

Welcome to 2026!

Welcome to our first newsletter for 2026! We are back at work after the break and we have some exciting plans for the community for the year.

A new year can be a good thing – it gives us a chance to think about making changes in how we want to live, to start again. But is it too late to make changes now we are in February? No!!

With God by our side, a new day is a gift which is given to each of us **every** day. And each day can be better than the day before – when we love and trust God and follow the path in life which God wants us to lead. God knows each of us – he has a plan for each of us - and love us all so much in ways that we cannot imagine. God’s love is for us every day of our lives – he is waiting for all of us to accept his call to love.

You might read this and think – no, that is not for me. Maybe you are not Catholic. Maybe you were raised Catholic and haven’t been to Mass for years.

Everyone’s story and background is different. God knows you and loves you. He is waiting with open arms for you to come to him.

So this year – 2026 – our plans again have our love of God, our love of each other, and supporting the deaf community at the heart of all we do.

Together, let’s make this a great year for our deaf community. Let’s support each other with love, let’s celebrate together with love – and, with trust in our loving God, enjoy the year ahead.

With love and peace,
All at the Ephpheta Centre



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-------|
| Chrisso’s Report | 2 |
| Fr Michael’s Reflections | 3 |
| Holy Week and Easter Mass Timetable | 4 |
| Saint Mary’s Cathedral Mass | 4 |
| Community Days Out | 5 |
| In Loving Memory | 6-7 |
| Deaf Cafes | 8 |
| Auslan Play Group | 9 |
| Ephpheta Craft Group | 10 |
| Out and About in the Deaf Community | 11-13 |
| Lent Group and Friday Mass | 14 |
| Auslan Prayer Group | 15 |
| Year of St Francis | 16-17 |

A message from Chrisso

Hi everyone! Welcome to our first newsletter for 2026!

The Ephpheta team have had a busy start to the new year. Sometimes we get so caught up in how busy everyday life can be we forget to take the time to pause, reflect and think about what is truly important. A time to pause and think about God and how we can live the life God wants us to live. This is one of the wonderful things that I enjoy about Lent.



In a recent message for Lent, Pope Leo's prayer for us all was **"As we begin our Lenten journey today, let us ask the Lord to grant us the gift of true conversion (change) of the heart so that we may better respond to His love for us and share that love with those around us. Upon all of you and your families, I invoke (ask for) the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you all."**

For our deaf community 2025 was a year of both joy and sorrow. We celebrated together at different community events, Mass, days out, deaf youth events, Auslan Play Groups, and our community retreat. We also supported one another through times of loss – especially as we farewelled loved friends in our community.

Through it all one thing was very clear: our community spirit is alive and strong. It never ceases to amaze me of the strength of love, care and friendship in the deaf community.

Before we look ahead to the year (yes Ephpheta has some exciting things planned!) – Lent is a good opportunity for us to slow down, reflect and ask ourselves:

- What is most important in my life? Where is my relationship with God?
- How can I show love to my friends, family, and deaf community?
- How can I prepare my heart to welcome Jesus?

Lent reminds us that real change begins in our heart. When we take time to reflect, pray, and reconnect with God and each other, we grow stronger as individuals and as a community.



My hope for this Lenten season for our deaf community is that it is a time of peace, renewed hope, and deeper connection.

As we move into 2026 together, may we continue to carry the same strong community spirit that has sustained us - grounded in love, friendship, and faith. Here's to a fantastic year together!

Love and blessings,
Chrisso

Fr Michael's Reflection...



On Not Claiming the Holy Spirit Lightly

You should not claim the inspiration of God lightly. The Holy Spirit is God. Yet many people claim the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

God can pour out His Spirit very generously. However, God's Spirit does not inspire people when they are disobedient and contradict God. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth. He agrees with everything that Jesus taught us to believe, both directly and through His Church. It is through the teaching of the Church that we have faith that the books of the Bible are inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Many have gone wrong over the centuries. They disobeyed the solemn teachings of the Church and claimed that they could know the truth, because the Holy Spirit would inspire them directly.

Normally, if someone claimed direct inspiration by God, people would rightly doubt them and want some evidence. Yet people don't seem too concerned to ask for any for inspiration by the Holy Spirit. No one bats an eyelid!

It is true that the effect of the Holy Spirit in someone's life can be subtle and only obvious looking back. For example, there were no dramatic signs of the Holy Spirit's presence when David was anointed by the Prophet Samuel, but divine guidance and protection in David's life is evident looking back at the extraordinary turns of events.

However, it can also be said, with certainty, that the Holy Spirit does not support those who contradict Revelation. For example, the Holy Spirit abandoned King Saul, who was king before David, for disobeying the commands of God.

Likewise, people have gone wrong claiming that God wants them to start a new Church, apart from the One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church that Jesus founded. Or they say that God doesn't mind if they do things that the Church teaches are immoral (sins). These include adultery, fornication (sex outside of marriage), believing in horoscopes or mediums, not going to Mass on Sundays, or not going to Confession (at least once a year).

Of course, there are many examples. However, a saying from the Prophet Samuel sums things up well. When King Saul pretended to offer wholehearted sacrifice and prayer to God, while disobeying God, the Prophet Samuel corrected Saul by saying,

"To obey is greater than sacrifice" — 1 Samuel 15:22

Upcoming Community Events

2026 Easter Mass Timetable

Please see below for our Holy Week and Easter timetable. All are welcome to join us. All Masses will be Auslan interpreted.



Masses will be held at

1. Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Church - 74 Underwood Road, **Homebush**.
2. St Nicholas Catholic Church - 326 High Street, **Penrith**.

| Event | Date | Time | Where | |
|----------------------|------------------|---------|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| Palm Sunday | Sunday 29 March | 10.30am | Our Lady of the Assumption | Deaf Mass |
| Holy Thursday | Thursday 2 April | 7pm | St Nicholas Catholic Church | Integrated Mass |
| Good Friday | Friday 3 April | 3pm | Our Lady of the Assumption | Integrated Service |
| Easter Sunday | Sunday 5 April | 10.30am | Our Lady of the Assumption | Deaf Mass |

Please note that there is **NO EASTER VIGIL MASS ON SATURDAY NIGHT**.

We will have a cup of tea together in the hall after Palm Sunday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday Mass.

Masses will be **live streamed** onto Ephpheta's Facebook page.

The Integrated Masses on Holy Thursday and Good Friday will be very busy. Spaces at those Masses might be limited. Any questions, please contact Ephpheta staff.



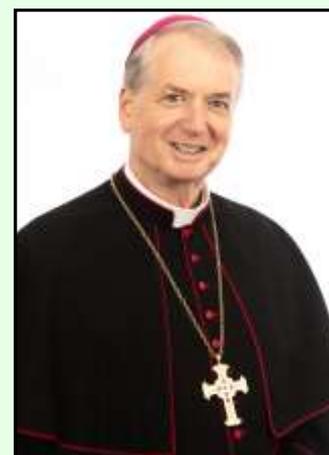
Saint Mary's Cathedral Mass – 3 May

We will be celebrating with his Grace Archbishop Anthony Fisher for a special Integrated Mass with the deaf community on Sunday 3 May at St Mary's Cathedral Sydney.

When and Where: 10.30am on Sunday 3 May.

Saint Mary's Cathedral - St Mary's Rd Sydney

RSVP: So that we have an idea of numbers, please let us know if you are coming. RSVP to Chrisso christiane@ephpheta.org.au or 0405 749 488 (SMS) before Monday 27 May.



Sistine Chapel: Revelations - 22nd May

Join us as we check out a special project created by the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney (CAS) - Sistine Chapel: Revelations. This exciting exhibition brings one of the world's greatest artworks to life using powerful projection technology with high quality images from the Vatican's archives.

We will learn about the history of the Sistine Chapel, why it was created and how it is used today - including its important role in choosing a new Pope. Through the exhibition we will also see a beautiful recreation of the Sistine Chapel.

The organisers will provide an audio guide to the Auslan interpreters and the interpreters will provide the information to us as a group. It will be a great day together.

After the tour we will have lunch nearby together at your own cost. BYO lunch welcome.

When and Where: Friday 22 May. Meet at 10am for a 10.20am start.

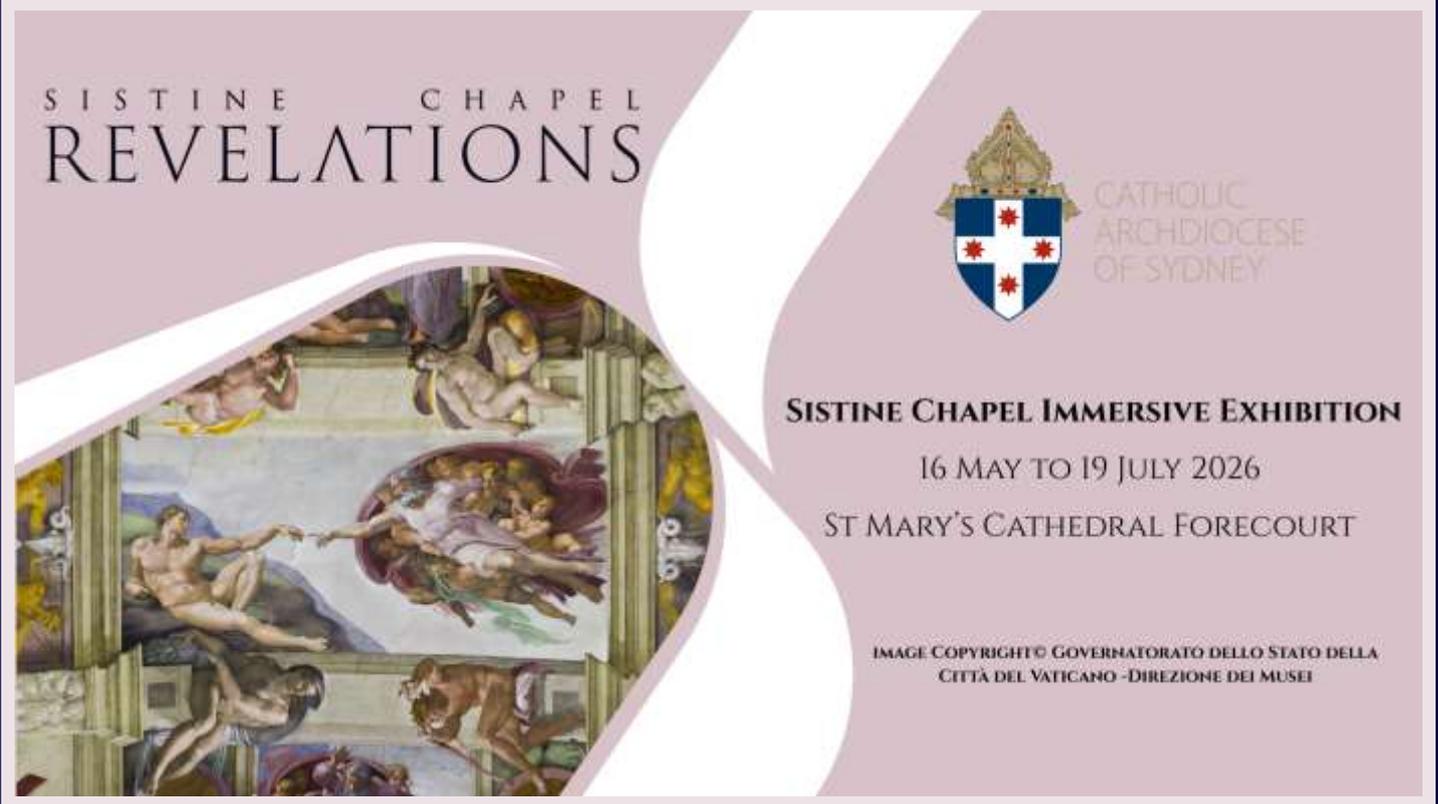
Saint Mary's Cathedral, Forecourt - St Mary's Road, Sydney.

Cost: \$35. *Please pay before the event.*

Lunch at your own cost.

If you need financial support for your ticket please contact Ephpheta.

RSVP: There are **limited** tickets available for this event. You **must** RSVP to Chrisso to secure your place 0405 749 488 (SMS) or email christiane@ephpheta.org.au before Friday 15 May.



SISTINE CHAPEL
REVELATIONS

CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF SYDNEY

SISTINE CHAPEL IMMERSIVE EXHIBITION
16 MAY TO 19 JULY 2026
ST MARY'S CATHEDRAL FORECOURT

IMAGE COPYRIGHT © GOVERNATORATO DELLO STATO DELLA CITTÀ DEL VATICANO - DIREZIONE DEI MUSEI

M IN LOVING Memory



We remember...

Our deaf community is like a family. We laugh together and we cry together. We celebrate with each other when things go well and support each other through the hard times. As a community of faith, we pray for our brothers and sisters who have died. We pray for all our departed brothers and sisters - and ask that God welcome them into the joy of heaven.

Michael Paul - Died 16 October 2025

We remember with love our dear friend Michael who died peacefully on 16 October 2025.

Michael was a loved and valued member of our Ephpheta deaf community. Our prayers are with him and his family especially his beloved daughter.

Rest in peace Michael



Anthony Hastings - Died 2 December 2025

We remember with love our dear friend Anthony who died peacefully on 2 December 2025.

Anthony was a loved and valued member of our Ephpheta deaf community, who for many years was a pastoral volunteer at the Ephpheta Centre. Our prayers are with him and his family.

Rest in peace Anthony



Pauline Smith – Died 12 January 2026

We remember with love our dear friend Pauline who died peacefully on 12 January 2026.

Pauline was a loved and valued member of our Ephpheta deaf community. Our prayers are with her and her family, especially her beloved children.

Rest in peace Pauline



Jeanette Bartle – Died 31 January 2026

We remember with love our dear friend Jeanette who died peacefully on 31 January 2026.

Jeanette was a loved and valued member of our Ephpheta deaf community. Our prayers are with her and her family, especially her beloved children.

Rest in peace Jeanette.



**Grant them eternal rest, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine
upon them. Amen**

If anyone in the deaf community has died, and you would like us to include information in the newsletter, please contact Chrisso to discuss.

We pray for all people who have died, that God will receive them with joy into heaven.





DEAF CAFÉ

The Ephpheta Centre runs deaf café for our deaf community - social catch ups at different locations around Sydney.

Here is the list of our next round of Deaf Cafes at different locations throughout Sydney.

- **Friday 20 March. 10am**
 - Central Coast Leagues Club
 - 1 Dane Drive, Gosford
- **Friday 17 April. 10am**
 - Canterbury League Club
 - 26 Bridge Road, Belmore
- **Friday 15 May. 10am**
 - Seven Hills RSL
 - 108 Best Road, Seven Hills
- **Friday 19 June. 10am**
 - Penrith RSL Club
 - 8 Tindale Street, Penrith

We meet on the
3rd Friday of
every month

Please bring money
to buy your own
food and drinks from
the club

We look forward to
seeing you!

For more information please contact
Donovan Mulligan - 0408 697 773 (SMS) or email donovan@ephpheta.org.au



AUSLAN PLAY GROUP

Auslan Play Group is for young families in our deaf community - a social group for mums, dads, grandparents, carers and their children aged 0 - 5 years.

Ephpheta loves supporting new parents and watching them support others as their children grow.

It has been wonderful getting to know the littlest members of our deaf community and watch them grow!

New families are always welcome!

*We have events for our deaf and hard of hearing families and their children aged 0 - 5 years old happening in **March, April, May and June.***

For more information contact Chrisso Quartararo.

For more information please contact
Chrisso Quartararo - 0405 749 488 (SMS) or email christiane@ephpheta.org.au



EPHPHETA CRAFT GROUP

All are welcome to get involved in our program of events or bring your own projects to work on.

We start at 10am and finish around 2pm. **Please bring your own lunch.** Ephpheta provides morning tea for a gold coin donation.

Dates for March - May:

- **Wednesday 11 March**
- **Wednesday 25 March**
- **Wednesday 8 April**
- **Wednesday 22 April**
- **Wednesday 13 May**
- **Wednesday 27 May**

If there are any special workshops happening on these dates we will announce on Ephpheta Facebook

We meet on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month



Homebush Hall
Behind Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Church
74 Underwood Road,
Homebush

For more information please contact
Chrisso Quartararo - 0405 749 488 (SMS) or email christiane@ephpheta.org.au

Out and About in the Deaf Community

The JOY of Christmas in the Deaf Community

We had a wonderful time with the community through December as we celebrated the end of the year and the coming of Christmas.

On 7 December we had a fantastic day for our Community Christmas celebrations – starting with Mass with Bishop Tony Percy and Fr Michael at Homebush, then to Canada Bay club for a great lunch. It was such a lovely fun day – thanks for all who joined us to make this a wonderful community event.

We also had great get-togethers with the community for our craft Christmas lunch, Auslan Playgroup and Deaf Cafe.

We all joined together for a great Christmas Mass and supper at Homebush on 24 December.

Thanks to you all for making it a wonderful month of celebration and community.



Community Day Out – Saint Mary’s Cathedral

On 14 November, we enjoyed our last deaf community day out for 2025. We visited Saint Mary’s Cathedral in Sydney where we joined for a guided tour.

During the tour, we learned about Saint Mary’s Cathedral’s rich history, from its foundation in the 19th century to its role as a spiritual and cultural landmark in the heart of Sydney city. The tour guide explained the stunning architecture of the Cathedral, told us stories about the different saints shown inside the building.

We also learned that the Cathedral has been a place where people come together for big events, celebrations, and important moments in the community.

We left with a deeper understanding of why the Cathedral is so important and a greater appreciation for it.

Thank you to everyone who joined us and helped make this meaningful visit accessible for our deaf community!



Community Day Out – Mary MacKillop Place

On 13 February, we enjoyed our first deaf community day out for 2026. We visited Mary MacKillop Place in North Sydney where we had a guided tour of the museum and Mass in the chapel.

Mary MacKillop Place is quite beautiful – it contains beautiful old buildings, gardens and a chapel, but it is in the middle of the business centre of North Sydney and its big office towers.

During the tour, we learned about St Mary MacKillop’s life, her dedication to education, and the challenges she faced while founding the Sisters of St Joseph. Walking through her home made her story feel more personal and real. Seeing the room where she lived and spent her final days helped us to understand her humility and strong faith.

After the tour, we had Mass in the chapel. The chapel had a calm and peaceful feeling, and it felt special to pray in a place so closely connected to Australia’s first saint. The chapel contains the tomb of St Mary MacKillop – it is a place where many people from Australian and overseas come to pray. The visit was meaningful and inspiring, and it deepened our appreciation for St Mary MacKillop’s legacy.



Free community event

Your identity is important. Learn how to protect it at our Morning identi-TEA (Auslan interpreted)



Every year millions of Australians are victims of data breaches and identity crime. It can be difficult to know what to do and where to find information.

ID Support NSW are here to help. Join us for a special morning identi-TEA session, where we'll share valuable tips on how to protect your personal information, stay safe online and how to protect your ID documents from cybercrime.

Date and time: Tuesday, 10 March 2026

Location: Phive Building: (Maker Room 2) 5 Parramatta Square, Parramatta

Bookings required: nsw.gov.au and search ID Support NSW events to register

Learn more about how to protect yourself from identity crime,
call us on 1800 001 040 or visit nsw.gov.au



Lent Group 2026

From the very beginning of the Church, Christians have met together to learn, support each other and pray.

When we meet, we experience God through one another as we listen and share our faith.

During Lent - a time when the Church asks us to walk with Jesus toward the Cross - this group will help us along the journey, to remind us that we are not alone and that God is always with us.

You are invited to join us and to reflect on the Sunday gospel readings with an open heart and open mind.



OPEN TO ALL DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING PEOPLE

| When? | Where |
|---|---|
| Sunday 1 March after 10:30am Mass | Homebush Hall Our Lady of the Assumption 74 Underwood Road, Homebush |
| Sunday 8 March after 10:30am Mass | Homebush Hall Our Lady of the Assumption 74 Underwood Road, Homebush |
| Sunday 15 March after 9:30am Mass | Parish Hall St Paul the Apostle Catholic Church 40 Buckleys Road, Winston Hills |
| Sunday 22 March after 10:30am Mass | Homebush Hall Our Lady of the Assumption 74 Underwood Road, Homebush |

If you would like to join please contact Brett Beath 0407 064 872 or email brettb@ephpheta.org.au

1st Friday at Our Lady of the Assumption

Every first Friday of the month, we will be having the Rosary, Mass and Auslan Prayer Group at Our Lady of the Assumption, Homebush.

| Every month | Upcoming dates |
|---|---|
| 10:30: The Rosary 11:00: Mass followed by lunch and Auslan Prayer Group | Friday 6 March Friday 1 May Friday 5 June |



GOLD COIN DONATION FOR LUNCH

Auslan Prayer Group



Auslan Prayer Group is about sharing our faith and our love for God and each other.

We come together in friendship with open hearts and open minds. It is a special place where each person is welcomed and valued.

All deaf and hard of hearing people are welcome!

Prayer Group will be on the 1st Friday of the month (Face to Face at OLA) after lunch and the 4th Friday of the Month (Online on Zoom) at 1pm

Program for March - June

| When? | Where |
|--|--|
| Friday 6 March Lent 101 | Face to Face: Our Lady of the Assumption |
| Friday 27 March How to pray | Online: Zoom - 1pm |
| Friday 3 April | NO PRAYER GROUP Good Friday Service at 3pm |
| Friday 24 April The Saints are our friends | Online: Zoom - 1pm |
| Friday 1 May What are the Holy Days of Obligation? | Face to Face: Our Lady of the Assumption |
| Friday 22 May Why do we pray the Rosary? | Online: Zoom - 1pm |
| Friday 5 June Why do we have Catholic Processions? | Face to Face: Our Lady of the Assumption |

If you would like to join please contact Brett Beath 0407 064 872 or email

brettb@ephpheta.org.au

NO ROSARY, MASS AND PRAYER GROUP FACE TO FACE

IN APRIL BECAUSE OF GOOD FRIDAY

Year of St Francis

10 January 2026 - 10 January 2027

Pope Leo XIV has announced that 2026 will be a “Special Year of St Francis.” This is to celebrate 800 years since St Francis of Assisi died (4 October 1226).



Here are five reasons why St Francis is still a great saint and why he is still loved today!

1. Francis lived with a simple, trusting Heart

At the centre of Francis’s faith was humility (being humble). This did not mean putting himself down. It meant happily depending on God. In front of a bishop and the townspeople, Francis gave up his riches and clothes. Standing in the town square with nothing, he let go of the things he owned, and also his pride and ego. He owned very little, trusted God to care for him, and found joy in the small and simple things. He did not want anything — not even comfort — to come between him and God.



2. Francis saw God in all Creation

Francis loved nature because he loved God, who created it. Nature showed Francis something about the beauty of God. It was like a window that helped him see God’s beauty. When he preached to birds or cared for animals, he truly believed that all creation came from God and gives God glory.

3. Francis loved the poor and sick people

The big change in Francis’s life happened when he met a leper (sick man with an infectious disease). At this time lepers had to live separately to other people – people were scared of catching their sickness. At first, Francis was afraid. But instead of turning away, he got off his horse, went to the man, and embraced him. He even kissed his hand. Later, Francis said that what once made him feel scared became a moment of deep joy and grace. Francis believed that Jesus was truly present in the poor and the sick. He cared for lepers, begged for food for the hungry, and chose to live in poverty himself.

4. Francis' joy in the simple things

Francis was filled with holy joy. He sang while walking through the fields. He praised God even when he was hungry. He laughed and joked with the brothers who followed him. For Francis, joy protected the heart. Francis said that "perfect joy" is when we are happy with God alone. He believed true happiness does not come from having many things, but from needing very little.

5. Francis lived a life of prayer and friendship with God

Francis's work for others came from a deep prayer life. He often spent long nights alone in caves, praying, fasting, and asking God to save souls. When his brothers asked him how to pray, he said simply, "Speak to God as to a friend." For Francis, prayer was an ongoing conversation with the God he loved. He would go to quiet places to be alone with God, and in that silence, he felt close to Him. Francis tried to live this every day. Whether he was walking, working, or resting, his heart was focused on God.

Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi - Prayer for Peace

Lord, make me someone who brings your peace.

Where people hate, help me bring love.

Where someone is hurt, help me bring forgiveness.

Where there is doubt, help me bring faith.

Where there is despair, help me bring hope.

Where there is darkness, help me bring light.

Where there is sadness, help me bring joy.

Lord, help me not to focus on being comforted, but on comforting others.

Help me not to focus on being understood, but on understanding others.

Help me not to focus on being loved, but on loving others.

Because when we give, we receive. When we forgive, we are forgiven.

And when we die to ourselves, we are born into eternal life.

Amen





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EPHPHETA WEBSITE NEWS

Have you seen our website recently?

Our website is now being updated regularly so it is
always full of current information.

Please keep checking it!

If you have any ideas or feedback for our website
please contact Chrisso.

www.ephpheta.org.au

Please send your news, stories,
information and requests to Liz or Chrisso to
be considered for the next newsletter!



What does “Ephpheta” mean?

The name Ephpheta of our Centre came from the
bible - a story about Jesus meeting a deaf man, he
says “Ephpheta” which means “Be open”.

We are always open to you all!