



Community for a Better World  
PO Box 21, MORISSET NSW 2264  
Ph 02 4973 2998 Fax 02 4973 1763  
Email: [better\\_world@bigpond.com](mailto:better_world@bigpond.com)  
Web-site: [www.communitybetterworld.org](http://www.communitybetterworld.org)

# LIVING COMMUNITY

## July 2010

Dear Friends,

We always look forward to communicating with you through our half-yearly letter. It is an opportunity to share some good news. As you know, we are part of an international group, Community for a Better World, whose aim is to serve the ongoing and communitarian renewal of the Church and Society. Of course we always need to be searching for better ways to fulfil our spirit and purpose.

Presently we are engaged in a world-wide study which is asking the question: **In the light of the situation of the world and the church today, what sort of reform of the church is needed to enable it to be more authentic in its mission in the world?**

At our annual general gathering for a week in July in Brisbane we will be reflecting on this question. If you would like to express to us your point of view we would appreciate your thoughts and convictions on this key question. You can contact us at the above address. We would love to hear from you.

In solidarity with you for the Reign of God in the world.

Fr Michael Fallon  
Director, CBW Australia

### NEWS FROM OCEANIA



### AUSTRALIA

#### **The Parish of Euroa, Victoria**

In Lent this year, Michael Fallon, Mary Fama and Margaret Green from Community for a Better World had the privilege of leading the inspiring people of Euroa in a week of parish renewal. Called 'Spirituality for our Times' the renewal had a threefold aim, namely to provide:

- an opportunity for participants to exercise themselves, as persons and as a parish, in the Christian life
- a time for people to deepen their overall understanding of the Church and its teaching, of Jesus and the Gospel and of God's presence in the life of the world
- an extended time for parishioners to have an experience of God and community.

With much enthusiasm, over 40 people participated in the week at various times and expressed a strong desire for some ongoing renewal in the parish. Here is a sample of their overwhelmingly positive comments:

*" It has been a time to reflect on our own beliefs and to thank God for all the gifts of faith we have been given...It presented clear guidance of parishioner responsibility in areas of community, evangelizing, developing structures in support of God's plan, and other local initiatives.. I did enjoy the Bible areas of talks, as I have a new Bible, but haven't used it much; now I feel more comfortable with using it...It provided an opportunity for renewal of faith and Church teaching and expectations with like-minded family of faith... For me it was an awakening to God's love for humanity in the world and a personal deepening of hope for Catholic communities like ours....A definite renewal of my Catholic beliefs and a wanting to become more active in parish life...This has been a great experience for me. My past experiences of Missions have been of limited participation by group members. I have enjoyed the diversity of discussion, sharing, bible readings, and the hymns and referral to the Vatican Council direction.....Your teaching-discussion on 'parish in the future' has given me some ideas of how parish can be...We as a group experienced the awareness of God and the work that has to continue on in the parish and beyond and our involvement in that work.*

Responding to the desires of the participants, CBW remains in contact with the Parish Pastoral Council and has offered some proposals for ongoing renewal into the future.

***The Parish of Morisset, NSW*** recently held their annual PARISH ASSEMBLY. Here is a comment from a new parishioner:

On Sunday 21 March 2010, in my new parish of just under a year, I attended my first Parish Assembly. It was organised well, and maintained a forward direction at all times. Reports from parish groups and services were displayed. This was beneficial for involvement in the subsequent discussions as was the use of the projector for immediate updates. The goal of the assembly was to plan for the year ahead, and I felt that this was achieved. The new initiatives proposed for the ongoing evangelisation of all the Catholics living in the area of the parish were received enthusiastically. The availability of the assembly report gives all parishioners a summary of all that is happening in the Parish. Furthermore, updates in the parish bulletin inform us of progress.

### ***The Parish of Sunbury, Victoria***

#### **Called to Holiness, a Lenten reflection....**

Over 60 parishioners gathered on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> February with apologies from a further 18 persons. We were grouped in our Parish Neighbourhoods (18 of the 22 were represented).

Father Kevin McIntosh welcomed all in prayer and introduced Jill Gibbs who was to lead us. The morning was spent reflecting on who and what we were as parish. Jill led us through a reflection on the nature of the Church as Sacrament of Communion, Sacrament of the Reign of God and Sacrament of Universal Salvation.

We shared our ideas in groups and talked it out further in assembly. We recalled the 5 areas of our parish pastoral planning: **Community Life; Special Sectors of the Community; Pastoral Services; Workers in the Vineyard; Decision Making, Coordination and Management.**

In smaller groups we looked at how we could build relationships in our Neighbourhoods, how we could continue to decentralise pastoral services and how we can promote faith sharing groups in the Neighbourhoods.

Jill suggested that a good way to review our Neighbourhoods was to think about how we **gather**, how we **serve**, how we **communicate**, and how we **are represented**, so that we have a say and share responsibility.

All participated in the model of faith sharing in small groups using the new CBW resource "Journey Together". There was a respectful sharing of personal stories and prayerful silence in a relaxed and joyful atmosphere. Over a delicious lunch we shared many ideas and suggestions.

Those who were able to remain for the afternoon session were enthusiastic and energetic in their plans for their own Neighbourhoods. With a sense of purpose some groups organized gatherings, others planned to meet with team members to share the content and spirit of the day. Having modelled the "Journey Together" experience, groups enjoyed a confidence in the sharing of their faith in small groups.

Planning continued for the "Workers in the Vineyard" campaign to be held in June when all parishioners are invited to participate in some work of service for the building up of the community.

Each Neighbourhood has been invited to nominate a representative for the Parish Coordinating Team. This team provides the forum for each Neighbourhood to participate in the decision making process of our parish.

An Annual Parish Meeting (APM) will be held in October when Sunbury will again welcome Jill to facilitate the meeting. The APM will be an opportunity to celebrate the work that continues in our community (which numbers over 14,400) and to implement our hopes for the future as we work to achieve our parish target that "all are aware of the value that every person has in the parish community".

### **PAPUA NEW GUINEA**

The Group in PNG can rejoice in having a vastly different situation from our own, with all-inclusive pastoral planning a common pastoral approach. It involves using a future-oriented method of planning, which includes a deep reflection (analysis and diagnosis) on the present situation in order to see the way towards their ideal.

**Port Moresby Archdiocese** is presently writing their questionnaires for the Data Collection moving towards the Analysis and Diagnosis. They are also continuing with retreats to the parishes and training of the Parish Teams to give these retreats. So both the spirituality and the method are moving ahead. In the complex situation of the city and its effect on the rural area the analysis and diagnosis will be very interesting, challenging and informative.

### **Mt Hagen Archdiocese**

In January the National Team worked with the Diocesan Education Board to prepare and facilitate a Diocesan Education Assembly. Based on the method used for the whole diocese, we did an analysis and diagnosis of the situation of the Catholic Education in the Archdiocese. We had about 25 people present, all involved in education and most in higher positions. We are now moving to planning which will be prepared with the assistance of the Pastoral Vicar to be presented to the DEB for finalization and approval.

**Auki Diocese, Solomon Islands**, had a hard-working two weeks with 80 participants in doing their analysis and diagnosis, preparatory to their planning.

### **Gizo Diocese, Solomon Islands**

The team helped prepare and facilitate a Diocesan Pastoral Council. They also facilitated discussion on parish structures with a view to consolidating the renewal at parish level.

**Roger Purcell MSC**  
Director, Papua New Guinea.

## **INTERNATIONAL NEWS**



### **Leadership Meeting, 2 to 14 May 2010**

This gathering of Area Coordinators and General Leadership Team took place from 2nd to 14th June at our headquarters in Rome. Our aim was to evaluate our situation and mission with a view to the future. Unfortunately, because of my health situation I could not be present in person but modern technology overcame the difficulty to a great extent. SKYPE and Web-cams operating on both sides of the world and there I was, in the midst of the meeting, without leaving Australian shores.

Of course, the time difference of eight hours meant I was working late hours and sometimes did not last the distance! It was good to see friends from countries such as Spain, Portugal, Poland, South Africa, Mexico, Puerto Rico ... as they spoke and to know they could see me as we discussed our targets and how to achieve them more effectively. As usual, we went from Spanish to English to French to Italian with informal translators working overtime.

It was finally decided to form some commissions to follow up specific targets: for example:

- what are the implications for us of our study on post-modernity and how should we take on those implications?
- based on our experience in different parts of the world, what changes should be made in the implementation of our localised processes of renewal?

The intention is that the commissions will prepare reports and proposals for our general assembly or Cenacle next year. A good experience.

**Jill Gibbs**  
Area Co-ordinator; Oceania

## **INSIGHTS of Fr. LOMBARDI**

There cannot be genuine reform within the Christian community if it is not in essential relationship with the universal community.

### **(General renewal of the Church)**

It seems to me that the Lord wants a general renewal of the Church, especially in the communitarian aspect, in order to help all humanity to grow in holiness in this moment of history, and to help humanity go forward on a cosmic and universal journey.

### **(Spiritual Exercises, International Centre, 3/10/1962)**

Human beings are great in the measure in which they serve, help, love their neighbour, and enable their neighbour's growth. This is the reform of Vatican II: a Church truly servant of humanity. Today the pride and glory of the Church should reside above all in being servant of humanity, servant of the Reign of God.

### **(Conversation no. 5, "The Church at the service of the Reign of God", Mexico, November 1976)**

*“Journey Together, a book to do as well as read, deserves the widest possible dissemination in our parishes”*

*Br Brian Grenier CFC, Catholic Leader 18/4/2010*

## Journey Together

This booklet has been developed by Community for a Better World as a resource to serve the spiritual, theological and pastoral formation of the many lay persons who minister to the life of their parish communities.

The authors, Fr. Michael F Fallon and Jill Lee Gibbs, composed this user-friendly publication as ten meetings over the course of a year. It is designed for use in small groups so that the time spent together might be fruitful and enjoyable. Each participant will need a personal copy of the booklet.



**PRICE:** 1-50 = \$10 ea; 51-100 = \$9 ea; 101→ = \$8 ea.

| NUMBER OF BOOKLETS | TOTAL COST OF BOOKLETS | \$ |
|--------------------|------------------------|----|
|--------------------|------------------------|----|

**POSTAGE and PACKAGING WILL BE CALCULATED and INCLUDED WITH THE ACCOUNT**

**NAME:**

**ADDRESS:**

**PHONE:**

**FAX:**

**EMAIL:**

**BOOKS MAY BE ORDERED BY:**

\* **EMAIL:** [better\\_world@bigpond.com](mailto:better_world@bigpond.com)

\* **POST:** Community for a Better World, PO Box 21, MORISSET 2264

\* **FAX:** 02 4973 1763



## Reactions to Journey Together

We used this resource for our Lenten programme and found the text easy to follow; each segment generated much discussion and sharing and confirmed us in our faith. I liked the theme of becoming a holy community, not just developing individual holiness.

The Booklet is attractively presented. The length of each session seems to be appropriate – enough time for thinking as well as time for discussion. Our small group has continued meeting and older members find the print and font make for easy reading. The pictures throughout the booklet create a sense of peace and reflection.

Make sure you keep the pale colours as backgrounds – they make it easy to read.

**Michelle and Geraldine  
Morisset, NSW**

A small group of parishioners who are involved in ministry within the parish met during Lent, when we used the first five meetings of the booklet. Each gathering lasted just over the hour.

I found Journey Together very user friendly, practical and beautifully presented. It gave time for prayer, reflection on the Scriptures and how they touch our lives for our everyday living in today's world. The thought-provoking questions led to some very good discussion where members of the group shared their faith in a deep and meaningful way. This led to the group ministering to each other in a caring and compassionate way.

The final section of each gathering was a challenging one. We were invited to consider ways in which we could grow in our faith in order to be active members for the promotion of the Kingdom in our families, work places, Church and world. The major theme of communitarian spirituality running through each session became more apparent to members as we met each week.

We found the topics stimulating and enlightening and look forward to completing the other five sessions next Lent.

**Sr Cecily Foster PBVM  
Clayfield, Brisbane**

## TOWARDS COMMUNITY SPIRITUALITY:

These are dark times for the Church. We, the Church, are in crisis because of the sexual abuse of children by priests and religious – a small number certainly, but more than enough to damage seriously the image of the Church in the eyes of many Catholics and the wider world. Ireland, Germany, Austria, Holland and Spain follow a series of grave scandals in the United States, and Australia has not been spared.

These clerical sins are crimes have been compounded by the failure of many bishops to respond appropriately. The inescapable conclusion is that protecting the good name of the Church has been a higher value than care and compassion for the victims of abuse. Ironically, this negligence has resulted in far greater damage being inflicted on what our church leaders sought to protect. The attempts to cover-up the scandals have left Catholics with an even greater sense of a trust betrayed.

The events now revealed should convince us all that we need to take seriously, at every level of Church, the Second Vatican Council's decision to make Communion the key concept for our understanding of the Church. Not only how we understand it, but how we implement it, and make it a reality. We know how prior to Vatican II, the predominant model of church was that of a hierarchical institution, a top-down model of Pope, the other bishops, the clergy, and the laity at the base of the pyramid. That was the dominant element of the ecclesiology studied in Seminaries until the 1960s.

The bishops at the Second Vatican Council aimed to change this way of thinking. In the Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium), they relegated the Church as a hierarchical institution to the third chapter of the document. To chapter two, they elevated the image of the Church as the people of God, and in pride of place (chapter one), they presented the image of Church as a mystery of Communion. But, one must ask, how much has really changed over the past forty years, despite these good intentions. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that many of those in positions of power in the Church have continued to operate out of the hierarchical model as the preferred one. The Church as "societas perfecta" was always a dangerous way of thinking. Instead, "semper reformanda" (always in need of reformation) is the aspect of the Church that was never more in need of implementation.

Every crisis also offers an opportunity. From the depths, real renewal can begin. If the current situation shows that the hierarchical model of the Church, as understood by many, is no longer sustainable, then this is reason to rejoice. We must begin, - as Vatican II said we must – with Communion. Communion is more than fellowship. It is the Church's basic reality. But it requires serious effort on our part, in collaboration with God – to make it work. It involves participation, communication, dialogue and change, however painful that may be. It means the encouragement of consultative models of authority, instead of church leaders talking down to people. The laity must not be seen as passive subjects, but as the people of God to whom the Spirit has been given.

We are often told that the Church is not a democracy. Indeed official Church documents in the nineteenth century condemned the democratic form of government. It was John Paul II who was the first pope to endorse democracy as an acceptable form of government. But while democracy may not be the Church's preferred internal model, the fact is that democracy is seen as the ideal by most of the world's people. The Church's leadership must move in that direction, if we are not to become irrelevant. Women make up half of the human race, but are grossly under-represented at the highest levels of church governance. Would not the sexual abuse scandals have been handled differently, if more women were in positions of authority, instead of the prevailing male clerical culture? The Church must be re-structured to include them at the level of decision-making.

Liturgical renewal is also important. I do not refer to the process of changing the prayers of the Mass to conform more to the Latin prototypes. Liturgy or worship has to reflect a Communion-based vision of Church. It is not just about commissioning readers and eucharistic ministers. It is about making liturgy and liturgical language the best way to speak about the mystery of God and the mystery of Christ, with the symbolism and the reverence of the sacred needed to communicate the mystery. The Eucharist is where the God of Communion enters into union with us.

One of the great theologians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Karl Rahner, said that Catholics in this new millennium would be either mystics or nothing. We need to promote the mystical element of belonging to a Church which is a mystery of Communion. Many Catholics, and indeed the majority of young Catholics, have lost faith in the Church as a hierarchical institution. If the Church

continues on its present path, they will not return. It is sad that they leave the Church, because they fail to find spiritual sustenance among us. We need a Church which insists on the importance of prayer. Historically we have been a Church of mystics, but have neglected that in recent times. We need to emphasise the prayerful study of the Scriptures, to learn from them the need to transform our society; and by reflecting deeply on the mystery of the Trinity, to learn to recognize God's saving energy at work in the world. We must be helped to read "the signs of the times."

We need to convince the world that the Church is not just about controlling human behaviour – not just anti-abortion, homosexuality, pre-marital sex, etc. - but about promoting a vision of faith and union with God, the Trinity, the source of Communion. We need a vision of Church as Communion also with all our fellow Catholics, with other Christians, with people of other religions, even with non-believers, and with the whole of God's creation. Perhaps the sexual abuse scandals which seem to have so damaged the Church, and have certainly damaged many individuals, might prove to be a catalyst for much-needed reform.

(with acknowledgement of an article by Fr. Gregory Collins, OSB – "The Tablet". 13.3.2010)

**Fr Bill O'Shea**  
**Community for a Better World**

### Email delivery preferred



There has been a good response to our decision to offer "Living Community" by email. We would like to reduce to a minimum the number of copies that we post. So, if you can help us by taking our newsletter by email, please respond to: [terry@forensicservices.com.au](mailto:terry@forensicservices.com.au)