



THE STORY OF CCD IN THE DIOCESE OF
ARMIDALE
NEW ENGLAND, AUSTRALIA



Quotes: Catholic Weekly, 6th May, 1948

“The Bishop Coleman insisted that his priests should visit these children in their bush schools at least once a week to teach them their religion.” (P304)

“.....Bishop Coleman instituted a Religion-by-letter scheme for these bush schools children. In this work of Apostolic charity, he was ably assisted by the Ursuline Nuns. At his untimely death in 1947, he had 800 children enrolled in this scheme.” P304

- It seems from a further quote from the Catholic Weekly,

“From memory, the Ursuline Nuns were the Ursuline Novices and Novice Mistress.”

Bishop Coleman, in his first address to the Priests after he became bishop, said,

“Systematic visitation of the schools was absolutely necessary if the Catholic children attending them were to have a working knowledge of their Catechism.” P306

(Bishop Doody does not give his source for the direct quotation)

Bishop Coleman, at the 1934 Priests' Retreat Conference.

“The catechising of the children in convent and state schools....were mentioned as urgent.” P307

In 1935 he Bishop [Coleman] spoke to his priests at the Retreat Conference on these same topics [as in 1934] catechising the children. P307

In 1936 Bishop Coleman again urged regular and prepared lessons for the children in the schools, mentioning as example “grace, the Church, the Sacraments.” *“This is very important”* The Religion-by-letter was again praised and priests asked to supervise it in the homes. P309

Once again [1937] he [Bishop Coleman] stressed the need for regular visitation of the schools and catechising the children, and the value of the correspondence for the country children. There were about 950 children enrolled in the course. P310

In 1938 "*The regular and systematic visitation of state schools and the instruction of the Catholic children*" was constantly stressed and the Bishop expressed his happiness at the results that were stemming therefrom. The Religion-by-letter scheme was also producing much good. He also advised the weekly visitation of the Catholic schools of their parish. "*The Priest is **THE** instructor,*" he said. [emphasis in the original.] P313.

THIS LAND OF PROMISE

The Ursuline Order in Australia 1882-1982

By Pauline Kneipp

Another innovation which the Ursulines undertook was a system of teaching religion by correspondence to children in the remote areas of the Armidale diocese who could not attend Catholic schools. The matter was brought up by Bishop Coleman, who asked the community to be responsible for this work. "*The question was a momentous one*", wrote the Annalist, "*for it meant added work for many of the sisters who already were much occupied*". However, it was decided that everyone in the community, including the novices, should help with the work. The sister placed in charge of the scheme soon had it in operation, and in the first year over one thousand children were taking the lessons. Instruction sheets were mailed to them, and the sisters corrected the returned exercises with great care and recorded the progress of each child. This undertaking was continued by the Ursulines until the late 1950's when a decreasing demand for such instruction caused its cessation.

In Armidale the Ursulines continued to teach girls in the parochial school.

DOMINICAN SUMMER SCHOOLS

In addition to the Ursuline 'Religion – by – letter ' scheme, during the 1950's the Dominican Sisters in Tamworth use to administer and offer Summer schools during which children from outlying district farms would come and board in Tamworth and be prepared for the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation and would be confirmed by the Bishop at the end of that time.

- 1995 There was a change to the areas of service.
1. the northern and Cathedral deaneries
 2. the southern and western deaneries
- 2001 As it was expected that at least one of the Sisters would soon leaving and no replacement would be possible there was put into place a decision to explore another style of CCD ministry.
- 2002 It was decided to adopt a new model of CCD involving:
1. Diocesan Co-ordinator – Sr. Mary Flynn, rsj
 2. Northern region consultant
 3. Southern region consultant.
- At the end of 2002 a Sister of St. Joseph was appointed to the position of Diocesan Co-Ordinator. The first lay consultant Mr. Rickie Withers was appointed for the Northern Region. Sr. Gieuseppe Walsh remained as the Southern Region Consultant.
- A CCD office was established with appropriate equipment and resources in the Catholic Schools Office building. This office was used by the Northern Consultant until the end of 2002.
- 2003 The CCD Office became the centre of CCD activity and was the work centre for the Diocesan Co-Ordinator and Northern Region Consultant. The Southern Region consultant continued to operate out of a private office in the Josephite convent in South Tamworth.
- 2004 Sr. Gieuseppe Walsh retired at the end of the year from her position as Southern Region Consultant.
 CCD activity was administered across the Diocese from the central office in Armidale with Sr. Mary Flynn as Diocesan CCD Coordinator and Mr. Rickie Withers as Diocesan CCD Consultant.
- 2006 At the end of this year Sr. Mary Flynn retired from her position as Diocesan CCD Coordinator. This ended the involvement of the Josephite sisters in the administration and coordination of CCD in the Diocese of Armidale.
- 2007 The beginning of this year saw Mr. Rickie Withers taking over the position of Diocesan CCD Coordinator/Consultant. Rickie travelled across the Diocese coordinating, supporting, training and ministering to catechists through to his retirement in 2016 when he returned to teaching as Religious Education Coordinator of St Joseph's School in Glen Innes.
- 2018 Bishop Michael Kennedy, placing significant importance on the value of SRE and wishing to provide not only a coordinator to support the catechists in his Diocese appointed

Permanent Deacon to the role of Spiritual Director and
Catechist Coordinator.