



I can do all
things through
Christ who
strengthens
me.
Phil 4:13

The Witness

Catholic School of Evangelisation Australia Inc.

August 2020 Newsletter

VALLEY AND MOUNTAINTOP

Our lives since February 2020 have certainly been very different. The whole world is dealing with the outbreak of Covid 19 and we in Australia, although fortunate, are certainly not exempt from the consequences. We hear criticism at the decisions some leaders have made, anxiety from those who are fearful of the future and pleas of loneliness and heartbreak. Alternatively, many are remaining positive and expressing gratitude. Whenever I phone my son Christopher and enquire how he is managing with three young children and he and his wife Laura working from home, he has lifted my spirit with his reply. "Oh Mum I am so grateful to still have my job"

Not being able to participate in Mass and the Sacraments has certainly been hard but I am constantly reminded of just how much I have taken these treasures for granted in the past and how I need to co-operate with God's grace to change this. The



same applies to Prayer Group and other parish activities. As Catholics we are so blessed through the many ways we can be spiritually fed and nourished.

Technology has provided us with new ways to hear the Word: Mass and Adoration on line, Zoom, YouTube etc. are all helpful ways to hear, absorb and spread the Gospel. The CSOE, through Sandra and her skilled team have also been able to use technology in place of our usual live courses. PRAISE GOD - We all hope to eventually return to face to face presentations, but in the meantime let us keep praying and listening

so as not to lose touch with our calling. Perhaps our future will be very different from the past. We will pray for and encourage each other no matter what lies ahead. Our Dear Lord is asking us to love, encourage and support all those who are struggling, lonely and anxious and to invite them into His place of rest.

Ann Serong

CALLED TO MEET JESUS

It seems in these times I have a need to listen more attentively to what God is asking of me. Daily nothing is the same in our routines. A few weeks ago I gathered with a small group for private prayer and at the end heard that Mass was possible in a nearby parish, and the church was open for prayer.

I felt a real prompting to go immediately, although I had just finished prayer. I went directly to the church to find it was closed with an information notice on the door. Then I used the toilet. As I approached I saw a young man sleeping rough. I passed by with a greeting. I prayed to God for grace to engage with him and took out a donation to give him. As I greeted him, I found him to be very receptive and gentle. I passed over

some money and asked if he would like prayer. He was really touched and agreed so I prayed for the Holy Spirit to be with us and bless our time. His eyes teared up and he told me he had just given the exact amount I had given him to another homeless person and prayed for the Holy Spirit to fill that person as I had done. This opened for us a great sharing of scripture and our faith journey.

God gave each of us a communion in the Holy Spirit, which really flowed in genuine love for one another. I had been called to meet Jesus in the poor and to share in his Real Presence beyond the physical church but within the Kingdom. I rejoiced going home knowing I had received great blessings as I responded to his word - Go out to all the world and tell the good news.

Marg Trainor

The Witness

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Catholic School of Evangelisation **MISSION STATEMENT**

To contribute to the formation of evangelising parishes by offering a formation program which:

- ▶ FORMS DISCIPLES
- ▶ TRAINS EVANGELISERS
- ▶ ESTABLISHES PARISH EVANGELISATION TEAMS

BOLDNESS

“Enable your servants to speak your word with all boldness.” (Acts 4:29)

Peter and John had just spent the night in jail for healing a man who couldn't walk. The next morning, authorities released them after sternly warning them never again to proclaim Jesus. So what did they do? Return to the Christian community and pray—not for protection, but for courage to continue.

Boldness is one of the key signs of holiness Pope Francis identifies in his apostolic exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate*. He praises *“the freedom of a life open to God and to others”* (129). That sounds great, doesn't it? Wouldn't we all like a bit more boldness? But this can also sound daunting, especially if we tend to be timid or private about our faith.

Well, did you know that you already have the spiritual gift of courage?

To help explain this, the Holy Father gives us a new take on a familiar image. You've probably seen the famous painting of Jesus knocking on a closed door (from Revelation 3:20). Pope Francis invites us to reverse the image. Jesus, who dwells within us through Baptism, is knocking on the inside of our heart's door. He wants to be let out into the world around us so that his love can touch and transform the people we meet. As Pope Francis says, *“We are weak, yet we hold a treasure that can enlarge us and make those who receive it better and happier”* (131).

God confirmed this truth when he shook the room where Peter and John and the other disciples prayed for courage. They had just been released from prison for proclaiming Christ boldly, and after praying they went out and continued to proclaim him boldly. They had what was required; they just needed to act on it.

This same gift of boldness lives in you through the Holy Spirit. So put it to use. Start thinking in a fresh way about the opportunities you have to make Jesus better known. It can be as simple as taking that one small brave step to open the door for Jesus. **Look at one stranger in the eye and ask his name. Do just one unexpected act of kindness. Watch for just one opportunity to pray with someone for comfort or healing. You will see how God affirms each act of boldness!**

“Lord, thank you for the gift of boldness. Help me to remain confident in you today.”

Psalms 2:1-9. John 3:1-8
 (Word Amongst Us meditation for 29th April 2019)



THE FATHER ICON

On Thursday 4th June I had the very real privilege of attending a Webinar, with Sandra Bishop, on the explanation of Icons. I have to admit, Icons had always left me more perplexed than uplifted and I might say that they were not a favoured way of mine to prayer.

After participating in that meeting I dug out a prayer card that I had been given some time ago and not even read. The cover has an icon of God the Father and I now appreciate both the beauty and the meaning, or at least some of it, of that representation. As I now practice the art of Visio Divina with this icon I am very aware of the openness of the Father to me and all His children.

He sits looking directly at us. His hand is outstretched to bless us. He sits on a seat with both a red and a blue cushion. The blue cushion represents God and the red, humankind. It is an



invitation for me to sit with Him in a close relationship and talk with Him. His royal crown and sceptre have been placed on the ground so that they do not intimidate me but rather show me that He is open to my approach.

He has no beard, as long white beards, which usually denote the Father, indicate aging and withering and our heavenly Father has no such aging process. This 'picture' of God the Father, to me, is far more in line with the forgiving father in the prodigal son than any other representation that I have seen.

The icon was inspired by a vision of the Father in the early 1930's by Sister Eugenia Ravasio who, like St. Faustina,

was instructed to spread the word of God's infinite mercy. I encourage you to explore both the icon and the nun to see the message Our loving Father has for you.

Deidre Herring.

Barbara - The Icon Writer

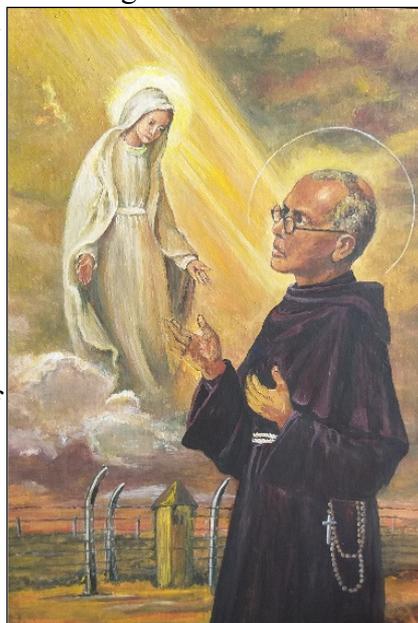
After attending *The Art of Divine Encounters* recently, I was inspired to write the following story.

Gael, a parishioner at St. Francis Xavier - St. Clare Parish prepares hampers. She fills baskets with all sorts of goodies, and we use them for raffles and presentations, but Gael was running out of baskets, so we put an advertisement in our Bulletin. Barbara answered the call and I was asked to go to her home to collect baskets.

As soon as I entered the door, Barbara and I became best friends! I was shown around Barbara's house and best of all her workshop. Barbara writes icons, her workshop and house were filled with icons. Barbara had been taught the art of icon writing by a Franciscan priest at St Pascals in Box Hill.

Sr. Moira, a Brigidine Sister who had been our Parish Associate and volunteer for many years was leaving our Parish at the end of the year and I

had been racking my brain thinking of an appropriate present. As I was standing in Barbara's lounge room, I thought to myself, 'I wonder if she would write an icon for Sr. Moira? Just ask, I said to myself.' I did, and the response was immediate and YES.



Details were discussed and when the icon was completed and framed, the St. Brigid of Kildare icon was presented to Sr. Moira.

A few weeks ago, I called in to see Barbara and she was excited about her latest project, St. Maximilian Kolbe, pictured at left.

Fr. Tony Kerin, our Parish Priest has blessed Maximilian and soon it will be on its way to Barbara's sister's Parish in Poland.

Barbara is a special lady, generous to a fault and I am sure many blessings will be rained down on her.

Jennifer Micheli

The Art of Divine Encounters

Reflection by Assunta De Pino-Curtis – CCR Shepparton

I had never heard of Andrei Rublev's Trinity.
I love the Trinity!
I am faced with oval, elongated shaped faces and bodies not my art favourites.
History of Art and Architectonic Studies to create inspiring architecture of social and environmental value was the beginning of my art journey in life.
Then it was Greek, Roman, Baroque, Renaissance etc. and finally Salvador Dali's surrealism.
That was then.



Sandra Bishop introduces Andrei's painting: I hear her say: "invitation to a Eucharistic meal Father Son Holy Spirit."
Wow! I am awake! upper room
Holy Spirit Blue Heaven.....
mystery..... Purity new life the lamb in the Chalice
..... THE CUP!
I am taken!

I think when I leave this table I will take with me the HOLY SPIRIT, LOVE of the FATHER and of the SON.

..... Somewhere I read at the time of COMMUNION the FATHER unites with the SON, then FATHER and SON with the HOLY SPIRIT, the essence of LOVE and DIVINITY,
..... at the presence of the Heavenly Court of Angels, Archangels, Communion of Saints, the entire creation led by the Virgin Mary

Sandra continues The eyes of the heart

Divine harmony invades me with the humbleness of those bodies by the gentle and delicate necks complimenting each other and sealed by the Holy Spirit I am taken in the supreme moment of Communion ...
.... my King MEEK LAMB of God.

My heart melts celebrating in Divine love, sealed by the FIAT of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Mother Of Jesus, My Mother, Mother of Humanity and ALL CREATION.

What a Picture!

ICONS - A way to connect with God

Thank you to Sandra and her team at the School of Evangelization for hosting 'The Art of the Divine Encounter'. I would like to share a word of encouragement about the use of icons in your prayer time, as a means to connect (or reconnect) with your Almighty God, who is always there, waiting for you.

Today's teaching and practical experience of divine encounter was just the opportunity God had been waiting for to stop me and remind me of my calling and mission to serve in His kingdom.

I am a wife and mother and a very busy person all round, somehow managing to be even busier in this time of lockdown and yet God is merciful and abundant in his love for me.

Today through the prayer journey of the 'Visio Divina', I was reminded that I am fully understood by God, He knows where I've been, where I am and where I am going.

God spoke powerfully through each icon as a calling back to Him, to repentance, to surrender and to rest in Him. As well as an empowerment and a strong reminder of my calling through the -

Two faces of Jesus at Mt Sinai, depicting the two natures of Jesus, powerful and gentle.

There was also a sense through **The Cross of San Damiano** and Rublev's image of **The Trinity at table**, of my recommitment as a lay person to my role in Christ's priestly office, in the Church and in the world. This was super enriching and led me to read the beautiful Catechism of the Catholic Church: **The Participation of Lay people in Christ's priestly office 901**.

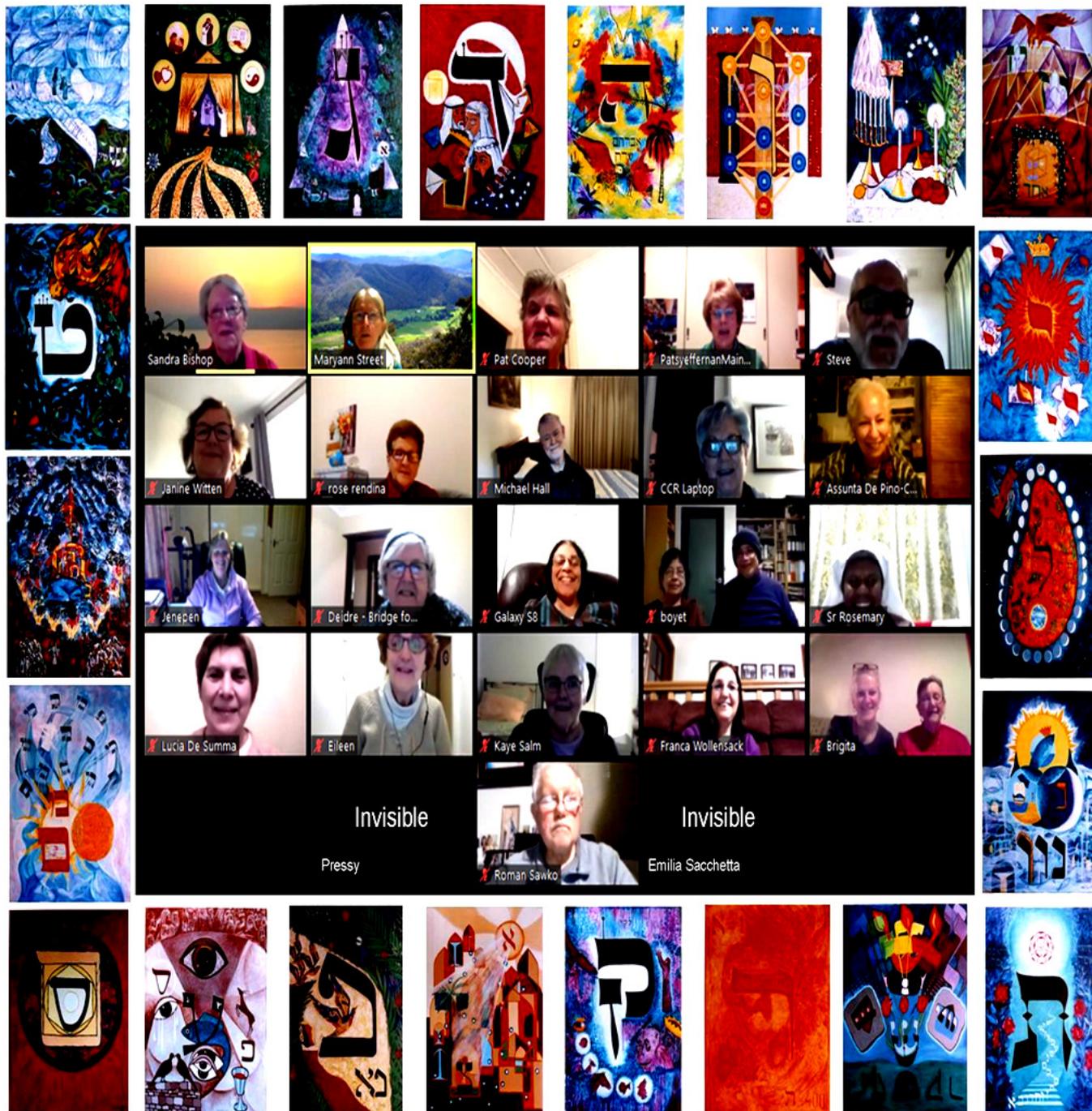
"Hence the laity, dedicated as they are to Christ and anointed by the Holy Spirit, are marvellously called and prepared so that even richer fruits of the Spirit may be produced in them ... And so worshipping everywhere by their holy actions, the laity consecrate the world itself to God, everywhere offering worship, by the holiness of their lives."

Wow I have a lot to ponder, reflect and pray.
Thank you God for reminding me of my call to mission, it is of great consolation that as we live out our lives in the Spirit that You can be glorified as the Creator and Redeemer of the world.

God Bless Melinda

Zoom Participants - Reflecting on Hebrew Letters

Below are participants from UK, PNG, Sydney, Canberra & Goulburn, Sandhurst, Sale, Melbourne and Adelaide Dioceses who took advantage of this course and zoomed in on Hebrew Letters.



The Catholic School of Evangelisation has purchased a new computer and with the Bishop house recently connected to NBN with super dooper upload ability we are now able to Zoom courses with less issues. We have been operating on 'Plan B' backups with some success, but I must admit it almost drove me to drink! Before the new computer everything would work fine when it was just Emilia over the road and me at my place having practise Zooms with each other, but then add people from across Australia, PNG, Philippines and UK and the strain on our systems showed up.

One of the biggest issues, quite irrespective of our equipment, happened when a Bishop in the Philippines, who had experienced our team ministering there a few years ago, recommended the diocese's RE teachers attend a two hour session with us. They booked in via Trybooking, all fine. They received a Zoom link stating it was at Australian Eastern Standard Time 2pm. You guessed it, they began signing in around 3.50pm just as the session was finishing! Now the RE teachers in San Fernando La Union have learnt that Australia is 2 hours ahead of the Philippines. They logged in very early the following week!

Sandra Bishop.

Are You Open To Zoom In ?

It was only when our churches closed did the impact of Covid-19 really hit me. Like countless other people, I experienced a gamut of emotions fluctuating from a sense of the surreal to deep fear. In all my years I had never imagined there would be a time when we could not attend Mass or even sit quietly before the Blessed Sacrament. With CSOE courses in Melbourne cancelled, our creative God showed us all was not lost however.....and the fundamental role Zoom would have in His plan!

In May, Adelaide CSOE Co-ordinator Carmen Sylvester and Fr Adam Samsel from Papua New Guinea and his leadership team participated in a *7 Young People in the Gospels* course on Zoom; in April, May and June the Melbourne team “met” for intercessory prayer; in June and July two new courses designed by Sandra Bishop, the Melbourne CSOE Co-ordinator made their debut: *The Art of Divine Encounters* and *Reflecting on the HEBREW LETTERS ~ the Aleph Beit for Christians*.

Overcoming our initial trepidation regarding this new mode of delivery, it didn't take long to

recognise its potential: From the comfort of their own home and socially distant, people from Australia-wide, London, the Philippines and Papua New Guinea were able to participate in courses they would not have otherwise been able to attend. The commission to go out and **“Go into all the world and proclaim the good news”** (Mark 16:15) just looks a little different in 2020.

Needless to say, there have been technological hiccups along the way and with a new technological language to learn, there have been challenges. The Lord, however is faithful: We have been notified that Fr Adam and his team have planned a *‘7 Young People in the Gospels’* course to be presented to their youth in August 2020, so the CSOE 2 Timothy 2:2 mandate is alive and well.

As we continue to pray and wait for a resolution to Covid-19 and the day when we can meet face-to-face once again, we thank God for His faithfulness and patience with us, teaching us all to be open to new ways to draw closer to Him and each other.

Emilia Sacchetta

Reflection on the HEBREW LETTERS – the Aleph Beit for Christians

The reflections on the Hebrew Letters has certainly contained a lot of surprises. The richness of meaning and significance of each letter has been truly instructive but at the same time full of symbolism and certainly personally enlightening.

The letter ‘TAV’ which had the meaning of ‘sign and seal’ had an instant sort of magnetism for me. Participants had been asked to reflect on the fact that as Christians we had been sealed by the Holy Spirit, the Breath of God who hovered over the chaos and brought about creation.

As we reflected during the presentation, I was aware of a sadness within me. Then as I reflected in my daily meditations it gave me a sense of hope as I came to the fullest realisation that the Holy Spirit had indeed hovered over the chaos that I had experienced in my own life and that, just as in the creation story, had brought about a new creation in me as St Paul describes in his letter to the Corinthians, *2Cor 5:17 ‘Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.’*

These are words I had heard and read often but only now realised the full extent of the Holy Spirit's action in bringing about the ‘new man’ (woman, in my case) because He had hovered over me at the time of my creation. That was a new ‘eye opener’ for me, so to speak, because now rather than just reading or hearing it I ‘experienced’ it in my spirit as truth.

So, it was with expectation in my heart that I had placed the ‘Jacob's Dream’ sheet under my pillow in the hope of receiving a new message from God. This symbolic gesture of reflective praying revealed, not only, that the Holy Spirit had hovered over me at my creation but that, as a new creation, I had access to God through the Holy Spirit who continues to hover over me and wants to bring me into the fullness of who I was created to be. This is surely an ‘ancient’ message but one that is ‘new’ every morning.

Miriam Markis

CATHOLIC SCHOOL OF EVANGELISATION PROGRAM 2020

28—30TH
August

‘7 Young People in the Gospel’

Goroka PNG

Hospital Evangelisation

I needed to undergo prostate surgery on May 4 2007. An earlier biopsy revealed that I had contracted prostate cancer. Fortunately it was considered to be slow growing.

A friend emailed me to be aware that the Holy Spirit can do dramatic things in hospitals. It brought back to mind a dramatic thing that happened during an earlier hospitalization.

One never knows what the Holy Spirit can do in hospital. During one post operative spell a nurse asked me if I was a pastor. Others have come and talked about personal problems. The most dramatic case was that of Joe, a 73 year old Italian gentleman who occupied the adjoining bed. We talked a lot together each day. Joe shared about the overseas trip he and his wife were planning to make. One evening a lengthy conversation we got onto was about always being ready to meet one's Maker.

It just seemed as though the words were there to come out of my mouth, so I spoke them out. It seemed clear to me that the Holy Spirit was doing the leading. I encouraged him and added that we all should always be prepared. About 8.30pm I indicated that the sleeping tablets were beginning to work and I should try to sleep. Joe responded that he was not tired enough to sleep, and would go to the lounge to watch TV.

About 2.30 in the morning, I awoke and noticed that his bed was stripped and empty. When the next nurse came in I asked where Joe was. She burst into tears and told me that Joe had collapsed

and died instantly in the doorway of the TV lounge. That afternoon his distraught widow came in to ask me what was the last thing we had talked about. She said that we were always talking together and it was important for her to know.

She was consoled in her deep grief that Jesus got a prominent mention in Joe's last conversation.

There is an addenda to the story.

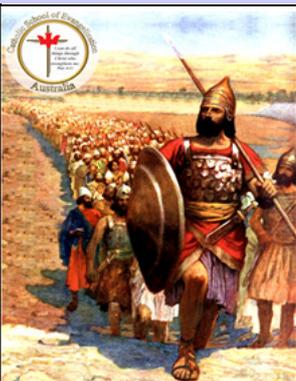
Some months later my Catholic Charismatic Emmanuel Community conducted a weekend outreach to the Anglican parish at Kenilworth, a small Queensland country town. Mollie and I were billeted with the Anglican priest and his wife.

On the Sunday morning as we neared the church, the priest informed us that they had a 20 minute sermon. Mollie and I were to share the time. We only had enough time to panic. No preparation, no idea of the Scripture readings, etc. It is out of my comfort zone as a Catholic to preach a sermon in an Anglican church, particularly with no warning. Mollie did well with her time.

One of the Scripture readings was about being always prepared to meet our Maker. What a relief. My blood pressure must have dropped at least 20 points. I shared the story of the hospital experience.

I concluded by challenging the congregation to see if they could guarantee being alive to exit the church after the service. There were a few gasps. The priest told me that the people were unusually quiet after the service.

Mike Dooley



GIDEON'S ARMY

A big THANK YOU to the generous people who have made a financial commitment to assist the ongoing running of the CSOF. Without you we would not be able to continue our mission which is our response to the last 4 Popes' call for a New Evangelisation.

To make arrangements for direct debit or to forward donations please contact:

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THE WITNESS



**“Let us renew our confidence in preaching,
based on the conviction that it is God who seeks
to reach out to others through the preacher
and that He displays His power through human words.”**

Pope Francis - Evangelii Gaudium



Attention! Attention!

**Like our Facebook page. Join our community and keep in touch with other
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Thanks to Joanna Lamek, the CSOE Facebook site is up and running so -

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