

# Course tackles big questions

## Discover your inner philosopher via online study with two Catholic thinkers

■ Anna Krohn

THE EXPERIENCE of the Covid pandemic has thrown up all sorts of anxieties and questions for ordinary people.

Whether in the porch after Mass or in the hardware store, all sorts of people are raising matters they may not have articulated before.

In the opening paragraphs of his classic 1998 treatment of the critical interrelationship between Catholic faith and inherent human desire for truth and understanding (the encyclical *Fides et Ratio*) Pope Saint John Paul II writes:

“...the fundamental questions which pervade human life: Who am I? Where have I come from and where am I going? Why is there evil? What is there after this life? ....They are questions which have their common source in the quest for meaning which has always compelled the human heart. In fact, the answer given to these questions decides the direction which people seek to give to their lives.”

It was during the lockdown restrictions, while they were tackling the conversion of their philosophy and theology courses onto an entirely on-line footing, that sessional academics, Natasha Marsh and David Schütz realised that they shared a passion to “re-animate Catholic adult education” in response to



Natasha Marsh, above, and David Schutz have co-founded a course for those wanting to study philosophy. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

the very real questions their friends, associates and parish contacts had been raising during the Covid crisis.

Natasha Marsh is a sessional lecturer and tutor with Australian Catholic University and the University of Notre Dame Australia as well as a parish music director and musician.

She has also been a journalist with work appearing in *The Catholic Weekly* and other publications. David has many

years experience as a scholar and Catholic adult educator.

David was the executive officer of the Ecumenical and Interfaith Council, a Lutheran pastor, liturgist, and is now editor of *Gesher*, the journal for the Council for Christians and Jews.

The pandemic restrictions lead the pair to devise a new type of on-line/face-to-face course, available to beginners or interested people outside

the university setting under the aegis of Anima Education. Anima Education is a Catholic apostolate which offers formation which is accessible, personally rewarding and affordable.

The first new course will be lead by Natasha - entitled *An Introduction to Philosophy*. The five-week course begins on Monday nights from 10 May. It will be available either live (in Melbourne) and from

anywhere on-line via Zoom. Natasha says that the course: “will equip people to dip their toes into thinking philosophically and clearly”.

“While history doesn’t repeat itself, it certainly rhymes,” she explained.

“Philosophy helps us identify patterns of thinking, the rise of certain ‘isms’ and ideas which repeat themselves with real impact in our societies and our lives.”

“Two things are important in beginning to think in this way. A reliable personal guide and the opportunity and encouragement to “sit with” the questions and to wonder about them.”

The course will be attentive to these two elements with beginners and will offer lectures, guided reading and the opportunity for personal guidance and discussion, with David as the Zoom tutor.

David is currently preparing new courses in ‘The Book of Revelation’ and a ‘Virtual Pilgrimage to Israel’ for Anima Education. Other courses in Scripture, theology and spirituality are also in the making.

**Details can be found under the Anima Education Banner on The Catholic Women’s League of Victoria and Wagga page: Activities at Catholic Womens League of Vic and Wagga Wagga at: <https://www.cwlvicww.org.au/>**

### In brief

## Blind lay Dominican now a saint

POPE FRANCIS has issued a decree declaring the sainthood of Blessed Margaret of Città di Castello, a much-loved Italian Dominican laywoman.

The decree is what the Vatican terms an “equi-pollent” or equivalent canonisation; when there is evidence of strong devotion among the faithful to a holy man or woman, the pope can waive a lengthy formal canonical investigation and can authorise the person’s veneration as a saint.

The Vatican announcement on 24 April said the pope declared her a saint after the members of the Congregation for Saints’ Causes recommended doing so. Born blind in 1287, St Margaret also had a severe spinal curvature. Her parents kept her secluded in a walled room of a parish.

Taking her to a shrine known for miraculous cures in the Umbrian town of Città di Castello, St Margaret’s parents abandoned her there when she was not healed. She was given shelter in various homes and eventually welcomed by Dominican nuns, later becoming a lay Dominican and dying in 1320. - CNS

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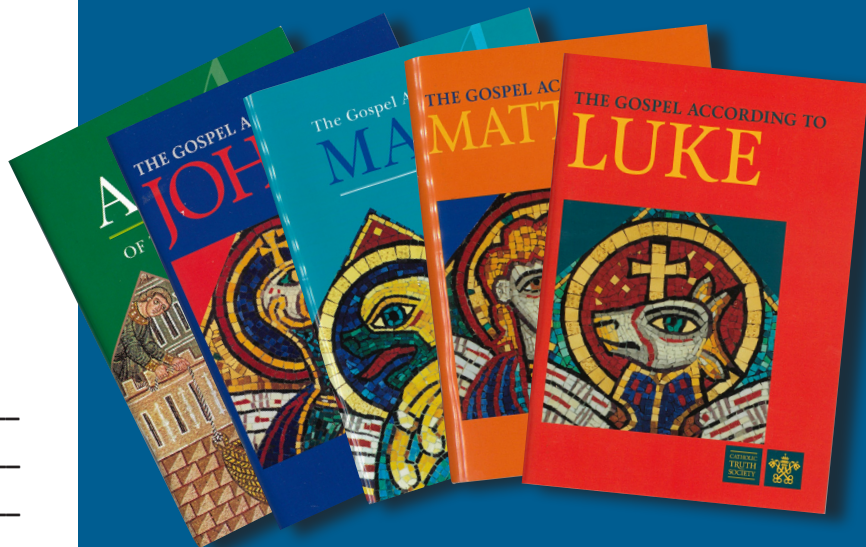
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