

## Secondary Schools Newsletter January 2006

*“Behold I bring you tidings of great joy, for today and every day a saviour has been  
born to us; and he shall be;  
Shelter for those who have none  
Hope for those who are lost  
A peacemaker in a violent, angry world  
Bread for the hungry  
Justice for the poor  
Meaning for those whose lives are empty  
Forgiveness for those destroyed by guilt  
And to a world that lives in darkness  
A light that all shall see  
For today and every day Christ is present in our world”*

Happy New Year. Hopefully you all managed to get at least a partial rest over the holidays. The joy and hope of Christmas are sometimes hard to hold onto as the frantic preparations for exams begin. One of my resolutions for the New Year is to try to make more time for prayer. Admittedly this has been the same resolution for at least the last five years, one day I hope to achieve it! I hope you are succeeding far better than I am

### News in Brief

#### **Attainment levels in RE.**

There will be a meeting in Birmingham on January 5<sup>th</sup> to discuss levels for attainment target two, “learning from”. As soon as I can I will make results from this meeting available to you. Section 48 inspectors have been reminded not to penalise schools for not levelling although assessing work in order to help students improve is obviously important.

#### **Peace Sunday January 15<sup>th</sup> 2006.**

This Sunday is then followed by Christian unity week. If you wish to run special assemblies on this topic then some of the best material can be found on the Pax Christi web site; [www.paxchristi.org.uk](http://www.paxchristi.org.uk)

#### **NQT Induction March 21<sup>st</sup> –23<sup>rd</sup> 2006**

A two day induction programme for newly qualified secondary teachers and those new to Catholic Education will be offered at St Cassian’s centre Kintbury next year. The aim will be to help teachers understand the distinctiveness of Catholic schools and how they contribute to and support this ethos. If you know of anyone in your school that this course might benefit please encourage them to apply for permission to attend. Details have been sent separately to all secondary heads. **Only two secondary schools sent NQT’s to the**

**day course organised by the department. It is important that we do as much as we can to promote an understanding of Catholic Education amongst all staff.**

### **The secondary Schools Mass Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2006 with Bishop Declan**

Yes I know it seems a long way off but it isn't honest! I would like to publish full details in the next bulletin. St Augustine's Trowbridge, helped by St Edwards Melchet Court, will be organising the music and students from St Brendan's college will be helping with the organisation on the day. I would be grateful if you would confirm your attendance by e mailing [jenny.fitzgerald@cliftondiocese.com](mailto:jenny.fitzgerald@cliftondiocese.com). As last year we are asking all schools to try and bring a coach load of students. It is our only opportunity for secondary schools from around the diocese to gather together. I do appreciate how difficult a journey it is for some of you and the time and effort you put in, but please try to come. The cathedral does look empty without you! If you would like to take responsibility for a particular part of the mass please let me know as soon as possible.

### **Dates for your Diary**

#### **1. Education Sunday February 12<sup>th</sup> 2006**

Heads have been asked to see if it is possible for them, a member of staff or a governor, to speak in their local parishes on this Sunday about Catholic Education **in general**. An outline of such a talk is attached to the end of this bulletin. It might be possible to have a group of students animate the liturgy on that Sunday in one of your feeder parishes or perhaps arrange for students work on an aspect of faith to be displayed in church. Further details and support materials are available now from [www.natsoc.org.uk](http://www.natsoc.org.uk) and should be available soon from the CES web site. This is a whole school endeavour and not intended to be the sole responsibility of the RE department. In fact one of the purposes of Education Sunday is to convey the distinctiveness of Catholic Education and how who we are underpins the whole of the curriculum and school life.

#### **2. Come Back to Me'' Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2006**

An evening of preparation for Lent to be held at Prinknash Abbey. The evening will include reflection for ourselves on Lent, ideas for celebrating (a short) Lent in school and the Easter season. Some resources will be provided. The session begins at 4.30pm and will finish at 8pm. A light supper will be provided. Cost £20

#### **3. Heads of RE Day Wednesday March 15<sup>th</sup> 2006**

This day will focus on the document **“On the Way to Life”**. The report by the Heythrop institute and commissioned by the Bishops of England and Wales, was written by Frs. James Hanvey, SJ and Tony Carroll, SJ, it provides an evaluative commentary on contemporary culture and social trends, secularisation and modernity and the part both play in the field of catechesis, religious education and formation. The document is in three parts. The first part looks at contemporary culture and attempts to work out what are the significant factors, the second part is a theological

responses to that culture and the third part a commentary on the resources and responses the Catholic Community can bring to handing on the faith through education, catechesis and formation. A full copy of the report can be ordered from the CES web site. At the request of the Heads of RE present at the previous meeting all deans of the diocese together with other relevant clergy have been invited to attend so that a joint discussion can take place over issues raised by the report. I would therefore value the attendance of as many heads of RE as possible on this day. I would also appreciate it if you could encourage any of the local clergy you think might find this relevant to attend.

**4. Chaplaincy Day And Heads of RE Day Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2006**

This will be a joint day for heads of RE and Chaplains and will be run by CAFOD. 2007 will see the anniversary of “Populorum Progressio”. CAFOD will be producing a range of materials to help schools get the most out of this document. This session will be an awareness raising day. Please note the date now further details will follow later

Many thanks for all you do  
Ann Fowler

Secondary Schools Adviser

## Talk for Education Sunday:

There are two versions given of a possible talk. The first version assumes you will be given a few minutes after communion; the second version adds more detail to some of the points and assumes you have a slightly longer period. Please remember to name all schools within your area.

### Brief Version

- Introduce yourself and background (e.g. Head, Chair, member of staff)
- Thanks to priest for opportunity to speak about Catholic education on Education Sunday.
- Catholic schools have a key role in the mission of the church; they exist like the Church, not for their own sake but to communicate Christ to others. Clement of Alexandria said “to give a child a good education is always a work of salvation”
- In this country, as a result of the efforts and sacrifices of previous generations, we are fortunate to have an established network of nearly 2,500 Catholic schools, with almost all the cost of running them met by the state.
- In our own Diocese there are 75 maintained and independent Catholic schools educating over 20,000 young people.
- Our own parish is served by (mention **ALL** the Catholic schools – primary, secondary/sixth form college & independent)
- Catholic schools are not secular schools with RE tagged on; nor are they simply schools where we go to mass. Catholic Schools exist to offer a radical alternative to state schools
- Within these schools we try to present a synthesis of faith and life, we celebrate and live out the vision of the Gospel; we try to be a community based around the presence of the risen Christ. This means helping individuals discover God in the ordinary events of their lives. *(If you have a slightly longer period please look at additional notes here)*
- The work of Catholic schools is assisted by the Catholic Education Service at national level and the Diocesan Department for Schools and Colleges at a local level. The second collection today is to help fund their work.
- On behalf of the Heads, Governors, and Staff of all these schools may I thank you, whether or not you currently have children of school age, for the support you give to the work of the schools through the parish and ask for your continuing prayers for our work.

### Additional points

- Within the school we try to present a synthesis of faith and life, we celebrate and live out the vision of the Gospel; we try to be a community based around the

presence of the risen Christ. This means helping individuals discover God in the ordinary events of their lives.

- All schools take part in the pursuit of truth; all schools would claim to put the person at the centre of their policies, catholic schools do the same. For us however this means something specific. we aim to make the promotion of the human person the goal of education, because we believe that all people are created in the image of God, that Christ reveals what it means to be human and that their exists within the heart of God a dream for every individual. Our task is to help those we come into contact with discover that purpose to “draw out of them the truth of their heart.”
- Bearing witness to the Gospel is not some nebulous ideal; it isn't enough to say we'll just be nice to each other. The gospel makes demands on people; it calls us to live in a particular way. It means that all our policies and practices, the entire curriculum, not just RE is effected, and it means that we deliberately attend to the presence of God in our midst, that we are people of prayer.
- Our beliefs do not narrow our view of life, faith does not counteract reason; Pope John Paul said “Faith and reason are the wings on which the human spirit flies” we are encouraging students to look beyond to see choices and options that the secular world does not offer.
- Living by the Gospel means making difficult choices. The school like the church must have an option for the poor; this means poor emotionally, spiritually, academically, socially, economically, behaviourally. All are welcome. Society itself is based largely on a premise of individual freedom but we are called to work for others, we are a materialistic society we are told we can buy our way to success and happiness, but we need to challenge these values. Schools strive to use a language which talks about justice; about the need for reconciliation; about the need for salvation; “my hope is based on the Lord who made heaven and earth”
- When adults work with children they model a way of being human. In a society which is often restless, lost selfish' frightened, hurting and without hope; in a world which is broken, torn apart by violence and greed; it is important to present to young people a vision of God's kingdom, where the poor and disadvantaged find true justice, to offer them an experience of communion with each other with God. They may chose to reject this vision, they may chose to walk other paths but if we aren't there we lose an amazing opportunity to answer the call of Christ to show others what it means to be fully alive.
- None of this is possible without teachers who can develop the vision, who are willing to see the work as a vocation. Pope John Paul said “ the world will listen to teachers if they are first witness “ We do not need perfect people, we need people who will have the openness to share their stories, to try to live out God's call, to be willing to travel with young people on their faith journeys. we teachers with the imagination and vision to see Catholic schools as places of inclusiveness where all are welcome and where God's love is visible

