

# ST AUSTIN'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

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*The Wednesday Word* is a very exciting initiative.

It is an excellent resource, based on such a simple idea. By sending *The Wednesday Word* out through our parish schools the power of God's Word enters into many people's homes. It provides a framework for families to discuss important family and faith issues openly and freely. Moreover we have found that some adults have been surprised by their children's reflections, by discovering what is going on in their children's lives – and indeed by how much the children know about the Catholic faith.

This new approach provides an important link in the Home-School-Parish partnership. It forges new and stronger links between home and parish as a complement to the strong links which already exist between home and school.

*The Wednesday Word* is a weekly guided time for family conversation and prayer. It includes a scriptural reflection which aims to make the gospel relevant and beneficial for all parents who have children in Catholic schools. The theme (or 'word') for each week is inspired by the Sunday Gospel or the liturgical season. In this way it under-girds the RE already provided by our schools, and harmonises with the parish liturgy.

Even though many families connected to our schools may not go to church, many say that they believe in God and admit the need for a spiritual side to their lives. *The Wednesday Word* helps to nourish the family's spirituality and will, we are sure, stir the hearts of many adults who have currently lost contact with the Church. We have found that *The Wednesday Word* made a real impact on some of the lapsed, making them think about their faith and what it means to them, and about the place of the Church in their lives. We believe that it may even encourage some of them to come back to the celebration of the Eucharist, the heart of our Catholic life.

Although a specific aim of *The Wednesday Word* is to create a new link with the 80% of Catholic school families who do not regularly attend mass, we have also found that many church-going families have benefited tremendously from the structure which *The Wednesday Word* gives to them to help them pray together. For these practising Catholic families *The Wednesday Word* aims to deepen their faith and spirituality. It helps them to prepare for the Sunday liturgy by reading and talking about the gospel which will be read in church on the following Sunday, and it provides an opportunity for them during the week to share their faith as a family.

*The Wednesday Word* has undergone some extensive piloting already. There has been very enthusiastic feed-back from families, many of whom have not been accustomed to praying together. Feed-back from some of these families is included in this information pack for your perusal.

*The Wednesday Word* is dedicated to St Joseph, patron saint of families, and has been backed by prayer from Carmelites throughout the UK. As part of the launch we will be requesting that parish churches support Catholic schools by specifically praying for those who have begun to pray together through *The Wednesday Word*, but whose family relationships are not fully strengthened by the regular celebration of the Eucharist.

Fr Timothy Swinglehurst, Parish Priest,  
St Austin's Church, Wakefield.