PART 1

Sycamore Teachers Workbook

Introduction to Sycamore
Called to Evangelise: Nurturing a Culture of Mission

Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools
28 July 2026

SYCAMORE

Melbourne Archdiocese
Catholic Schools

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Using this workbook

Work through it at your own pace. Take time for discussion, and then to consider the reflection questions. Write your thoughts, prayers and comments in the spaces provided, and return to this workbook as a resource for your team long after today ends.

Part 2: Facilitation Training is the second workbook in this series. It covers the skills of small-group facilitation and the practical shape of a Sycamore session. Keep the two together.

Register your group

If you are coordinating a Sycamore group, sign up and register it. You can update your details or add new groups at any time, and registration gives you access to the Coordinator Manual, alternative discussion questions, print-ready publicity and offline film downloads: https://www.sycamore.fm/register/

Welcome and Introduction

Sycamore is a comprehensive programme about the Christian faith and its relevance for life today. It brings people together so they can share ideas, explore their beliefs, and think about questions that really matter.

The Sycamore films offer an inspiring vision of Catholic Christianity. They involve clear teaching and thought-provoking testimonies. The discussion groups — in person or online — help people grow in friendship and build a sense of community.

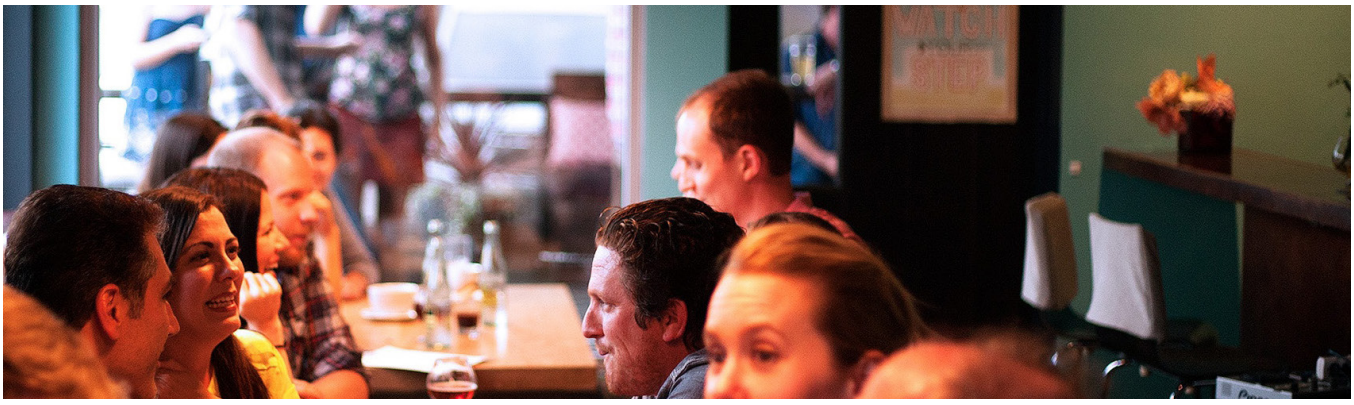
This workbook is designed for teachers and school leaders in the Archdiocese of Melbourne who are considering how to bring Sycamore to life in their school communities.

This workbook is designed to give you

- a clear understanding of the mission and ethos of Sycamore
- a realistic, achievable plan for running Sycamore in your school context
- practical knowledge of the MACS Year 1 Pathway
- a sense of your next steps and a concrete plan for your team

The second workbook in this series

Part 2: Facilitation Training covers the core skills of small-group facilitation and the practical structure of a Sycamore session. This workbook is concerned with the programme itself: what it is, what it offers, and how it might work in your school.



Testimonials

From Christian leaders

"We are excited about the lasting effect it will have on the faith of our young people. Fabulous videos and resources with a professional and user-friendly website"

Claire O'Neill, a diocesan education adviser

"A superb and easily accessible resource for all parishes. The production quality and content are outstanding"

Mary Crowley, a diocesan catechist

"A great gift of God and just what the Church needs right now. It presents the Catholic faith in a way that truly meets the needs of all — from the unchurched to practising Catholics who are in desperate need of formation"

Fr Charlie Fox, Spiritual Director to the St Paul Street Evangelisation Movement

"A very important project that will be invaluable for contemporary evangelisation"

Fr Thomas White, Director of the Aquinas Institute

From participants

- An amazing experience!
- I finally found an opportunity to think about my life.
- I love the videos. I have learnt so much.
- The questions asked were incredibly relevant.
- I appreciate the opportunity to explore my thoughts in a space that felt open and welcoming.
- Sycamore made me feel at home. It was the highlight of my week.
- I always felt welcome. All I was asked was to come with an open mind.
- It's a great programme!

Tip

We can learn a great deal from each other. You might consider joining the Facebook Sycamore Leaders' Forum for practical advice, tips and guidance from a supportive community: https://www.facebook.com/groups/sycamore.leaders As you begin your planning, you may find it helpful to discuss some of these testimonies with your team.

Called to Share the Good News

> *"I wish to invite the Church to renew her missionary commitment... For missionary activity renews the Church, revitalizes faith and Christian identity, and offers fresh enthusiasm and new incentive. Faith is strengthened when it is given to others! It is in commitment to the Church's universal mission that the new evangelisation of Christian peoples will find inspiration and support."*
>
> St John Paul II, Redemptoris Missio (1990)

Reflection questions

Why am I here today?
What draws me to this mission?
What hopes do I have for my students and my school community?

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SECTION ONE

The Sycamore Vision

Why start a Sycamore group in your school?

A tool for primary evangelisation

Sycamore is first of all a stand-alone enquiry course and a tool for "primary evangelisation". It seeks to share what is at the heart of the Christian faith with those who have not heard it before, or whose understanding of Christianity is very limited. It creates a space for honest and open discussion about faith and about life in general, and helps people, if they wish, to respond by taking the first steps of faith.

Comprehensive and accessible

Sycamore is also a comprehensive twenty-module programme encompassing all four "pillars" of the Catechism (CCC 13–17): the Profession of Faith, the Liturgy and the Sacraments, Life in Christ, and Christian Prayer. It leads people from initial curiosity to an encounter with Jesus Christ and his Church, and then to a vision of the doctrinal, sacramental, moral and spiritual teaching of the Church.

Tailored resources

Sycamore can form part of a wider programme of faith formation, catechesis or sacramental preparation. There are different pathways through the programme, and leaders can choose which modules are appropriate for their group. For schools these include General RE courses, senior Religious Studies and Ethics, discussion groups and faith formation, staff formation, and Teacher Training and Continuing Professional Development — alongside pathways for enquiry groups, RCIA, Confirmation, adult formation, Advent and Lent.

High-quality films

The films are presented by Fr Stephen Wang, a well-known Catholic priest and teacher who enjoys introducing people to the riches of Catholic culture and history. Filmed in the UK, they include vox pop street interviews and testimonies from ordinary Christians, and have been created to speak to people from different traditions, cultures and backgrounds.

A resource that is free to use

An online resource

There are online resources and printable handouts for participants. These include the discussion questions, summaries of the teaching in each session, relevant scripture quotations, and references to the YouCat and the Catechism of the Catholic Church for further reflection. Many groups have used Sycamore online and found it an invaluable way to keep their communities connected.

Films to stream or download:
https://www.sycamore.fm/videos/

Free to use — no strings attached

Many Christian programmes sell their resources or require a paid subscription, and there are very valid reasons for using those models. Since June 2020, however, Sycamore has been completely free to use through its open access policy. There is no cost to the community or to individual participants running courses using the twenty core films.

Tip

You might visit the Sycamore YouTube channel and look through the selection of "Sycamore Shorts": bite-size films exploring the key elements of Christian belief, one topic at a time. https://www.youtube.com/c/SycamoreSeek

Understanding contemporary culture

We must be acutely aware of the world our students inhabit, and of the wider context in which we are ministering.

> *"The split between the Gospel and culture is without a doubt the drama of our time, just as it was of other times. Therefore every effort must be made to ensure a full evangelization of culture, or more correctly of cultures. They have to be regenerated by an encounter with the Gospel. But this encounter will not take place if the Gospel is not proclaimed"*
>
> Evangelii Nuntiandi, 20

Reflection

What are the main challenges and opportunities among the young people, staff and families in my school community?
What could evangelisation look like here?

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SECTION TWO

What is Sycamore?

Our core modules

Twenty films, each self-contained, each presented as if the group were beginning a new topic.

1 The Search for Happiness
2 The Existence of God
3 A God who speaks
4 Who is Jesus?
5 The Holy Spirit and the Church
6 The Bible
7 The Gift of Faith
8 The Power of Prayer
9 Finding True Freedom
10 The Meaning of Love
11 The Light of Christ
12 Creation, Fall, Salvation
13 The Community of the Church
14 The Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation
15 The Holy Eucharist
16 Forgiveness, Healing and Mission
17 The Christian Vocations
18 The Social Teaching of the Church
19 How to Pray
20 Mary and the Hope of Heaven

A note on film numbers

The film number is a fixed code that refers to the complete list of Sycamore films, not to the order of a module within a particular course. This means you always know which film is being referred to, even when it appears in a different position in a different pathway.

All core films, to stream or download: https://www.sycamore.fm/videos/
Session guides for every film: https://www.sycamore.fm/start/session-guides/

Sycamore pathways

Sycamore is a modular course that can be adapted for the needs of your group.

- There are twenty core sessions in total, with additional content available through SycamorePlus.
- You can choose which sessions to run depending on the needs of your group.
- Each session is self-contained and tries not to assume too much previous knowledge.
- Each session is presented as if the group were beginning a new topic.
- Pathways are arranged into four areas: Enquiry, Formation, Sacramental and School.

A pathway has already been prepared for you

You do not need to select a pathway from scratch. The MACS Year 1 Pathway has been created specifically for the Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools formation programme, and is set out on page 16. The pathways described here and on the following page are given for context — and for any wider work you may go on to do with staff, parents or your parish community.

Combining Sycamore with other programmes

Sycamore can be used alongside other programmes — Catholicism, Symbolon, the CaFE courses, Alpha, the Bible Timeline and others — to build a varied and engaging programme across the year.

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Other pathways at a glance

The following pathways may be useful to your wider school and parish community.

Enquiry

Courses for anyone interested in exploring the Christian faith, aimed at those with little or no Christian background — short (seven-week), standard (ten-week), retreat-day and follow-on formats.

https://www.sycamore.fm/pathways/a-enquiry-pathways/

Formation and renewal

Courses of ongoing formation for anyone who wants to explore the heart of Christianity, deepen their faith and engage in discussion — including Faith Formation Parts 1 and 2, How to Pray, Living the Christian Faith in the World, Advent and Lent courses, the Holy Spirit Pathway, and Growing in Faith for engaged and married couples.

https://www.sycamore.fm/pathways/b-formation-pathways/

Sacramental

Sycamore can be used as a programme of catechesis and sacramental preparation, or as a supplement to courses you are already running — with pathways for RCIA, Confirmation, infant baptism and First Holy Communion, including courses designed for parents.

https://www.sycamore.fm/pathways/sacramental-preparation/

Sycamore for schools

Sycamore has a growing family of pathways developed specifically for school settings, alongside the courses designed for parishes and wider communities.

Core and General RE

- First Semester (10 weeks)
- Second Semester (10 weeks)

Other school options

- Religious Studies, Ethics, Philosophy
- Discussion groups and faith formation in schools
- Teacher Training and Continuing Professional Development (8 weeks)
- **MACS Year 1** — the pathway created for the Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools formation programme

https://www.sycamore.fm/pathways/d-school-pathways/

Practical notes for the classroom

A full Sycamore session can just be fitted into a forty-minute lesson: roughly twenty-five minutes of film with fifteen minutes of discussion, in three short conversations of about five minutes each. It is considerably more fruitful over fifty minutes or an hour, or a double period of eighty minutes.

Sycamore works best with those aged fourteen and over, and most fruitfully with those aged sixteen to eighteen. It may suit some classes of thirteen to fourteen year olds, but is not recommended below that age.

Student leadership

The ideal is to train students as Sycamore leaders — in a class of thirty, perhaps five student leaders. This can become a real incentive to raise up leaders in the school, giving them training and transferable skills.

Guidance on running a discussion group: https://www.sycamore.fm/training/how-to-run-a-discussion-group/

SECTION THREE

The MACS Year 1 Pathway

The MACS Year 1 Pathway

A pathway created for the Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools formation programme. It consists of five sessions.

1. **The Existence of God** (Film 2)
   Why bother thinking about religion? Five reasons not to believe in God. Arguments for the existence of God.

2. **Who is Jesus?** (Film 4)
   He came to bring life to the world. The saving death of Jesus. The light of the Resurrection.

3. **The Holy Spirit and the Church** (Film 5)
   How the Holy Spirit can change your life. No one gets into heaven alone. Why we need signs, symbols and sacraments.

4. **The Gift of Faith** (Film 7)
   What is faith? Are there good reasons to believe? How to take a step of faith.

5. **The Power of Prayer** (Film 8)
   What is prayer? Does prayer make a difference? How to pray.

Where to find it

The MACS Year 1 Pathway, with links to each film:
https://www.sycamore.fm/pathways/d-school-pathways/macs-year-1/
Session guides, with the discussion questions for each film:
https://www.sycamore.fm/start/session-guides/

The 2026 term plan

The five sessions of the Year 1 Pathway sit within a wider programme running across Terms 2, 3 and 4 of 2026 — fifteen films in all, five each term.

Term	Films
2026 Term 2	The Existence of God (2) · Who is Jesus? (4) · The Holy Spirit and the Church (5) · The Gift of Faith (7) · The Power of Prayer (8) **These five are the MACS Year 1 Pathway.**
2026 Term 3	The Light of Christ (11) · Creation, Fall, Salvation (12) · The Community of the Church (13) · The Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation (14) · The Holy Eucharist (15)
2026 Term 4	Forgiveness, Healing and Mission (16) · The Christian Vocations (17) · The Social Teaching of the Church (18) · How to Pray (19) · Mary and the Hope of Heaven (20)

An optional further pathway

Five of the twenty core films do not appear in the plan above: The Search for Happiness (1), A God who speaks (3), The Bible (6), Finding True Freedom (9) and The Meaning of Love (10).

Together these could form an optional pathway for groups that want to go further. Each session is self-contained, so they may be taken in whatever order suits your group — or drawn on individually alongside the main plan.

Factors to consider

- **Who is this for?** Staff formation? A student group? Senior RE classes? Parents?
- **Where will it take place?** Staff room, chapel, classroom, library, online, hybrid?
- **When will it run?** Which terms? Staff meeting slots, twilight sessions, timetabled lessons?
- **How many sessions?** The full five-session pathway, or a shorter start?
- **What is your hospitality approach?** Refreshments? Social time? Community-building in a school setting?

Make notes over the page.

Moving from vision to action

> *"An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people's daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary, and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others. Evangelisers thus take on the 'smell of the sheep,' and the sheep are willing to hear their voice."*
>
> Evangelii Gaudium §24, Pope Francis

For discussion

How can we use the Year 1 Pathway to connect most effectively with our school community?
Do we need to adapt or adjust anything to tailor it for our needs?

A FIRST DRAFT OF OUR SYCAMORE LAUNCH PLAN

How can we use Sycamore?

> *"Do not be afraid. Open wide the doors to Christ."*
>
> St John Paul II, Homily at the Inaugural Mass of His Pontificate, St Peter's Square, 22 October 1978

Reflection questions

How can you see this being used in your school — with staff, with students, with parents?
What sort of culture do we want to create?
What excites you about the resources?

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Introducing SycamorePlus

Having explored how to run Sycamore locally, SycamorePlus is a way of deepening and sustaining that work — a subscription service providing access to additional Sycamore resources.

New films

Ways of Praying — a rich, intimate set of films to help you go deeper in your prayer life.

How to Discover Your Vocation — eight beautifully filmed sessions from Fr Stephen exploring how God calls each of us to holiness and service.

These films complement the core twenty and are accompanied by new pathways and tailored training for parishes, schools and dioceses.

Membership

For communities and schools, one subscription provides multiple accounts for other leaders or teachers to join, so that several SycamorePlus groups can run within the same community on the same account.

Individual participants who wish to access the films at home can take out their own subscription. All subscriptions auto-renew and can be cancelled at any time.

Contact the MACS team for access arrangements to SycamorePlus

Free taster sessions for all the new series are available on the Sycamore website:
https://www.sycamore.fm/videos/

If you would then like to explore fuller access for your school, please get in touch with the MACS team to discuss the arrangements available to Melbourne schools.

Find out more

Full details of what SycamorePlus includes:
https://www.sycamore.fm/sycamore-plus/
SycamorePlus subscriptions directly support the creation of new courses, films and training, while ensuring that Sycamore's core resources remain free for all.

Join the Sycamore community

1. Register your group

If you are coordinating a Sycamore group, you can put your group firmly on the Sycamore map. Registering gives you:

- Coordinator Resources, including the Coordinator Manual and alternative discussion questions for different contexts
- Publicity materials in print-ready PDFs — posters, postcards, banners
- Permissions and downloads for all twenty main films, so you can run Sycamore without depending on wifi
- Your school added to the Live Sycamore Map
- Networking with local and diocesan leaders, and news of local training events

https://www.sycamore.fm/register/

2. Follow

https://www.facebook.com/SycamoreSeek
https://www.instagram.com/sycamoreseek/
https://www.youtube.com/c/SycamoreSeek

3. Get in touch

We are delighted to hear from leaders, teachers, catechists and groups of all kinds who are interested in or considering using Sycamore. Please get in touch if you have any questions or would like further information or support.
https://www.sycamore.fm/contact/

Training and planning

https://www.sycamore.fm/training/
https://www.sycamore.fm/planning/

> *"Do not be afraid. Open wide the doors to Christ."*
>
> St John Paul II, 22 October 1978