



# Our Lady's Catechists Notes and News 2018

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

## 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 electronic and postal courses, through the catechists we train and support, and in occasional meetings.



Marie Francis  
1938-2017

So well known and loved by OLC members Marie will be greatly missed.

Marie was a member for more than 30 years. While studying the Foundation Course she took over from Mary Murphy as the DR for Brentwood in 1989.

She was Secretary of OLC 1995 to 2002 then Treasurer to 2005

Marie became Chairman from 2005 to 2008 and Secretary again in 2008 until 2014.

She was a Tutor on the Diploma Course and the FC, later the CMS and Rosary. She was instrumental in starting the OLC studies in South Africa and Switzerland,

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## MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Dear Friends, here we are at a very exciting time in the life of Our Lady's Catechists.

As you will no doubt be aware a vote was taken at our Annual General Meeting in April to decide the future of our organisation. Whether, to continue Our Lady's Catechists with a structured pathway to recruit new tutors and students and with an up-dated website, or to close within an agreed timescale. The vote was overwhelmingly in favour of continuing the work of Our Lady's Catechists.

This does mean however, that everyone must take an active part in ensuring that we can go forward and work alongside the executive members. As always, we must pray for all the aspects of this great organisation. Although, we do have a small, very dedicated and loyal team of tutors willing and able to guide new and existing students through our interesting and instructive courses, we must also encourage more trained catechists to offer their expertise as tutors to help us. Then we need to encourage more students to use our courses. There will be a lot of people out there wanting to develop and increase their knowledge of the Catholic faith. We need to reach out to them and hopefully with the posters and leaflets spread round our churches and by talking, we can encourage them to use Our Lady's Catechists courses. Finally, we are hoping to have a new website up and running later this year. Watch this space.

In the meantime, thank you for all that you do in the name of Our Lady's Catechists. Please keep praying and spreading the word.

With best wishes and prayers. Elizabeth Dixon.



## CONGRATULATIONS

### FOUNDATION COURSE FINAL ASSESSMENT

ALAN BARKER                      SALFORD  
Distinction

### FOUNDATION COURSE: FIRST ASSESSMENT

ROY DUNN                      EAST ANGLIA  
Distinction  
KATHLEEN HOY                      ABERDEEN  
KATHY UPTON                      SALFORD

### CATHOLICISM MADE SIMPLE

*Certificates of Completion issued to:*

NICOLA HANNAH WALSHE, EAST ANGLIA.  
KAREN DOKU,                      WESTMINSTER.  
MARTIN TODD,    HEXHAM & NEWCASTLE.  
IAN BENTON,                      NOTTINGHAM.  
AIMY REBECCA HARRISON, EAST ANGLIA.

### MYSTERIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE:

NICOLA WALSHE                      EAST ANGLIA

### FUTURE EVENTS

#### CWL AGM: 2-Nov to 14 Nov 2018, SWANWICK

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

#### OLC CONFERENCE and AGM 2019

**Date: 26<sup>th</sup> to 28th April 2019**

**Venue, (to be confirmed): The Royal Court Hotel,  
Coventry**

Time: Registration from 4pm Friday

Finish: after lunch on Sunday

Theme and Speaker to be announced

Cost: approx. £160. Deposit of £40 to secure rooms.

Contact Sue Andrews: [secretaryolc@cwlhq.org.uk](mailto:secretaryolc@cwlhq.org.uk)

for details or an application form.

## **OBITUARIES**

Marie Francis.

Marie Adele Irene Constance was born in Kharagpur, West Bengal and baptised on the 29<sup>th</sup> June 1938. She was the eldest of five and the family lived on Wynne Avenue in Kharagpur.

She attended the Railway School in Kharagpur and went to the Catholic Church of the Sacred Heart. She was a regular at Sunday school, Saturday Morning Children's Mass and a member of the Children's Choir.

In 1953, at the age of 15, she passed the University of

Cambridge school examinations in seven subjects including Religious Knowledge, with credits. She was above average ability, a competent Prefect and enjoyed Hockey, Basketball and Athletics.

In 1955 Marie attended a Finishing School in Madras - where she gained her Secretarial Diploma. It was in that same year at the age of 17 that the family came to England. In 1959 she married, Trevor at St Anthony's Church in Forest Gate, then followed Judith and Cathy. Marie worked as a Private Secretary until she retired at the age of 60 in 1998.

Marie was responsible for keeping OLC in the forefront - she gave talks & presentations and she prepared a report for the Bishops of England and Wales to keep OLC's presence in the National Directory. She was editor of N&N for a number of years, greatly improving the content and appearance of the newsletter. Her colleagues have said that she was the backbone of OLC.

On 13<sup>th</sup> September in 2006 Marie was presented with the Bene Merenti Medal.

Marie was vibrant, full of joy, and had a wonderful sense of humour which endeared her to everyone. She became ill in 2014, a cruel and nasty illness which she suffered with grace and dignity. Her family cared for her at home.

We will miss you more than words can say. May she rest in peace.

**Mary Murphy**

**11.06.1922 -27.01.2018**



With great sadness we report the loss of Mary, a former Diocesan Representative for Brentwood, and a member of OLC for more than 50 years. Mary enrolled on one of our Courses in August 1965 and began work as a catechist in 1967 on the Children's Postal Course, working with 9 children not in Catholic School, the kind of work OLC was created to do. Mary also enrolled on the 2-year Brentwood Catholic Teacher's certificate course. She Tutored for OLC on the Catholicism Made Simple Course and continued as a parish catechist until 1997, but did not stop there, She helped with a parish 'Roots Group' for lapsed and disgruntled Catholics.

With her husband Michael she attended the OLC Conferences and Michael always supplied the music for our Masses. Both Michael and Mary were awarded the Bene Merente medal in 2001 for services to their parish. Her lovely presence will be missed at our Conferences, reunited with Michael, may she rest in peace. The photo was taken at our Conference in 2016.

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

Dear Sisters and Brothers,



Wheeee! It's over! "It", of course, is the Dedication of St. Joseph the Worker Catholic Church in Coventry. "It" has been the focus of all our prayers and work in the parish for the past twelve months and more. We have had a parish Mission to help us to prepare spiritually and also a Day of Recollection; the Bidding Prayers each week have included a prayer for the Dedication; we have had innumerable planning meetings of the Finance Committee and Parish Forum and also choir practices and a servers' practice. I tried to give some ideas about what was going to happen and what it all meant in homilies over the months. (My diction may not have been very clear because I did have the joy one Sunday of overhearing one parishioner saying to another after Mass, "And Father said that they are going to put a burning brassiere on the altar." I hope they weren't too disappointed when the brazier was brought in). It all culminated in a wonderful celebration, led by Archbishop Bernard Longley, in a packed church on the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker. The church looked beautiful, and the music and the service matched it. All the symbols of the service of Dedication were carried out reverently and were moving and inspiring. But there was one symbol that was not part of the ritual that I should like to reflect on.

St. Joseph's was built in the early 1980s and, as was not unusual in those days, there was an attempt to move away from the standard design of four walls and a roof. In fact, it is a five-sided building, which is just a little bit awkward when we try to fit in the chairs in the most space-efficient way, but it is the feature that the architect picked out when I asked him to design a new stone altar and a new font.

Did you know that five is a significant number in the Bible? It symbolises the grace of God – His goodness and life that reaches out to us. For a start, there are five Books of the Law – the five Books of Moses – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Those five books are the basis of the relationship between God and His people ("I will be your God and you shall be my people"). The Ten Commandments consist of five which relate to our relationship with God and five which relate to our relationship with one another. In terms of ritual worship, there are five types of offerings that God commanded Israel to bring to Him: the Burnt Offering (Leviticus 1; 8:18-21; 16:24); the Sin Offering (Leviticus 4; 16:3-22), Trespass (Leviticus 5:14-19;

6:1-7; 7:1-6), Grain (Leviticus 2) and Peace Offering (Leviticus 3; 7:11- 34). The 'tabernacle in the wilderness' which housed the Ark of the Covenant and whose design was given to Moses by God, contained five curtains (Exodus 26:3), five bars (Exodus 26:26-27), five pillars and five sockets (Exodus 26:37) and an altar made of wood that was five cubits long and five cubits wide (Exodus 27:1). The height of the court within the tabernacle was five cubits (Exodus 27:18). The oil used for anointing the furniture in the tabernacle and the incense that was burned to honour God each had (you've guessed it!) five ingredients (Exodus 30:23-25). In the New Testament Jesus refers to five several times in His parables, and when it came to feeding five thousand men He used five loaves. Finally, He received five sacred wounds, symbolized by the five grains of incense that are inserted into the Paschal Candle at the Easter Vigil.

When you enter St. Joseph's the five walls surround you, and it is not difficult to imagine that they symbolize the grace of God reaching out to us and enfolding us, like the wings of a mother hen encircling her chicks. The font stands just inside the main body of the church; it is five-sided and reminds us that through the waters of baptism we die with Jesus, sharing in His wounds, so that we may rise to new life with Him. The font leads us to the sanctuary, where the word of God will be proclaimed from the five-sided lectern, and we shall be fed, not with five loaves, but with the One Bread – the Body of Christ. On the altar, which has pentagonal legs, the one Offering of Calvary will be made to God the Father, replacing and fulfilling all the offerings of the Old Testament.

In the beautiful prayer of Dedication, the Archbishop addressed these words to the Father:

"Today we come before you, to dedicate to your lasting service this house of prayer, this temple of worship, this home in which we are nourished by your word and your sacraments. Here is reflected the mystery of the Church. The Church is fruitful, made holy by the blood of Christ: a bride made radiant with his glory, a virgin splendid in the wholeness of her faith, a mother blessed through the power of the Spirit. The Church is holy, your chosen vineyard: its branches envelop the world, its tendrils, carried on the tree of the cross, reach up to the kingdom of heaven. The Church is favoured, the dwelling place of God on earth: a temple built of living stones, founded on the apostles with Jesus Christ its corner stone. The Church is exalted, a city set on a mountain: a beacon to the whole world, bright with the glory of the Lamb, and echoing the prayers of her saints. Lord, send your Spirit from heaven to make this church an ever holy place, and this altar a ready table for the sacrifice of Christ. Here may the waters of baptism overwhelm the shame of sin; here may your people die to sin and live again through grace as your children. Here may your children, gathered around your altar, celebrate the



memorial of the Paschal Lamb, and be fed at the table of Christ's word and Christ's body. Here may prayer, the Church's banquet, resound through heaven and earth as a plea for the world's salvation. Here may the poor find justice, the victims of oppression, true freedom. From here may the whole world clothed in the dignity of the children of God, enter with gladness your city of peace. We ask this through Our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever."

Amen. Let it be. Alleluia!

Thank you all for your prayers, cards and good wishes for the Dedication, which were a tremendous support. May God bless you and help you in all that you do in His service. Fr. Harry

## COURSE REPORTS

### DIPLOMA COURSE

**Sue Andrews**

Two students have completed Part 1 of the course during the past year and are working steadily. One student has had a break due to personal reasons but is hoping to resume work soon. A new student from the Leeds Diocese has recently registered and will begin work shortly. My thanks go to the tutors working with students.



Despite the small number of students actively working on the Diploma Course, there continues to be a number of enquiries via the website.

I look forward to supporting Our Lady's Catechists as we plan for the future and work with renewed effort and enthusiasm in the field of catechesis. I pray that God will bless our efforts and guide us as we work to make his love known, both to adults and children.

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### FOUNDATION COURSE

**Pam Comerford**

It is gratifying to come back each year to inform you of the success of our students.



It is a pleasure to tell you that one student has successfully completed Part 4, Alan Barker, who achieved a distinction and. Two students have successfully completed the Part 3 assessment. Beryl and I have been invited to present Alan's certificate in his parish in Darwen in the near future.

Four new students enrolled since last conference. Of the 19 students twelve on Part I, one on Part 2a, three on Part 2b, one on Part 3 and one is on Part 4. Two of the students returned to continue their FC studies.

Twelve students discontinued studies, 4 of these registering but not starting. Every thanks to our 11 dedicated tutors who give their time to the students and their encouragement to them to complete the course. They are a wonderful troupe.

I attended all the executive meetings during the year. I attended the funeral of Marie Francis with other members of the OLC. One student, Eileen Richards, also deceased. May they rest in peace.

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### CATHOLICISM MADE SIMPLE

**John Crean**

Since the last AGM there have been 11 enrolments and 5 people have completed the course and received their Certificates. I have taken quite a few students off the Register because their tutors have heard nothing from them for quite a long time. We now have 24 students. Five of these are in prison.

The number of prisoner student applications has fallen off in the past year. This could be because there is a Course available which has been designed specifically for prisoners. The Course consists of two books, one for the student and one for the catechist who is usually the prison Chaplain. The whole Course can be conducted inside the prison with no correspondence element. This helps with prison security and expense. If this is the reason for the drop in applications it means that inmates are still able to learn more about their faith and that has to be a good thing.

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### THE MYSTERIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

**Elizabeth Dixon**

I am happy to report that one student Nicola Walshe has completed the course since our last AGM and at this moment in time we have two students working on the Course. This is thanks to John Crean. John kindly directs his students to the Mysteries course once they have completed the Catholicism Made Simple course. I know that we have tutors willing and able to take students through this course, therefore, what we need is more students.

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### CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AND COURSES

-- For home and parish

**Beryl Wakefield**

We have been pretty much at a standstill this year. One lady requested a specific OLC book on First Holy Communion. The book was more than 50 years old, I had to update it to reflect more modern language (Holy Spirit instead of Holy Ghost etc.) and the changes in procedure. The lady made a generous donation. As this was a request from a previous purchaser of OLC literature, it seems we are finding work with people who already know us and not reaching new people.

While some people seem to prefer our older work to the more modern offerings, we are aware that parents do want their children to know about their faith. If we could reach these people, we would need to have good copy ready to go.

It is very difficult to keep a positive outlook for this Section. There have been no requests for booklets or even queries since my report in September. Without leaflets there has been no publicity on my part, other than talking about OLC when I have the chance.

It is good that parishes are more involved, but there must still be a lot of Catholic children not attending Catholic school who have no Christian education beyond the few weeks preparing for the sacraments. This is why OLC still has a job to do.

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## **OLC CONFERENCE 2018**

### **Christine Pugh**

The theme this year was “Jesus in the Eucharist”. On Friday at 6.00pm after registration Holy Mass was celebrated for our deceased members by Fr. Harry Curtis and Fr. Ian Kelly, who was to be our speaker the following day. After evening dinner, we had the chairman's welcome followed by a very entertaining talk by Fr. Harry about his trials and tribulations in the planning for the dedication of his Parish Church, St. Joseph the Worker in Coventry on 1<sup>st</sup> May. (Our prayers will be with him on the day). He then continued by giving his usual interesting and inspiring thoughts on the Church on Earth, Heaven on Earth. The day finished with night prayer.

Saturday started early with the Rosary – Glorious Mysteries and later by Morning Prayer and then breakfast. We were looking forward to the talk by Fr.



Ian Kelly titled “The Holy Eucharist Source and Life” Unfortunately he woke with a migraine headache and had to rest. Fr. Harry stepped in and kindly gave us the opportunity for a reflective time with the Most Blessed Sacrament. This prepared us for the discussion on the future of the OLC. It had been planned for the afternoon but brought forward in place of our speaker. Everyone who wished to speak was given a chance to put forward their views.

Holy Mass was celebrated for all OLC members. Fr. Ian was well enough to concelebrate, and, after lunch, he gave his two talks on the Eucharist. The first talk titled, ‘The Holy Eucharist, Source and Life’ emphasised the importance of the Eucharist in our lives, joining us with the divine life. The second talk entitled, ‘Twin Hearts, (The Lord and Mary), a single heartbeat,’ was wonderful and inspiring,

concentrating on the closeness of Our Lady and her Son. As Fr Ian joined us for the whole weekend, we had time to ask him questions about his uplifting talks.

The day finished with evening and night prayer followed by entertainment. The latter consisted of the eagerly awaited quiz, expertly put together by Pam, which caused the usual keen rivalry, and hilarity and was a fitting high point in the friendship and warmth experienced by everyone over the weekend.

Sunday, after Morning Prayer, we had the Annual General Meeting closing at 12 noon with Holy Mass for the future of Our Lady's Catechists celebrated by Bishop Peter Doyle, Fr. Harry Curtis and Fr. Ian Kelly. Roy Dun was presented with a certificate of Completion for Part 3

The AGM this year included a vote on the future of OLC, and the vote was very much in favour of carrying on with ‘a structured pathway to recruit new tutors and students and an up-dated website.’

Although we were down in numbers this year the whole weekend was a prayerful and Holy experience and a chance to meet up with old friends.

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## **PRAYER CORNER**

Don’t forget that Sr. Joyce has made a promise to pray for our sick members, in the chapel of her convent in Southport. Send their name to her. Phone 01704568361. Address: Sister Joyce Barnes SND, 21 Weld Road, Birkdale Road, Southport PR8 2AZ

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## **NBRIA REPORT AGM 2017**

### **Sue Andrews**

On Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> November, I attended the AGM of NBRIA, (The National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisors), at Don Bosco House in Coleshill. The meeting opened with prayer commemorating the Feast of St Andrew.

There were two professional reports:

### **1. The Curriculum & Assessment Working Party.**

The two meetings held during the last twelve months have focussed on how to promote efficient assessment in RE following a survey held in 2016 at both Primary and Secondary level. End of phase expectations have been emphasised rather than end of year.

A pilot will be held this school year, concluded in the Spring Term. A review and analysis of the results will be made in the summer. A glossary of terms has also been completed.

## 2. Denominational Inspection Working Party

Inspection of RE in schools: there should be transparency with the relevant professional and ecclesial authorities. Care should be taken to ensure the following: consistency, rigour, objectivity, oversight and accountability.

More Catholic Schools achieve 'Outstanding' in their RE Inspections than achieve 'Outstanding' in their Ofsted inspections. Reasons for this need to be discovered.

**Holy Mass** was celebrated for the repose of the soul of Mgr. George Stokes, who has been a tireless worker for NBRIA. The main celebrant was Rt. Rev. Marcus Stock, Bishop of Leeds, and President of NBRIA.

### INVITATION TO MISSION PROGRAMME

A presentation by James Trewby, Columban Justice and Peace Education Worker:

The Columban 'Invitation to Mission Programme' is now into its 4th year. It is intended to be a learning experience, nurturing a growth in faith and understanding through preparation in the UK, a 10-day visit overseas and follow up on return. The 2018 focus is Peru and the programme involved a visit to Peru, preparation beforehand and a 'follow up' day. The time in Peru, based in Lima, was expected to explore issues connected to poverty, role of the laity in the Church in Peru, pastoral ministry and injustice.

### CES SAFEGUARDING THE FUTURE OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

The remit of the Government was to lift the 50% admissions cap from our schools. However, the Secretary of State does not seem to be following the agreed manifesto. Please register your concern by adding your name to the online petition, which is extremely easy to access and by writing to your own MP.

### ELECTION OF OFFICERS TO NBRIA EXECUTIVE

**Vice- Chair:** Peter Ward succeeds Bernard Stuart as Vice Chair.

**Treasurer:** Maureen O'Leary succeeds Vicky Hummell as Treasurer.

Both Bernard and Vicky were warmly thanked for their years of service to NBRIA.

**NBRIA PROFESSIONAL AND ASSOCIATE GROUP REPORTS:** These were circulated before the meeting and only questions arising addressed in the meeting.

## CATECHISTS

### LEADING PEOPLE TO THE LORD

**Imagine you are a pagan and someone dear to you returns home a newly baptised Christian after hearing Peter speak on Pentecost.**

Contributed by Kathleen Hoy.

The children were playing outside, a chance for me to make some extra baskets to take to market next week. My husband and I hold a stall and it has been difficult to produce enough goods to make ends meet. Our eldest has been sick, and unable to help us with the stall, or help look after the younger two children, leaving my husband to work alone. The doctor has given us extra time to pay him, but I honestly don't know how we are going to recover. My husband has avoided discussing it which worries me. He has taken on extra work when he can sometimes be working both day and night. That morning he was out again looking for work, a farmer perhaps who needed a labourer. My husband is a skilled man but worry and tiredness are wearing him down, his work is no longer of the highest standard.

The other women in the village are talking about us. I can hear them when I go to the well. They stop when I arrive and give me a pitying look, but don't offer to help. If she were still alive my mother would have tended the children while I worked at the market, but I'm all alone, I'm desperate, I really don't know what to do. If my husband finds work, he will work late. And he really needs some sleep, and we need time to talk.

Then it happened. He burst into our home babbling some rubbish, his face seemed different, I thought this was it, he was ill, and we were finished. I tried to calm him down, but he was strong, he wouldn't sit, but was almost convincing me he wasn't ill. His face, his eyes, they were "better" but the nonsense - something about a man called Jesus, water and hope and everything would be ok, we were not alone, I would see my mother again. Then I broke down, I missed her so much, it pained me. He seemed so convinced.

What he was telling me was crazy, he was happy, and I felt jealous of his new-found happiness, he seemed oblivious to our problems, the unfinished orders, the unpaid bills, all the worries of a mother. He was telling me of a group of men led by a man called Peter, preaching of a God and something about a spirit. My jealousy turned to fear, I suddenly felt very small. I still couldn't believe what he was saying but, there was something in his expression that reassured me, even if my head couldn't explain it.

I had heard a man called Jesus, I had listened to him, but he was crucified as a criminal, now my husband was saying he was alive again. I felt the same as I did listening to Jesus, - the longing, in my heart became one of purpose.

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I wanted to feel the way my husband did but not just I, my children too. He sat with me a while and we talked, not to each other but to the one he called “father”. I hoped that once I too was “washed”, I would have the same confidence as my husband. Would others see Jesus in my eyes as I saw him in my husband’s?

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### BASIC BIBLE STUDY

Ann Kearney

An activity which works well with children, key stage 2 plus: I



have worked as a teacher and catechist for roughly 40 years. By far the activity which has always worked well with children and teenagers is, believe it or not, basic Bible

Study. General approach can be varied to suit the abilities and ages of the class. I provide several Bibles of different translations, often illustrated, hopefully one per child, or one between 2/3. We begin by looking at the names of the books, time can be spent discussing how there are stories/letters/ poems/laws/history etc. The thing they usually really enjoy, though, is finding Bible references, navigating their way around the Old and New Testaments, locating chapter and verse, the triumphant “I’ve got it” can be a joy. Then (sensitively manage the next bit) listening to the slightly different versions of basically the same thing being read out. Discussing meaning/interpretation/relevance to their own lives. Finally writing the piece out and producing art work to accompany it. Sometimes they have their own scrapbook/folder, sometimes it’s a group effort. Simple and obvious? I often start with an everyday story and link the Bible references to it, what would God/Jesus/Holy Spirit want us to do/ how would they help us etc, for example with my current class we began with a modern-day version of the 3 Billy Goats Gruff, set in a school.

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### CHINQUAINS

A Chinquain is a simple way of writing a prayer and can be enjoyed by children as young as seven years.

The five lines are usually:

Line 1. One word.

Line 2. A two-word description of the first line

Line 3. A three-word action line

Line 4. A feeling about the title in four words.

Line 5. A one-word synonym for Line 1.

Examples:

Baby  
Unique life  
Continuing our race  
Precious gift from God  
New-born

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### Meeting with a Saint.

#### A Private Audience with Pope John Paul II

Charmaine Jayasuriya

I was on pilgrimage with a group of Legionaries and it was the most important day. We were to attend Holy Mass Celebrated by Pope John Paul II in his private chapel. We were awakened at 5:00 a.m. to be **met**, dressed in our best, in the foyer. With great excitement we walked up to St. Peter’s Square, right up to the entrance to the Holy Father’s residence. The Swiss guards were at the gate. A smartly dressed man came to admit us into the Holy Father’s residence, and we marched in silence looking in all directions. The beauty of the place caught our eyes, At first, we had to go up three flights of marble steps. I was praying **in** spite of all the excitement. We walked through a passage and came to an open square area; we walked across the square and came to another



place with two more Swiss guards. Next, we went up in two lifts, and found ourselves in a massive hall where we met with great [beautiful] architecture and beautiful painting. We waited anxiously for a few moments until two religious sisters came to lead us into the Holy Father’s private chapel. The Chapel was small and very beautiful. We were standing in a semi-circle waiting for the Audience and after a few minutes the Holy Father came into the room to meet us. We presented him with our gifts, then, a very precious moment, he spoke with each one of us. I worried what I could say when it was my turn, but Holy Father put me at ease by asking a question I could easily answer. We were each presented

with a rosary and a certificate. The Holy Father spoke words of congratulations and encouragement about our work then gave us his blessing. This ended our audience with the Holy Father, who is now Pope Saint John Paul II.

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## **COMMENTS FROM STUDENTS**

### **FOUNDATION COURSE STUDENT**

Kathy Fallon

I was introduced to the Course by a friend who shared the amazing task of teaching the First Holy Communion children towards receiving this Sacrament. It opened my eyes to how they see God! They have so many questions! I love the innocence and I believe that I have lost that over the years and I pray to God, but do I really talk to him? This course was daunting for me as I have not written an essay since school and that was too long ago.

I stressed over my first assignment so much. But I loved it as I was feeling, questioning, learning and this gave me something that I needed, even though I did not know I was searching. It is hard work and trying to fit it in around a normal busy life is a struggle. But I have found that I am talking about it and asking other people, especially my family, about the Units that I have done or currently doing. We call it our Holy Homework.

I was born a Catholic and was brought up learning everything by rote! I believed in all I was taught, but felt it was because I had too. I didn't make that choice, my parents did. Over the years, I feel that I have come to love my faith again. When I started this course (a few months ago), it reminded me why I help the children in our Parish. I didn't want them to learn from a book or be told what they needed to know. I wanted to give them the love that I have for God. Let them know how wonderful it is to let him be the biggest part of their young lives, to have him always by their sides, in good and bad times.

All I can say is that this was one of my greatest decisions and I thank my friend always for getting me to take that leap.

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### **FOUNDATION COURSE STUDENT**

Roy Dunn

I have recently completed my First Assessment on the OLC Foundation Course which has taken me

about three and a half years to complete due to my own personal circumstances.

The course itself has definitely been challenging for me but without a doubt the most rewarding course I have done (so far) relating to my faith.



I have, whilst working on the course, been part of a team running a youth fellowship group and I have found the work completed on the course very useful

when talking to the group members. The group is made up from children in the local community between the ages of 11 to 14 who come from a range of back grounds in terms of their education, personal and faith perspectives with some having no faith at all when they join the group.

The course was particularly useful when dealing with the bigger issues of faith such as The Holy Trinity when the question asked, "What implications does belief in the Holy Trinity have in your life?" and the examination of this issue made things much clearer in my mind and this understanding of my own belief which is not necessarily the normal way I would have approached this issue with children really helped me to explain it to them in a way that they could understand because it was based on my life experience and not from a more formal doctrinal viewpoint which they would find more difficult to relate to.

One area explored with the group in the last 12 months have been the Exodus story and the linking with Passover, Communion and Easter, Transfiguration and the moral life. It is this more focused study brought about by completing the course that allowed these difficult and complicated issues to be explored in the context of such a mixed group especially the examination of that most wonderful VERITAS SPLENDOR document and that personal 'life experience' examination approach making it even more appropriate.

With that said I would conclude by saying that the course is worth completing for any Catholic who is perhaps thinking of examining their faith more or perhaps suffering a crisis of faith as many of us do at some point but I would suggest it is just as appropriate for those who are confident in their faith but are perhaps unaware as I was that their confidence albeit well placed was based on a pattern of thought and behaviour that was still



even if only slightly out of alignment with the true thinking of the Church.

It only remains for me to thank my Tutor for her understanding and support throughout the course and to stress that the course was not only informative and interesting but also enjoyable and I would recommend it to anyone and everyone who is thinking about it. Stop thinking now and embark on the journey as I did. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

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## **REPORTS FROM THE DIOCESES**

### **ARUNDEL & BRIGHTON**

*Brenda Hilliam*

Arundel & Brighton Branch is now down to 4 sections but all members want CWL to continue and within sections work with the local community and National projects. Those catechists within these sections have mostly trained at Dabcec or at Catholic Training colleges when they obtained their teachers certificates. Members are always interested to hear about the work of OLC and support is mainly spiritual with prayers for students and tutors. One member, Mrs Anne P O'Rourke continues her course work with children.

In spite of declining numbers of priests nationwide sections continue to have spiritual activities led by members for which we are all most grateful.

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### **BIRMINGHAM**

*Ann Bayley*

The Catholic Women's League change of status to Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) has resulted in some changes of working. 1/ Section Treasurers are now required to submit all monies, including donation to OLC, and regular Bank Statements, to the National Treasurer. 2/Data protection rules mean that I no longer hold names, addresses or phone numbers of Section members or OLC students. 3/ The removal of OLC Associate Members subscriptions means that I no longer know how much individuals, or Sections contribute to OLC So my role as Diocesan Organiser has become simply one of disseminating information re. Courses; personal contacts, friendly phone call and encouragement of students and members is no longer possible.

Birmingham Branch has 7 Sections, membership averages 10 per Section though two of them boast

more than twenty members. All Sections arrange talks, social events and are pro-active in raising money for charities and attend Branch meetings. At the March Branch Meeting, I gave a talk on the History and Development of OLC from its foundation in 1923. I also talked to one Section on Martin Luther on the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation.

In 2018 we have 2 Branch Meetings (self-funded) and a Pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady at Evesham on May 1<sup>st</sup>. In agreement with the UCM we have decided to discontinue the annual joint Mass at St Chad's in response to falling numbers.

Our eight catechists still faithfully return Annual Report Forms. Sue Andrews is both Diploma Course Registrar and the Hon Secretary. Three still tutor OLC Courses, one takes Children's Liturgy, another Baptismal Preparation with parents and children. Two dedicated hardworking catechists work outside the remit of OLC one in a Retreat Centre and the other travels to Uganda to promote a Life House.

At our Annual Conference weekend in the prevailing mood of optimism generated by our reflections on "Jesus in the Eucharist" two thirds of members voted to continue promoting the work of OLC with a revised web-site, publicity and prayer- and with the support of our bishops and priests.

With grateful thanks to catechists and CWL members for your loyal support and for your prayers in these changing times.

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### **BRENTWOOD**

*Rosa Vasquez*

A brief description of the work of the OLC Catechists in Brentwood was sent to the Rt. Rev. Alan Williams Bishop of Brentwood. This had included the deaths of OLC Catechists with a request to pray for them.

We have two OLC Tutors who are also catechists working in Wanstead. One as a Parish Catechist.. Two students had to discontinue because of poor health. I serve as a Special Minister of Holy Communion at Holy Mass and to the infirm in their homes.

We had a year of sadness and happiness, Marie Francis and Mary Murphy were both members of Brentwood Diocese. May Our Lady lead them in the Kingdom of God, Rest in Peace. The Happiness because our Diocese celebrated its Centenary. Each Parish appointed a *Steward of the Gospel* who coordinates prayers and readers during Lent and Easter. The Diocese will continue the celebrations with a Pilgrimage to Walsingham with Bishop Alan.

### **CARDIFF & MENEVIA**

*Joan Welsh*

One student in Cardiff Diocese enrolled onto the Foundation Course with the plan to partially complete the course and one student from

Menevia enrolled on to CMS. I was able to distribute leaflets and “Notes and News” widely but with no further enquiries. Catholic Women’s League Cardiff Branch has closed, and Cardiff Section closed in December. Briton Ferry Section donated to OLC and will continue their support.

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**CLIFTON**

*Margaret Richards*

When I was a catechist in our Parish we had the children in groups of 5 and followed the book. There were no special activities. Now we don't help as the Parish Priest does all the instruction himself.

Clifton Diocese have their own catechesis if needed.

**EAST ANGLIA**

*Ann Kearney*

I am still fairly new to this role but am gratified to have received welcoming support from people far too numerous to mention and I would hate to omit anyone, though I cannot thank Angela Ashby, my predecessor, enough for her invaluable advice. I have been assured of Bishop Alan’s prayers for the good work of OLC and the CWL. The CWL seems to be busy and active locally helping those in dire need with clothing, food and general hospitality, also aiding the seafarers who miss their families and homes and need hats! As well as meeting for social activities. Lowestoft Section should be congratulated for their knitted Last Supper scene which they produced at Easter.

I am optimistic regarding the take-up of the OLC leaflets I have distributed, the interest is there, if not always the time within today’s hectic lifestyles.

There are some hard-working catechists tutoring a small number of students at various stages who all benefit from what they learn, please remember them in your prayers.

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**HEXHAM & NEWCASTLE**

*Elizabeth Dixon*

Members of Hexham and Newcastle, continue to come together for our two annual spiritual events. The Rosary Day in May and the Prayer Walk in September. Our Rosary Day was held in Fenham (Newcastle) during this event members recited the Rosary and sang hymns to honour Our Blessed Lady - we also held a similar service in our new

Partnership Group, which was extremely well received. The Prayer Walk was once again held in Morpeth, a gentle stroll was taken alongside the River Wansbeck, about 30 walkers took part including some people from the Brinkburn Partnership. It was wonderful to see people with many levels of ability taking part. Of course, the refreshments at the end of these events were as always well received. The members of the Branch also attended Holy Mass together in the Cathedral at Newcastle, to celebrate the feast day of Saint Margaret Clitherow.

Miss Bryony Foley continues to keep the OLC National Registrar and I am the Registrar for the Mysteries of the Christian Life Course as well as being the Chairman of OLC

**LEEDS**

*Mary Rodwell*



Sadly, we now have only one CWL Section in Leeds Diocese. Four members of Huddersfield and Harrogate Sections have joined the thriving Wakefield Section..

Friends from Harrogate and Skipton help to raised money for the Gianna Project by knitting baby clothes, and members and friends attended the Wayside Crucifix at Ripon in June. In August we celebrated a founders Day Mass at the Shrine of St. Margaret Clitherow in York. These events were well attended and inspiring.

Most members are active in various areas including the Children’s Liturgies.

Recently I showed Harold Riley’s Station of the Cross DVD to a groups of church members who were very moved by it, as we all were at an OLC AGM.

We pray for the future of OLC and thank you for the stimulating courses. Thank you for the love and friendship I have received whenever I have been able to attend the AGM Conference.

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**MIDDLESBROUGH**

*Lilian Finch*

I am not aware of what, if anything, has been donated to OLC this year.

I asked our Parish Priest, Fr. David White if I could invite people interested, and associated with OLC to our Advent Quiet Day we have in preparation for Christmas. And he very kindly

agreed. OLC Treasurer, Sheila Chambers joined us.

One Lady who is new to the area and the Catholic Church showed interest in doing one of our Courses, but has since told me she has a job at the York Hospice.

We have an active Catechist in Thornaby and Sheila the Treasurer, in Hessle.

My invitation to the Advent Quiet Day was my effort to replace the Autumn Study Day, which were stopped last year.

I still do my monthly pilgrimage to York to St. Margaret Clitherow's Shrine to pray for the League and OLC.

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**PLYMOUTH**  
**John Crean**

There has not been a great deal of OLC activity in the Diocese since the last AGM. Notes & News has been distributed to all CWL Sections together with posters, Conference information and application forms. I have arranged to give two talks to CWL members on Our Lady's Catechists and our Courses on the 5<sup>th</sup> of April.

We have one CMS student who is at university in Exeter. Sadly, one of our students, Mrs. Eileen Richards who was studying the Foundation Course, died last year. May she rest in peace.

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**SALFORD**

Salford has four qualified OLC members two of whom are both Registrars and Tutor. Well done to our student who recently qualified. We welcome Alan Barker as our newest member and look forward to others from his parish joining us when they complete their studies.

CWL now has only four Sections and we are grateful to all those who pray for us and help with donations.  
*Editor.*

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*The Executive of Our Lady's Catechists, tutors and Diocesan Representatives thank the League for their prayers, support and donations.*

**SHREWSBURY**

*Joan McCarthy*

We have no tutors or students at present. I report at Branch Meetings. I was invited to the Lord Mayor's Annual Civic Mass at Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral in February, but unfortunately due to the snowy weather I could not go.

Thanks to CWL for their prayers and support.

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**SOUTHWARK.**

*Helen Cooley*

I prepared one 'Special Needs' child for First Holy Communion this year. We do not have any other working Catechist at present.

We have one student doing the Diploma Course and six students working from one CWL Section doing the CMS Course.

I attend the branch AGM and give a report. There were four members from Southwark at the OLC AGM weekend.

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**WESTMINSTER**

**Charmaine Jayasuriya**

Members of the Catholic Women's League Westminster are generous with their donations to Our Lady's Catechists. I give a brief talks at Branch meetings about the various courses offered by OLC to the people who show an interest in catechesis.

There are three students in Westminster doing the Foundation Course. One of them is a Secular Carmelite who is helping our assistant parish priest prepare the children, in Hemel Hempstead, for First Holy Communion

One member who successfully completed the Foundation Course five years ago has been doing excellent work in her parish. Another catechists takes an active part in a prayer group using the resources from the Westminster agency of evangelization.

The organist of Ss. Mary and Joseph Church Hemel Hempstead also uses his talent to provide music at all the Masses and prayer services for Our Lady's Catechists Annual Conference. He has kindly offered his services for the last five years. We offer our sincere thanks to him.

Finally, my grateful thanks go to all the members of my Branch and all 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: Our Lady's Bookshop, 23-25 Northgate, Hessle, East Yorkshire HU13 0LW.

Tel: 01482 641835.

Email: [hesslebookshop@yahoo.co.uk](mailto: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