

The Heights



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5 Years ago I didn't even know my job existed!

An interview with David Smith

DIOCESAN FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATOR

Q: When you became an accountant did you ever see yourself working for the Catholic Church?

David: No way! But I wasn't really enjoying working in public practice; something I thought I'd be stuck doing basically forever. Then a SEEK email in my inbox advertising this position as Diocesan Financial Administrator for the Diocese of Armidale came up. I didn't even know what that was, but when my wife and I looked at it, we thought it would be worth looking into!

Q: How has working for the Church impacted your faith as a Catholic?

David: In some sense it has blended my faith and my work which has been interesting to navigate. It's been a real privilege and given my work meaning and purpose that I never felt in previous roles. I've been honoured to get know our priests as people, as men. I also love being able to go to daily Mass during my lunch break, make visits to the Adoration Chapel, and attend big Masses like the Catholic Schools Week Mass as part of my job.

Q: Aside from your role what do you love about being Catholic?

David: I love that even while the world tries to tell us that we don't need God because all of our material needs can be met in a country like Australia, Catholicism still stands out to me as the better path in life. I believe we need something to consecrate our lives and families to, and the Catholic Church in her traditions, her perpetuity and teachings still stands out to me as being the



DAVID SMITH

only thing worthy of that. There are also so many amazing people I've met and become friends with who wouldn't be part of my life if I wasn't Catholic.

Q: Finally, tell us what you love to do for fun!

David: I'm a sports tragic. I've been following the Panthers since I was 11 or 12 though dad never let me play footy. I enjoy the cricket in Summer and in terms of what I play I've always enjoyed tennis and most recently, cycling.

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Let's all pray for David and his family as he serves our Diocese in such important ways

Intentional Discipleship in our schools

Data indicates that Generation Z is keen on learning about Jesus personally, yet hesitant to explore this within traditional Church settings. Bridging this gap is the forefront of the New Evangelisation today, so in response the Armidale Catholic Chancery, Catholic Schools Office, and Alpha Youth have joined forces to create a pathway for student discipleship in our schools. This approach aims to engage with young people on their level, inviting them to relationship with Jesus in the Catholic context.

What is Alpha Youth?

Alpha Youth and its complementary resource, Life Essentials, are made up of interactive sessions designed to start an open and honest conversation around some of the big questions of life. Topics include: Who is Jesus, why did he die, how do I read the Bible, how do I pray, who is the Holy Spirit, and does God heal today? Alpha Youth runs all across Australia, in schools, homes, youth ministries and online. No two Alpha Youths will look exactly the same but they typically have a setting and structure that involves an inclusive safe environment to explore contemporary issues through a Catholic lens.

The CSO's Catholic Life, Mission and RE Leader Damian Roff shares some of the strategy to begin implementing Alpha Youth and Life Essentials here:

“After a successful pilot of the Alpha Youth Program in 2023 at Holy Trinity Inverell overseen by Principal Jillian Rainger, Religious Education Coordinator Mary Jane Guest, Armidale Diocese Mission and Evangelisation Officer Chris Da Silva and Parish Priest Father Paul Chandler, a collaborative effort by Armidale Catholic Schools and Chancery to scale out this program to more secondary schools is set to start in July.

Alpha Youth is an opportunity for faith formation for those students who want to explore their faith further in a safe and inclusive environment. The evaluations of the program from the students at Holy Trinity were overwhelmingly positive. Links with syllabus outcomes have been made so the sessions can work within the current RE curriculum. The program is optional, and as a result students are able to decide if they want to be a part of these sessions or resume their normal RE lessons.

On the Year 10 students' participation at Holy Trinity, Mary-Jane Guest, after a taster (of four sessions), was amazed and encouraged that the entire cohort opted to stay with the program.

Alpha Youth is a collaborative effort and it requires facilitators for the small group discussions that take place. In that sense it is hoped that parishioners wishing to be involved in this kind of mission can be trained and be leaders in the program. The scale out of Alpha Youth extends to St Philomenas and McCarthy. Some taster days are planned for St Mary's Gunnedah and O'Connor later in the year.”



How we are using Alpha Youth as a catalyst to grow young disciples

Chancery and CSO are eager for Alpha Youth and Life Essentials to not just be a one-and-done program that students can engage with in Year 9 or 10, but instead are actively researching and consulting about opt-in experiences and opportunities that resonate with both faith-filled and spiritually curious students from around Year 4 right through to Year 12. Examples of this include attending the Ignite Conference, the Australian Catholic Youth Festival in Melbourne next year, and developing our own homegrown retreat. The hope is that as this is scaled out with the guidance of Parish Priests and other key parish leaders, intentional bridges between schools and parishes can be built that invite and encourage Catholic school students to embrace life as a disciple of Jesus through the Sacraments, youth groups and other opportunities to serve their local communities through their parishes.

If you're interested in helping to facilitate Alpha Youth or similar student discipleship initiatives please contact Chris Da Silva on chris@armidale.catholic.org.au

Evangelise Summit: A Synodal Way



Chris Da Silva with fellow evangelisation leaders from around the country

I was honoured by the invitation to present a workshop on how to grow a deep love for the Eucharist at the *Evangelise Summit* hosted at Mary MacKillop Place in North Sydney by the National Centre for Evangelisation. The experience was both inspiring and encouraging as I took the opportunity to pray and share with evangelisation representatives from 22 dioceses and a few other ministries from around our Great South Land of the Holy Spirit. Highlights of the event began with Archbishop Christopher Prowse seeking to consolidate our definition of evangelisation as primarily about *encounter, discipleship and mission*, with the exhortation that as Australians we've got to become better at the encounter piece.

As participants we were heartened by *Open the Way to Christ*, the statement on sports as prime territory for evangelisation. I have had many a conversation with priests around our Diocese about how religiously children and families attend sporting events and practices while only occasionally - if ever - entering their local Catholic church. I know that we have a good amount of active laity and clergy who are also sports fanatics that could take great encouragement from the statement, which you can read [HERE](#).



The poster features a large orange and red background with a photograph of a man speaking. The title 'Parish Renewal Conference' is written in a white cursive font at the top. Below it, the text 'FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS' is in large white capital letters, followed by '- Esther 4:14 -'. Three circular images are arranged horizontally: a group of people, the text 'PARISH RENEWAL CONFERENCE 2024', and a religious icon. The date and time 'SATURDAY 3 AUGUST 8:45AM-5PM' are prominently displayed, along with the venue 'Liverpool Catholic Club' and its address. A QR code is located in the bottom right, and the 'GO MAKE DISCIPLES' logo is in the bottom right corner.

Parish Renewal Conference

FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS
- Esther 4:14 -

PARISH RENEWAL CONFERENCE 2024

SATURDAY 3 AUGUST 8:45AM-5PM
Liverpool Catholic Club
424 - 458 Hoxton Park Road,
Prestons NSW 2170

Do you want to see our parishes renewed? Join us for a day of formation, workshops and networking to be equipped and strengthened for mission. Be part of the transformation in our Church today!

CONFERENCE COST
\$75 | Book by 31 May
\$90 | Book from 1 June

REGISTRATIONS CLOSE 19 JULY
gomakedisciples.org.au/cas-events

GO MAKE DISCIPLES

Do you want to see your parish renewed? Join Chris and other parish leaders from around NSW for a day of formation, workshops and networking to be equipped and strengthened for mission. Be part of the transformation in our Church today! If you're interested in attending and would like to request sponsorship please email chris@armidale.catholic.org.au

July Inspiration

ALWAYS REMEMBER THIS!

- GRAPES MUST BE CRUSHED TO MAKE WINE**
- DIAMONDS ARE FORMED UNDER PRESSURE**
- OLIVES ARE PRESSED TO RELEASE OIL**
- SEEDS GROW IN DARKNESS**

WHENEVER YOU FEEL CRUSHED, UNDER PRESSURE, PRESSED, OR IN DARKNESS, YOU ARE IN A POWERFUL PLACE OF TRANSFORMATION

TRUST GOD'S PROCESS

Parenting formation from Centacare

FREE
help for
frustrated
parents

PARENTING EXPLOSIVE KIDS

Does your child:

- Show extreme behaviour?
- Have intense temper tantrums?
- Refuse to do what they are asked?
- Use verbal and physical aggression?

Parenting Explosive Kids shows parents how:

- To identify the child's concerns and triggers that cause the behaviour,
- To teach the child coping skills and
- To find workable solutions that satisfy both parent and child and lessen the likelihood of negative behaviour

WHEN: 3 x Tuesdays 2nd, 9th & 16th July 2024
10am to 1pm
WHERE: Centacare, 150 Rusden Street, ARMIDALE
COST: FREE

For more information please call
Pedro on 6738 7200 or to register 1800 372 826

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RELATIONSHIP CENTRE
HELPING FAMILIES BUILD BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

 An Australian Government Initiative

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- Make an investment of at least \$10 or more within the month;
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Thanks for Reading!

Please get in touch with any feedback you may have
email: chris@armidale.catholic.org.au OR droff@arm.catholic.edu.au

We wish continued Pentecost blessings to you and yours,

Chris Da Silva & Damian Roff

