



Catholic Enquiry Centre Newsletter

*The Catholic Enquiry Centre is a work of the National Centre for Evangelisation,
an agency of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference*

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Welcome to the new newsletter for supporters and donors of the Catholic Enquiry Centre (CEC). Released three times a year, this newsletter will share stories and the broad work of the CEC.

While continuing to respond to enquirers, the CEC has invested time this year to compile a snapshot of its works in 2019. Released in the coming weeks, the snapshot highlights the CEC received 436 enquiries by phone, and 317 by email in 2019. Of these 753 enquiries, the majority were seeking advice on Catholic teaching

(22%) or Catholic resources (22%). Other significant enquiries related to current social issues or experiences (seal of Confession, abuse crisis, etc) and support with the Sacraments. Enquirers consisted of both those seeking to know more about Jesus and the Catholic faith, as well as baptised Catholics wanting to update or increase their knowledge of the Catholic faith.

PLEASE SUPPORT OUR WORK

We would like to thank you for your ongoing support of the CEC, which in 2019 celebrated 60 years of mission in Australia.

The CEC is focused on growing its network of supporters to greater enable its response to enquirers. We invite you to make a donation to the CEC via the enclosed form or online at www.catholicenquiry.com.

Every blessing,

Malcolm Hart
*Director, National
Centre for
Evangelisation
and the Catholic
Enquiry Centre*



THE IMPORTANCE OF ASKING QUESTIONS: BISHOP GREG HOMEMING OCD



The turn to modern philosophy began in the 17th century when Rene Descartes penned those famous words "I think, therefore I am". Later commentators have said that he should have said "I doubt, therefore I think, therefore I am". Whether you agree with the commentator does not matter, because all philosophical thought begins with a foundational question. Descartes' was "Is there anything which I can know with absolute certainty?"

From the earliest time, questions have defined a people and shaped the individual. However, if we look at this, we find that some questions have led to greatness in a nation and others have led to downfall. Likewise, some questions have promoted personal virtue and others personal destruction. Our foundational questions emerge from issues which concern and preoccupy us. For example, one country's main concern might be defence, another's might be health. The first might place a larger than average part of its national income into armaments, while the second might establish a social health system. Both countries have identified values which define a national question. One becomes a super power, the other develops a social welfare system.

In the case of the individual, one person may be preoccupied with wealth and personal security, another with the care of others. The preoccupation specifies the questions which shapes their lives. The average person has a number of issues which occupy his or her thoughts and at times consume.

Your questions reveal your inner issues. Spiritually, the reverse is important. We can address inner issues by fine-tuning our questions. For example, an inner impulse to know may be expressed through questions which are curious or through questions which search for the truth. Questions may express a noble intent; they may also refine our intent. Questions are very important because they both express and form the inner person.

St Thomas Aquinas was driven by the question to know and understand God. St Teresa of Avila was driven by two questions: to know and love Jesus; and how to live a life which transforms us into true friends of Jesus. The first question led her to God, the second sanctified her. The Chinese philosopher, Confucius, who claimed to know nothing about God, asked "what do we need to do

to have an upright and good government, and how should individuals live so as to be virtuous?"

These are examples of useful, constructive questions. Sadly, many of us carry unproductive and often destructive questions – questions for which there are no answers, or which lead us away from human perfection. I am not talking about the day-to-day questions of what to do next or what to eat or wear. I mean questions which are about meaning, and which are central to who we are.

The Gospel questions are a good place to start. "Who is my neighbor?", "What must I do to inherit eternal life?", "Who am I (Jesus)", "Teach us to pray", "Truth, what is that?", "How many times should I forgive?" These questions provide a focus for a

good life and the growing answers craft a good person. These questions are seldomly motivated by curiosity. They are questions which niggle, won't go away and sometimes disturb. They can be the first responses to the Holy Spirit, who initiates a human journey through a question.

The Catholic Enquiry Centre is established to help people answer the Gospel questions and questions concerning the Catholic faith. Its purpose is not simply informative, but is, I would suggest, more importantly formative. I hope that any person who approaches the Centre is beginning a journey into God. Questions establish a dialogue. One question properly answered leads to further questions which are often more profound. After tentative steps our horizons expand, we begin to see God, and we grow as people of love and truth.

ROCKHAMPTON SODALITY SUPPORTS THE MISSION THROUGH PRAYER AND ACTION



Do you know what a Sodality is? Google tells me that it is a general name for a confraternity or pious association. Put simply, and in a Catholic context, it is a voluntary group of like-minded people who work together to make Christ known, and it usually has a special devotion to Jesus or a saint. Sodalities are less popular these days, yet they remain a valued group in many parishes as they devote their attention to both the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.

In Central Queensland is one such Sodality. The St Mary's North Rockhampton Sacred Heart of Jesus Sodality has been operating for many decades. Its current president, Patricia McDevitt, took over the reins from her own mum in 2010. Patricia says, "Sodality membership has been a bit of a family affair. I took over from Mum, and my grandmother and aunt were also very much involved in the Sacred Heart Sodality in another parish until their deaths."

In its heyday the Sodality had 30 + members at any one time, and all were women. It is now a much smaller group with ten regular members, and includes men and women ranging in age from late 20s to early 80s. They meet monthly and have an annual Mass and morning tea around the feast day of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This year the celebrations were a little different because

of the coronavirus restrictions. Adhering to social distancing rules, Parish Priest, Fr Marcel Kujur was able to celebrate Mass with the Sodality members, along with the South Rockhampton Sodality.

Patricia notes that prayer is very important for Sodality members. They make a commitment to pray individually every day, and when they meet they record their special intentions in the "little black book."

At each of their meetings members "pass around the hat" collecting for three charities they sponsor. One of these charities is the CEC. Patricia says, "We have been supporting the CEC for as long as I can remember, but probably since the 70s." Patricia believes it is important to support those who are trying to share the Catholic faith with others. As well, they support St Vincent de Paul and Right to Life.

The CEC is very grateful for the ongoing prayer and financial support of groups like this one. It highlights the role laity can take in sharing the Good News of Christ. Practically speaking, the monthly donation made by this Sodality goes towards ensuring that we can give free books to those making enquiries about the Catholic faith.

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians who have walked upon and cared for this land for thousands of years. We acknowledge the continued deep spiritual attachment and relationship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to this Country and commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of Reconciliation.

Donations can be made by completing the attached slip, or online via our website.

The NCE resource, **The Bridge**, is now available online at <https://bit.ly/3d3hZ24>

To receive the CEC Newsletter electronically, subscribe at <https://bit.ly/2YLzXIF>

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