

SPI

E. News

March 2009

Dear Friends,

It is parish assembly season! In many churches congregations gather with their pastors to examine the concerns of the parish. While this practice may appear to traditional Catholics as an innovation of Vatican II, collaborative ministry is not new in the Church.

A good narrative of the ancient practice of Christian collaboration is Acts 15: 1-35. With increasing numbers of Gentiles being converted to Christianity, the predominantly Jewish church in Jerusalem gathered to discuss the issue of including them into the community. The consensus that was reached was not only profoundly pastoral, but also believed to have been derived from the will of God: "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" (v.28).

God's plan does not grow less fuzzy with time. Like the Christians of old, we are challenged to make commands like "Love your neighbour"; "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is near" or "Go make disciples

of all nations" more concrete in our world. That is what parish assemblies help us do.

Parish Assemblies ensure that our religion does not remain in the abstract, but becomes practical and relevant. Much more than a mere exercise of democratic principles in a 'shareholder meeting,' a Parish Assembly is fundamentally an act of faith - a community's response to their belief that God is really present in their parish and is concerned about their neighbourhood. They attempt to discern God's will and, using the diverse gifts of the parish, show their neighbours what living the Gospel means.

As you read this issue of the SPI e-news, I invite you to join me in prayer for our churches conducting parish assemblies. May their collaboration bring about fruit, of which they can say "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us."

Arthur

The common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood are ordered to one another; each in its own proper way shares in the one priesthood of Christ

Lumen Gentium #10

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THE MONTH OF MARCH

8 March - [International Women's Day](#) is celebrated in many countries around the world. It is a day when women are recognized for their achievements without regard to divisions, whether national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic or political.

21 March - [The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#). On that day, in 1960, police opened fire and killed 69 people at a peaceful demonstration in Sharpeville, South Africa, against the apartheid "pass laws". Proclaiming the Day in 1966, the UN General Assembly called on the international community to redouble its efforts to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination (resolution 2142 (XXI)).

COLLEGIALITY

THE SPIRIT OF THE PASTORAL COUNCIL



It was 10:30pm and the Pastoral Council was tense.

What began as a planning meeting for the feast day celebrations turned into an impasse. At first the SVDP reps wanted to invite the poor, but the liturgy folks were not too keen. The youth minister started preaching about solidarity with the unfortunate until he was cut short by a comment from the altar servers that if he was so hot for the poor he shouldn't be driving his Porsche all day. After some not-so-friendly verbal exchange between multiple parties, which involved someone saying something decidedly un-Christian about someone else's mother, the priest, who just walked in and was already on edge with church renovations, demanded that everyone calm down. The chairperson called a vote on the issue. The priest vetoed the decision to vote, which triggered off the long-suffering migrant reps who finally found courage to protest their partial treatment, stopping short of accusing Father of being biased to those who gave big bucks to the building project. He got the message anyway and stormed off, declaring that he will organize the 'bloody feast day' himself. The chairperson looked like she was going to cry. Meeting adjourned.

Now you may be thinking: our parish council is not like THAT. I certainly hope that is true. However, what is also true is our tendency to allow our human frailties to get in the way of our shared life, distorting what is supposed to be collaboration into contests of power, or cycles of hurtfulness and vengeance. When we permit this to happen, what results is a demoralized pastoral council, not to mention a counter-witness of Gospel values to the parish at large. In an effort to address this, I go scrounging in the Vatican II toolbox.

Of the many treasures of Vatican II, collegiality is one that receives relatively little attention. Termed after the mode of cooperation between members of the college of bishops, collegiality denotes mutual interaction and communication. Although the key

referent of the idea of collegiality is the episcopal college, I believe that it has important application for parish councils. At the level of the Universal Church, collegiality happens when all the bishops, together with the Pope as their head, think and act in concert for the good of the Church. This collective examined behavior is rooted in the mutual recognition of God's Holy Spirit present in and speaking through all members. Collegiality is derived from God's call for the Church to witness communion, and it can serve as a paradigm for all diocesan and parish operations. Applied at the level of the parish, collegiality is the spirit of dialogue that must be nurtured in the assembly at large, and concretized in the relationships between laity and priests. The parish pastoral council thus becomes a local relative of the episcopal college.

As a fundamental unit of Christian leadership, the parish pastoral council is called to exemplify collegial harmony and, thus sensitized to the communion that characterizes the reign of God, sees clearer the divine plan. Pastors, presiding over the councils in the person of Christ the head (CCC1548), bring *holy order* upon their communities by inviting participation and forging consensus among all the members. With true collegiality there need not be fear of either 'clerical dictatorship' on one hand or 'over-democratization of the laity' on the other, for we recognize that everyone is needed in order to function as church. Collegiality is not simply co-operation as in a division of labor among the whole yielding the sum effect of its parts. It is the body of Christ in harmonious motion, enabled by God's grace and our aspiration for that just and virtuous Christian community envisioned by the Apostle Paul:

Now the body is not a single part, but many. As it is, God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as God intended. As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand "I do not need you" nor again the head to the feet "I do not need you." (1 Corinthians 12: 14, 18, 20-21)

EUTHANASIA

With the recent case of Eluana Englaro in Italy, “the right to die” has resurfaced as a moral issue for our time. Guest writer Teresa Hoe offers us her reflection on Church teaching regarding euthanasia.

The Right To Die

In 1992, Eluana Englaro, a 20 year old Italian woman from Lecco, Italy, was involved in a car crash. On 18 January 1992, she was declared to be in a persistent vegetative state. Since then, she had been on artificial life support. Eluana’s father, Beppino Englaro, had requested to have the feeding tube removed to allow her to die naturally.¹

On 6 February 2009, Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy, drafted a decree that would have forced the continuation of the treatment of Eluana but the President of the Republic refused to sign the decree. Why was there a drastic need to resort to a decree?

Beppino had brought Eluana’s case to court twice, and on both occasions he was turned down. However, on 9 July 2008, the Court of Appeal granted Beppino the right to remove the feeding tube. However, due to overwhelming split on the Court of appeal’s decision, the Italian Parliament had to pursue the case to the Final Court of Appeal. Italy’s highest court awarded Beppino the right to discontinue the feed to his daughter. Eluana died on 9 February 2009 after having been in a vegetative state for 17 years. Eluana Englaro was euthanised.

This case has sparked a constitutional crisis in Italy. Some claimed that it was murder, while others maintained it was the right thing to do. So is euthanasia murder? The Catechism of the Catholic Church describes euthanasia as an action or an omission which, by itself or by intention, causes the death of handicapped, sick or dying persons – sometimes with an attempt to justify the act as a means of eliminating suffering (CCC 2277).

Morally Problematic

The action of euthanasia intends to cause death. Euthanasia is the intentional killing of an ill human being for his or her alleged benefit. The key idea is “intentional” because if death is not intended, it is not an act of euthanasia. Euthanasia has been considered morally unacceptable by Christian tradition,² which likens euthanasia to committing suicide, and making the assistant in suicide a partner in a crime. It is an act that eliminates the dignity of a human person and devalues life, involving the rejection of love of self and the obligation of justice and charity toward one’s

‘I’m going to die on Monday at 6.15pm’



The Guardian ran an account of the diary of Marc Weide, whose mother chose euthanasia after being diagnosed with terminal cancer (7 Sep 2008, The Straits Times)

neighbor. The temptation of euthanasia lies in our ability to lessen the burden of agony or unsatisfactory quality of life by choosing death.

Forgoing Extraordinary Means of Treatment

Hannah Jones, a 13 year old British girl who had leukemia,³ won the right to die after persuading a hospital to withdraw its bid to force her to have a risky heart transplant operation. Hannah’s treatment had damaged her heart, and the hospital was insistent that she had the operation. Hannah had been in and out of hospital for much of the previous eight years after she was diagnosed with leukemia at the age of five. The operation had a high chance of failure, and even if it were successful, would be followed by a disproportionate amount of medication. Hannah turned down the procedure and said she would rather die with dignity.

The hospital attempted to bulldoze their way with aggressive medical treatment, without considering the fact that they had caused excessive burden on the patient and her family. The Church calls this “extraordinary means” of treatment. A Christian can on good conscience choose to forgo medical procedures when they become too burdensome, dangerous or disproportionate to the expected outcome. Forgoing extraordinary means of treatment is neither suicide nor euthanasia, it does not intend death but rather seeks not to forestall death. This action is legitimate as long as the patient is competent and able to make the decision (CCC 2278).

CONTINUED ON PG 4

THE BASIC CATECHIST COURSE

by Fr Erbin Fernandez

Well Lent is upon us once again and for me it has always signaled a period of taking stock, a time to assess where I have been, where I am now and where I would like to go. This three-fold level of reflection is also constantly taking place at a macro level at the catechetical office.

Our Secondary Coordinator Christi Disher is busy reaching out to catechists at the confirmation level through her biannual coordinators meetings and her workshop cum reflection sessions in different parishes. At the primary level we have two new part timers Linda Heng and Alvin Tan who are helping me to design a new basic catechist course, which we hope to launch at the end of this year. At the moment we have settled on the title 'Echo' for the name of the course. Linda brings a renewed sense of passion to the ministry as she begins to reach out to the primary level catechists through a blog site that is being created by Alvin who is our creative design man. Our catechetical team is busy bouncing ideas of each other as we try to envision what the future shape of catechesis might look like in our parishes.

I am sure the word 'Echo' itself is not lost on the ears of the seasoned catechist who will immediately recall that the Greek rendition of the word Catechesis, '*katechein*' means 'to resound', to 're-echo' or 'to-hand down'. I became interested in the two-way dynamics signaled by this word 'Echo'. It captures for me the dynamic act of catechesis whereby what the catechist proposes impacts the young person in such a way that it provokes a response! If it does not have this effect then the catechist has either not taken into account the life experience of the youth they are addressing or the youth themselves are not paying attention to what has been proposed. In this new basic course we want to re-examine the method we use in Catechesis. I would like to propose that we shift from a transmissive pedagogy to a dialogical model that really engages the full use of the young persons' capacity to reason.

May this Lenten journey be for each one of us a time of personal as well as communal renewal as we grow in our communion with Jesus and rediscover what it means to teach as Jesus did!

EUTHANASIA ... CONTINUED FROM PG 3

The practice of euthanasia is a threat to the elderly and the ill because it might inadvertently imperil the lives of many elderly folk who do not wish to die but may be coerced to do so. The possibility of someone being euthanised without their explicit consent is high. Pope John Paul II pointed out in *Evangelium Vitae* (EV 64) that people in developed countries are preoccupied with efficiency. Elderly and disabled people, isolated by their families and society are considered as intolerable and burdensome.

A View that Respects God

Differences of opinion arise and some are of the view that in not permitting euthanasia; "mercy delayed is mercy denied". However from the Christian perspective, euthanasia is not morally lawful because we do not have the free disposal of our own lives. Only

God is the author of life and death. Human persons are called to steward their lives and give them back when God calls. Killing is forbidden because it usurps a Divine prerogative and violates Divine rights (EV 64). It is contrary to God's plan to attack God's gift of human life. God has given life to human beings and created them in his image. Consequently every human life from the time of conception until death is sacred. Instead of resorting to euthanasia, improved end-of-life care and help should be rendered to ensure that patients receive proper palliative care.

¹ Eluana Englaro http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eluana_Englaro

² Cf. *Gaudium et spes* n.27, and *Evangelium Vitae* nn.64-66.

³ London. "UK Teen Says No To Life-Saving Op." *The Straits Times*, 12 November 2008.

LENTEN LITURGIES

by *Christi Disher*

My home parish of St. Ignatius decided to focus the month of February to raise awareness amongst its parishioners regarding how to celebrate good liturgies. Part of the focus was to remind parishioners of our responsibilities as Catholics to maintain a reverent silence at certain times during Mass.

How appropriate that this occurred just prior to the start of the Lenten season. Since Lent is a season of increased prayer and reflection, it is an ideal time to refocus on a renewal of silence in the liturgy. While silence is appropriate in all liturgies and in all seasons, Lent offers us the opportunity for longer periods of silence, and for increased catechesis on the purpose of silence in the liturgy.

Communal silence in the liturgy often follows a scripture reading, a psalm, or the homily. Such silence allows for a back-and-forth movement between God's word to us and our reflective taking in of that word.

Another kind of silence is after the Communion banquet. Here, silence is a way of reflecting on God's great gifts in a spirit of gratitude. Receiving Communion, singing the Communion song and maintaining silence after the procession are all ways we can participate in the mystery of the Eucharist

Maintaining a reverent silence at appropriate times during Mass draws us together as a community into the liturgy. It allows for communication to take place between God and his people. Silence is also a response, something we do to answer God's call.

I pray that we all actively seek some moments of sacred silence throughout this Lenten season both during the celebration of Mass and in the chaos of our everyday lives.



Upcoming Events: Secondary Level District Coordinator Meeting

St. Vincent de Paul

April 25th

#03-02

10:00 am-12pm

Or

Holy Trinity

March 28th

10:00am-12pm

Please rsvp to

christidisher@catholic.org.sg

by Friday, March 13th.

Addressing the Pastoral Needs of the Catechist by Br. Colin Wee

May 30th 9am-1pm

CAEC 2 Highland Road

Contribution: \$10

Please rsvp to:

spi@catholic.org.sg

Tips for Catechists

Use silent prayer during classes and meeting sessions. For example, model liturgical prayer in the classroom by using the invitation "Let us pray" followed by silent time, before offering a spoken prayer.

THE BACK PAGE



Encountering Christ, the Word of God in community

God chose to reveal God's self through Christ, the Word made flesh. Through faith in Christ we are able to share in the divine life and the love of God. This Word of God inspires us to love and share with one another. We become witnesses to the Word of God, and it takes shape in the way we relate to one another. How have we been relating to one another? Does the Word of God inspire us to act lovingly, kindly and justly? Loving and sharing becomes harder when we are in a diverse community. With every member being different, it is sometimes hard to relate to one another. We enjoy the company of like-minded people, yet the Word of God ought to inspire us to reach out to those who are not like us.

Many of us miss this essential understanding of the Word of God and it is reflected in the way we appreciate the liturgy of the Word at the Eucharist and the way gospel sharing is done. It is with this in mind that the SPI has planned for a workshop on 'Encountering Christ, the Word of God in community' inviting especially those in Small Christian Communities to come to encounter Christ, the Word of God, in their communal life.

Date: 7 March (Sat)

Time: 2.00pm – 5.00pm

Venue: CAEC, 2 Highland Road

Contribution: love offering

Pastoral Care of the Elderly Manual

This is the third pastoral care manual published by the Singapore Pastoral Institute. This manual serves as a guide for those who are ministering to the elderly. Besides providing general guidelines on serving the elderly from the Christian perspective, it also presents a basic understanding of the social, physical and mental changes that occur in ageing. There is a section on guidelines to visiting the elderly as well as a section on helpful information such as helplines and services available.

A handy manual for all who care for the elderly, and a must-have for those developing the care of the elderly ministry in SCC or parish. Order your copy from SPI today!

Available 3rd week of March at \$6 per copy.

Upcoming Courses

Praying the Psalms Through the Seasons of My Life - by Sr Susan Thomas, FMM

Beginning 5 March, 5 Thursdays, 9.30am - 11.30am

CAEC, 2 Highland Road

Contribution: love offering

Walking with the Women in NT, from Lent to Easter - by Sr Susan Thomas, FMM

Beginning 18 March, 5 Wednesdays, 8.00pm - 9.30pm

CANA, 55 Waterloo Street

Contribution: love offering

Pastoral Care of the Elderly Workshop - by Dr Philip Yap

21 March (Saturday), 2.00pm - 5.00pm

CAEC, 2 Highland Road

Contribution: love offering

The Gospel of Mark - by Fr Ambrose Vaz

Beginning 24 March, 10 Tuesdays,

morning: 9.30am - 11.30am

evening: 7.45pm - 9.45pm

CAEC, 2 Highland Road

Contribution: \$35