

What a wonderful few months!

Wow - what an amazing few months we have coming up at the Ephpheta Centre!

As you will see when you read through this newsletter, there are many special events which we have planned for the deaf community for the next few months.

As you know, a visiting deaf priest from the US will be with us for a month through August - September - this is Fr Michael Depcik (Fr MD).

We have prepared many opportunities for the community to be with Fr MD when he is with us - for Ephpheta Sunday Mass and lunch, Deaf Café, a trip to Mary MacKillop Place and Eileen O'Connor's home at Coogee and of course our 3 day retreat at Grose Vale. We will also have opportunities for one on one meetings for the community and Fr MD. We will have many Masses led by Fr MD in Auslan.

We of course will also be at the Deaf Festival on Saturday, 29 August - Ephpheta and our craft group will have a stall. Please make sure you come up and say hello to us on the day - and have a look at all the wonderful things which the craft group have been busily preparing for sale on the day.

In Sydney at the moment it is cold with lots of rain. So make yourself a cuppa, find somewhere warm to sit and enjoy our newsletter!

With best wishes from the Ephpheta team



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A message from Liz

Love in the little things

Sometimes when we watch the news or read the newspaper, the world seems a scary place. There are wars overseas, earthquakes, all sorts of awful things - how can we make a positive difference in this world?



Credit - Diocese of Westminster

I have been thinking a bit about “love in the little things”.

Some of you might have heard of St Therese of Lisieux. She is known as “the little flower of Jesus”. She was a nun who lived from 1873 to 1897 - dying at the young age of 24.

In her life, St Therese focused on **small acts of love**. What does she mean? Simple things - like smiling at people who are not nice to us, being patient with each other and doing the everyday things with great love.

St Therese says that we should try to do the smallest things in our life with great love and that we should look at how we can do this in everything we do. Everyday.

We can do this in very simple ways. We can look at another person with love. We can pause and think before we make an angry response. We can go out of our way to help another person - we don't know the impact we might have on another person when we smile at them or respond to them in a loving way. We don't know what is happening in their life. It might be our smile that changes their day.

This is what God wants us to do - to love Him and to love each other. And God is with us - every moment of our life - to help us to be the person that God wants us all to be.

Until next time.

Stay warm,

Liz



Fr Michael's Reflection...

God is love,
and he who abides in love abides in God,
and God abides in him.
(1 John 4:16)



God made you to be loved and to love, like Himself, who is “Love”. Our first parents fell from love, because they were tempted by an angel who Himself had fallen from love of God forever. However, God had created man and woman differently from the angels, with free will, with the power to change. God always had a kind plan to restore love in them.

It was a long path for humanity, from the beginning to the fulfilment of God's plan. However, God knew what He was doing, and when the right time came, God the Father would reveal God the Son, conceived by God the Holy Spirit. It is a great mystery that God revealed Himself to be a Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God in three persons. However, I would like to focus on the **love** of the Trinity. If God is Love, then the Trinity is united in love. God the Father is Love, God the Son is Love, and God the Holy Spirit is Love.

God the Son, who is Love, became man. He was born of the Virgin Mary who was preserved from the harm of the first man and woman's failure to love. Mary was freed from the first moment of her existence to love as they had been free to love. And Mary did love, wholeheartedly dedicated to the love of God and her neighbour, unlike any other person, until... by God the Holy Spirit, and not by any man, Mary was made the mother of God's Son. Love was born, a man, named Jesus, and fittingly gathered into the arms of one freed to love.

Mary was freed by a foretaste of Love's gift... Himself.

Jesus, Love made man, offered Himself on the Cross. As usual, the loveless had only wanted to steal, but found placed within their reach a gift addressed to each.

The gift is Jesus, Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity, in the Eucharist. In this gift, Love heals our lovelessness and calls us to love in union with Him. That is why we pray in the Mass, “through Him, with Him, and in Him”. Our response is given in our attention at Mass, our prayerful consideration of the teachings of Jesus, and, as we receive Him, in our loving prayers, offered in Union with Love, for the praise of God and love for all people.

Upcoming Community Events

Feast Day of Mary MacKillop - 8th August

On Saturday 8 August, there will be special celebrations at Mary MacKillop Place at North Sydney to celebrate the feast day of Mary MacKillop - Australia's first saint.

Auslan interpreters will be present at Masses at 10am and 1pm.

All the deaf community are welcome at either of these Masses.

Please note that this is not an Ephpheta event.

Ephpheta staff may not be at these Masses.



When and Where: Saturday 8 August. **10am and 1pm.**

Mary MacKillop Place - 80 William Street, North Sydney

Assumption of Mary - 15th August

On Saturday 15 August, the Church celebrates the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the day when Mary goes up to Heaven.

In Australia, it is a Holy Day of Obligation.

There will be an Auslan interpreted Mass at Our Lady of the Assumption, Homebush.

Mass will be live streamed on our Facebook page for those unable to join us.



When and Where: Saturday 15 August. Integrated Mass at **5.30pm.**

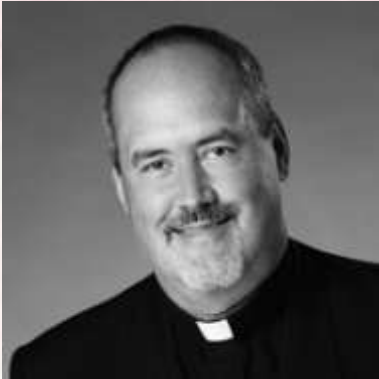
Our Lady of the Assumption - 74 Underwood Road, Homebush

After Mass there will be a parish celebration in the Hall - all are welcome to join.

Ephpheta Sunday - 23rd August

Every year on Ephpheta Sunday the Church celebrates the gifts deaf people bring to the life of the Church - the gifts of language, faith and community.

Get ready for something truly special!



On 23 August, we will celebrate an unforgettable Ephpheta Sunday with a wonderful Mass and joyful lunch led by Fr Michael Depcik - marking his exciting welcome to Sydney! Everyone is welcome to come and join us to celebrate Ephpheta Sunday!

We look forward to seeing you all on this special day!



When: Sunday 23rd August

Mass: Starts at 10.30am

Our Lady of the Assumption - 74 Underwood Rd, Homebush.

Lunch: Starts at 12pm

Canada Bay Club - 8 William Street, Five Dock.

Please join us for a beautiful buffet meal in the Auditorium Room at Canada Bay Club.

Canada Bay Club is a 10 minute drive from Our Lady of the Assumption in Homebush.

Cost: \$45 per person

\$10 per child (12 years old and under)

Ephpheta is supporting the costs of this event. Please pay before the event

RSVP: You must RSVP to Ephpheta Centre **before Friday 14 August.**

Email: christiane@ephpheta.org.au or 0405 749 488 (SMS).

- When you RSVP please let us know if you have any special food requirements/ allergies.
- If you are deafblind and need extra interpreting support on the day - please let us know **ASAP**.

How to pay: 1. Post us a cheque or money order to the Ephpheta Centre

2. Give cash to any Ephpheta staff

3. Pay online into our bank account

Account Name: Ephpheta Centre Cheque Account

BSB: 062 784

Account Number: 1000 01233

Reference: ES + your name



Mary MacKillop Place Visit - 27th August

Join us as we visit Mary MacKillop Place in North Sydney.

Mary MacKillop is Australia's first saint. We will have Mass together, a guided tour of the museum where we will learn about Mary's life and faith. It will be a great day together.

We will start the day with a tour of the museum, then have Mass led by Fr Michael Depcik.

After Mass we will have lunch together.

When and Where: Thursday 27 August. Meet at 9.30am. Tour starts at 10am. Mass at 12pm.

Mary MacKillop Place - 80 William Street, North Sydney.

Cost: \$25. Includes guided tour and lunch.

Ephpheta is supporting the costs for this event. Please pay before the event.

RSVP: Chrisso 0405 749 488 (SMS) or email christiane@ephpheta.org.au before Friday 21 August.



Deaf Festival 2026 - 29th August

Everyone is welcome to come along for a fantastic community day. There will be lots to see and do. Ephpheta will be having two stalls this year - we'd love to see our community there!

Fr Michael Depcik will also be joining us - please come and say hello!



Eileen O'Connor Visit - 4th September

Join us for a visit of the Eileen O'Connor house in Coogee.

Eileen O'Connor was a remarkable Australian woman. She lived a life of constant pain but great cheerfulness. She learned the hopelessness that poor people faced with illnesses. Her work is a big part of the social history in Australia. Living a life close to Christ and Mary resulted in a spirituality so strong and radiant.

Join us for a tour to learn more about Eileen, followed by Mass led by Fr Michael Depcik.

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

When and Where: Friday 4 September - meet at 9.30am for a 10am start.

Our Lady's Nurses for the Poor - 35 Dudley Street, Coogee.

Cost: Free. Lunch at your own cost.

RSVP: Chrisso 0405 749 488 (SMS) or email christiane@ephpheta.org.au before Friday 28 August.



EPHPHETA CENTRE DEAF COMMUNITY RETREAT

Theme: Peace and Happiness

Friday 11 - Sunday 13 September 2026

3 days, 2 nights

Arrive 9:30am Friday. Leave after lunch on Sunday.

Where: Benedict XVI Retreat Centre at Grose Vale (near Richmond).



We are so pleased to announce that
we will holding a retreat for the deaf community!!

Led by **Fr Michael Depcik** (deaf Catholic priest)
Fr Depcik will be signing in Auslan throughout the retreat.



Join us for a wonderful weekend with:

- Lovely accommodation
- Great food
- Peaceful location
- Interesting talks and activities
- **All in Auslan!**



Retreat Cost (3 days, 2 nights)

Price includes all meals and accommodation

1.	Own Room	(1 person per room)	\$420 each person
2.	Shared Room	(2 people per room)	\$275 each person
3.	Shared Room	(3 or more people per room)	\$240 each person
Join us for day only (no dinner, not staying the night)			\$60 each person per day

ALL ARE WELCOME TO JOIN!

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN COMING?

Please contact Chrisso Quartararo on 0405 749 488 (SMS)

or christiane@ephpheta.org.au for RSVP and
more information **ASAP**

PLACES ARE LIMITED.



Community Games Day!

Join us for some fun games days with our deaf community and a chance to chat with Fr Michael Depcik. We will have this during our regular craft group day. All are welcome to join us!

Ephpheta will provide some different games to play and morning tea.

Please BYO lunch.

When and Where: Wednesday 9 September. 10am - 2pm.

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

Cost: Free. Morning tea provided (donation appreciated). BYO lunch.

RSVP: Chrisso to let us know if you're joining 0405 749 488 (SMS) or email christiane@ephpheta.org.au.



Community Presentation - 14th October

Dementia Australia is the leading national organisation supporting people living with dementia, their families and carers.

Almost 500,00 Australians live with dementia, and about 1.7 million Australians are involved in caring for people with dementia.

Many people do not have a clear understanding about dementia – what it is, what we should know and how to support a person with dementia.

We are very lucky to have Dementia Australia come and lead this informative session with our deaf community. This will be Auslan interpreted. We all have a lot to learn about this very challenging health condition which impacts on so many people.

When and Where: Wednesday 14 October. Meet at 10am for a 10.30am start.

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

Cost: Free. Ephpheta will provide morning tea (gold coin donation appreciated)

RSVP: Chrisso 0405 749 488 (SMS) or email christiane@ephpheta.org.au



dementia
australia™

Community Day Out - 30th October

Join us for a tour of the State Library of New South Wales.

The State Library of New South Wales is a special place in the centre of Sydney. It has millions of books, photos, maps, artworks and old items that tell the story of New South Wales and Australia.



We will have a special guided tour through the library with an Auslan interpreter.

After the tour we will have lunch nearby together at your own cost. It will be a great day together.

When and Where: Friday 30 October. Meet at 9.30am. Tour starts at 10am.

State Library of New South Wales - 1 Shakespeare Place, Sydney.

Cost: Free. Lunch at your own cost.

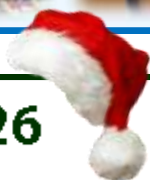
RSVP: There are limited spaces available for this event.

You must RSVP to Chrisso to secure your place 0405 749 488 (SMS) or email

christiane@ephpheta.org.au before Friday 23 October.



December 2026



We know December is often a busy time of year - please save these dates in your calendar.

More information in the next newsletter!

- **Community Christmas Party** - Sunday, 6 December
- **Craft Group Christmas Party** - Wednesday, 9 December
- **December Deaf Café** - Friday, 11 December
- **Christmas Eve Vigil Mass** - Thursday, 24 December

SAVE THE DATE

**MORE INFORMATION
COMING SOON!**



calendar for FR MICHAEL DEPCIK'S UPCOMING VISIT



Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
17 August	18 August	19 August	20 August	21 August	22 August	23 August
		10am Mass Winston Hills Morning tea with community	10am Mass Ephpheta Centre Punchbowl	10am Deaf Café Lidcombe 10am - 2pm See page 12 for more information		EPHPHETA SUNDAY See page 5 for more information
24 August	25 August	26 August	27 August	28 August	29 August	30 August
	10am Mass Ephpheta Centre Punchbowl	9.30am Mass Our Lady of the Assumption Homebush	MMK Place Visit to Mary Mackillop Place Tour, Mass and lunch See page 6 for more information	10am Mass Ephpheta Centre Punchbowl Morning tea and lunch 1pm Prayer Group on Zoom and Face to Face Ephpheta Centre Punchbowl See page 12 for more information	DEAF FESTIVAL See page 6 for more information	10.30am Homebush Mass 11.30am Catholic Faith 101 Presentation Homebush See page 11 for more information
31 August	1 September	2 September	3 September	4 September	5 September	6 September
		10am Mass Ephpheta Centre Punchbowl	10am Mass Winston Hills	Eileen O'Connor Tour, Mass and lunch - Coogee See page 6 for more information		10.30am Homebush Mass 11.30am Catholic Faith 101 Presentation Homebush See page 11 for more information
7 September	8 September	9 September	10 September	11 September	12 September	13 September
	10am Mass Ephpheta Centre Punchbowl	9.30am Mass Our Lady of the Assumption Homebush Craft Group/Community Games Day Homebush See page 8 for more information		COMMUNITY RETREAT See page 7 for more Information	COMMUNITY RETREAT See page 7 for more Information	COMMUNITY RETREAT See page 7 for more information

Ephpheta Regular Sunday Mass times and places

A reminder about our regular accessible deaf Sunday Mass times and places.

Our Lady of the Assumption Church:

74 Underwood Road, Homebush
(10.30am - Deaf Mass)

August: 2, 9, 23, 30

September: 6, 27

October: 4, 11, 25

November: 1, 8, 22, 29

St Paul's Catholic Church:

40 Buckleys Road, Winston Hills
(9.30am - Integrated Mass)

August: 16

September: 20

October: 18

November: 15



Catholic Faith 101

Fr Michael Depcik will be leading us in some very interesting presentations when he is here in Australia. Fr MD loves teaching people especially about the Catholic Faith.



We will have 2 presentations called "Catholic Faith 101"- these will be different presentations on each date.

All deaf and hard of hearing people are welcome – Catholic, not Catholic, doesn't matter.

Fr MD will teach us all about some fundamentals of the Catholic faith. For some of us it will be new information; for others it will be a good reminder.

Ephpheta will provide morning tea (gold coin donation appreciated)

When: Sunday 30 August and Sunday 6 September. After 10.30am Mass has finished (so start around 11.45am). Each session will go for about 45 minutes or so. All presented in Auslan

Where: Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Church Hall - 74 Underwood Road, Homebush

RSVP: Chrisso 0405 749 488 (SMS) or email christiane@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
10:30am: The Rosary 11am: Mass followed by lunch and Auslan Prayer Group	Friday 7 August Friday 2 October Friday 6 November



GOLD COIN DONATION FOR LUNCH

NO 1st FRIDAY AT OLA ON FRIDAY 4 SEPTEMBER - SEE PAGE 6 FOR MORE INFORMATION

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!

Program for August - November

When?	Where
Friday 7 August The Fatima Children and the Eucharist	Face to Face: Our Lady of the Assumption 1pm
Friday 28 August Prayer Group led by Fr Michael Depcik	Face to Face and Zoom: Ephpheta Centre 1pm
Friday 25 September NWDP - Gospel Story of Jesus healing a deaf man	Online: Zoom 1pm
Friday 2 October Pray with Mary	Face to Face: Our Lady of the Assumption 1pm
Friday 6 November How to Pray the Angelus?	Face to Face: Our Lady of the Assumption 1pm
Friday 27 November TBC	Online: Zoom 1pm

Special Auslan Prayer Group Series with our Seminarians

In October, join us for a special three-part Auslan Prayer Group series on Zoom.

Our seminarians will lead 3 sessions exploring the Eucharist, helping us deepen our understanding of this great gift of our Catholic faith. **All deaf and hard of hearing people are welcome!**

If you can't make these dates, we will try to record the presentations.

When?
Eucharist: Thursday 15 October - 11am on Zoom
Eucharist: Thursday 22 October - 11am on Zoom
Eucharist: Thursday 29 October - 11am on Zoom

Any questions, please contact Brett Beath 0407 064 872 or email brettb@ephpheta.org.au



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.

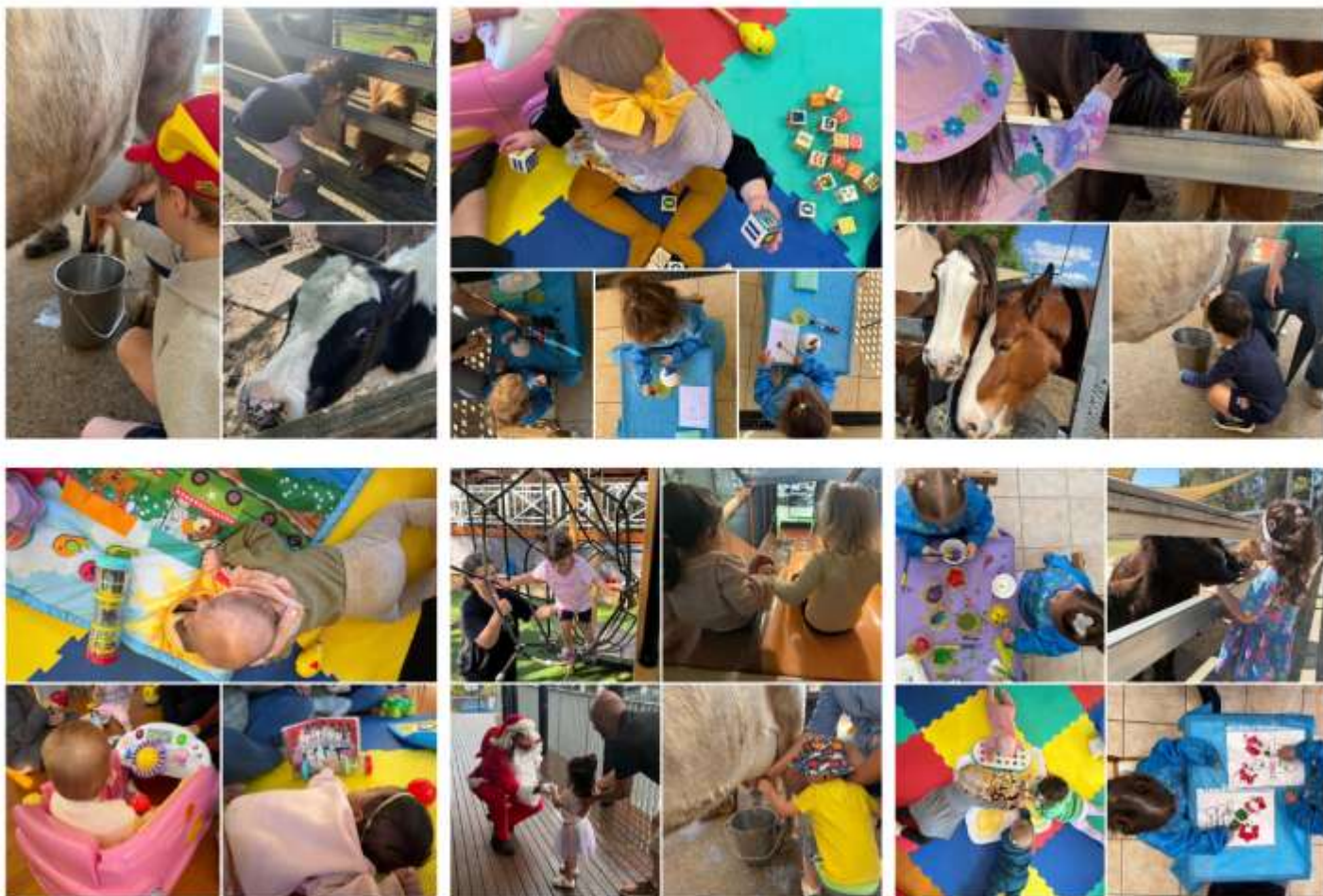
- **Friday 21 August. 10am**
 - DOOLEYS Catholic Club
 - 17 Church Street, Lidcombe
- **Friday 18 September. 10am**
 - Wenty Leagues
 - 50 Smith Street, Wentworthville
- **Friday 16 October. 10am**
 - The Juniors Kingsford
 - 558A Anzac Parade, Kingsford
- **Friday 20 November. 10am**
 - Wests Ashfield Leagues Club
 - 115 Liverpool Road, Ashfield

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 **August, September, October and November.***

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 August - November:

- **Wednesday 12 August**
 - **Wednesday 26 August**
 - **Wednesday 9 September**
 - Community Games Day!
 - *See page 8 for more information*
 - **Wednesday 23 September**
 - **Wednesday 14 October**
 - Community Presentation
 - *See page 8 for more information*
 - **Wednesday 28 October**
 - Macrame with Lou (all materials provided)
 - You **MUST** RSVP
- NO CRAFT GROUP ON 11 NOVEMBER**
- **Wednesday 25 November**
 - Macrame with Lou (all materials provided)
 - You **MUST** RSVP

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

get TO know

FR MICHAEL
DEPCIK

We are so excited to welcome Fr Michael Depcik to Sydney next month.

While many of you already know him, for others this will be your first chance to meet him.

To help everyone get acquainted, we've asked him to answer a few fun and thoughtful questions.

Read on to learn a little more about who he is before you have the chance to connect with him in person!

1. Tell us a little bit about your family. Do you have brothers or sisters?

I was born into a Deaf family of seven. My Deaf parents have five Deaf children, and I am the youngest. I grew up in Chicago, Illinois, and my parents also grew up in Chicago, as did my four grandparents. My dad worked at a company that made suits for men, and my mom was a housewife for many years. After I completed my secondary education, my mom worked as an aide at a hospital for Deaf patients with mental health issues.



2. Where did you go to school? What was your experience like during school years?

I went to a hearing school that had a Deaf unit attended by about 30 Deaf pupils. Each class had a signing teacher. When I was old enough at the age of 12, I joined my siblings at a Catholic Deaf boarding school in Cincinnati, Ohio. When I was 17 years old and in high school, I spent one year in Australia as an exchange student. I lived with a host family in Townsville, Queensland, for six months and then with another family in Brisbane for the last six months. After one year in Australia and completing the last six months at my high school, I went to Gallaudet University, where I received a bachelor's degree in Secondary Education and History. I then joined the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales to study for the priesthood, and the Oblates sent me to Ss. Cyril & Methodius Seminary near Detroit, Michigan. I was ordained a priest in 2000, and in 2005 I returned to Gallaudet to earn a master's degree in counselling.

It was during my year in Australia that I first experienced attending mainstream classes with an interpreter for several Deaf pupils. The schools in Townsville and Brisbane had around 30 Deaf pupils. These interpreted classes prepared me well for my studies in the seminary because I was the only Deaf student and had to rely on interpreters.

3. Tell us when and why you decided to become a priest? What were your thoughts about that? What was your family's reaction to that?

How did I become a priest? It is a long story! If I had not lived in Australia for one year, I probably would never have become a priest. I truly believe that God sent me to the other side of the world in order for me to find Him. It was in Australia that I experienced God's deep love for me. I became serious about my prayer life and my relationship with God.

When I was 21 years old at Gallaudet University, I read a book on the apparitions of the Blessed Mother in Medjugorje, which changed my life. That was when I fully embraced my Catholic faith, and soon afterward I had a powerful dream in which I saw myself as a priest. The rest is history. My family's reaction was one of surprise and caution at the same time. As time went by, they became supportive of me.



4. Tell us about your experience in the seminary. Were there other deaf seminarians studying at the same time as you? What was access like with ASL in the seminary?

Because I am an Oblate of St. Francis de Sales, which is a religious congregation, I lived in a house with other Oblates while commuting to the seminary. I was the only Deaf seminarian, and I had an interpreter in all classes. At first, I was not used to having my eyes glued to the interpreter all the time. However, I became more comfortable with having an interpreter, and I learned so much in the seminary.



At home, there were one or two Oblates who were able to communicate effectively with me because they knew ASL. Yet I must admit that it is often difficult to be the only Deaf Oblate, especially when there are large gatherings of Oblates. This is a common experience for most Deaf people, especially when they attend large hearing family gatherings such as weddings or funerals, where one can feel left out.

5. Tell us about your connection with Australia. When you visit us in Australia what do you love about Australia? Is there anything that maybe scares you a little bit when you visit?

I LOVE Australia! I will never forget the year 1987.

Why? That was when I spent one whole year in Australia, which changed my life.

Australia is a beautiful country, and the people are friendly. I am not nervous about going to Sydney next month. I am quite excited, but I must admit that I am aware that my Auslan is rusty.

I hope Deaf people in Australia will be able to follow me when I sign Auslan.



6. Do you have a favourite Australian animal or bird? If so why?

Since I was a boy, my favourite animal has always been the parrot.

Every time I went to Australia, I became thrilled when seeing wild parrots such as rainbow lorikeets and cockatoos.

I once owned two sweet cockatiels named Rosie and Ely, and they both reminded me every day of their cousins in the wild in Australia.

7. Do you have a favourite Saint? Who and why?

My favourite saint is not yet a canonized saint. Her name is Léonie Martin, and she is now a Servant of God, the first step toward becoming a canonized saint. She was a biological sister of St. Thérèse of Lisieux.

It is my hope to give a presentation on her life when I am in Sydney, and I will tell you more about her and why she is my hero.



8. Tell us about your job now in America. What do you do there? What are your hopes for the future of the deaf Catholic community?

For a long time, I was the chaplain of Deaf Catholics in the Archdiocese of Detroit, and I ran St. John's Deaf Centre, which is similar to the Ephpheta Centre.

Three years ago, I asked to be transferred to the Archdiocese of Baltimore because there were many Deaf people living in the state of Maryland. In fact, the Archdiocese of Baltimore probably has the highest number of Deaf people in the United States and the second highest in North America, with Mexico City being the first.

Unfortunately, for a long time the Archdiocese of Baltimore did not have a signing priest for Deaf Catholics.

Because of this, there were not many practicing Deaf Catholics. The Archbishop of Baltimore invited me to move to Maryland and help the Archdiocese rebuild its Deaf Ministry.



Wherever I go, my goal remains the same: I want to help both Deaf and hearing people grow deeper in their relationship with God, appreciate their Catholic faith more, and strive to love others more.

9. What are you most excited about when you come to Australia soon?

I am excited to meet old and new friends and to see what plans God has in store for all of us!

Like a one on one chat with Fr MD?

All deaf people are welcome to have a one on one visit and chat with Fr MD when he is in Sydney. You do not have to be Catholic. You will chat in Auslan. **Everyone is welcome.**

Fr MD is deaf. He knows about deaf life and deaf culture. He knows Auslan. He cares a lot about deaf people and is happy to talk to any deaf person when he is in Sydney.

We all know that life can be tricky. It helps to talk with a good person who can listen to you.

So PLEASE contact Donovan 0408 697 773 (SMS only) or any of the Ephpheta team to let us know if would like to chat with Fr MD.

We can organise a visit to your home or to a coffee shop where you can have a cuppa and chat.



Meet Our Seminarian! Patrick

It is our pleasure this newsletter to officially introduce you to Patrick who is currently studying to become a priest. He will join us along with Bran and Dai

These young men are undertaking their pastoral placement with us – so that when they have become priests and are working in the community, they will have an understanding of our deaf community.

Please make sure that you say hello when you see them at Ephpheta – they are learning Auslan so need to practice!!



Patrick Laurente - Diocese of Sydney

1. Where were you born and how long have you lived in Sydney?

I was born in Sydney and have been living here since birth!

2. Do you have brothers and sisters? What do you love most about your family? Tell us a little bit about your family.

I am the eldest of three, with a younger brother and a younger sister.

What I love most about my family is how close we are, and that we all try our best to support one another despite our differences.

My family still lives in Sydney, so it is easy to keep in touch during the breaks. While the parents instilled good habits and discipline in the kids, the kids instilled fun and adventure for the parents.



3. Do you have a favourite Saint and if so why?

Apart from the “heavy hitters” of Our Blessed Mother and St Joseph, St Pier Giorgio Frassati is currently my favourite. He has been a close companion for me this year, as I have started to pray to him almost daily. He is known for his famous quote of “Verso l’Alto”, which means “to the heights”. A lovely reminder of being courageous in finding and loving God! He died at a very young age, but he was well known for his active life and having a fun and joyful spirit.



4. Do you have a hobby? What do you do in your spare time?

For most of my life, I have played a lot of sports. Most recently, I have trained for a marathon, so I do run a lot! However, I also do enjoy a slow and quiet walk around different places and reading a good book to slow down.

5. What is the most adventurous thing you have ever done?

I will have to say that entering the seminary has been the most adventurous thing I have ever done. To leave behind what has been so familiar for 25 years of my life is very daunting yet exciting at the same time. I think seeking and saying “yes” to God daily has been the best adventure.

6. How do you feel about coming to work with the Deaf Community?

Honestly, I am very excited and enthusiastic to work and learn with the Deaf Community. However, it is unknown territory for me, so I am also feeling a bit nervous, so please be patient with my ignorance and naivety!

After doing a short visit to the Community two years ago, when we visited as first-year seminarians, I was in awe that such a community exists. Fast forward two years later, when I was asked by the seminary formators where I wanted to do placement, Ephpheta was my first choice. Ever since that visit, it has always been a quiet stir in my heart to experience and journey with the community.

I have not had any direct work with deaf people, so my Auslan needs a lot of work! But I am excited to learn the language and to also widen my perspective, so that I know how to love and serve the different needs as a priest - God-willing.

7. Anything else you would like to add...

I look forward to getting to know the Ephpheta Community well! Thank you for all you do.



Out and About in the Deaf Community

School Holiday FUN!

During the July school holidays, we had **two** amazing events with young members of our Ephpheta community.

On Thursday 9 July we had our **Ephpheta Youth Group** event at FlipOut!

It was amazing to see even more participants come together to connect, make new friends, and enjoy the day! The event was a great opportunity to build friendships, grow confidence and have fun in a safe and supportive environment.

After all the jumping, everyone enjoyed a well deserved break with delicious food and drinks while chatting about their favourite moments of the day. There were plenty of smiles and laughter, making it an event to remember.

A big thank you to everyone who came along and helped make the day such a fantastic success. We look forward to seeing you at our next youth event!

On Monday 13 July we had a wonderful day at our **Ephpheta Juniors Group** - a successful day of Putt Putt (mini golf)!

We were so excited to have such a great turnout, with lots of familiar faces and some new families joining us for a fun afternoon together.

The children had a great time making their way around the course, cheering each other on, celebrating great shots, and sharing plenty of laughs along the way. It was also wonderful to see parents connecting, meeting new families, and enjoying time together while the kids played.

After the game, everyone enjoyed delicious food and drinks while chatting. It was lovely to see both children and parents getting to know one another and strengthening our Ephpheta community.

Thank you to everyone who came along and made the day so special. We love seeing our juniors community continue to grow and can't wait to see you all at our next event!



Keep an eye out for what's coming up next. Our next Auslan Juniors Group will meet again on 26 September. Our next Ephpheta Youth Group will meet again on 9 October.

If you know any deaf or hard of hearing young people that would like to join us, please contact Ephpheta! We'd love to see you there.

Sistine Chapel: Revelations

We enjoyed a wonderful community day out on 22 May in the city where we visited the Sistine Chapel Revelations exhibition organised by the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney.

It was a really interesting exhibition - we learned about the history of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican and then we entered the huge video projection room. In that room, there was an amazing video and light display explaining the meaning of some of the images in the famous ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

It was a spectacular recreation of this famous and important building.

Afterwards we all enjoyed lunch together.

Thanks to everyone who came along to share this special day.



State Theatre

On 17 June our community visited the beautiful State Theatre in city of Sydney. It's a big theatre with over 2000 seats.

The style is really old 1930's gothic style but beautifully decorated and well preserved. They have giant crystal chandelier lights on the ceiling of the theatre.

Lot of little details that have been there since 1930's made it even more special. They have not remodelled it - they have kept it as original as possible and now it is on the heritage list.

Some things in the theatre are worth a lot of money and are extremely difficult to replace if damaged or stolen.

We all enjoyed learning from the tour guide as he talked about the building and the history behind it.

After the tour we walked to nearby pub and had a nice lunch together and watched a world cup soccer match on TV!

Thanks to everyone who came along to share this special day.



IN LOVING Memory



Farewell to Sr Margo Gibson OP

We were all very sad to learn of the recent death of our dear friend Sr Margo Gibson on 28 May 2026.

Sr Margo was born in Maitland in 1939 - she had a twin brother Frank and another little sister. She became a Dominican nun at age 22. She trained as a primary school teacher and spent many years teaching deaf children in NSW and Victoria. She spent 4 years in the Solomon Islands with the Dominican Sisters.

Sr Margo continued her work teaching in Sydney before she started working with us at the Ephpheta Centre from 1992 until 2006.

Sr Margo formed many close friendships with people in the deaf community which continued throughout her life.

Margo was well known and loved throughout many deaf communities in Sydney, Newcastle, Orange, Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide.



Even after she left the Ephpheta Centre, she maintained many strong friendships in the deaf community.

She was a fearless advocate for deaf people and a loyal friend. She also had a wonderful sense of humour!

In June 2020, Sr Margo moved to a nursing home at Waratah. She died there after a long illness.

Sr Margo thank you for your life of faith, love and support of the deaf community.

Thank you for your joyful loving care for all you knew.

Rest in peace our dear friend Sr Margo.



Lives of the Saints - St Charbel

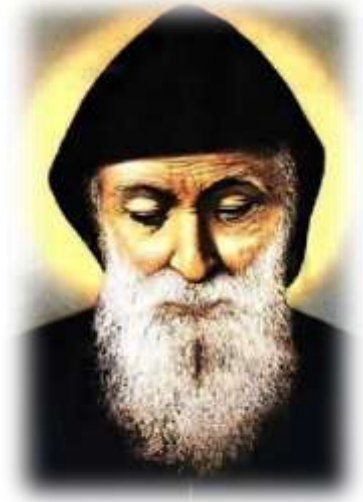
Born: 8 May 1828

Died: 24 December 1898

How old: 70 years old

Became a saint on 9 October 1977

Feast Day: 24 July



CHARBEL'S EARLY LIFE

St Charbel was born in the mountain village in North Lebanon. His birth name was Youssef Antoun Makhoul. He came from a Maronite family who were very poor. Youssef (Charbel) was the fifth of eight children (2 brothers, 2 sisters and 2 stepbrothers).

Youssef (Charbel) went to the parish school in his village. He spent many hours in the fields, looking after the cows. Youssef (Charbel) had a special love for Mary by bringing flowers, incense and a candle to her grotto. He loved the quiet places of the valleys and mountains where he could be alone with God to pray. He spent many hours praying and talking with God. Prayer helped him to grow in faith, and he felt that God was calling him to become a monk.



*St Charbel's home in North Lebanon,
the place where he grew up*

BECOMING A MONK AND A PRIEST

When Youssef (Charbel) told his family that he wanted to become a monk, they tried to change his mind by wanting him to marry a girl they had picked for him. But Youssef (Charbel) wanted to follow God's plan. He left home without telling anyone and he joined the Monastery in Mount Lebanon.

He changed his name to Charbel, an early Christian martyr. Charbel spent two years learning how to become a monk.

On 1 November 1853, Charbel made his final promises to God to live a life of obedience (to listen to God and his superiors), poverty (to live simply and not seek riches) and Chasity (giving his whole heart to God).

Charbel studied hard to become a priest and was one of the best students.

He was ordained a Maronite Catholic priest on 23 July 1859 and was a priest for 16 years.



*Monastery of Our Lady of Mayfouk in
Mount Lebanon –
the place where Charbel studied*

LIVING AS A MONK AND A HERMIT

Charbel was known as a man of prayer, obedience, humility and living a holy life. He spent many hours praying before the Blessed Sacrament. When working in the monastery, he chose the hardest jobs. He fasted often and treated everyone with kindness and respect. The other monks saw that he lived very close to God. Charbel wanted an even quieter

life with God. He received permission to live alone in a small hermitage near the monastery. He lived there for the last 23 years of his life. He lived a simple life by sleeping on the ground, eating one small meal each day, praying for many hours, celebrating Mass every day and spending the rest of the day thanking God.



*St Maroun's Monastery in Mount Lebanon –
the place where Charbel was priest
for 16 years*



*The Hermitage of Sts Peter and Paul in Mount
Lebanon -
the place where St Chabel lived as a hermit*

HIS DEATH

On 16 December 1898, while celebrating Mass, Charbel had a stroke during the time he held the Holy Eucharist carefully in his hands. He was sick for 8 days.

He died peacefully on Christmas Eve. His last words were the holy names of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

WHY IS ST CHARBEL A SAINT?

Charbel loved Jesus in the Eucharist. He loved prayer and silence. He was humble. God worked many miracles through him. He gave hope to the Lebanese people who have experienced war, hardship and economic struggles. He shows that living a holy life is possible.

PRAYER TO ST CHARBEL

Lord Jesus, you helped St Charbel to love You with all his heart. You gave him the strength to leave everything behind and follow You. He lived a life of prayer, silence, humility, and trust.

Help us to love You and serve You always, just as St Charbel did.

St Charbel, pray for us and help us grow closer to Jesus every day.

Amen.



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 Join us on Facebook!
<http://www.facebook.com/thecentrefordeaf>

*The Ephpheta Centre is
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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!