



1 June 2007

Dear friends,

Many of you are away on holidays and we wish you a safe and enjoyable time of rest and recreation. We also wish those who have decided to take some time off at home some happy times around the dinner table and talking about things that matter to all. Be sure to plan into your calendar other special days when the family can get together again in a favourite spot or at home with close friends or just among yourselves. We keep hearing about families that are not getting on too well and most of the difficulty stems from miscommunication or no communication. No matter how busy you are with church activities and ministries, there is nothing more important than your family life and love.

We have included some latest news and photos of events and visits and a little reflection on the way decisions are made in the parish.

Wendy Louis



From left to right, Marietta, Daphne of the SPI and Marietta's sister

Photos & text by Wendy Louis

German Visitor to the Singapore Pastoral Institute Small Christian Communities growing in Germany

Marietta Tebbenjohannes from Hildesheim in Northern Germany was visiting her sister who lives in Singapore and wanted to visit a Small Christian Community. She contacted the SPI who

arranged for her to visit a community in the parish of St Michael. It was the month of May when most groups are praying the Rosary. Marietta was most moved when we visited a group where an old man bed ridden was at the centre of the gathering. The ease with which the group prayed in these difficult circumstances she said was very precious and rare.

On Monday 21st May, Marietta visited the Pastoral Institute and had an exchange of experiences of Small Christian Communities. Her group was started by a priest who had attended a workshop on SCCs and he started getting people interested by running programmes on faith formation. With Fr Hennecke's inspiration Marietta's group was formed. They do Gospel Sharing and their leaders meet up fortnightly with the priest in charge to discuss growth and changes in structure and new developments. Once a year there is a very large gathering of all those who belong to SCCs for the whole of Germany and Switzerland. This lasts for three full days. Last year, in 2006 the gathering was in Hildesheim.

Marietta explained: "SCCs are truly evolving and what we realize is that there is a big diversity of groups who do different things. What is important is that we have a common vision and with all our diversity we move in a common direction."

Another very important thing is that groups that are set up remain in close contact with the priest and parish team. If this connection is weak these groups will not survive. The people in these groups are asking for a better connection to the priest and the team.

Being centred on the Gospel, the Word of God, we are enabled to take notice of our neighbours and help them where possible. Without Gospel Sharing this would be impossible. Just going to Church on Sundays, you will not see your neighbours in the same way. Real growth in faith takes place in these small communities.”

Gospel Sharing Workshop brings 93 participants from 16 parishes **Photos by Daphne Tan, Text by Wendy Louis**

The SPI organized workshop on Gospel Sharing on Saturday & Sunday 19-20 May from 2pm to 6pm each day. A small number of participants came from each of the 11 parishes while the remaining 5 had only one participant each. The parishes that sent SCC training teams for this training were Holy Family Church, Risen Christ, St Stephen's. Many parishes, like Queen of Peace sent those who were involved in the Ministry of the Word like catechists, lectors and Children's liturgy facilitators.

Group work is a very important part of the methodology employed to help people facilitate Gospel Sharing in their own groups back in their parishes.

Music and action reinforces the messages and keeps participants awake.



The content of this second workshop was using the Gospel in Small Christian Communities. The first workshop dealt with the Vision of the Church after Vatican II and the vision of Small Christian communities and how to share the vision. About 60 participants attended the first workshop in April.

This second workshop presented a Gospel Sharing Method called “The Bible-Mirror-Method” which helps a group become aware of a situation in their parish, estate or town which is reflected in the Scripture text. Instead of a personal application, this method helps us to make an application to the wider community with the intention of addressing a problem faced in the community.

Participants learnt the skills needed to facilitate and participate in such a Gospel Sharing session. Most participants in their feedback forms were very enriched by the 8 hour workshop.

The four essential features of a Small Christian Community is

1. they exist in unity with the parish and diocese,
2. they are centred on Christ through the word and prayer,
3. they serve the community beyond Catholic, parish centred activities and that
4. they are open to all who live in that area. The baptized belong by virtue of their baptism and all others are welcome to the meetings.

In order to grow strong Small Christian Communities Gospel Sharing skills are essential.

The next workshop to be held concerns leadership in SCCs and developing ministries within the SCCs which provide a regular service to the community. The workshop will be held at the Singapore Pastoral Institute in Highland Road and will be held on Sat & Sun 7 & 8 July. Details are available online at www.catholicspi.org

FOR PARISH PASTORAL COUNCILS AND ANY CHURCH MINISTRY

USING THE CONSENSUS MODEL

When you look up the Thesaurus, the word *Consensus* brings up words like 'agreement', 'harmony' and 'compromise'. As we try to develop a more participatory church with Parish Pastoral Councils and with the laity getting involved in Pastoral Planning, it becomes more and more urgent that we understand the meaning and cost of consensus. In the newly arrived magazine 'Today's Parish Minister' Doris Murphy gives us an easy-to-use process for arriving at consensus in certain situations.

Here are the steps:

1. Determine who is to be involved in the consensus process: the entire parish, the parish divided into small groups, the parish pastoral council, the parish staff, or selected committee (s).
2. Determine why or if the consensus model is the best and most efficient model. Is it because all members will have an equal voice; harmony in the community can be nurtured; listening skills are developed; view-points of others are respected; and decisions will be owned by all?
3. Determine what important topic(s) will be the focus of the consensus: a new building project; a common social concern project etc.
4. Determine when the consensus should occur: how long should the process go on – days, weeks, months, years, indefinitely.
5. Determine how to proceed with the consensus:
 - a. Complete steps 1,2,3,4 above.
 - b. Select one specific issue for using the consensus model.
 - c. Choose a good facilitator.
 - d. Continue to meet until all come to a common conclusion or agree that they can accept any decision. If a consensus or compromise cannot be met, the issue may need to be temporarily tabled and more information or other alternatives concerning the issue may need to be pursued. The facilitator may need to meet with members individually and encourage them to find what other options may be acceptable.

All the above takes place with prayer and in the presence of the Holy Spirit of God who brings harmony to all creative activity.

JUST ARRIVED!! At the Singapore Pastoral Institute Library

Today's Parish Ministry – a magazine with ideas and inspiration for parish leaders

CATECHISTS AND RCIA TEAMS:

ONLINE RESOURCES: check out the Melbourne Catholic Education Office resources at:
<http://www.resource.melb.catholic.edu.au/>

World Refugee Day – 20 June 2007

