hold events in the local community including:

- **Relay for Life** supports the Cancer Council NSW. Visit [www.relayforlife.org.au](http://www.relayforlife.org.au)
- **St Vinnies Community Sleepout** focuses on raising awareness of homelessness and raising much needed funds. Visit their website [www.ceosleepout.org.au/events/nsw-sleepout/vinnies-community-sleepouts](http://www.ceosleepout.org.au/events/nsw-sleepout/vinnies-community-sleepouts), phone (02) 9568 0262 or email events@vinnies.org.au
- **Clean-Up Australia**. Your parish community can hold a clean-up event anytime in a site near you. Visit their website: [www.cleanup.org.au](http://www.cleanup.org.au)
- **Meals On Wheels** provide nutritious meals to people whose age or disability make it difficult to get out and about. The service provides social interaction and a friendly check of a client’s wellbeing by volunteers, enabling people to live more independent lives. More information can be found at: [http://www.nswmealsonwheels.org.au/Volunteer/Volunteer](http://www.nswmealsonwheels.org.au/Volunteer/Volunteer) or phone (02) 8219 4200
- **City2Surf** is an annual 14km fun-run held in Sydney from the CBD to Bondi. Teams may enter to raise funds for their particular cause. Parish communities can be involved as competitors or as volunteers to assist on the day. More information can be found at [http://www.city2surf.com.au](http://www.city2surf.com.au)
- Parishes can also check their **local council websites** for a list of events they can participate in as a community of faith
**ACTION 1.4.2**

Promote pilgrimages and faith-based events within and beyond the Diocese that may be of interest to parish families (in parish bulletins and on noticeboards)

**RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:**

Pilgrimages provide an opportunity to encounter God in those places and people in whom God has done great things. It provides a way of growing in faith and provides inspiration to share that faith with others. **A number of organisations facilitate pilgrimages both locally and abroad**, including:

- Harvest Pilgrimages. Phone: 1800 819 156 or email harvest@pilgrimage.net.au
- Guidepost Tours. Phone 1300 733 323 or visit their website: [www.guideposttours.com.au](http://www.guideposttours.com.au)
- Olive Tree Travel. Phone 1300 550 830 or visit their website: [www.olivetreetravel.com.au](http://www.olivetreetravel.com.au)
- Mary Mackillop Pilgrimage in North Sydney. Contact Sr Therese Leydon by phone on (02) 8912 4845 or email Therese.Leydon@sosj.org.au
- Annual Marian Pilgrimage at Mount Schoenstatt, 230 Fairlight Road, Mulgoa. Phone (02) 4773 8338 or email info@schoenstatt.org.au for more information
RESOURCES FOR PARISH EVANGELISATION
Strategy 5.1
Develop and strengthen an awareness of the parish as an evangelising community

**ACTION 5.1.1**

Parish teams and parish pastoral councils to dedicate reflection day/s on ‘the parish as an evangelising community’, reflecting on opportunities to cultivate a culture of evangelisation in the parish and initiatives to reach out to the wider community as disciples ‘called and sent’ (1 Cor. 1.1). Support available from the Institute for Mission and Pastoral Planning Office

**RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:**

The Institute for Mission will make available in 2015 a support process for parish visioning and evangelisation in keeping with our Diocesan Pastoral Plan. Contact Fr Paul Roberts by phone (02) 9831 4911 or visit the IFM website: www.ifm.org.au.

The Pastoral Planning Office can also provide formation in parish evangelisation with notice, grounded in the implementation guide of our Diocesan Pastoral Plan (pages 60-68) and the latest research available. Phone (02) 9831 4911 or email pastoralplanning@parra.catholic.org.au

There are a number of helpful resources to guide parish pastoral councils in their work, all of which are available from the Pastoral Planning Office. These include:

ACTION 5.1.2

Parish teams, parish pastoral councils and ministry group leaders to promote and participate in formation on the theology and practice of evangelisation, as made available at the Institute for Mission and Pastoral Life Centres within the Diocese.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

The Institute for Mission offers a number of courses and formation processes for parishes and their ministry groups. Contact Fr Paul Roberts by phone (02) 9831 4911 or visit the IFM website: www.ifm.org.au

Adult formation and education for parishes is also offered by the following organisations:

- **Alpha in a Catholic Context.** Contact Lorraine McCarthy on 0402 217 123 or contact the Pastoral Planning Office on (02) 9831 4911
- **Catherine of Siena Institute** offers ‘Called and Gifted Workshops’ for the discernment of lay gifts. Contact Clara Geoghegan on 0448 411 389, visit the Siena Institute website: http://htp.siena.org, or contact IFM on (02) 9831 4911
- **Catholic Mission** offer formation services to empower each person to continue building God’s Kingdom, to live the joy of the Gospel and lead mission. Contact Kathryn Endicott on (02) 9919 7800 or visit their website: www.catholicmission.org.au
- **Catholic Charismatic Renewal** offer ‘Life in the Spirit’ seminars in parishes. Contact Gerard Marcello on 0404 093 118 for more information about programs and events.

ACTION 5.1.3

Each parish and its associated schools to organise a combined ‘commissioning Mass’ or similar at the start of the school year, to bring together key leaders and groups that serve the faith of the community, blessing them for their evangelising mission in the year ahead (e.g. include parish staff, school staff, baptismal preparation teams, catechists, sacramental teams, and RCIA teams among others).

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

The Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) have resources for ‘Commissioning Masses’ which includes preparatory material, a Rite of Commissioning, suggested Prayers of the Faithful and bulletin notices. This Commissioning Mass can be adapted to include any groups in the parish community, sending them forth into mission. For these resources, contact the Parramatta CCD on (02) 9890 4731 or visit their website: www.parra.catholic.org.au/ccd.
**ACTION 5.1.4**

Promote on a regular basis the stories of faith, discipleship and witness of the community in parish and school bulletins, focusing on the way in which the Gospel has changed and directed the lives of parish members

**RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:**

Break the silence in your parish about discipleship by encouraging the sharing of real life stories of faith, conversion and evangelisation. When people begin talking about their faith, they grow in their faith and confidence as does the parish community.

- The National Office for Evangelisation will soon offer guidelines for the preparation of testimonies, as well as the stories of Catholics who are growing and sharing their faith. Phone 1300 432 484 or visit their website: www.evangeliseaustralia.com/testimony-of-faith.html

- Parishes can assemble a book or booklets with testimonies of faith from parishioners, including their photos and stories with permission. This collection of stories could be assembled in the lead up to anniversaries of parish foundation, gathered from RCIA groups and shared online, through the parish bulletin in short paragraphs, or even school bulletins. These stories witness to the way in which faith enriches, deepens and promotes human flourishing

**ACTION 5.1.5**

Identify suitable occasions and forums for sharing testimonies of faith that witness to the Gospel alive in the parish community (e.g. during sacramental preparation, in youth groups and in parish family groups and events), preferably with a range of speakers in age and life experience

**RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:**

The personal testimonies recommended above can be integrated into sacramental celebrations, either in person or by a DVD of testimonies that can be shown at appropriate times during or after liturgies. Contact our Social Media Coordinator, Adrian Middeldorp, for assistance in producing such resources, by phone on (02) 8838 3432 or email AMiddeldorp@parra.catholic.org.au. An example of an effective testimony can also be seen on our Pastoral Planning Office website: www.faithinourfuture.org.au
ACTION 5.1.6

Dedicate particular Sundays and seasons to inviting those on the margins of faith to participate in parish life (e.g. online and print invitations to parishioners’ relatives to join the community on Ash Wednesdays, at confirmations, and at Christmas and Easter liturgies)

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

There are numerous opportunities in the life of a parish to invite those on the margins of faith to encounter the Gospel and the community of the Church anew. Here are some simple suggestions:

- Invite parish families or school children to write a card of personal invitation to their relatives to attend a special occasion or event in the life of the parish, whether that be a parish fete, sacramental celebration, welcome initiative or end-of-year parish gathering
- Dedicate particular Sundays to reaching out to different groups in the wider community, for example a ‘Family Sunday’ that invites extended family and school families to a parish event or a ‘Friends Sunday’ for the special invitation of friends and their families to parish life
- Customise postcards for a letterbox drop to those living near the parish and connected through schools about upcoming parish events and programs

Strategy 5.2

Strengthen the connection between Catholic parish and school communities

ACTION 5.2.1

Each parish and its associated schools to share celebrations, liturgical and otherwise, whenever possible (e.g. parish feast days) in order to strengthen a sense of common identity and mission. The active involvement of school students and parents in these liturgies is strongly recommended

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

- Send personal invitations to families from databases and announce in school bulletins when special occasions are taking place e.g. parish feast days or anniversaries
- Contact school principals, religious education coordinators, or the Parents Representative Council (PRC) to find ways to collaborate with schools to celebrate events and milestones together. The PRC website can be found at www.prc.catholic.edu.au
- Again, the CCD has resources for a combined parish-school ‘Commissioning Mass’. Contact the Parramatta CCD on (02) 9890 4731 or visit their website: www.parra.catholic.org.au/ccd
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<th>ACTION 5.2.2</th>
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<td>Each parish to invite students from associated schools to take up a variety of ministries in the parish (e.g. as altar servers, youth leaders, catechists, music ministers). Consider a certificate of reward or participation as an acknowledgement of service and an opportunity to draw parents and families into contact with the life of the parish.</td>
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**RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:**

- Students can be invited to participate in parish life as lectors, in IT support for liturgies and parish groups, in youth ministry, music and forms of outreach including through Vinnies Vans and Minnie Vinnies. Their service can be acknowledged through recognition during liturgies, on noticeboards, parish bulletins, on parish websites, through social media and in school bulletins and assemblies. Senior students can also be involved in parish life as catechists.
- Contact the Parramatta CCD on (02) 9890 4731 or visit their website: [www.parra.catholic.org.au/ccd](http://www.parra.catholic.org.au/ccd)

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<th>ACTION 5.2.3</th>
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<td>Each parish to review the availability of, and invitation to, Masses and sacramental initiation for children in State schools to ensure their inclusion in the life of the parish community.</td>
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**RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:**

- The Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) can provide advice and a range of resources to assist our parishes include and involve State school students in the mission and life of our parishes.
- Contact the Parramatta CCD on (02) 9890 4731 or visit their website: [www.parra.catholic.org.au/ccd](http://www.parra.catholic.org.au/ccd)

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<th>ACTION 5.2.4</th>
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<td>Parish teams and/or committed parents to represent the parish community at Catholic school orientation days to welcome and inform new school parents of activities, programs and support available within the parish and Diocese (parish ‘welcome packs’ to be made available).</td>
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**RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:**

- The witness of practicing Catholic parents and families is one of the most powerful forms of evangelisation that can be offered to school families. A parish team, parish pastoral council, sacramental teams and ministry groups can work together to identify couples and families with a strong and evangelising faith to share at school orientation days and the like.
**ACTION 5.2.5**

Liturgical resources to be shared and exchanged between the parish liturgical committee or similar and RECs in associated schools, including approved liturgical music and the interchange of school and parish choirs at suitable events.

**RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:**

The Parramatta Diocese is currently investigating a diocesan licencing agreement. Workshops will soon be held to address copyright issues, including music and liturgical licencing. Contact the Office For Worship for more information regarding licencing and liturgical resources available to your parish. Phone Sr Mary Louise Walsh on (02) 9831 4911 or email mlwalsh@parra.catholic.org.au

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**Strategy 5.3**

Review parish engagement of social media and technology to reach out to existing and potential parishioners

**ACTION 5.3.1**

Each parish to have a website that is regularly reviewed to ensure at least the following are available:

- a mission statement that describes the fundamental inspiration, identity, purpose and future aspirations (i.e. vision) of the parish community
- an accurate list of contact details for the parish team and ministry and prayer groups operating within the parish
- the most recent parish bulletins for reading, download and printing
- an online parish calendar that is updated and used to promote key events in the life of the parish, deanery and Diocese
- other relevant forms, including parish registration, sacramental preparation, planned giving, and expressions of interest in ministry or prayer groups
- links to online faith resources, diocesan agencies and services, parish or school childcare services, local Catholic schools, and to neighbouring parishes
- an ability to submit prayer requests and acknowledgement of receipt of these requests
- a page specifically for Catholics considering a return to the Church as well as for newcomers to the faith

**RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:**

Our diocesan Social Media Coordinator will soon be facilitating training sessions on how to use social media in your parish. Contact Adrian Middeldorp for more information about locations and times of these training sessions which are available to all parishes. Phone (02) 8838 3432 or email AMiddeldorp@parra.catholic.org.au

- A blog is also being developed to assist parishes to engage social media as a tool of evangelisation and where parishes can ask questions online. The blog is in development at: https://parracatholicsocial.wordpress.com
- Members of the diocesan Communications Team are also available to visit your parish to assist with training in the use of social media
ACTION 5.3.2

Each parish to explore the potential of Facebook, Twitter, Skype and other social media technologies to build and grow their community of faith, with a focus on the young, families and those without easy access to community life (to be supported in this response, evaluation and issues of data security by the diocesan Social Media Coordinator)

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

Parish secretaries and other parish staff are invited to attend the professional development days that will be provided by the Communications Team from time to time. Contact Michael Cowdroy for more information, by phone on (02) 8838 3424 or email CommsRequest@parra.catholic.org.au

Other suggestions include:
• Seek out parishioners with professional experience in using social media to guide a development team for your parish community
• Youth are often at the forefront of social media. Invite young leaders to assist in the evangelisation of your parish by sharing their skills in the parish setting
• The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference has released a document Social Networking Protocol 2011 which is available from the Pastoral Planning Office. These protocols are intended as a guide for those working at various levels of Church organisations and includes advice regarding the appropriate and effective use of public social networking sites, Twitter, blogs and YouTube

Strategy 5.4

Promote the Catholic faith and parish life in the wider community

ACTION 5.4.1

Advertisement of parish RCIA groups, seasonal liturgies, significant social events and groups in local papers and community boards

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

• Actively seek out parishioners who are willing to advertise parish events or parish groups in their place of work e.g. in local restaurants and other businesses, through parish ministry groups, parish pastoral councils and local Catholic school communities
“To grow and share our Catholic faith challenges each one of us to become intentional disciples, filled with the love of God and the love of our neighbour. It is a vision of a growing Church and an expanding mission...”

(Faith in Our Future, p.12)