

# Community Animation Service

*Movement for a Better World Inc*

PO Box 21

MORISSET NSW 2264

Ph 02 4937 2998 Fax 02 4937 1763

Email: better\_world@bigpond.com



## LIVING COMMUNITY

Summer 2005/06

Friends,

As we live the summer of 2005/06, the members of the Community Animation Service rejoice in our solidarity with you. We look beyond the struggles of the present to a future of unity and peace that God is holding out to all who are working to bring about a better world.

May we all be filled with much hope during 2006.

**Fr Michael Fallon, Director  
Promoting Group in Australia**

### INTERNATIONAL NEWS

#### **International Encounter, Rome**

With nineteen other people - priests, religious and lay people from different parts of the world - I spent 3 months, late in 2004, at our international house in Rome. We came from Trinidad & Tobago, Italy, Colombia, Sudan, South Africa, India, Papua New Guinea and Australia. We gathered to deepen our experience of the spirituality of Trinitarian communion and to explore the project of diocesan renewal/evangelisation. This process of renewal, promoted by our Group, is based on a theology and a methodology of hope. It is not so much for problem solving but for journeying from the present situation to a desired and intentional ideal future.

The eleven weeks were a kind of journey or pilgrimage for us all. It included a visit to the Mamertine Prison, guided tour of St Peter's Tomb under the basilica, a pilgrimage to Assisi and the celebration of Mass at Fr Lombardi's tomb.

At the commencement, Jill Gibbs gave us an icon of Pentecost with the following inspiring quotation from Fr Riccardo Lombardi, the founder of our Group, "Persons need a generous resolve to commit themselves with all their strength to the creation of a better world according to the heart of

*God, to a renewal that, starting from the Church, would necessarily imply a general improvement of the world, towards the Reign of God. They need determination to take part in the enterprise at our moment of history. Each one must feel his/her responsibility for the whole human family, in his his/her own time, in the whole of history, in eternity."*

Sharing our experience from our countries and our dioceses throughout the world was a special enrichment. Sixteen bishops from Colombia, staying in Rome for their ad limina visit to the Pope, visited our international house and spoke enthusiastically of their experience of the diocesan project of renewal and evangelisation. In very difficult circumstances, they have been working for years to create a new historical model of church based on communion and participation.

The story of the diocese of Cucuta was particularly impressive: a Mission in which 70,000 children took part; the closing commitment celebration involved 25,000 participants and led to the birth of 3,000 small groups. The bishops also spoke movingly of their gathering for a week of study on topics related to the Project.

It was the sharing of their stories that helped us feel that all our own efforts were part of a bigger movement of renewal of church and society, which is gaining ground. It is an expression of that 'new Pentecost' that Pope John XXIII had wanted.

**Michael Fallon**

### NEWS FROM OCEANIA

#### **The PNG National Team**

*Christ the Light of the World* is a natural theme for us to keep coming back to here south of the equator, with the hours of glorious sunlight flooding the world around us!

New hope rests in the 8 persons sponsored by 5 PNG Dioceses who attended the International Encounter (described above), held this year at the CAS international centre in Rome. They are truly a precious resource for the whole church, not just their own dioceses and the CAS Group! They bring new fervour, deeper understanding and new life to renewal. Their experience is a blessing like the General Assembly of the Catholic Church, only perhaps smaller in size. May it bring an abundance of that same New Life given to us by Christmas!

We thank Sr. Cathy for being part of MBW. Sister returned to Wewak in January 2005 to work as vocation promoter.

**Fr Arnie Steffen, Director  
Promoting Group in PNG**

### **Trinity FM**

We now have a Catholic Radio Station in Mt Hagen. For the last year Fr Arnie has been giving a weekly ten minute talk on various topics related to the Movement for a Better World. It is an excellent means of transmitting our message to the wider community. Of course, Pidgin English is the medium for most of the listeners. One drawback with Trinity FM, is that mountains prevent the signal from reaching the whole Diocese. Catholic Radio Network hooks us up to Vatican Radio so twice a day we can hear the news in English from Rome.

**Sr Joan MacGinley  
Promoting Group in PNG**

## **NEWS FROM AROUND AUSTRALIA**

### **The Australian National Team**

#### **Townsville Priests Retreat**

In August Fr Michael had the joy of leading a retreat on the spirituality of communion with nine priests and pastoral workers from this northern diocese of Queensland. It was a deep experience of sharing faith, hope and love amidst the pastoral challenges of such a vast geographical local church. The presence of two women, both with pastoral responsibility for parishes, was a special blessing in the exchange of spiritual insights. We all found ourselves truly blessed by this spiritual encounter which we helped to create together in the love of the Trinity.

#### **Parishes in Victoria**

Each year we gather for two days; inviting priests and key workers from parishes using the Parish Renewal Project. They come from all parts of Victoria and share their experiences and name the challenges being confronted in parish life.

As a result of these gatherings, those present report that they feel supported in their isolation as few of the 350 Victorian parishes are following the Parish Renewal Project.

We have been fortunate that Fr Michael, our National Director, has often been present to offer worthwhile input from his Australian and International experiences.

#### **Pentecost Event**

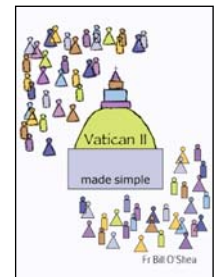
The Archdiocese of Melbourne initiated a two year program as a way of evangelisation based on the document *Novo Millennio Ineunte*. This program culminated in a gathering to which all ecclesial movements, Agencies of the Archdiocese and parishes were invited, to set up displays promoting their work of evangelisation. The Melbourne Team of the Community Animation Service mounted a display advertising our spirituality and projects.

Approximately 1,000 people viewed our display and many were given handouts.

**Team in Victoria**

#### **Vatican II Made Simple**

Community Animation Service, Australia, has just published this short book by Fr Bill O'Shea. The articles, on which it was based, were written for a parish newsletter. The articles caused widespread interest and lively discussion. A young woman in her early 30s was surprised how much she learnt about the modern Church from this book.



During the Brisbane Archdiocesan Synod consultation, there were some calls for a "Vatican II for dummies" – since many, perhaps most, Catholic laity have not read any of the documents, and so have a poor understanding of the significance of the Council. We believe this little book fulfils this call; a view shared by Archbishop Bathurst in his endorsement.

We hope that you, our supporters, will promote the book in your groups, parishes and among your friends. The initial reactions have been very favourable; a distributor describing the book as delightful and beautifully produced. Several Queensland parishes have ordered 50 copies.

Copies, \$8 each, may be obtained from CAS either by writing to the address above or by emailing [web\\_mbw@bigpond.com](mailto:web_mbw@bigpond.com). Postage and packing for 3 copies is \$2. Multiple copies attract discounts – email or fax for more information.

## Web Site

The CAS Australian group's web - site will be up by the end of June. We'd love you to visit it and give us some feedback. More material will be added in the coming months, including some from our group in PNG; so that it becomes the Oceania Area's web-site We also intend offering space to the other English speaking areas of CAS. A new international site is under development. The link is: <http://users.bigpond.net.au/mbw/>

## EXPERIENCES OF THE PROJECT OF RENEWAL OF PARISH

### Beechworth, Victoria

The Catholic Parish of Beechworth in the lovely Shire of Indigo, south of Wodonga, celebrated 150 years of life in November 2004. It was a time for giving thanks to God for the abundance of the blessings they had lived over all those years. But the parish decided that they now wanted to be "moving forward" in faith. So in late October it became the location for three weeks of prayerful reflection and planning for the future. Michael experienced warm country hospitality from all, especially from Fr Tony Hill at the presbytery and takes away many happy memories. The Community Animation Service will accompany the parish in the future.

### Hoxton Park, New South Wales

Fr Peter Fitzgerald and the people of Good Shepherd Parish gathered as a community on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> November on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their vibrant parish west of Liverpool. Michael Fallon was privileged to concelebrate the Anniversary Mass. The focus of the gathering was, "we remember, we celebrate, we believe." Good Shepherd Parish is born of immigration and embraces all the richness and the challenge of being a multicultural community. The huge parish is keen to create church at the level of the neighbourhood and the Community Animation Service looks forward to the adventure of accompanying the parish pastoral council and the pastoral workers in their endeavours to be a parish open to all.

### Earlville Parish, Cairns

Following the realisation, within the Earlville Parish Pastoral Council, that their parish was in need of a new impetus, they approached CAS for a starting point to reanimate the people. In July 2005, Fr Michael and Terry Casey presented a weekend experience of the Spirituality of Communion. This rich experience was centred on the spirit of Vatican II and the impact that living community makes in parish life. The weekend

finished on a high note and with a request for a follow up visit.

### Roma, Queensland

Fr Michael and Sr Cecily visited Roma to present an ecumenical renewal weekend.

### One Zone reflects on small group events.

As members of the 'Hills' zone in the Parish of St John the Baptist, Enoggera, Brisbane, we began our renewal process through zones and local events rather tentatively, with an uncertain understanding of just why we needed more than we had experienced at Mass and other whole parish gatherings. Still, we had dreamed of a more inclusive and welcoming parish and were prepared to try. After some initial, limited attendances we joined up with a neighbouring zone because of existing friendships across the zones and from that point onward, people became enthusiastic.

Now? Well, after a 10:30am start on a damp Sunday morning in November, the gathering concluded with the conversation moving from the living room to the footpath at about 1:30pm for about 20 minutes with the last person leaving at about 2:00pm. Our two new members seemed right at home and keen for the next event. The real delight for me was in the offer of a young mother of two pre-schoolers to host the next event, as well as deciding to bring together a group of young mothers beyond our zone that we knew needed some support with difficult situations.

The growth of a strong spirituality of communion is evident in what is happening before and after our events. In our street, for example, zone members are talking over coffee or an after work drink, supporting each other in all sorts of ways and drawing others, who no longer attend Mass, into the warmth of real friendship. I guess this is finding out about solidarity through experiencing solidarity. Before our eyes, renewal is taking place, slowly but surely. May it long continue.

## KEY INSIGHTS

The Church must be like Christ: it must become bread to be eaten by the people in order to communicate Christ to humanity. A Church that gives itself to the end, that almost forgets itself, so that each and all may be helped to grow in the good they already possess in themselves: this is the condition for Christianity to be inculturated.

## TOWARDS COMMUNITY SPIRITUALITY

### Diocesan and parish planning

I concluded my Easter 2004 article by saying there was a need for a new synthesis of doctrine, spirituality and pastoral action. The mistake has perhaps been that in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council, many dioceses and parishes, keen to put into practice the directives of the Council, have first asked the question: "What must we do?" instead of the more fundamental question: "What must we be?"

The Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium) gave us a clearly communitarian vision and ideal of the Church: as mystery of communion (Ch.1), and people of God (Ch.2), and only in third place, a hierarchical organisation (Ch.3). But efforts to give flesh to this vision and ideal have had only partial and limited success. Sticking with the third option is a much easier way to go.

But we need to be looking at the vision of the whole Church on a journey of ongoing renewal and conversion towards unity and holiness, and of all the baptized joined in one family as children of God (pope, bishops, priests, laity).

When we accept the fact that the Church must live the spirituality of communion, good pastoral planning is a necessary consequence. This planning must aim at the synthesis and coherence I mentioned earlier – between doctrine, spirituality and pastoral action.

The process of diocesan and parish planning must involve setting targets to be achieved in a given time. When a target is set, we need to say why we wish to attain it. Planning must consider 1) the present situation; 2) the ideal we are aiming at; 3) the conversion or commitment that has to take place.

In other words, planning and programming must take into account reality, theology, and pastoral method. It presupposes a process of discernment, comprising an analysis of the present situation, reflection on the theological basis behind what we wish to attain, and consideration of the practical steps needed to move the people of God in its growth towards holiness. Conversion is required if we are to respond to God's will for the common good of all.

Fidelity to this method of pastoral planning counteracts the dangers that come from fragmented approaches to Church life. We refer to the approach that looks at the present situation with a certain degree of despair, because there seems no solution to current difficulties, like the

shortage of priests, decline in the number of vocations to the priesthood, absence of young people from Church attendance and involvement, greater centralisation of Church leadership in the Vatican with its often hard-line and alienating directives, etc etc.

Good and positive planning at the local level will also want to avoid the view that Church teaching and theology sound all very well in theory, but do not translate well into practice. It will also avoid the frustration felt by some parishioners that pastoral action does not help them make any obvious progress from the present state of affairs to the ideal that God wants.

A coherent synthesis will guide our actions, and also remain flexible and subject to on-going evaluation.

Fidelity to this method of pastoral planning will also avoid the risk of jumping from theory to practice without the necessary conversion. We need to ask the question "Who are we?" before asking the question "What should we do?"

The answer to the first and fundamental question is that we are living members of a Church which is the mystery of communion with God, of communion among men and women, and of communion with all of creation.

Our whole spirituality stems from this mystery. We are a people made holy by the presence of Christ in our midst. We are at the same time a human reality called to on-going renewal and conversion in a journey towards holiness. (*Adapted from "Community Spirituality - Being Church in the World Today", Community Animation Service, Rome*)

**Fr Bill O'Shea**  
**Brisbane Team**  
**Movement for a better world**



### Email delivery

As a way of controlling costs, this is the first issue of 'Living Community' that has been offered via email. There has been a good response to this offer from those recipients who have email access. If you can help us by taking the newsletter via email please respond to: (terry\_marie\_mbw@bigpond.com)