



Catholic Women's League of  
England & Wales CIO  
Charity Number 1173138

# Our Lady's Catechists Notes and News 2017

## MISSION STATEMENT

As Mary brought Jesus to us all, we hope to bring Him to those individuals - adults or children - who are unable to use other resources. We do this directly by postal courses, through the catechists we train and support, and in occasional meetings.



**Maureen Walker**  
Past Chairman, Secretary,  
and Treasurer of OLC  
Died November 27 2015

Older members will remember Maureen. She was a dynamic worker for OLC and over the years was Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. During her time, she broadened the vision of Our Lady's Catechists, improved its resources and outlook, and set it on a course to what it is today.

It was while she was Chairman that we became associated with Fr John Redford. During that time, we started our Conferences at Plater, resourced our Speakers from Maryvale, and opened up work to Prisoners, Duke of Edinburgh Awards, and Special Needs etc. Then all these adult courses were realigned to CCC and Dei Verbum to become the focus of OLC work.

Maureen was God's gift to OLC, a woman of much larger vision and complete disinterested dedication; at the time, she was so much needed. As officers on the Committee were always in short supply, Maureen was there as Secretary and later Treasurer.



## MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Dear friends,

May I start my term of office by letting you know that I will keep you in my prayers and hope that you might consider keeping me and the members of Our Lady's Catechists executive in yours? On the subject of prayer, please continue to say Our Lady's Catechists prayer daily, because as we all know, prayer really does work and with your help and that of our dedicated tutors, we will get the message of God's love to as many people as possible.

This year the, Year of Mercy, we have been given a great opportunity by our Holy Father. We have opened our churches and cathedrals so that people can walk in. However, we must also welcome the people into our hearts and be ready to really listen. I would also like to invite you to look again at the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy; I feel that these, are God's way of setting us on the right path.

May I take this opportunity to thank Beryl for all the work that she has done as Chairman over the last four years. Of course her work is not over as she will continue to be an important part of the Executive. I hope that with your help and support we will continue to build on the excellent work that has been achieved over the past 93 years, spreading the Christian message and helping those seeking to deepen their knowledge of the Catholic Faith.

*Elizabeth Dixon*

## CONGRATULATIONS

### Diploma Course

Regina Gottschalk South Africa

### Foundation Course Final Assessment

Carol Stephenson Middlesbrough

### Foundation Course: First Assessment

Carol Stephenson Middlesbrough

Pam Aherne Salford

Angela Ashby East Anglia

### Completed Part 3 without Assessment

Inez Dann Plymouth

### Certificates of Completion issued to:

### CATHOLICISM MADE SIMPLE

Rebecca Snell,	Clifton.
Grace Cox,	East Anglia
Laura Ordish,	East Anglia
Natalie Williams,	Plymouth
Cathrine Chirenje,	East Anglia
Vincent H.,	East Anglia
Enid D'Cruz,	Southwark
Vivien Hennessy,	Birmingham
Rosalinda de Pascale-Patten,	East Anglia

### MYSTERIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

#### Plymouth Diocese:

Claire Gatehouse	Marian Tewsbury
Maureen Ponling	Valerie Howard
Ray Mulligan	Pauline Mulligan
John Crean	Jackie Crean
Ann Hunt	Sue Wakley-Stoyle
Paula Parkyn	Carol Russell
Joyce Whiting	Pat Turner

#### Nottingham Diocese:

Kay Allen	Elisabeth Cooper
Ann Criddle	Glenise Ellis
Antoinette Faulkner	Audrey Hopkins
Winnie Hopkins	Lesley Noakes

### FUTURE EVENTS

#### AUTUMN DAY

Venue: St Anne's. Alcester St. Digbeth, Birmingham on 15 October 2016

Speaker: Fr Udriss.

Theme: The life of G. K. Chesterton

Registration: 11am; Close 3:30 pm. Please bring a packed lunch

Contact: Sue Andrews: [suem.andrews@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:suem.andrews@hotmail.co.uk) for details

### CWL AGM: Sept 30-Oct 2 2016, SOUTHPORT

For further information contact the  
CWL Secretary at [natsec@cwl.ork.uk](mailto:natsec@cwl.ork.uk)

### OLC CONFERENCE and AGM 2017

**Date: 21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> April**

Time: Registration from 4pm Friday – finishing after lunch on Sunday

Cost: £143.50

Deposit of £20 to be sent in by 8 December please to enable us to secure rooms

To Mrs Sue Andrews [suem.andrews@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:suem.andrews@hotmail.co.uk) for details. Speaker: to be advised

### OBITUARIES

#### **Maureen Walker (1923-2015)**

Marie Francis, who knew Maureen well writes, I first knew Maureen when I attended Harbourne Hall in 1988, with Trevor, my husband, who felt like a "fish out of water". Maureen came and spoke to him. Maureen took on Chairmanship in 1985, and with Marion King as Treasurer in 1986; they were a formidable partnership. During her period as Chairman, we were without a Secretary, so for some years, Maureen covered both roles. She continued as Chairman until 1990 and then became Treasurer in 1992; I joined the Executive as Secretary, where I got to know Maureen better. She always had a sense of humour.

When she was Editor of Notes and News, she and her husband, used to count, and take to the Post Office, every Diocesan Rep package for onward delivery.

When she left as Treasurer in 1999: she wrote: "*this is the Silver Jubilee of my membership of Our Lady's Catechists, 20 of which have been served on the Executive and I have enjoyed every one of those years...*"

Maureen attended Autumn Day 2011 at the St. Richard Reynolds Centre, Blessed Sacrament Church in Exeter.

She was a dynamic yet kind and generous person, with a mischievous smile; she will always be in my heart. May her gentle soul rest in peace. Maureen will be greatly missed.

#### **Sister Eileen Bogues (1929 -2015)**

Administrator for our students in South Africa

Our Lady's Catechists owes much to the work of Sister



Eileen, who belonged to the Assumption Convent, Ballynahinch. On 17th May 2002, Rt. Rev Bishop Michael Coleman (RIP) gave approval for our courses to be used in the Diocese of Port Elizabeth, South Africa. Since then Sister

Eileen and Josephine worked tirelessly to spread our courses in their dioceses, which includes, Port Alfred and East London. The CMS course was translated into Afrikaans and Xhosa, and we had numerous students. We had a few students on the Diploma Course, many of whom are catechists, ministers of the Eucharist and help the priest in significant ways for example they go with the funeral procession to the graveyard and bury the dead. Wilhelmina Williams did this for Sister Eileen. In 2004 Sister Eileen and Josephine came to the UK and the then Executive met them

for lunch. In 2007 Sister Eileen and Josephine retired. Sister Eileen celebrated the Diamond Jubilee of her Religious Profession 2011.

*Marie Francis*

**Mrs Ruth Hampson** Birmingham

Ruth died in April 2015. She was a retired lay Prison Chaplain who became a tutor on the CMS and MCL Courses. A person of strong Faith, she bore her long illness with fortitude and remained positive to the end. We extend our sincere condolences to her family and friends. May she rest in peace.

*John Crean.*

**Mr Rodney Pylee** East Anglia

Rodney was studying the CMS Course until illness made further work impossible. He passed away in November 2015. May he rest in peace. We extend our deepest sympathy to his family and friends.

*John Crean.*

**A MESSAGE FROM OUR SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR, FR. HARRY CURTISS STL**

Dear Sisters and Brothers,



A hundred years ago, George Bernard Shaw complained that there were too many productions of Gounod's opera *Faust*, but today it seems that it has almost completely dropped out of fashion. Perhaps it is easy to see why, with its rather sordid and very melodramatic story and over-sweet music, but I confess that I have always enjoyed it,

especially the final scene.

(Spoiler alert!). It is the story of an old man, Faust, who sells his soul to the devil, Méphistophélès, in exchange for his youth and worldly pleasures. He seduces a young girl called Marguerite and subsequently kills her brother in a duel. Marguerite's world falls apart: she is shunned by the world, abandoned by her lover, and has witnessed her brother's death. In despair she loses her mind and murders her baby. (I warned you it was sordid). In the final scene Méphistophélès helps Faust to enter the prison where Marguerite is being held for killing her child, and Faust tries to persuade her to escape with him. But Marguerite recognises Méphistophélès and shrinks from him, preferring to appeal instead to the mercy of God and His angels. The music soars higher and ever more desperate until at last Marguerite pushes Faust away and falls down dead. Méphistophélès is triumphant; it is another soul for hell. "Jugée!" he sings, "She is damned!", but just then a voice on high sings in contradiction, "Sauvée!" ("She is saved!"). The bells of Easter sound and a chorus of angels sings "Christ est ressuscité!" ("Christ is risen!"). The walls of the prison open, and Marguerite's soul rises to heaven while Méphistophélès retreats, thrown into confusion and despair before light and glory of heaven, dragging Faust down to hell.

It is sentimental and I love it! It is a sort of re-telling of the parable of the Prodigal Son who recognises that he does not

deserve the consideration of his father. In the parable, the son has effectively said to his father, "To me, you are dead". Even so, the father in the parable does not fail to love and accept his son when he seeks reconciliation. In the opera, Marguerite does not deserve to be saved; in justice she is guilty of terrible sins. But she throws herself on the mercy of God and through that mercy she is welcomed into the celebrations of heaven. In each case the message is about the mercy of God which is far greater than human justice.

This is a Jubilee Year of Mercy, a time of grace for us all to rediscover how much God loves us and what He invites us to share. As Pope Francis said when he announced the Year: "I am confident that the whole Church, which is in such need of mercy for we are sinners, will be able to find in this Jubilee the joy of rediscovering and rendering fruitful God's mercy, with which we are all called to give comfort to every man and every woman of our time. Do not forget that God *forgives all*, and God *forgives always*. Let us never tire of asking forgiveness."

The other day I was driving along the motorway when I was overtaken by a van. It was apparently a pick-up truck for a scrap metal dealer because there was an assortment of old metal junk in the back. The back of the van was covered with mud, but someone had written in the mud, using large capital letters, the legend "LIVING THE DREAM". It made me smile because driving a load of scrap metal wouldn't be my idea of living the dream, and yet it somehow summed up an idea of freedom which was very attractive. To some, the idea of being forgiven, of being reconciled with God may seem like an impossible dream. But in this Year of Mercy we are all being encouraged to "live the dream" because we can all experience the glorious liberty of the children of God. Let us never hesitate to share that mercy with others.

Thank you for all you do as Catechists to share the joy of the Gospel. Let us pray for one another. May God bless you.  
*Fr. Harry Curtiss*

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**COURSE REPORTS**

**Diploma Report – Sue Andrews**

We have 5 students at present on the register, 2 are working steadily, 1 is on hold for health reasons and 2 students have not, as yet, sent in any work.

We had a potential student from Singapore, but having failed to get a response regarding our course, from the Archbishop of Singapore, we had to explain that we would not be able to issue a Diploma as a Parish Catechist on completion of the course. The student would have been free to study the course for his own knowledge, but I have not heard anything further from him.

We have had a few enquiries via the website but no developments on these as yet.

With regard to the Diploma report given at the AGM last year, regarding the comments made about the need to update or simplify the course, we received an email from a former student, Steven Harknett. He writes:

*I have just read online the latest notes and news (2016) and noted the comments concerning the diploma. My observations are that no change should be undertaken that diminishes in any way the currency and status of the diploma. It demands a lot but that is for a reason in that it tests you and without the guide of the Holy Spirit*

*the person cannot be successful. To simplify it may well take away key spiritual aspects. It is difficult in many senses for a reason and perseverance is undoubtedly called for as is a determination to understand its complexities.*

*For me it stands as the gold standard of the OLC catechist education and to be a holder is testament to the dedication and love of the faith. These are the messages we should give. It is not easy and nor should it be.*

*The invitation is for everyone but once grasped those accepting should be aware that it asks a lot and can never be compromised by shortening it or making it easier.*

We feel that this is an endorsement of the Diploma and while we may want to look at improving publicity for the course, the content should remain as it is.

## **FOUNDATION COURSE**

### **- Pam Comerford**

The considerable perseverance and persistence of our students continued to reap rewards again this year. Two of our students have completed the Part 3 Assessment. Cath Benton has gained a distinction and Kathleen Foy awaiting results. Tereza Cloughessy (Zurich ESM) has passed Part 4 with distinction. Well done to them. Cath has written an account of her journey for the Notes & News.

At present we have 25 students enrolled on the FC. Most of these are well with established on the course with only 4 on hold due to personal circumstances. 12 are on Part 1. 10 on Part 2 (6 on 2b), and 3 on Part 3. Two new students have enrolled since last conference. Seven students have discontinued, two of which were non-starters.

The hard work and dedication of our tutors resulted in the success of the students as noted and the continued application to study for others. Thanks so much to them for their knowledge and support to all their students and making my job easy.

I have attended 2 of the 3 executive meetings this year. Beryl Wakefield and I attended the annual CWL and UCM fundraising event in Bury, Manchester, a great pie and mushy peas event. I

also attended the wonderful Autumn Day on GK Chesterton in Birmingham in October '16. Many thanks to everyone who sponsored me for the Camino March/April '16, the funds going to OLC. Photographs available to peruse this weekend.

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## **CATHOLICISM MADE SIMPLE**

### **John Crean**

There has been little major activity since the last AGM. We have 30 students. Fifteen of these are in prison. One prisoner student was among those who completed the Course. His work was very good and we hope he will go on to further study.

Since April last year, we have had 6 enrolments. Nine people have completed the Course and their Certificates have been awarded. Two students are on hold and one withdrew from study due to failing eyesight.

The names of successful students who have completed the Course are printed in our Congratulations column on page 2

Thank you all for your prayers and support.

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## **THE MYSTERIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE**

### *Elizabeth Dixon*

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## **CHILDREN'S POSTAL COURSE**

### **-- For home and parish**

We try to inspire parents and children with the books and CDs provided by OLC. We have added a new colouring book to help children learn the Rosary. A list of our lesson books and colouring books is available on request.

As parishes seem to be managing to educate the Catholic children in non-Catholic schools there is no longer a need for Our Lady's Catechists to work with young children outside their parish. If you know of any children who attend Mass, but are not receiving their Catholic education, please let you parish priest know.

Anne O'Rorke has retired from her work as catechist and tutor on the postal course and we thank her for the many years of work in this area.

Marie Francis also gave an update on her overseas students  
*Beryl Wakefield, Registrar*

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## PRAYER CORNER

I am still trying to help prisoners with the CMS course. It is good to see the efforts they make to complete the course. Sometimes it takes a long time because there are many long gaps in between the lessons. I am pleased that I can pray for all who are in need because I have the time now to do so. We have daily Mass in our chapel and evening prayer together when we pray for all the many needs we have been asked to pray for. Every Friday we pray before the Blessed Sacrament exposed in the Monstrance so please ask us if you need us to pray for your intentions.

**Sister Joyce Barnes** invites to write or email her with your request. All prayers will remain confidential. Email address: [Joyce.Barnes@SNDdeN.org](mailto:Joyce.Barnes@SNDdeN.org) Telephone: 01704 568361.

Address: Sister Joyce Barnes SND, 21 Weld Road, Birkdale Road, Southport PR8 2AZ



Our Lady's Catechists, (OLC), is an Associate Member of the National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisors, (NBRIA). In December 2015, I represented OLC at the NBRIA Annual General Meeting, held in London. The meeting was hosted by CAFOD and Chris Bain, its Director, welcomed us.

Bishop Marcus Stock, the new President of NBRIA introduced himself and spoke of his background in education, both as a teacher and as Head of the Schools Commission.

Monsignor Kevin McGinnell, summarised the main achievements of NBRIA over the last year including a presence on the RE Council which will give NBRIA an opportunity to contribute to the wider RE debate. Two problems for our Catholic schools emerged from the meeting. Firstly, the shortage of Catholic teachers especially in Secondary schools. This could be an opportunity for OLC to contribute to the training of non-Catholic teachers working in Catholic schools, as our CMS course is an ideal introduction to the Catholic faith. Secondly, the need for us all to proclaim the value that our schools and the Church bring to society. The religious education of our children is something that we should all be concerned about and remember in our prayers.

The Keynote Presentation, was given by Martin Foster, Director of the Liturgy Office for the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales. Recent new translations of interest are a revised 'Rite of Marriage', and of special interest to catechists who prepare children for the Sacraments, a revised 'Rite of Confirmation'. These new 'Rites' became mandatory after Easter.

We were given a preview of the new NBRIA website. OLC, as an Associate Member of NBRIA, has a short summary of our work displayed on the website.

The following are a few of the main points taken from the reports given at the meeting:

The RSE, (relationship and sex education), are preparing three documents dealing with, governance, procedures and quality, and content.

The secondary Advisors reported that new GCSE and GCE AS and A Level Religious Studies qualifications are due to be taught from September 2016

The CES and NBRIA are continuing to work with exam boards and publishers to secure the quality of both specifications and supporting resources for the new examinations.

The Association of Catholic Chaplains in Education, (ACCE) advises on the work of chaplains in school and gives advice to employers, explaining the role, advising on training, terms and conditions, job descriptions etc. At present, ACCE is working with the CES to revise existing documentation and provide new guidelines.

CAFOD: Various resources are available for the Year of Mercy and Laudato Si'

The Kairos Forum: Budget reductions have meant a reduction in services and Kairos now runs only 2 days per week, whilst many disabled people have experienced benefit cuts and the need is in fact greater. Kairos still have several disability training and formation services available for use in schools and adult education.

## The Civic Mass Liverpool.

Once again Joan McCarthy and I were asked to attend the Mass in Liverpool Catholic Cathedral on behalf of Our Lady's Catechists.

It is always a thrill to see all the dignitaries in their robes of office and fluttering chains of office and the Judge in his wig and robe, processing into the church behind the mace carried solemnly in by a special carrier – the symbols of their authority.

In his address, Archbishop Malcolm McMahon thanked them for all the good work they are doing for the people in need in the area and diocese of Liverpool. He also spoke of the cooperation of the Church and support of the Church as Church is involved in caring also for the poor and marginalized in our society. He also spoke about the Mass, which is celebrated to thank God for what has been achieved since last year and to ask his help for what is to come.

The choir excelled itself as usual and helped to raise our minds and hearts to God.

This year the Cathedral was full of parishioners and foreign visitors. (I wonder what they thought about it all?)

After the service were all treated to a glass of wine (or juice) and lots of 'nibbles'.

Sr. Joyce Barnes & Joan McCarthy.

## NBRIA AGM Report

Missio: Mission Together is the children's branch of Missio – motto, 'children helping children.' They support schools, orphanages, feeding centres and health centres etc. worldwide. Children are encouraged to pray as well as to share. The campaign for 2015/2016 is Malawi

Caritas – St Joseph's: Currently delivering 45 lifelong learning courses, with 200 students. Cuts in disability have affected all students.

Fr David Gibbons invited those attending to visit the Metropolitan Cathedral next door, which has a shrine of Blessed Oscar Romero and St Frances Xavier Cabrini, Patron of Immigrants. They were indeed worth a visit!

*Sue Andrews – NBRIA representative*

### **AUTUMN DAY**

Our Autumn Study Day 2015, on 3<sup>rd</sup> October, was held in the picturesque city of York, the place where our patron, St. Margaret Clitherow lived and was martyred. The Study Day was held in St Wilfrid's Church, a stone's throw from York Minster. The day was an uplifting mix of prayer, discussion, socialising, a quiz, and learning.

We began and ended the day with the Prayer of the Church, led by our Spiritual Director, Fr. Harry Curtis, and at midday we joined the congregation of St Wilfrid's for Holy Mass.

Our speaker was Fr. Kevin Melody O.Carm., who is a Carmelite Friar and Parish Priest of the Church of Our Lady in York. Fr. Kevin spoke on St Teresa of Avila in this, the fifth centenary of her birth, concentrating on the legacy that she has left to us in the present day. Teresa was a Carmelite nun, who exemplified the fundamental Carmelite attributes of prayer, community and service. Teresa wrote books, which told us of her experiences in prayer and on her spiritual journey, not that she wanted us to slavishly follow her way but to encourage us on our spiritual road. For Teresa the point of prayer is to meet Jesus, the Jesus of the Gospels and to open ourselves to be transformed by him. Fr Kevin made us aware that Teresa, a sixteenth century Spanish mystic, can still have a message for us today. Her writings include the books; *The Life*, (her autobiography); *The Book of the Foundations*, (telling the story of the convents that she founded); *The Way of Perfection*, (written for her nuns at their request); *The Interior Castle*, (her great treatise on prayer).

A 'word search', based on St Teresa, kept everyone busy throughout the day, and all those attending appreciated the chance to get together, to pray together and to learn something about a very popular saint, who can be a wonderful example for us as catechists.

### **ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

21-23 April 2016 Kings Park, Northampton

The Conference opened on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> April with Evening Mass celebrated by Canon John Minh for deceased members. After Mass, it was good to meet up with other members and friends of OLC and CWL. Elizabeth Dixon our new Chairman welcomed us all to the weekend, the theme of which was 'To Lead People in Prayer.' We then welcomed Father Harry Curtis our Spiritual Director who gave a talk on the

significance of 'the third day' in the Scriptures with God as our Saviour:

Jesus rose again on the third day (1 Corinthians 15:2), God put Abraham to the test when He asked Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, but on the third day Isaac was saved as a ram appeared which Abraham sacrificed instead of Isaac (Genesis 22)

and Jonah was saved after being in the whale for three days (Jonah 2).

Father Harry reminded us that Easter is set by the moon and that each month there are three days without a moon (we are left in the dark) and that for Jews with the New Moon there is new Hope.

On Saturday 'early birds got up for The Rosary. This was followed by Morning Prayer. After breakfast Canon John Minh gave a talk on 'Leading Others in Prayer.' He reminded us that we are prophets and have a role in assisting our parish priests in leading others in prayer. He stated that what has been the normal practice of prayer for us is now not the case in many families. The midday Mass was celebrated by Father Harry for OLC Members. In the afternoon, we welcomed our guest speaker Kathryn Turner, who is Head of Department of Spirituality in the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle. Kathryn spoke about the different types of people who will lead us in prayer. With different people there will be different methods, but the important factor is to listen to what God is saying to me, and what applies to me. For her second session Kathryn changed the lecture hall into a haven for peace and prayer with different aids for focusing on prayer e.g. sand tray, shimmering water bowl, egg timer, heart shaped stones, pebbles and others. It was a most uplifting session. After tea, a Member's Forum took place in which we discussed the future of OLC, the role of the Diocesan Representatives, attendance at Study Days, interaction with students, OLC Courses and the promotion of our work. Following dinner and prayers we eagerly awaited the evening entertainment. We were not disappointed when the Stars of OLC demonstrated their talents in a comedy sketch, which earned them a rousing applause.



A quiz tested our brains and the evening finished with a bumper raffle.

Sunday morning began with prayer followed by the Annual General Meeting, presided over by CWL National President Margaret Valentine. Reports were read which gave us an overview of the current work of OLC, the Finance Report was circulated and the Officers agreed to continue for the coming year with the willing consent of the Members. Midday Mass was celebrated for the future of OLC by Bishop Peter Doyle and Father Harry Curtis.

Following lunch, we dispersed to different parts of the UK with a song in our hearts and a determination to carry on the work of OLC. Without the hard work of all concerned, the weekend would not have been such a joyful and successful one.

Jane Barham

**Don't forget to visit our website on:**  
[www.ourladyscatechists.wordpress.com](http://www.ourladyscatechists.wordpress.com)

### The Family Matters to Prisoners



Many people may think that the main duty of a prison chaplain is to talk about God. Hopefully with some new knowledge about God, prisoners may change!

There is no doubt about the religious duties that a prison chaplain has to do: organising Mass and prayer sessions, running Bible or Rosary courses, etc.

However those religious activities are not the only tasks for a prison chaplain. Quite often, a prison chaplain has to deal with family matters such as information about the illness of

a prisoners' family member, or breaking the sad news about the death of a prisoner's loved one.

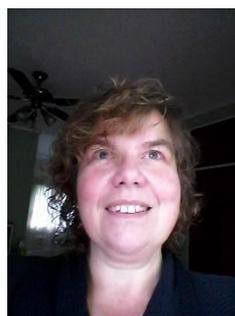
To many prisoners, the word 'family' is the sweetest and one of the first things they are worried about. Talking to prisoners about their families is one of the best ways to break the ice for a meaningful conversation. The worst thing for those who are behind bars is the sad news about their loved ones. They may feel helpless. Therefore a prison chaplain would normally be the first point of contact for prisoners to talk about their families. A prison chaplain does not do the job of a family liaison officer who mainly deals with legal or social aspects of families.

The recent document *Amoris Laetitia* describes both the joys and the sorrows of the family life. The Holy Father's concerns for families are deeply rooted in his vast experiences as a pastor. He would like the Church to show God's mercy to all families, and of course families of prisoners are among his priorities. The pastoral care to prisoners in the light of the post-synodal apostolic exhortation on love in the family is certainly a huge challenge. It requires not only the spiritual and practical experiences, but also the sympathy and compassion from a prison chaplain. Prisoners do not always expect an answer or a solution. They would normally appreciate an attentive ear or an assurance of prayers. When you read these lines, please say a prayer for those who are separated from their loved ones, and for those who look after them. Great thanks!  
*Fr John Minh, Prison Chaplain and Priest in Charge of St Luke's, Peterborough*

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### COMMENTS FROM STUDENTS

#### DIPLOMA COURSE



How did I find the Diploma course?

I found it most interesting and eye opening.

When I was asked to teach in 2002, I had to sit down and learn, because I could not remember anything from what I should have learned

in Germany when I grow up. I noticed one thing; I cannot expect the children to follow the rules of the Church if I do not follow them myself. I needed to be a good role model for them and so my hunger for the knowledge of the Church started to grow, I think one part was because I started to teach the group my daughter was in. Then after 10 years teaching, 5 years for first communion and 5 years for confirmation and being more than once the co-ordinator, the priest ask if anyone was interest to do the course and I did. In line with the motto if you know better you can do better.

Anyway could I honestly tell the Lord, if I would stand in front of him that I did my best and claim

ignorance, that is not working for me. So you see I did not start because I wanted to teach catechism, it was more that I wanted to know more about my religion. And yes the course helped a lot, even so that I want to learn more, it gave me more confidence not only in my religion but also in what and how I am now teaching my adult group.

I am planning to do RCIA course in my parish, and Marie is helping set this up.  
Regina Gottschalk

Apologies for omitting Regina's comment last year. Editor.

### Foundation Course



I really did not know what to expect from the course. It was daunting to begin with, mainly because of the number of units that had to be completed. I

wondered if I would be able to combine studying with my part-time work and family commitments. I was very pleased that I decided to go ahead with the course, as I can now look back with pride and gratitude for the privilege of learning more about my faith.

I would like to think that my spiritual development has been enhanced. It helped me to acknowledge that I needed to develop a deeper relationship with God through reading, prayer and reflection.

The Course was hard work but rewarding in so many ways. I have gained so much and it has made me realise that I still have so much more to learn. Thank you

Cath Benton

### Catholicism Made Simple

I would recommend most highly the Catholicism Made Simple Course to every one Catholic, Christian, Agnostic or any other religion. I am a Catholic from birth and I thoroughly enjoyed the course. It helped crystallise my existing knowledge as well as extended it. My tutor was excellent, she was knowledgeable, kind, encouraging and managed to enthuse me so that I

could not wait to receive the next paper to work on. She answered my questions most fully and I have kept all my notes to refer to and look back on. I now wish to study further with the OLC.

My most heartfelt thanks to my tutor and the OLC.

It has given me a desire to study further and deepen my knowledge

Enid D'Cruz

I have thoroughly enjoyed taking part in the course, although it has been hard work, it's also been very interesting. I have learnt a great deal and many aspects of our faith have become much clearer. I have also had the opportunity to read the Bible, books and other literature that I wouldn't have done. These have all helped deepen my religious knowledge.

I would like to thank Pam and all my tutors for their help during the course. Their time and guidance is very much appreciated.

I look forward to passing on this new found knowledge to others that God may send to me for education.

I would certainly recommend the course to anyone who has an interest in widening their own knowledge or want to pass on the faith to others.

*Carol Stephenson, Foundation Course*

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In many ways the course was much better than I expected, though I suppose I didn't know what to expect...or how much I didn't know! I have learned so much from the written guidance, I now understand so very much, especially about the Old Testament and its fulfillment in the New and about the Truths of our faith and how to live them. As a Catechist, I am much more equipped and confident in passing on the Faith. Also I have grown through persevering on the Course, especially in my realization that the Holy Spirit inspires and guides me when I ask and I have much more enthusiasm for passing on the Faith and following Christ in His Church. I was always keen to read more but didn't get much time. I see that one of the great advantages of learning on such a course is that we force ourselves to make time!

Tutors are sensitive to the fact that we are fitting the course into busy lives, with illness and unexpected absences etc. and therefore understanding and flexible when we explain our situation. But it is also good that the tutors urge us at times to keep up with things so that we don't lose our learning and motivation as it is quite long. I completed Part 3 and the Assessment and I intend to take up Part 4 as soon as my health permits.

I think everything we studied was important from the different units re Catechism, Old and New Testaments and Veritatis Splendor. I would be hard put to think what could be left out. I thought that Veritatis Splendor, though a bit difficult in parts, was an amazingly good Encyclical. I wouldn't have missed it for the world and I think we need it in today's world more than ever. The units all combine to

give us a great education and I really can witness to the fact that the Holy Spirit and Our Lady help us. When I prayed first I found I could have a pretty good go at it. It is great that our tutors pray for us as well as guides us and it's a great blessing that they do it because they clearly want to help the student grow in their faith as they do it voluntarily. I chose the course simple because I could afford it but having done it, I would choose it anyway! Many thanks to the course writer, my tutor and Registrar. God bless them and their work for OLC. May it long continue; this course is so needed, especially these days.

*Pam Aherne.*

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The CMS course, which I have just recently completed after a learning journey that began in November 2013, has, for me, been both surprising and challenging. Surprising, because it played a part in my conversion to Catholicism and challenging

because I soon realised that what I thought I knew, up till then, of the Catholic Faith and Tradition - in the light of rigorous catechism - was revealed to be something quite other, and richly beautiful to me at its heart.

My tutor was warm and skilful and her feedback proved very thought provoking and helpful. Serious study of the Catholic Faith, brings unexpected joys but also, necessarily uncomfortable personal challenges when seeking to sincerely and honestly try to line up one's life with the wholeness and holiness of a living Catholic Faith. And I can see that I have a long road to travel, still, but what a treasured road!

*Samara Fairsing, Catholicism Made Simple*

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It was by chance that I found out about the Catholicism Made Simple course - or so I thought. I registered for the course without realising the significance it would have on my faith journey. I received the materials promptly and found the course materials clear and easy to follow. Because the course is broken down into short chapters, it is quite easy to fit in the time for studying - even if, like me, you are very busy. I work as a teacher and correspondence tutor myself (in a different subject and for a different audience) so I really appreciated the fact that my tutor, Joan, was carrying out this service voluntarily. Indeed, Joan made all the difference, as she took so much care to tailor her feedback and responses so that the course addressed my questions and met my needs. It wasn't long before I realised that it was God, not chance, that made me aware of this course. It has had a lasting impact on my faith, and rekindled in me a desire to learn more and grow my faith. Although, at this time, I have decided that I shall remain in the Anglican Church, I do not rule out the possibility of conversion to Catholicism in the future. I certainly intend to continue my studies with OLC. Thank you to everyone at OLC for your important and life-changing ministry.

*Rebecca Snell*

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It is over a year ago now since the Catholic Women's League in my parish looked at the new course recently launched by Our Lady's Catechists, the Mysteries of the Christian Life, and decided it would be a good subject for group study. They approached our parish priest, who read the course and agreed to tutor the group. The Section decided to throw the invitation open to the parish and very quickly, a group of 12 formed and agreed to meet weekly after Mass.

Interest in the course was good from the beginning but Father's introductions to the chapters with information on the history and social circumstances surrounding the events brought the Mysteries to life. Rumour must have spread because the following week three more people joined the group and stayed with us to the end.

Lively discussion always followed the sessions, over a cup of coffee and I was surprised by how much I learned that was new to me and how much was brought back that I had learned long ago and forgotten over the years. I would not hesitate to recommend the course for individual study or study in a group.

*John Crean, Mysteries of the Christian Life*

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I was delighted when Father Harry said at our 2014 OLC Conference that he was ready to launch The Mysteries of the Christian Life, a new OLC Course. I was immediately drawn to enrol for it.

This is a Course for everyone. Do not be daunted by the 20 chapters, the text is clearly set out with the addition of a beautiful picture relating to the Mystery. In each chapter there is a scriptural basis, some detail of the story and what it teaches us and concludes with prayer intentions.

There are 2 or 3 questions to be answered for each chapter and the answers are to be found either in the text, from the bible or from deep in one's heart or soul. The student is also requested to write a question for the tutor. It is a way of getting the student to think even more deeply about the chapter. It may even be a challenge for the tutor to find the answer!

Some may feel that praying the Rosary regularly is enough, but I found the Course gave me a much deeper understanding of the Mysteries.

Here are some comments from CWL members who are studying the Course:

"I have been converted for three years so I am always interested in learning. We discuss for about two hours and I walk home inspired."

"I have greatly enjoyed being one of the group of OLC. It is very interesting as we discuss the Mysteries in detail and give our views and thoughts. I hope to continue with the study group in further study."

"Studying the Mysteries of Life in a group has been a very enriching experience. We each bring something personal to the discussion and it is wonderful to talk of our Faith to other women in a controlled way,"

*Jane Barham, Mysteries of the Christian Life*

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**REPORT FROM SCOTLAND.**

**Angela Williamson**

The situation here is much the same as in last year's report.

The Holy Family parish in Aberdeenshire has a very active Kerala community. They have their own catechism and teaching materials and also their own teachers.

The Dominican Sisters in Elgin arrange catechist courses for anyone interested. They are very busy working with the young people in the Diocese and also arrange regular retreats for them. The World Youth Day was well attended. So the main work of OLC is Parish Catechesis which is ongoing as the need arises. The brochures for the various different correspondence courses are in the Churches.

I have two students working on the FC, one student studying the Mysteries and one student on CMS. The FC and CMS students leave months between each paper which makes it very difficult to keep their interest. Both Pam and John are aware of the situation and of the students in question.

Children were prepared for the sacraments of Confirmation in January 2016.

I send my best wishes and prayers to the Executive Committee.

## **REPORTS FROM THE DIOCESES**

*The Executive of Our Lady's Catechists and Diocesan representatives express their thanks to the League and in particular to Associate Members for their prayers, support and donations.*

### **ARUNDEL & BRIGHTON**

We have problems in A&B as at our Branch AGM we could only get one Branch Officer, Treasurer Barbara Elms. With the proposed changes to the League structure we are attempting to keep going as a Branch at least until 2017 with informal Branch meetings and Sections meetings as usual. I always give a report about OLC and can say that the prayers of our members are always offered for the tutors and students at all levels. Member have always been very interested in CMS courses in HM Prisons and hope that ex-offenders with God's blessing keep up with the work they have started. All Sections have copies of Notes & News to keep informed about OLC in other parts of the country.

I was unable to attend OLC AGM this year as I had hoped, but due to a severe eye infection. It was a worrying time, but improving now thank goodness.

*Brenda A Hilliam*

### **BIRMINGHAM**

In 2015 there were 11 CWL Sections, from which 111 were Associate Members of OLC - just half of the Branch membership. Associate subscriptions of £222 plus £98 donations amounted to £320, which was the total sent from the Branch. One Section has already in 2016 withdrawn from CWL but has loyally agreed to continue their support of OLC. 8 catechists returned Annual Report Forms: 3 of them act as tutors for the Diploma and Foundation Courses and one for the CMS Course. Only 2 are engaged in

traditional parish catechesis, two attend fortnightly Bible Study sessions - also Prayer and ecumenical House Groups. Several are Readers, Eucharistic Ministers, or undertake Sacristan duties. Another works in Uganda, promoting a Pro-life & Childcare Foundation. We send congratulations and best wishes to Valerie Berridge, one of our first Diploma students, who this year completed 25 years of full-time Ministry at the Olde House Retreat Centre in Southam, giving guided retreats and one-to-one spiritual direction. We have 4 students on the Foundation Course and 3 have completed the CMS Course. At the CWL Branch meeting in March, our Chaplain Father Harry Curtis gave a talk on the "Mysteries of the Christian Life" and several expressed interest in taking this Course. Many people feel unable or unwilling to make a regular commitment to longer periods of study, so "Catholicism Made Simple" and "Mysteries of the Rosary" are more popular courses: they aim to help people grow in love and knowledge of God and are a good starting point for religious study but they do not qualify a person as a catechist. Thank you CWL for your loyal support; please continue to pray for all who are learning and teaching the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ.

*Ann Bayley*

### **BRENTWOOD**

#### **Rosa Vasquez**

OLC Members Annual Report of Work for year 2016 are collected and sent to the OLC

Chairman. A summary of the report was also sent to Rt. Rev. Alan Williams who thanked the OLC in the Brentwood Diocese for their work.

With every good wish and an assurance of prayers. God Bless.

There are five OLC Catechists at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Wanstead. Mr D Kelly and Mr R Sime are also tutors to students doing the 'Foundation Course'. Mrs Marie Francis, to my knowledge continued meeting the catechists. With great sorrow as we all know she had now retired due to ill health. Their catechetical work includes, preparation for First Holy Communion, preparation for Confirmation, and RCIA. They are also involved in Adult faith Formation such as Bible Study.

Miss Ann Henry is assisting on the preparation of children for First Holy Communion at St.

Anthony of Padua Parish, Forest Gate.

Myself, I continue as a Special Minister of Holy Communion at Mass celebrated at SS. Peter and Pauls Church. I take the Service of Readings and Holy Communion to the Sick and Housebound.

In addition, I read to them the Gospel that is appropriate to their needs specially when they are ill or feel very low. I learnt about it at the 'Proclaim 15' meeting two years ago.

Students: one doing the Foundation Course and another Catholicism Made Simple.

Following the advice of the Rt. Rev. Peter Doyle, I wrote about the OLC Courses, with a

short description and had also enclosed leaflets. Letters were sent to the Rt. Rev. Alan Williams, Bishop of Brentwood, and 17 parish priests of the Brentwood Dioceses who also communicate with CWL members as parishioners. I enclosed copy of Our lady's Catechists Notes and News 2016 and a poster for the OLC Conference and AGM 2017.

According to the new CWL Constitution all CWL Direct Members should work as CWL Section Member. I am a CWL Goodmayes Section Member. I am continuing as OLC Brentwood Branch Representative. The number of CWL members at Brentwood Branch had increased this year with a new Section at Guiden Park.

Brentwood Diocese is celebrating its Centenary Year. I had attended the 'Proclaim 15' follow up. We were advised to work with the 'Stewards of the Gospel' who will work with the parish priest and parishioners, part of it was to fill in a questionnaire which were presented to bishop Alan at the Celebration of Mass of Chrism, on 22<sup>nd</sup> July, the Centenary Celebration will be at Walsingham. There is an exhibition of the History of the Dioceses, Centenary Lectures given at the Cathedral and other activities towards the celebration.

Dr Rosa Vasquez

#### **CARDIFF**

Cardiff has one student and one qualified catechist. Marie Harris the former OLC Tutor and Diocesan Representative has had to retire because of ill health. She has given many years of excellent service to OLC and we thank her for her work and friendship. Please pray for her as she adjusts to life in a care home.

*Editor*

#### **MENEVIA**

The year has been a quiet one, but OLC information was still circulated and news reported at Branch meetings of CWL. There were 36 Associate members from the sections and Direct Branch members; OLC continues to be remembered in prayer.

*Joan Welsh*

#### **CLIFTON**

We thank sections for their support and kind subscriptions and donations. We currently have a student studying of the Foundation Course.

*Margaret Richards*

#### **EAST ANGLIA**

There is one Foundation Course student and one CMS student. Congratulations to Angela Ashby who completed the Foundation Course. Angela has retired as Diocesan Representative and we need someone from that area to take on the work. Congratulations also go to Angela Francisco, who completed the CMS Course. Well done to both. And thanks to the CWL ladies of East Anglia who continue to support us.

Editor

#### **HEXHAM & NEWCASTLE**

Hexham and Newcastle now have 50 Associate Members, an increase of two on 2014 numbers. I am delighted to report that we now have a student studying the Foundation Course and two students registered on the CMS course. Miss Bryony Foley continues to keep the National Registrar for Our Lady's Catechists and I am the registrar for the Mysteries of the Christian Life Course. In the last year we have organised a Branch Prayer Walk at Morpeth. This took the form of a very gentle walk alongside the banks of the River Wansbeck. It was so popular that members have asked if it could be repeated. Morpeth also hosted the annual Rosary Service in 2015 and this year it will be the turn of Sunderland Section.

*Elizabeth Dixon*

#### **LANCASTER**

Lancaster Branch is still without a representative though many members continue to support OLC as associate members and remember OLC Students and Tutors in their prayers.

*Sue Gornall*

#### **LEEDS**

Mary Rodwell

In June we attended our CWL annual pilgrimage to Ripon, St. Wilfred's Church Mass and the Way Side Crucifix Service, remembering the work of the CWL Canteen Huts during World Wars 1 and 2. This is always a moving occasion. On Founders Day we met at Hinsley Hall, the Leeds Diocesan Pastoral and Conference Centre, for our Branch Meeting, Mass and Christmas Lunch. The CWL National President attended offering encouragement.

We discussed the future of CWL in the Leeds Diocese. The 2 Sections in Wakefield and Harrogate will remain separate in spite of reduced membership. We have 10 faithful OLC Associates.

In 2016 the Leeds Branch supported many charities including £2,000 donated to OLC. Sadly, I have had only one enquiry about OLC Courses. I would appreciate prayers for guidance. Thank you.

#### **MIDDLESBROUGH**

**Lilian Finch**

Last year we had 90 CWL Associate Members of OLC. This year we only have 69 CWL members and I will find out how many of these are Associate Members.

I attended the Autumn Study Day in Birmingham. I was very kindly driven there by Margaret Stevens, who is doing the Diploma Course. Birmingham was being 'dug up' and we felt that we had "gone to Birmingham via

Beachy Head”, (the talk was about G K Chesterton).

I have given reports at Branch meetings and tried to promote OLC and encourage members to come to the Conference and the Autumn Day. I found the year 2016 very traumatic. John had his sick bed in the dining room. One Saturday afternoon the doorbell went and Father White was on the doorstep with our Bishop. The 2016 Notes and News had just arrived so I took the opportunity to give the Bishop his copy. This is the second year I have managed to deliver the Bishop’s copy by hand.

We have one active Catechist in Thornaby and Sheila, the Treasurer, in Hessele.

When the Bridlington Section sadly closed, they donated £50 of their funds to Our Lady’s Catechists.

#### **NORTHAMPTON**

There are no students at present. We thank all our associate members in our Sections for their continued support and prayers.

*Jean White*

#### **NOTTINGHAM**

Congratulations to Wesley Hawryliw who completed CMS this year. Also to the CWL Section who managed to stay open longer by studying and successfully completing the Mysteries of Life Rosary Course. Two members attended the Autumn Day in York and both found this to be a very rewarding experience.

Thanks to all who supported us over the past year, and especially to Glenise Ellis who has now retired as our Representative.

*Editor*

#### **PLYMOUTH**

##### **John Crean**

There has been little activity since the last AGM. Nationally we have 30 students. Fifteen of these are in prison. One prisoner student was among those who completed the Course. His work was very good and we hope he will go on to further study.

Since April last year, nationally, we have had 6 enrolments. Nine people have completed the Course and their Certificates have been awarded. One of these was from Plymouth Diocese. Natalie Williams from Bridport completed the Course to a very high standard and we extend our congratulations to her. Two students are on hold and one withdrew from study due to failing eyesight.

In this Diocese we have two Foundation Course students and one Catholicism Made Simple student.

Thank you for all your prayers and support.

#### **PORTSMOUTH**

We continue to be active as a CWL Branch, and donate to a number of charities. Eight of my Section attended to Branch AGM and Mary Bowen who is an active member of OLC asked to be remembered to everyone

*Audrey Taylor.*

#### **SALFORD**

There are five CWL Sections – three are Section Members and the others include 30 Associate Members. The Branch and Sections continue to support OLC.

There are three qualified members and all are active in a number of areas for OLC.

Pam works in the Diocese with different organisation to promote our work, including the Salford Diocese Catechetical Group for Adult Formation. We have a display at their Catechists Days and gave a presentation at the May meeting. *Editor.*

#### **SHREWSBURY**

##### **Joan McCarthy**

We have one tutor and unfortunately no students. I report at the Branch Meetings and the members are impressed with our work, especially with the prisoners.

Some Sections have Associate Members, whilst others send a donation.

We thank our members for their prayers, subscriptions and donations.

#### **SOUTHWARK.**

*Helen Cooley*

We have one Foundation Course Student and one Diploma Course student. One member has just completed the Catholicism Made Simple Course and two the Mysteries of Christian Life.

I have attended Branch Meetings when I could, or sent a report. The Sections are very supportive to OLC with donations and some members attended the OLC Conference and AGM.

#### **WESTMINSTER**

##### **Charmaine Jayasuriya**

All the associate members are from the Catholic Women’s league Westminster except for one member from Hemel Hempstead. Members of the Catholic Women’s League Westminster have been very generous always with their donations to Our Lady’s Catechists. Unfortunately, this year I am not sure of the exact number of associate members or the total donations given by Catholic Women’s League Westminster to Our Lady’s Catechists.

I try to give a detailed report of the work of Our Lady’s Catechists at the Catholic Women’s

League Westminster Branch meetings and encourage the members to enrol in Our Lady's Catechists Courses. I also make every effort to talk about the various courses to people in the four parishes of Hemel Hempstead. Few people have enrolled in some of the courses and some have discontinued due to lack of time.

Two years ago, a Secular Carmelite in Hemel Hempstead enrolled in the Foundation Course. Whilst doing the course, this year she is helping our assistant parish priest with the Holy Communion preparation of the children in one of the parishes. I do hope and pray that she will persevere to complete the Foundation Course. There are a few other students from the London areas who have enrolled in the Foundation Course.

One member from the Welwyn Garden City Catholic Women's League Section who successfully completed the Foundation course three years ago, is now doing excellent work in

her parish. I prepared a child with severe learning difficulties for his First Holy Communion. Finally, he made his First Communion on the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, (11<sup>th</sup> February 2017). One of the catechists takes an active part in a prayer group using the resources from the Westminster agency of evangelisation.

An associate member of the Hemel Hempstead SS. Mary and Joseph parish is using his musical talent to provide music at all the Eucharistic celebrations and prayer services during Our Lady's Catechists Annual conference 2017. He did the same for the last four years. I am happy to announce that Enrico our musician celebrates his Birthday on the same day as the Our Lady's Catechists AGM 2017.

Finally, my grateful thanks go to all members of the Catholic Women's League Westminster Branch and all the others involved in supporting us with the prayers and generous donations.

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## **OUR LADY'S BOOKSHOP**

Our Lady's Catechists recommend Our Lady's Bookshop to all our readers, especially students and Tutors of OLC. The shop carries an attractive range of religious books, Bibles, rosaries and holy cards.

Contact: Sheila Chambers: Our Lady's Bookshop, 23-25 Northgate, Hessle, East Yorkshire HU13 OLW.  
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Email: hesslebookshop@yahoo.co.uk Thank you to all those who have contributed their reports and articles to this edition of Notes & News and to all members and friends of Our Lady's Catechists who help distribute copies. Editor