





**Catholic  
Agency to  
Support  
Evangelisation**



# CASE NOTES

Issue 3 Winter 2004/2005

## Seasonal Evangelisation

Advent and Christmas present exciting opportunities for evangelisation. Society as a whole is arguably becoming steadily more secularised, and this means that Christian individuals, families and communities, who genuinely celebrate this season as a religious festival, will increasingly stand out.

The first step towards evangelising at Christmas is one of taking stock and asking ourselves, "How do we really want to make this time the holy season that it is, even if it means doing some things a bit differently?" Why not go on to write down in a sentence or two, for yourself, or with your family or parish group, what this season means for you?

Perhaps some memories of Christmas celebrations that particularly touched you may spring to mind. Doing this exercise can prepare you to share with others, as the opportunity arises in daily life, something of the joy and hope this season inspires.

At Midnight Mass and Christmas morning many people who do not often go to Church are present. It is easy to feel cynical about such people, especially if they have "partaken of a drop or two" beforehand! Instead, why not pray to the Holy Spirit before going to church? Pray that he will give you an opportunity to witness, by your smile and even by your words, to your faith in the new-born Saviour. It could simply help to make someone think, "Isn't it amazing what he did for us the first Christmas?"

Finally, don't forget to look at the special Christmas resources page on our website: [www.casesources.org.uk](http://www.casesources.org.uk) There you can find a whole range of ideas for faith sharing. Please do email us if you are looking for some specific help or advice at: [info@casesources.org.uk](mailto:info@casesources.org.uk) or ring us on 020 8458 3316.

**Mgr Keith Barltrop, CASE Director**

### What is CASE?

CASE is an Agency of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. Through a wide variety of resources and training, its remit is to enthuse, engage and equip all tiers of the Church in the urgent task of evangelisation.



## Momentous Mission Gathering

A dynamic vision of an "Evangelising Church" was the way our first CASE/BBH Forum was described by delegates.

Nearly fifty evangelisation experts and enthusiasts came together at London Colney in Hertfordshire, from across the British Isles for this unprecedented Catholic gathering. The event, which took place on the 23rd-24th November, aimed to bring people



together from a wide variety of initiatives and groups to explore ways in which we can evangelise.

## LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE!

The theme of the Forum was "Stories of Changing Evangelisation," and the programme included Mass, discussion groups and presentations about current mission projects and issues. CASE co-hosted the event, along with *Building Bridges of Hope*, an ecumenical initiative of *Churches Together in Britain and Ireland*. CASE Team Member, Fr Philip Knights said, "This gathering presented an exciting and hope-filled vision of an evangelising Catholic community. By coming together we supported and learnt from one another. It promises to reap many future fruits."

Delegates represented around thirty different groups; there were parish and diocesan representatives, as well as members of new movements and initiatives.

The discussion areas were varied and included "Faith and Culture", "Evangelising the Church", and "How to meet and serve those on the fringes". Kathy Bensen from the National Shrine to Padre Pio in Pantasaph said, "It was so inspiring to meet and share a common goal with people touched by the Holy Spirit." Meanwhile, Fr Val Farrell from Holy Family parish in Blackpool said, "At this Forum I've discovered a 'case' full of treasures - like opening a treasure chest."

Among the outcomes of the Forum is the planned publication of a Directory of Evangelisation Initiatives in 2005. Please keep this project in your prayers.

**Do you know someone who has questions  
about the Catholic faith?**

**Please invite them to look at [www.life4seekers.co.uk](http://www.life4seekers.co.uk)**

## A First for the CEO

A unique gathering took place at CASE at the end of September marking an exciting new development in the history of the Catholic Enquiry Office. On September 29th, website experts, mission practitioners, religious, recent converts, young people and CASE team members, met for the first meeting of the CEO Advisory Board.

Fifteen people drawn from a wide field of expertise have agreed to be on the Board to:

- Advise the CASE team in CEO development
- Facilitate the sharing of experience and expertise in different areas
- Help create and develop new ideas
- Hold the CEO in prayer
- Be its public supporters
- Help open up new networks to assist the work
- Where appropriate, work alongside CEO staff on specific projects



Some of the Board members with the latest CEO leaflet

In the coming year, five main projects are being worked on including further website development and the creation of a more pro-active "Follow-up" strategy. Please keep this work in your prayers.

## Evangelisation European Style



Bishop Ambrose evangelising on the Paris Metro

Never mind "Paris in the Springtime", the French capital was the place to be this autumn. That's certainly what the 3,000 plus delegates at ICNE, the *International Congress on New Evangelisation*, found.

This ten day event drew Catholics from across Europe and beyond for theological reflection on the New Evangelisation, as well as active participation in urban mission. Twenty countries were represented and six Cardinals were in attendance, along with eight Bishops, two of whom had travelled from Australia. CASE co-ordinated the UK delegation of over thirty people including the retired Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle, Rt. Rev. Ambrose Griffiths, OSB.

By bringing together so many people from so many diverse evangelisation initiatives, the Cardinals provided an unparalleled opportunity for us to learn from each other's creative ideas, and to be inspired by the dynamic methods used. Being able to experience the joy of sharing the truth that Jesus loves us in an international context has enabled us to reflect with fresh eyes upon the challenges of evangelising within our own unique cultures.

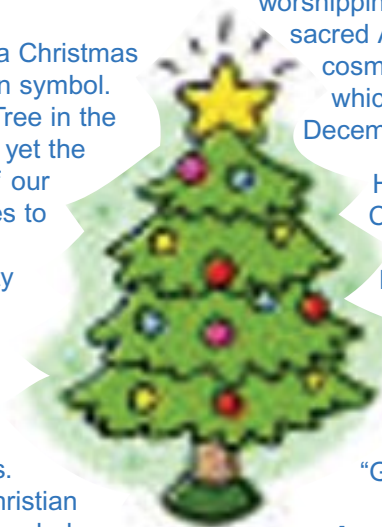
We believe in learning by doing, so the UK group made it a priority to engage in some form of active evangelisation each day. Although personally challenging, participants described how this had really made their own faith come alive, and how they were delighted with the responses received.

Paris was the second of five Congresses being held across Europe; last year's gathering was held in Vienna, and next year's will be hosted in Lisbon, Portugal... see you there!

## Faith and Culture Comment: Christmas Trees

I have heard of a priest who refuses to have a Christmas Tree in Church because he sees it as a pagan symbol. I also have a Jewish friend who never has a Tree in the House because she sees it as Christian. And yet the vast majority of the implicitly pagan people of our nation, somehow explicitly connect themselves to the Christian Gospel when they choose to decorate their houses in honour of the Nativity of the Lord.

Many of our Christmas customs demonstrate the centuries of interaction between faith and culture that some theologians would call 'inculturation'. We have baptised pagan feasts. We have used powerful imagery to convey Christian meaning. Symbols which expressed light in the dark and life in the face of the death of winter are now used to express our Christian hope which comes through the incarnation of the Divine Son.



The greenery with which we 'deck the halls' is not worshipping Woden and does not represent Yggdrasil, his sacred Ash. Rather they should be joyful signs of that cosmic celebration of new life that God gives in Jesus which penetrates even the dullness of an English December.

How about these two ideas for connecting the Christmas Tree with the Good News of Jesus:

- Prayer is always good and you might find helpful the 'Blessing of a Christmas Tree' from *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers* published by the American Bishops [www.usccb.org/publishing/advent2003/XMAS-TREE.PDF](http://www.usccb.org/publishing/advent2003/XMAS-TREE.PDF)
- Decorate your tree with angels singing, "Glory to God in the highest!" (Luke 2:14)

**A very happy and holy Christmas to you all!**

Interested in finding out more? For the full text of this comment see: [www.casesources.org.uk/latestnews/latestnews\\_culturetalk](http://www.casesources.org.uk/latestnews/latestnews_culturetalk)

## Pause for Thought:

*“May each Christmas find us more and more like him who became a little child for our sake; more humble, holy, happy ...more full of God.”*

Cardinal Newman



## Good News about those who give Good News

*Each issue we feature a particular evangelisation initiative. This time, we report on the launch of an innovative course.*

It certainly is Good News that over 40 people have begun the new Evangelisation and Ministry Course at Maryvale. The Course comprises a foundation module, written by Mgr Keith Barltrop, and four pathways which explore principles and practice of evangelisation in distinct areas of ministry. Students choose from: Youth Evangelisation and Ministry, Parish Evangelisation and Ministry, Family Evangelisation and Ministry, Ministry and Support to the Sick.

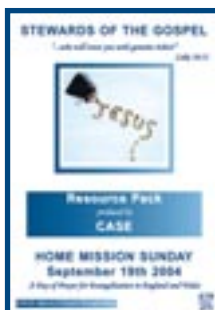
A real joy of the launch day in October was for very diverse participants to come together and share their stories, motivations and hopes for how their study could help them evangelise even more effectively in their unique situations. Some people following the Course are in full time ministry, whilst others are juggling family duties with being of service in their parishes. All look forward to “putting out into the deep” in response to the Pope’s call to commit to the New Evangelisation.



## Home Mission Sunday

Many thanks to all who responded to our appeal for funds on Home Mission Sunday this year, September 19th. It is too soon to say how much has been raised for our work, but we will let you know! Particular thanks to those people who took time to let us know what they thought of our materials; it was great to receive such encouragement, and we look forward to trying out some of your suggestions in the future.

We have had many requests for more copies of the resources we sent out, especially the leaflets “What is a Catholic?” and “Everyday Evangelising for Everyday Catholics.” One parish priest ordered 5,000 copies so that every home in the parish could receive one - if anyone else wants to do the same, we are happy to be of service!



## Media Watch



In an age dominated by technology, it is increasingly important that the Church is actively proclaiming the Gospel on the worldwide web. In this edition we profile a new venture

designed to help parishes run cost effective websites. Introducing... **CathCom**.

*CathCom* is an initiative which has been seven years in the making. Its purpose is to help Catholic parishes create and maintain their own websites at very low cost.

The makers of the system say that you do not have to have any prior web expertise as it is so easy to use. Archbishop Kevin McDonald of Southwark said, “I would like to express my support for this initiative. Communications are vital in the Church today, and I am sure that *CathCom* will be a great help and resource to many people.”

For more information, see: [www.cathcom.org](http://www.cathcom.org)

## “NOV News”

### CASE continues to work closely with the National Office for Vocation



Exciting times are ahead for NOV as a new director prepares to take the helm. Fr Kevin Dring has done outstanding work in setting up the office. He leaves in December to begin missionary work in Peru after a short sabbatical (CASE’s mission influence perhaps?!) He will be very much missed. The new director will be Fr Paul Embery of Lancaster Diocese.

Diocesan Vocation Teams are taking root in dioceses across England and Wales. Made up of people from all states of life, they aim to help foster a “culture of vocation” and to promote diocesan priesthood and all the particular vocations in the life of the Church.

Mgr Keith Barltrop and CASE Team Member, Clare Ford, gave an enthusiastically received keynote address at the annual Conference of Diocesan Vocations Directors and Promoters in October at St. Mary’s College, Oscott, Birmingham.

## CASE Highlights...

The remit of CASE is far-reaching and we are actively involved in a wide range of initiatives. Space doesn’t allow us to report on all our activities. Recent highlights include:

- Mgr Keith Barltrop took a leading role in a successful “Day for Seekers” on August 15th at the Capuchin Franciscan Community at Pantasaph in North Wales. All events were adapted to cater for non-Catholics.
- In September, Fr Philip Knights facilitated a day of workshops on evangelisation with the central region Teams of Our Lady.
- Clare Ward gave a stimulating keynote address at a resources day for Confirmation Catechists in Arundel and Brighton Diocese in October.
- In November, Clare Ford gave an inspiring input to the Wrexham Diocesan Pastoral Council on “Evangelisation: The Challenge!”

**Please check out [www.caseresources.org.uk](http://www.caseresources.org.uk) for more!**

## Ecumenical News: Evangelism Consultation 2004

CASE belongs to the *Group for Evangelisation*, part of the ecumenical organisation *Churches Together in England*. In this issue we hear about how the Evangelism Consultation 2004 opened doors for discussion about radical new expressions of mission church.



This year the annual consultation on evangelism was organised around *Mission-Shaped Church*, a report that was presented to the General Synod of the Church of England. Two big themes came out of this: the changed nature of English culture and society, and fresh forms of church structures.

Perhaps the biggest issue arising from the speakers' contributions and the work in small groups, was the need for a new mindset from Christians in order to address the new culture. Speakers emphasised that Britain is not Christian in the way it was a generation or so ago. In the 2001 census nearly 72% of the UK identified themselves as Christians, although it would seem that less than 8% are regular churchgoers.

It is clear that new Christian responses are needed in this new situation. The jargon for these new responses talks of "fresh expressions of Church", "emerging church" and "encounters at the edge". By and large the lead in this is coming from our evangelical partners. Yet, there are challenges for Catholics. Do our new initiatives really inhabit the cutting edge of where people are today?

Some denominations have already touched that point of desperation by which they have felt forced to say 'change or die'. Maybe Catholics also need to face up to some harsh realities? Nearly 30 years ago, Pope Paul VI taught us "The Church exists in order to evangelise": if we do not evangelise, we shall not exist.

## Seminary News

On October 7th 2004, Mgr Keith Barltrop, himself a former seminary rector, led a discussion with the seminary rectors of England and Wales on how to prepare new priests for the task of the New Evangelisation. A number of short courses on evangelisation are beginning to be offered in seminaries, but it was agreed a more radical look at the whole programme of seminary formation and studies was necessary if the newly ordained are to be effective leaders in evangelisation.

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## Priests Reaching Out

35 priests from the Westminster Diocese attended a day of recollection at London Colney in September which was themed: Reaching Out. CASE Team Members, Fr Philip Knights and Clare Ward, led sessions on "Preaching the Good News in Today's World", "Sharing Our Stories" and "Christians Coming Together".

The aim of the day was to encourage prayerful reflection on the theme of evangelisation and how this might find expression in the parish context.

Fr Martin Hayes, who was the principal organiser of the day said, "Members of the CASE Team provided resources and input to the clergy, leading them with skill and sensitivity to individual and shared prayer and reflection. Those present found the day helpful to their personal and collective ongoing renewal as priests."

Subject to request, it is hoped similar events can be run in other dioceses during 2005.



Clergy taking part in one of the day's sessions.

## A Christmas Prayer



God of love, Father of all,  
the darkness that covered the earth has  
given way to the bright dawn of your Word  
made flesh.

Make us a people of this light so that,  
faithful to your Word,  
we may bring your life to the waiting world.  
**AMEN.**

Prayer taken from:

[www.catholic.org/clife/prayers/prayers.php?section\\_id=7&name=Christmas](http://www.catholic.org/clife/prayers/prayers.php?section_id=7&name=Christmas)

## 'Behold the Lamb' Eucharistic Congress July 2005

CASE is working with a network of parishes, diocesan contacts, and new movements to put on a Eucharistic Congress in Birmingham, July 2005.

The event has the backing of several bishops including the Archbishop of Birmingham, Vincent Nichols, and will focus on the theme of 'Communion and Mission'.

Please keep the success of this event in your prayers.

For more details, contact Fr Julian Green: 0121 373 1437.

