

Community for a Better World

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LIVING COMMUNITY

November 2008

Greetings again

Dear Friends

For various reasons we have not been in touch with you for a while. However; we are resuming our regular twice yearly contact from now on.

Most Australians are very much aware that 2008 is the centenary of the birth of the cricket legend, Sir Donald Bradman. Much has been said about his sporting greatness and his unique service to the game locally and internationally.

Community for a Better World is glad to announce that 2008 is also the centenary of the birth of Fr Riccardo Lombardi SJ, another "great" of the twentieth century. In the tradition of St Paul, the passionate missionary of God's love, Fr Lombardi was a fiery beacon who lit up the world stage especially from 1938 to 1979 as a messenger of Gospel hope. In a world torn apart and traumatised by World War II his preaching and his announcing of the Gospel of hope resonated in peoples' hearts and souls. He had a gifted way of presenting Christ's reconciling and healing love as the answer to humanity's deepest yearnings. He devoted all his energy towards bringing about a better church for better world according to the heart of God.

Pope Pius XII officially initiated the Movement for a Better World in 1952 and the group's work has spread to 40 countries at the present time. We hope you enjoy reading our short stories, both local and from afar.

The Peace of Christ to you and yours this Advent and always.

Fr Michael Fallon
Director, Australian Group

NEWS FROM AROUND AUSTRALIA

Annual national meeting at Manly

This took place in the 1st week of September. After sharing information about our activities, we followed a process of reflecting on the environment in which we work, on our group and on the service we offer.

We began by shared study of a paper by a well-known moral theologian, Fr. Carlo Molari, on the challenges posed to us by the present situation of the world and of the Church. He reduced his topics to three from society: nihilism, injustice and violence. The three ecclesial challenges that he saw as most urgent were to do with language, religious pluralism and synodality. This gave us a very worthwhile and rich entry into the next steps of the process. The first task was to identify the opportunities and difficulties facing us. We then proceeded to an analysis of the group itself, the results obtained, the resources at our disposal, our strong and weak points and what was most significant in all of this data. This led us to define lines of action for the future.

Although few in numbers, we felt firm in our commitment to developing our mission and strengthening our group. As usual, it was a very happy and productive time for us.

Another New Venture in Community Retreats

Recently, Jill and Michael offered to some parishes in the Maitland – Newcastle Diocese a new series of weekly experiences on aspects of the spirituality of communion and its implications. Six topics were covered. These were: God's Plan and the World's Deepest Yearnings; Faith, Hope and Charity as the style of Life of Christ's Church; Communication as Word and Silence; Participation and Co-responsibility; Prayer and Unity of Life; Communion as Mission and Commitment.

They received very positive feedback and we were pleased that the experiences proved so enriching for the participants. Here are some of the participants' comments:

"These weekly retreats were an opportunity for us to grasp a deeper understanding of Communion, beginning with our entry into the Faith Community at the time of our Baptism. I would encourage you – everyone who can - to take the opportunity to participate, if offered in your parish, as you will find them enriching and helpful."

"The sessions were presented in a very easily understandable way. The input from the attendees was great. It made us think about the 'differences' and how to grow together in 'community' although our stories are so diverse. It gave me food for thought for the whole week! Jill and Fr Michael were inspiring leaders!"

"It is always helpful to explore our faith together. This has been a lovely few weeks to talk together, to work together and help one another. I hope we can follow up with more sessions. Thank you."

This new series of retreats is available in a variety of formats to other parishes in the country. To make further enquiries you can contact our National Office or a member of Community for a Better World (CBW) in your State.

Vatican II Made Simple: a reaction

When we offered the sessions on the Spirituality of Communion in the different parishes, we were able to sell more copies of our "Vatican II Made Simple". One woman bought two copies; she wanted to give one to a friend. Next week she rushed over to me just as we were starting and said "Brilliant". She saw I was taken aback by her remark and explained: "Vatican II Made Simple: I read it, it's brilliant".

We still have copies available, but they are running out fast!

Units on Jesus, Communion and Mission

In response to the Brisbane Archbishop's call to promote the Archdiocesan vision locally, the Brisbane team of CBW is developing three units on Jesus, Communion and Mission respectively. We are intending to offer these units at the Archdiocesan Spirituality Centre on three separate days during 2009.

The 1st part of the unit on Jesus takes up the topic of **Jesus** and the Good News of the Reign of God and the way **Jesus** promotes that through his **word** - his teachings and his parables. The 2nd part concentrates on how **Jesus** promotes the Reign of God through his **action** - his works of mercy and his miracles. In the 3rd part, we reflect on how **Jesus** entrusts his disciples with his mission. The community of the Risen Christ is called to reveal the Reign of God and so continue the ministry of Jesus down through the years.

The other two units are yet to be completed.

A renewed effort in parish renewal

For years we have worked with parishes to promote a process of moving from one way of being parish to another. We are talking about moving to a COMMUNION-STYLE OF BEING CHURCH, a style that is CONSCIOUSLY and essentially evangelizing, and CONSCIOUSLY and essentially Sacrament (sign and instrument) of the Reign of God breaking in, as the gift of salvation, to people's lives to free them from all that is oppressive in human life.

Several years ago we reviewed our action in this regard and decided to propose some key changes. When we worked with Fr. Kevin McIntosh in the Sunbury parish in Victoria earlier this year and suggested this new approach, the parish took it on with great enthusiasm. So we are involved with them in a partnership to keep developing effective ways of evangelisation and renewal. In this new approach, based on communitarian values, the pastoral care of all is more directly evangelising. Much more attention is given to building up relationships in the neighbourhoods and on having strong neighbourhood teams. More formation is provided to the pastoral workers and basic changes have been made to simplify the system of reaching out to all. Early results have been encouraging.



Our Australian web-site

We are working on our web-site, built with a different software package and a slightly different format. This will allow us to update regularly with new content. As soon as it's ready, we will circulate the web address via email.

OTHER NEWS FROM OCEANIA AREA

PNG News

Orientation course in Daru-Kiunga

Our group has worked with the Daru-Kiunga diocese over many years. During an orientation course in April for new persons coming to work in the diocese, Fr Roger Purcell MSC, the Director of our group in PNG, gave 3 days input about the diocesan journey of all-inclusive renewal as an expression of communion.

Seminar for Bishops on diocesan renewal

Nine bishops, some with whom we are already working and others who are interested in the process described above, gathered in Port Moresby in April. Members of our PNG National team, Bishop Gilles Cote, Fr. Arnold Steffen and Fr. Roger Purcell facilitated the meeting.

Chief's conference in Bereina diocese

Continuing the work of the last 6 years, in June 2008, Roger and members of the diocesan team led a group of 45 chiefs in a reflection on the ideal role of a chief in the light of the changed situation of society today. All felt it was another step of growth for these men as Christian leaders.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Thinking back on October 2007

What a great meeting we had in Rome, the representatives of CBW: Spanish and Portuguese speaking from Latin America; French and English speaking from Africa; Italian, Spanish, Polish, German, French and Portuguese speaking from Europe and English speaking from Asia and Oceania.

Our gathering took place over three weeks from 7 to 26 October 2007, with a general theme of **Shaping the Future, Faithful to God's Gift**. Our

aim was to share our life and experience, and look towards how to act for the future. And so we listened, we read, we visited the 'expo' of each country, we questioned and gradually the whole panorama of our life and activities was laid out before the assembly, together with our hopes, dreams and convictions, our joys and sufferings, our challenges, failures and achievements.

Two highlights of our time together were when members of the media and a large group of our friends joined with us in celebration one afternoon, and when a well-known theologian highlighted the crucial challenges of the situation today in church and society.

Of course, there was a great deal of organization done before and during our time together, including the translation system in our three official languages - Spanish, English and French - with the occasional inclusion of Italian. Among ourselves the non-verbal replaced the verbal many times. We are proud to say that Jill, from our Group in Australian, was one of the moderators of the whole meeting.

And then, having achieved our purpose and having elected our new leadership team, it was time for farewells and for carrying out what we decided together.

Those of us from Oceania - Joan, Michael, Mary, Gilles, Roger and Jill - remember the experience, and those with whom we shared it, with gratitude.

Follow-up Meeting in April - May 2008

The purpose of this meeting of the Area Coordinators from the different continents and the Leadership Team was to spell out our decisions and what they implied into a four-year plan. A draft document had been prepared and we worked on it together to get it into a final, acceptable form.

Once again, translations were part of life. Our rhythm of work, prayer, rest and free time was well-balanced. Sylvia from English-speaking Africa and I from Oceania were able to re-visit favourite places and even discover and explore new sites from the many treasures Rome has to offer.

Jill Gibbs,
Area Co-ordinator, Oceania

English-speaking Africa Area Encounter

Though our journeys to our venue in South Africa were beset by border difficulties, punctures, delays and long hours - some almost 36 hours - we finally made it for a delayed start; members from South Africa, Malawi and Zimbabwe. We gathered on Monday 4 August, very aware of the absence of Jill, who had intended to come from Australia to be with us. Her present state of health did not permit that, and we missed her.

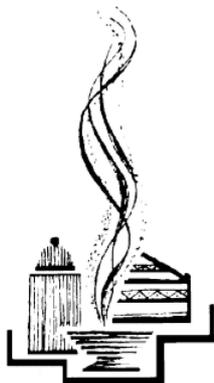
There was an energy in our meeting that generated enthusiasm and an expectancy that something new was about to happen. Our main task was to evaluate the Parish Evangelisation Process in our countries and then compare it with the information Jill sent us of their experience in Australia. We realised that what we were doing needed to be adapted to our various situations.

After input, prayer and reflection, we gave birth to "Living the Gospel in Africa" as a parish journey. Our efforts were rewarded when Bishop Steve Brislin of Kroonstadt Diocese said that he liked this simple way of planning a journey, starting with the values that come out of the dream and the situation of the parish.

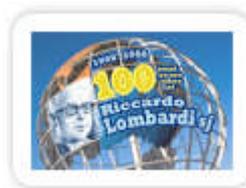
We missed Jill but we benefited a lot from the input and PowerPoint presentations she sent in preparation for our meeting.

Laughter, struggle, sharing, work, relaxation, prayer and celebration of Eucharist were woven into our days together. Planning on the Area level filled us with hope and enthusiasm. We were all revitalized through our being together, through the hope expressed in drafting the new parish journey and through the sense of looking forward in planning.

Sylia Van Vuuren OP,
Area Co-ordinator, English Speaking Africa.



Centenary of Fr Lombardi's Birth



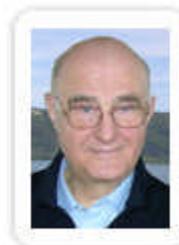
Fr. Lombardi was born in Naples on 28 March 1908 into a very devout and well-known Catholic family. After resolving some crises of faith as a young man, he entered the Jesuits and was ordained in 1936. A series of decisions by his superiors put him on the path of becoming a charismatic preacher of renewal.

Among the different initiatives to celebrate the centenary of his birth was a liturgy held on 31 March in the Church of Santa Maria in Trastevere in Rome, presided by the Apostolic Nuncio to Italy, *Mons. Giuseppe Bertello*. He stressed that the guiding idea and fundamental insight that marked Fr Lombardi's whole life was that "there is a whole world to be rebuilt and that can only happen in the light of the Gospel". He went on to say that Fr Lombardi was the "protagonist of one of the most beautiful pages of the history of the Church in the second half of the twentieth century."

On that same occasion, *Andrea Riccardi*, Professor of contemporary history at the University of Rome, said that Fr Lombardi "was the conscience of Pope Pius XII. History should pay more attention to a great reformer like him, a convinced promoter of the Spirituality of Communion. He was a precursor of the Second Vatican Council, a man full of history and full of life, someone who never just resigned himself to situations as if they could not be changed. He felt that Christianity was deeply challenged by communism. The Movement that he originated has meaning and a mission in the Church today. I have heard many people from different continents speak of Better World with great gratitude. It is a Movement that still today has not lost the dream of its founder."

Death of Fr Juan Bautista Cappellaro

Community for a Better World mourns the loss of one of our "greats", Juan Bautista Cappellaro, who entered into God's eternal life on 24 August 2008. At the same time we celebrate his life with us and all that he contributed to the renewal of the Church and the transformation of the World.



He was a member of our group for 50 years, had founded the group in Argentina and directed the International Centre of Spirituality at Rocca di Papa for many years. Like Fr Lombardi himself, Juan Bautista was constantly focused on contemplating the signs of God's presence and action in history and on promoting the Church's consequent response.

Juan Bautista helped the whole group to grow in that contemplative spirit linked with action for a better future for all. His deep conviction was that this action could not be left to chance. It needed to be planned and planned in such a way that it involved everyone. For him, planning was an expression of obedience to God's will, in as much as a community or group could discern it. This was another of his gifts to our group and to the many dioceses and parishes who take on the process of overall renewal that he was instrumental in developing. This involves them in a lifestyle of reading the signs of the times and of all-inclusive organic pastoral planning to grow together towards the communion and unity of God's own life.

The combination of prophetic contemplation, of discipline in the use of methods, of passion for renewal based on the spirituality of communion, fostered and sharpened his innate gifts of insightfulness and creativity.

Perhaps what most characterised Juan Bautista was the profound degree to which he lived the Christian virtue of hope. As he himself expressed it:

"Hope frees us from slavery to the past that makes us unable to move forward; hope liberates us from remaining in the limits of the present and allows us to see it as opportunity for doing what is possible; finally, hope frees us from immature dreams and brings us to live the future as a challenge to the best that can be. Hope is inner freedom, strength of choice, energy to implement, yearning for something more, always open to the future".

All this we in the Australian group saw in him, in his presence with us, in his spoken and written word and in his action. He inspired us especially when he led us in the Communitarian Spiritual Exercises in 1997. At that time many of us came to experience, through him, the reality of communication, spirit to spirit, in the here and now.

We end with the Gospel passage that the international team put on the website about Juan Bautista:

"You did not choose me, no, I chose you; and I commissioned you to go out and bear fruit, fruit that will last."

KEY INSIGHTS

How wonderful is the power of conciliation that, in today's drama, is capable of determining an orientation that would make us feel intimately our equality, the equality of brothers and sisters. The crisis is moral rather than material; a crisis of unacknowledged dignity among the masses that have, at last, woken up.

Spiritual Writings of Fr Lombardi



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 2

As we have said so often, spirituality, a commonly but loosely used word these days, is basically a way of being, seeing and acting. What is distinctive about Christian spirituality is that it is a way of being, seeing and acting which has its source in the person and vision of Jesus Christ and draws its inspiration from him. And, in the beautiful words of the Vatican II document, *The Church in the Modern World* 22, Jesus, who shows us how to live, “worked with human hands, he thought with a human mind, he acted with a human will, and loved with a human heart... he also blazed a trail, and if we follow it, life and death are made holy and take on a new meaning.” Jesus acted with a human will but the fundamental choice he made was always to do the will of his Father: “For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of the one who sent me.” (John 7: 38)

The God, whom Jesus revealed to us, is a communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. To be in communion with Jesus is to be in communion with the Trinity. Through Jesus, God’s life is extended to us and shared with us. It is through baptism and faith that we become members of God’s family in a special way as brothers and sisters of Jesus, adopted sons and daughters of the Father, and sacred dwellings or “temples” of the Holy Spirit. When we follow the trail that Jesus blazed and take on his way of being, we are saying “yes” to a communion way of life.

The theology expressed in the previous paragraph is very much the theology of St Paul, though it also owed much to St John and is in no way out of step with the thinking of the other Gospel authors. Following Paul’s thinking, we find in his letters that his favourite image for the church is “the Body of Christ”.

He compares the Church to a human body whose members all contribute to the well-being of the whole body. The image suggests the co-responsibility that all of us, as members of the Church, have for one another and for the whole body. Paul describes Christians and the Christian community as having “put on” Christ (Gal 3: 27), and as possessing life in Christ (Phil 2: 1).

Once we are convinced of our relationship of communion in the Body of Christ (with the

persons of the Trinity and with one another), we will no longer be able to regard ourselves as isolated individuals leading spiritually “selfish” lives, but rather as people united “in Christ” with a multitude of brothers and sisters. When we grasp Paul’s understanding of being in Christ, then our whole way of living life must change, because what we take on in all our relationships is COMMUNION, not only with God but with one another and with the whole of God’s creation.

Part of that life of communion will inevitably involve dialogue, which is to say, mutual communion of truth and love - “speaking the truth in love” (Eph 5:15). What has transitionally been described as “fraternal correction” also has its basis here. God willed to give us a share in God’s own life; what we share is God’s life in us.

Communion involves participation: it means trying **together** to discover and do God’s will. It implies reconciliation and praying **together**, not just alone. The life of communion is a journey **together** towards holiness, to the wholeness of life that God wants for us.

And just like the human body, the Church (the Body of Christ) does need systems and structures to promote its growth. There is a need for pastoral planning to help us live the communion way of life. But good, authentic pastoral planning must always begin with, and arise out of, a shared spirituality. Otherwise we run the risk of seeing and treating the Church as just another human organization or institution, which it is not, and reducing pastoral planning to just another human management model.

In his letter to mark the beginning of the new millennium, Pope John Paul II used the expression, “the Spirituality of Communion” – the first time that phrase had appeared in an official church document. He said that the great challenge for the new millennium is “to make the Church the home and school of communion if we are to be faithful to God’s plan and respond to the world’s deepest yearnings”. He then went on to warn that “running immediately to action would not be the right impulse to follow”, but, indeed, “before making practical plans (to meet the challenge) we need to promote a spirituality of communion” (Novo Millennio Ineunte, 43)

Fr Bill O’Shea
Brisbane Team