

Community Animation Service

Movement for a Better World Inc

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LIVING COMMUNITY

Easter 2007

Dear Friends,

We greet you with joy and hope this Easter season. May the peace of Jesus that the world cannot give live ever more deeply in you.

This edition of Living Community gives you some news about our activities during recent months. Also, thanks to the combined efforts of our members, and with help from a friend of our group, we have produced a web site. It tells you something about: the spirit and purpose of our Promoting Group of Movement for Better World and the service we offer for the renewal of church and society. The web site address of 'Towards a Better World' is: <http://users.bigpond.net.au/mbw/> We are delighted with our first effort and hope you find it helpful. Sometime please let us know what you think; perhaps by email to web_mbw@bigpond.com.

In solidarity with you for a better world

Fr Michael Fallon
Director, Australian Group

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

International Convivenza in English Rome – August / September 2006

The six-week meeting drew together young priests from India, Malawi, PNG, and Trinidad; young nuns from PNG and Cameroon and lay people from PNG Diocese of Daru and Beriena, from Vietnam and myself. Nine different countries and eight Religious Orders were represented. The average age was early thirties – how great to be amongst the young – they called me “Uncle John”.

The Convivenza comprised 2 parts each of 3 weeks. The first “offering the opportunity to live the experience that led Fr Lombardi to found the Promoting Group” and the second “about how to

build up the Group itself”. I attended the first 3 weeks only.

I had some previously experienced aspects of these first three weeks; however, it was exciting and vibrant to renew these experiences and learnings. The original documents, audio tapes, personal and public commentaries still exist and are freely open for inspection, review and wonder.

I took over fifty pages of notes, so here are some of my learnings:

- Spirituality implies a person making a fundamental choice.
- The more we break down divisions between people, the more we enter into a relationship with God.
- No longer do we give up all to find God, but now we enter into humanity to find God.
- A greater appreciation of the Vatican II document Church in the Modern World - Gaudium et Spes
- The Church is a “who” not a “what”
- The fundamental service of the Promoting Group is to put ourselves at the service of the Church in unity.

I really enjoyed the three weeks and I now have a much greater understanding of the type of organisation that Fr Lombardi prayed for and the mix of personalities he envisaged.

One was continually captivated and surprised by the stories, the way of life, the cultures, the colourful dress and “ritual orders of service” which sometimes controlled the way in which people present were able to become involved.

A wonderful learning experience about our Church and the variety of cultures therein. God bless the organisers.

John Punch
Sydney

The Australian National Team

Spirituality of Our Times and Analysis and Diagnosis.

Sunbury

My introduction to and participation in these presentations this year has been life-changing. Even after working with Fr Michael Fallon and the Brisbane team on the preparation of the programme prior to the February/March presentation of Spirituality of our Times in Sunbury I was still unprepared for the power of this experience of Church. I was drawn, along with the parishioners of Sunbury, into a life-giving experience of the Spirituality of Relationships. The quality of the work done by Fr Michael and Fr Bill O'Shea, the superb facilities of the Parish Centre and the thorough preparation by Fr Kevin and the parish workers, made this time of renewal such a success.

Because of the work done in preparation, the analysis and diagnosis of the parish in August/September was well-attended and included diverse groups of ages and background. By the time the day came to decide whether to proceed further, the people were ready to enthusiastically undertake the next stage.

Ku-Ring-Gai Chase

While the presentation of Spirituality of our Times in the former parishes of Asquith and Berowra in March/April 2006 was in the hands of Fr Michael, Terry Casey and Robyn Carter, I was fortunate in being able to assist Fr Michael and Terry with the analysis and diagnosis in the newly formed Ku-Ring-Gai Chase Catholic Parish in Sydney. This work was undertaken in November. It was presented under rather restrictive conditions and venues and the recent history of the newly 'twinned' parish was evident and powerful in the minds and hearts of the parishioners.

It was very hard work in the circumstances but there was an evident movement in all who faithfully attended. When the final decision to proceed was taken a touching spirit of hope was clear. All in all, I realise more than ever before, what great work we are engaged in. What a privilege to be part of it.

**Margaret Green
Brisbane Team**

Activity in Parishes/Deaneries

Central Deanery - Brisbane

An Experience of Communion: Living a Spirituality of Relationships.

Based on Archbishop Bathersby's 2005 Lenten pastoral document "Spirituality of Communion and the Body of Christ", this 90-120 minute "Experience" is our response to his call to take up, explore and deepen the topics in his pastoral. In the light of Pope John Paul II's call for the Church to be the "home and school of communion" (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, John Paul II, 2000 #43), Fr. Bill O'Shea and Mary Fama gave this unit to members of the Central Deanery gathered at Holy Cross Church, Woolloowin, on November 27th, 2006.

Following an introductory exploration of the concepts of "spirituality" and "communion", those present were asked to reflect and share on the need to "open our eyes as Christ challenged us to" – a phrase based on *Mark 8:18* which the Archbishop used in his pastoral statement – and so to contemplate the world with the eyes of faith. We suggested that the Holy Spirit is gently moving the world in the direction of God's plan, despite the many appearances to the contrary.

Following this, we gave more detailed input on the concept of communion and invited people to reflect on their own experience of communion – communion with God, with our fellow Catholics and other Christians, with the whole human family, and with all of creation. We believe that, of the three elements of the Archbishop's vision (Jesus–Communion–Mission), it is the term communion that people still have most difficulty with. We need to address this deficiency.

Finally, under the heading "a call to action", people were invited to reflect, share and pray about what is asked of all of us if we are to co-operate with God's plan for building a better world.

The feedback from those present was very favourable. This "Experience" will be offered to other deaneries or parishes in 2007. Please feel free to contact us if you would like it to happen in your deanery, parish or group.

**Mary Fama
Brisbane Team**

KEY INSIGHTS

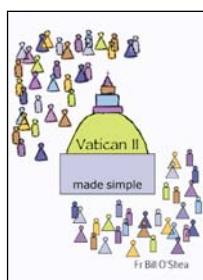
Capable of directing history

Christianity is becoming a universal symbol of the joint values of freedom and solidarity. But are we Catholics prepared for this? This ought to be the focus unifying all efforts: it is a matter of becoming capable of directing history. I am now addressing most of all those Christians who go to church and do some good works. But they do not live the fundamental aspect of Christian practice, which is to apply Christianity to all social relationships. In this way they are missing the very essence of the Gospel and their Christian name is false.

Spiritual Writings of Fr Lombardi

Vatican II Made Simple

This easy to read 73 page booklet is a collection of short articles written by Fr Bill O'Shea to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council. Endorsed by Archbishop Bathersby, it aims to provide a simple, user-friendly reminder of what the Council did and its significance for the Church today. Published by Community Animation Service, Australia, at the beginning of 2005, it continues to be a best-seller!



We hope that you, our supporters, will promote the book in your groups, parishes and among

your friends. It has proved to be useful for RCIA groups and is recommended reading for the Catholics Returning Home program.

Copies, \$8 each, may be obtained from CAS either by writing to the address above or by emailing web_mbw@bigpond.com. Postage and packing for 1-3 copies is \$2. If you or your parish order 10 copies (or more), send just \$80 and we'll pack and post for free!

Email delivery



As a way of controlling costs, we will continue to offer 'Living Community' 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@forensicservices.com.au)

TOWARDS COMMUNITY SPIRITUALITY

Features of a Spirituality of Communion – Part 1

“Spirituality” is a commonly used term these days and means different things to different people. In a recent Quarterly Essay, entitled “Voting for Jesus”, author Amanda Lohrey noted from her discussions with a group of teenagers, young Christians from the “Hillsong” group, that they all made a distinction between spirituality and religion.

For them, having a personal relationship with Jesus was different from “religion”, which they saw as a set of rules and institutional practices that they felt were out of date, and which they could not relate to. There is a real challenge here for us who belong to the mainstream churches -

perhaps our Catholic Church most of all - which attaches such great importance to tradition and continuity with the past.

I see “spirituality” as a term which defines a person's, or a group's, whole way of life: his/her /its WAY OF SEEING, BEING AND ACTING, which arises out of a fundamental choice the person or group has made. For us, that fundamental choice is the decision to follow Jesus Christ.

In his encyclical to mark the start of the present millennium, “Novo Millennio Ineunte” (2000) the late Pope John Paul II said that the Church's spirituality is the spirituality of communion, transcending all other kinds of spirituality that individual Catholics might adopt.

John Paul II meant that a spirituality of communion must be our way of seeing, being and acting - our whole way of life. He wrote that the "great challenge" facing us is "to make the Church the home and the school of communion".

But what does it mean in practice. To understand this idea, we need to begin with the communion from which we all come - the communion lived by the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. A spirituality of communion is a Trinitarian spirituality. It has its origins in, and takes its inspiration and even its reality from, the life of the triune God: a communal life, a shared life of mutual relationships and mutual self-giving.

Their communion is expressed in relationships of mutual and abundant love. They are one and three, in a life and love that are shared. There is a single identity, embracing the love of the three persons in a kind of eternal dialogue. This shared life of love and mutual self-giving is the life of the God in whose image we are made.

Genesis 1:26-27: "Let us make man (male and female) in our own image and likeness..."

That love which is God's own life was unable to be contained, but overflowed through Jesus Christ (God-made-man) into our world, so that we and all creation are drawn into the divine communion. We have within us the seed of that divine life of unity/diversity, communion, dialogue and communication of truth and love.

If young people like those mentioned above fail to see a connection between religion and spirituality, perhaps it is our fault. The Second Vatican Council in its Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium) Pointed the way which we have not sufficiently picked up.

Prior to Vatican II, the Church tended to be seen as a hierarchical institution or organisation with its hierarchy of Pope and bishops, its body of dogmas and its sacramental system. The Council tried to change the emphasis in our thinking by relegating that image of Church to chapter 3 of the document. Chapter 2 dealt with the Church as the "people of God", an ancient biblical image from the 1st Letter of Peter.

But in chapter 1, in pride of place, the Council described the Church first and foremost as a mystery of communion. Perhaps it is because many Catholics, including Church leaders, are still stuck on the image of church as hierarchical

institution, that young people see this gap between religion and spirituality.

By seeing Christian spirituality in terms of a relationship with Jesus, they are close to the truth, but they need to be taken a step further, to include the Father and the Holy Spirit as the basis of a real spirituality of communion. Otherwise, one's spirituality can become too individualistic, a case of an exclusively private and personal "Jesus and me" spirituality. This leaves insufficient awareness of the need for a spirituality of relationships – relationships with the human family and indeed the whole of creation.

The role of religion is to serve the universal need and desire for a spirituality. The religious vision of Church as communion best satisfies that role.

Theologian Karl Rahner, at the end of his life, said that Catholics of the future world need to be "mystics", and to develop a mystical approach to life. Rahner's observation would surely include the need to see ourselves, the Church, in a more spiritual way; not just as belonging to an institution or organisation, not even just as people of God, but as part of the mystery of communion which has its origins and its life based on the shared life and love of the triune God.

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

