



THANKYOU – CELEBRATING THE MANY PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN ADULT FAITH EDUCATION SANDHURST THROUGH THE YEARS (2006-2022)



Spoken by Lyn Breen, Adult Faith Coordinator,
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at her Diocesan Zoom Farewell
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Today, for me, is very much a celebration of all the people who have been part of Adult Faith Education Sandhurst through the years. There are so very many groups, communities and individuals who deserve my heartfelt thanks, and too many to name them all.

The ministry of Faith Education Sandhurst was established in 1992, in the time of Bishop Noel Daly, by Fr Michael Goonan and Anna Tuck, followed by Fr Gerry Gallagher and Angela McCarthy (now Finn). When I was a teacher at Catholic College Bendigo, my own faith was enriched when I attended many Faith Education Sandhurst programs. When I joined the Sandhurst Diocesan Ministry Team, established under Bishop Joe in 2006, as Adult Faith Education Co-ordinator, I knew I was stepping into a strong and vibrant ministry, based on the work of some pretty amazing and visionary people.

Coming from life as an educator in schools, my learning curve was very steep indeed when I began this ministry for our parishes. The Pastoral Associates and Priests of our Diocese helped and guided me from the earliest days until now, with their deep wisdom, pastoral experience, kindness, and inspirational care for their people. I have shared many coffee chats and meals with these pastoral leaders, and I've often experienced the warm welcomes and hospitality of our parish centres, parish staff and volunteers, and convents of our religious sisters across the Sandhurst Diocese — homes away from home! St Brendan's Shepparton, centrally located, has, with outstanding generosity, hosted countless Faith Education events.

Members of the Adult Faith Education Reference Group have made a vital contribution to this ministry for the Diocese. I've had the privilege of working with many diocesan-wide groups and networks, including colleagues in diocesan ministries; parish RCIA team members; Catholic Education; chaplains and pastoral care workers in health and aged care, our recently established Care for Creation Team and network; other important organisations and networks in our region; and, of course, all the parishioners who participated in Adult Faith Education opportunities. There was a lot of travelling in days gone by for face-to-face gatherings and now, because of COVID, we've also learned how to gather online!

I am very grateful for the leadership and support of Bishops Joe Grech, now in heaven, Leslie Tomlinson, Shane Mackinlay, and also Fr Brian Boyle and Dr Chris Cotter as Sandhurst leaders of mission and ministry. I have been

part of a community of very special Chancery Staff colleagues and, last but far from least, I belong to a loving extended family whose love and support has accompanied and helped me through the years.

A passage from Matthew's Gospel, an absolute favourite piece of Scripture, that stood out for me as a child is this:

"Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light" (Matthew 11:28-3).

I heard it and memorised it from a hymn. It remained my favourite – of many texts that became favourites – in my adult years. I'm not sure what it was that first attracted me to the words. Perhaps Jesus' understanding of the burdens that so many carry, his personal invitation to come, be with him and rest, his description of his gentle and humble heart and, that we could learn from him. A lightbulb moment came to me when I was a young adult going to talks on the Scriptures, and I began to study them in depth. It finally dawned on me that when Jesus spoke of himself in this way, and in everything he did, he was showing us what God is like and he also said, "I've come that they may have life and have it to the full!" Later I learned in the Gospel and letters of St John, that 'God is Love!'

I am certain that I have seen these words of Scripture expressed in the lives of people I've been privileged to meet across the Sandhurst Diocese. Leaders and people who are friends and disciples of Jesus – they are gentle and humble of heart. They walk carefully with others, many of whom carry very heavy burdens. Most of us see little of it but, for those who do see, they glimpse the God of Love. In them, Faith, Life, Spirituality, Social Justice and practical care for others are all interconnected in life lived to the full!

From a distance, looking at the world, and Church, we might sometimes feel discouraged, but when *these* are the people who gather, pray and dream, we might see a planting of God's seeds for the future. The Brazilian archbishop, Dom Helder Camara said: *"When we are dreaming alone it is only a dream. When we are dreaming with others, it is the beginning of reality."* I like to think that one of the tasks of Adult Faith Education, is to offer opportunities that might help each person, and communities, at least in a very small way, in life lived to the full and dreaming for the future. For the ministry of Adult Faith Education, as with all ministries, seeing, listening, learning and praying are really necessary for this task. For our Sandhurst Diocese, we are going forward in times of challenge and new opportunities, dreaming together and planting seeds for a vibrant future.

There are photos in a few minutes, to celebrate parishes, families, groups; everyone who has been part of Adult Faith Education Sandhurst. You might see some familiar faces.

Thank you, for the privilege of being able to share faith, life and service with you for 16 years. To finish, I will borrow some more words of Scripture, this time from St Paul's letters to say:

*I pray for you, for your hidden selves to grow strong in love and faith.
I thank my God whenever I think of you, and when I pray for you, I pray with joy.*

Thank you.
Lyn Breen