

# NEW EVANGELISATION

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## ALIVE IN CHRIST Making mission possible In your parish

**I**n our last Issue 34 of New Evangelisation we featured the article on Bishop Michael McMahon of Nottingham, "Evangelisation Is Not a Solitary Task: We Need Dedicated Parish Teams" He was referring to the *Alive In Christ* DVD being sent to all the Parishes in England and Wales. Sufficient copies of this same DVD were sent to Faith Development Ministries in Christchurch (NZ agents of CaFE who made the DVD), who have now dispatched them to all 6 NZ Dioceses for distribution to every NZ parish.

The Topics covered in the DVD *Alive in Christ* are the headings listed from 1 to 8. below. Sample extracts have been taken from 2 of the 8 sections of the DVD. They are:

### 1. AN INTRODUCTION FROM ROME

*"Mission is the urgent priority for our Bishops and parishes...people are searching for something often with great sufferings, even Catholics who have not had an experience of knowing Jesus as the loving Lord...several personal testimonies were given by lapsed Catholics who had come back to the practice of their faith...since Vatican II we have been constantly reminded of our duty to share and to be the Good News with the people around us... "the Church exists in order to evangelise"...in Baptism and Confirmation we have been given the gifts of the Holy Spirit to evangelise... Pope Paul VI said, "every one is responsible, it is unthinkable not to share your faith"... we can't just leave it to our Bishops and Priests we are all involved..."evangelisation is an obligation of love," said Pope JPII. This section was concluded by Cardinal Murphy Cormac O'Connor "in our world today particularly in Britain we need what is called a New Evangelisation... In the new society of our times we need to be braver, more courageous in the witness we give to Jesus Christ..."*

**How do you evangelise within your community and within your life?**

### 2. MISSION INSIDE THE PARISH

*"Evangelisation is not a one off event, it is an ongoing process...there are many ways we are evangelised in our Church... through the sacraments, the liturgy and through each other... putting on activities, running courses and developing small groups, help us to grow deeper in our faith and helps builds a strong sense of community...This is*

*vital as a base, so we can go out and invite others to come and see...hospitality is the key, making people welcome where they meet, enjoying the food and receiving answers to their questions on faith...We all need conversion...many Catholics formation of the faith happened at school or a long time ago...we all need to appreciate that it is really Jesus we receive when we go to Communion...*

*Stories are given of people who wanted to go deeper into their faith and who came back to Church through their friends...many have grown in faith through attending courses such as the CaFE Programmes and Bible study, they have come to a better understanding of their relationship with God and to appreciate the new life He has for them...many staunch Catholics now feel their faith has come alive, they have gained more confidence and now have a personal prayer life...as a result there is a lot more lay involvement in the parishes."*

### What new initiatives could be used to increase mission within your Parish?

The D.V.D. covers another 6 major topics as follows:

- Mission Outside the Parish
- Practical Steps to Mission
- Mission to Young People Pt.1
- Mission to Young People Pt.2
- Mission through Service
- Mission in the Power of the Holy Spirit

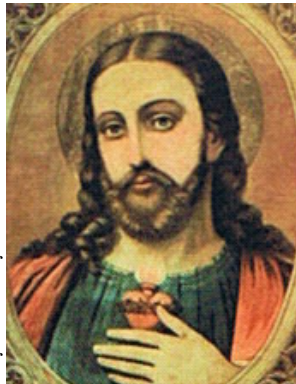
At last we have a resource that is informative on how some English Parishes have taken the courage to reach out and share their faith in practical ways. Lay people were encouraged to become involved in a variety of different ministries of service. Examples were given of how parishioners have become involved in feeding the poor, helping the homeless, dealing with cases of injustice and offering friendship and love to a diversity of cultures and those in need.

In the DVD we hear a number of interviews and testimonies given by those who have come back to the practice of their Catholic faith and others who have benefited from the prayer and generosity of ministry leaders.

One aspect not covered in the DVD is the need for additional training for participants to be able to give their own testimony of their experience of God and the message of the Gospel. This training is now being given in the UK parishes and will need to be available in NZ too.

The DVD is inspirational in what they have achieved by following the Gospel's mandate "to make disciples..."

The DVD leaves one in no doubt that those who have entered into the spirit of the programme have certainly been transformed into being *Alive in Christ*.



# Plan today

## for tomorrow's crisis

Can crisis really create an opportunity for evangelisation and catechesis? *Yes!*

PAT FOSARELLI

**W**hen individuals experience a personal or community crisis, many resolve to “get right” with God. Once the crisis abates, most of these individuals return to their previous levels of faith commitment. Immediately after 9/11, there was a steep increase in church attendance. Four short months later, church attendance was back to pre-attack levels and has remained consistent ever since.

### Create a climate of welcome

While one can be cynical about those who show up at church sporadically, church leaders must reflect on what we do that encourages or discourages such people to remain. When a person who has been away from church returns—regardless of the reason—does that individual experience church positively or negatively? Although most church leaders *are* welcoming and hospitable, some are not.

No matter why individuals leave and why they return (including those who return only on Christmas or Easter), they should be treated with hospitality and genuine joy. The person returning because of crisis must feel listened to and cared about. Christian hospitality insists that we expect nothing in return—neither a big donation to the parish's coffers nor continued regular attendance at church. Like the gift of grace that God gives us freely, we are to offer the gifts of welcome and care without strings.

### Be ready to grapple with core issues

People in crisis usually ask, “Why me?” The first step in personal transformation that adversity might encourage is grappling with that question. For the church to have a role in that transformation, we must be ready and attentive in that grappling. Until people feel listened to and understood, transformation can elude them. In addition, a person must feel that the church's practices and teachings are relevant to the complicated personal, societal, professional, or political issues he or she is facing.

It is easy to dismiss sporadic churchgoers, but our challenge is to demonstrate *why* and *how* being part of a worshipping community makes a difference in good times and bad.

Personal transformation is elusive because it is hard work, but we must actively encourage each other. We are there not only to comfort but also to challenge.

If people who return to church find what they are looking for, why would they abandon it? And if they do not find it, is it because they fail to articulate what they need or because church leaders and members fail to listen carefully, ask the right questions, or provide what was requested? It's hard to know, but, given Christ's mandate to go and make disciples, we must all try to find out.

*Extracts were taken from this article by PAT FOSARELLI, MD, DMIN, is the assistant dean for the Ecumenical Institute of Theology in Baltimore, Maryland. “TODAY'S PARISH MINISTER“ January 2009*

### STRATEGIES for encouraging newcomers and returning members to remain

- ✠ Emphasise hospitality through homilies and educational offerings, underscoring that hospitality is the responsibility of all members. Encourage established parishioners to greet those whom they do not know. Encourage the community to pray for each other.

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- ✠ Emphasise that judging why someone has been away from church is unacceptable. What matters is that he or she is returning. Remind parishioners of the prodigal son parable.

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- ✠ Encourage greeters to arrive early and look for those whom they do not know to provide a friendly welcome.

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- ✠ Make newcomers and returning members feel at home, with a welcome message in the bulletin and a welcome announcement before the Mass begins. Encourage these individuals to participate in parish events.

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- ✠ Have an in-pew welcome card by which individuals can request a meeting with a staff member. Have a designated place to deposit such cards. Ensure that the cards are acted upon promptly.

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- ✠ Have a visitor book or a prayer request for individuals to sign with contact information. Follow up promptly with anyone who leaves contact information, even if it is just a “glad you visited” note sent or call made to them. It shows that someone at the parish cares.

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- ✠ Call parishioners who haven't been seen for a while. They might need to know that they are missed and that someone cares that they have been absent.

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- ✠ Encourage parish leaders and parishioners to witness to the difference their church had made in their lives through essays included in the bulletins or on the parish Web site.

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- ✠ Provide educational sessions that take on the thorny issues of our time.

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- ✠ Highlight, in homilies and educational offerings, some of the “why me?” scenarios that people commonly face. Encourage those struggling with such situations to meet with a staff person or other trained parishioner.

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- ✠ Remind parishioners and visitors alike often that they are loved by God, no matter what they have done or what adversity they are facing. Model that love in encounters with them.

# Is Your Parish Growing in Faith?

Eileen M Ponder

## Three Quick Ways to assess your parish

**E**ach spring we muster our resources to immerse ourselves once in fervent celebration of Christ's death and resurrection. We do that because we know, in the deepest recesses of souls, that our lives are patterned on His. As individuals, families, and parish communities, we continuously seek ways to confront the darkness of sin and sorrow and wait in hope for God to raise us to something new—some new way being in the world that mirrors the divine presence more clearly.

It can be a daunting task to get a handle on spiritual growth for oneself, let alone a whole community. Because there are many weeks in parish leadership when we do well to simply keep the place going, evaluating whether or not the community is growing in holiness on our watch can be an intimidating process to say the least. However, this is an exceptionally good time of year to do so. As you journey with your community through this season of renewal, stop to ask yourselves the deeper questions. Look beyond the extra schedules, durations, and rehearsals to probe signs of spring in the spiritual life of the parish. Here are a few ways to start;

### TIME

First take a look at how people are spending their time, beginning with parish activity schedules.

- ★ Is there a balance between social and other events that help bind the parish community together and those who serve the needs of the neighbourhood, city, state, and global communities, especially the most vulnerable members?
- ★ On what do the pastoral council parish staff spend most of its time?
  - Is there enough time dedicated to your own faith development?
  - Enough time to address spiritual needs of the community?
  - Are the pastor and other leaders free of administrative duties enough to sit with the dying, comfort the grieving and isolated, and tenderly support those in crisis?
- ★ Are there enough staff hours and council time given to address pastoral needs of those at the fringes of parish?
- ★ Are there opportunities for communal prayer beyond Sunday or daily Mass?
- ★ Do significant numbers of parishioners (adults and children) gather for faith sharing and catechetical development?
- ★ Do we take time to be informed as a parish community on pressing social, political, and economic issues?

### TALENT

Look also at how well the personal gifts and talents of parishioners, staff, and leaders are identified and utilised.

- ★ Is everyone, particularly those on the margins, challenged to understand and share their gifts in service to the parish and its mission to be the presence of Christ in the world?

- ★ Do those already involved in parish organisations, committees, programmes, and processes avoid becoming cliques?
- ★ Are there regular attempts to match local needs (both within the parish and beyond it) with parishioner gifts and talents?
- ★ Is there room for creative problem solving and effective, well-informed planning that calls forth widespread participation?

### TREASURE

Last and certainly not least: follow the money. It's easy enough to examine the parish budget, but also invite parishioners to assess how they spend their own money.

- ★ Does the parish regularly support a sister community of lesser means?
- ★ Are there ongoing monetary commitments to feed the hungry, clothe the poor, shelter the homeless, and assist the unemployed, under-educated, and ill members of the parish community and local neighbourhood?
- ★ Does the parish spend appropriate dollars to ensure vibrant worship, faith formation, and pastoral ministries within the parish?

This year as you lead your parish community, take stock of the spiritual health of the parish. Only in this way will you be able to help yourself and your fellow parishioners give voice to the concrete experiences of paschal mystery in their individual, family and communal lives. How have parishioners known death and embraced new life? What sin and other burdens have been laid to rest? What sprouts of new life have burst forth?

| Individuals and families can assess their own spiritual growth by rating themselves on these indicators of gospel living. | DOING WELL | AT TIMES NEED HELP |
|---|------------|--------------------|
| I (we) maintain a nourishing personal prayer life.  |            |                    |
| <b>I (we) regularly participate in vibrant liturgical celebrations.</b>   |            |                    |
| I (we) utilise my (our) time, talent, and treasure to assist those in need.   |            |                    |
| <b>I (we reach out in hospitality to welcome all whom I (we) encounter.</b>   |            |                    |
| I (we) heed the baptismal call to evangelise by showing others compassion and the healing face of Christ.                 |            |                    |
| <b>I (we) practice forgiveness of hurts large and small.</b>  |            |                    |
| I (we) practice hope, letting go of sin and sorrow that comes my (our) way and watch closely for signs of new life.       |            |                    |

*EILEEN M PONDER is an editor at Ave Maria Press and a longtime pastoral minister. She holds a master of divinity degree from the University of Notre Dame. Taken from "Today's Parish Minister" February 2008.*

## ARE WE RECESSION READY?

*“The love of God is revealed in responsibility for others.”*

**Pope Benedict XVI**

“**T**he economy is going through its biggest dive since the early 1990’s recession...Businesses are suffering the worst trading slowdown since at least 1970 according to a grim survey” says James Weir reporting in the Dom-Post when quoting on the various statistics, that are vital to the health of our economy. The Govt.Treasury is predicting “a further 60,000 people jobless by next year,” Dom-Post 7 April 2009.

We can therefore expect more unemployment, bankruptcies, liquidation of companies and a fall in household incomes, for many of our workers. Already some factories have been forced to close and others have laid off staff. Other manufacturers are shifting their operations to Asia to achieve cheaper wage rates and production costs. The free trade policies adopted by successive NZ Governments means that some of our manufacturers cannot compete against the same goods being imported into NZ. The implication is we get cheaper goods, but jobs are held overseas at the expense of our own workers.

In cases of two income families some are feeling the pain when one or both of the partners, have lost their jobs and find themselves forced to sell their homes. Countless numbers have high credit card debt. Others have lost their savings in failed investments. Prospects for many in these circumstances are uncertain and naturally we are all concerned about our future. But as we know in every crisis there is an opportunity, and ministry opportunities in a recession are abundant.

To come to an understanding of the needs of those who are suffering hardship out in the community, it is suggested that a small team of key people investigate their local situation. They would talk with existing caring agencies and local organisations to find out what are their problems, needs and advice.

It is better to survey the local scene so as to avoid duplication of services. Once the specific needs have been identified dioceses and parishes can make their decisions and swing into action, looking for ways to realistically solve problems.

**A** list of Possibilities are set out below that could be appropriate to consider:

- ◆ Approach your Mayor or District Council suggesting they take the initiative of co-ordinating the involvement of Churches and others groups in helping the needy in your community
- ◆ Offering a Budget Advice course to help people reduce their debt and create budgets to better steward what God has given to them. Budget Advisory Service Groups in the Hutt Valley have been swamped by the numbers wanting help. The message they sent out was to, “seek help early.”
- ◆ Teaching people how to grow and process food eg. bottling fruit.
- ◆ Publicity on how to save on power charges.
- ◆ Suggesting people change and down scale their

lifestyles, so they have more to share with the needy. Supporting the local Food Bank

- ◆ Some might even be motivated to open up their homes to help those in need.
- ◆ Offering support for people in serious financial circumstances, helping them with advice and assistance where possible.
- ◆ Compile a list of the skills and professions of those needing work on the notice board in the Church foyer. Consider advertising jobs wanted in the Diocesan newspapers.
- ◆ Identify land that can be used for growing vegetables (back in the recession of 1991-2 in the Upper Hutt Parish a Tongan community garden was established for their families. Another group in the Lower Hutt Parish began bulk buying of foodstuffs at wholesale rates and splitting it up amongst the members.
- ◆ Contacting Supermarkets and Grocery stores that throw out old, but still good, food can be a viable option.
- ◆ Rural and Country Parishes can make arrangements and partner with local farmers and gardeners.
- ◆ Include and mentor the youth to be part of the process. They can offer a new perspective and learn about sustainable lifestyles from older people.
- ◆ Set up a separate Emergency Fund or else ask the congregation to significantly increase their giving so as to help out both locally and beyond.
- ◆ Consider working together with other Churches and agencies by inviting them to discuss helping proposals in your community.
- ◆ Car Pooling with friends and neighbours, to save on transport costs to work, children to school and their sporting events.



- ◆ Forming a small group within your neighbourhood to help fellow neighbours and others who may be undergoing hardship and unemployment.
- ◆ Good leadership empowers people by providing the resources they need to get started, but the goal is to teach them to be resourceful themselves.

**B**esides returning to the financial fundamentals of generous giving, wise spending, living within ones means, the times also demand that we become aware of the resources and the needs around us.

It therefore makes good sense for Churches and Caring Agencies to be prepared to minister in times of economic crises and natural disasters as well.

What wonderful opportunities there could be in offering to pray with those who are in need and possibly sharing our faith and trust in the power of prayer.

Let us renew our commitment to being Good Samaritans, by offering our help to those in need. May this recession lead us towards greater dependence on God, who has seen many economies rise and fall. This opportunity could be one of our finest hour’s, as we help each other to store up graces in heaven.

*Editors.*

### **Are you recession ready or not?**

*Let us pray before the Eucharistic Lord for an outpouring of charity in our world. Following in the footsteps of the Saints, may His presence inspire us to help those in need.”*  
**St. Thomas Aquinas**



## ST PETER AND PAUL PARISH LOWER HUTT CHALLENGE TO SOCIAL ACTION

In 1991/2 New Zealand underwent a severe recession when many people were hurt by high unemployment, benefit cuts and the consequential struggle to make ends meet. The Mayor of Lower Hutt City at this time was, Glen Evans who took a leadership role by calling a public meeting which resulted in the formation of a Caring Community Group. A Committee was formed of Council staff members, representatives from Churches and other organisations. They set up a range of different Support Groups dealing with: Budget advice, Employment, Gardening scheme for the elderly and those who had just come out of Hospital, Grandparents scheme, Food Bank, Volunteer Office, Checking Power bills and Counselling.

At that time there were 4300 people registered as unemployed in the city of Lower Hutt. Catholic Social Services were being inundated with case referrals coming in every day from the consequences of unemployment. In our Catholic Schools increasing numbers of parents were struggling to pay schools fees. The media highlighted the growing number of children coming to school without having breakfast or bringing their lunches.

The Government made Cuts to all those who were receiving Benefits. This particularly affected the elderly, the unemployed and put a number of people on the poverty line.

### MEETING OF PARISHIONERS

At Ss. Peter & Paul A *Call to Social Action* meeting of parishioners was called to discuss a range of ideas, by those who were in sympathy with the various needs in the Parish and community. An executive group were appointed to make decisions, report to the Parish Council and to keep the parishioners informed of progress. A parishioner represented the Parish as a member of the Hutt City Caring Community Group.

### ACTIONS IMPLEMENTED

- Contact was made with other Parishes and other Christian Churches in the Hutt Valley sharing information, as to the caring activities they were engaged in.
- Budget advice was given for those having problems with paying school fees (liaising with School Principals), Counselling done on a family to family basis for those who needed it.
- Collected food parcels and money at every Mass. The food parcels were given to the Lower Hutt Foodbank and to the Parish St Vincent de Paul group. Money given out to those in need by a small committee that included the Parish Priest.
- Visitation group who called on shut-ins at home.
- A Work Seekers Club was formed for parishioners and those from neighbouring parishes, who had lost their Jobs. They met every Monday evening in the parish hall. They were fortunate to have in the parish, two parishioners who were Personnel Consultants, working in Employment Agencies. They were assisted by 3 other parishioners who were experienced in the business scene.
- Those needing help explained their situation and

backgrounds to the team who responded with advice and suggestions. The team reviewed the CV's of each of the work seekers. The team did what is common practice now days of revamping the first page of the CV to attract the attention of the prospective employer.

- One paragraph covered the how and why they could excel at the job being advertised, with the next paragraph giving their personal attributes and experience that would qualify them to undertake the advertised position.
- Work Seekers received interview training to equip them to handle difficult questions that might come up during a job interview.
- The result was nearly all the work seekers got job interviews with **30 of them being successful in getting jobs**. It was more difficult to help those who were unskilled.
- The sessions were held in very friendly and prayerful atmosphere. Each work seeker was encouraged to pray for his or her needs and to spend time in prayer before a job interview. Even having a Holy picture in their hands or pockets when going into a job interview.

***"Work is of primary importance for man's fulfilment and for the development of society." Pope Benedict XVI***

### PRESENT SITUATION

At this time representatives from the Parishes could consider making contact with existing caring agencies and organisations on the needs and wants out in the community. Normally there is no point in duplicating helping services if they are already operating. Recently there was an article in the local Hutt News reporting that Budget Advisory Groups were being stretched by requests for help. This is an example perhaps where parishioners with budgeting experience could offer their help rather than setting up another service. Working together with other Parishes and other Churches and caring agencies, makes a lot of good sense.

### **TODAY IS THE DAY!**

*In a world ever shouting at us to do more!*

*Be more! Get more!*

*Where do you want me to serve?*

*How will I know the right place?*

*The right time? The right gift to share?*

*Frankly, the thought of adding even one more thing to my life ... well ... where on earth will I find the time ...*

*the energy ... the wisdom to be Kingdom NOW?*

*At this moment, the best I can do, Lord is this:*

*I am willing*

*The rest is up to you.*

*Inspire us. Guide us. Fill us with courage.*

*Take us to that place where our deep gladness and the world's deep hunger collide.*

*We ask this in your name, O Lord ...*

*Send Down the fire!*



The DVD *Alive in Christ* featured on the front pages of issue No. 34 and also this issue has the potential to change our attitudes positively, towards recovering our Catholic identity, as disciples of Jesus Christ and missionaries of His Church. The mission Jesus gave to each one of us. "to go and make disciples of all nations." We sincerely hope that NZ Dioceses will be able to learn from the UK experiences and so bring our Parishes more *Alive in Christ*.

As this is our last issue it is an opportunity to reflect and ask, "what would be our wish list for the future of our Church.?" We could make no better choice than the NZ Bishops Statement in the NZ Catholic Newspaper of Nov 4-17 2007. We have printed the full text of their Vision Statement as follows:

***Bishops give their vision for Church in NZ: Faith-filled, Christ centred.***

*In 2013 the Catholic Church will be faith filled and dynamic, with Christ as its centre. Its unique identity in the global Church will be flowing, as it always has, from the presence of Maori, who have been part of the Church since the time of Bishop Pompallier.*

*The people...will be actively seeking holiness, and faith education and formation will be readily available to assist them. The seeds of spirituality will be nourished in liturgical assemblies which are filled with a sense of the sacred, and deeply contemplative in their prayer. The hunger for holiness felt by so many people will be met through consistently good liturgy and preaching, Christocentric and deeply attractive to people of all ages.*

*Our priests will be taking a leadership role in bringing their communities into a deepened individual and community prayer life. There will be a new understanding of and love for priesthood among our people, and good support for priests in their personal growth in holiness and ministry. A new approach to vocations to the diocesan priesthood and religious orders will be bearing fruit in increasing numbers.*

***Growth in holiness***

*Personal and community growth in holiness will be acting as the springboard for evangelisation. Our parishes will be growing, and pastoral areas will be proving to be a source of renewal for both priests and people. There will be a deepening appreciation of the gifts that ethnic communities and migrant are bringing to us. Catholic communities will be respectful and appreciative, not fearful, of difference—and migrant communities will be fully integrated into the life of the church in New Zealand.*

*The strong Catholic identity of many migrants and their commitment to Gospel values will be challenging the secularised values found among some Catholics.. As a Church, we will be learning to embrace poverty rather than comfort.*

**It is with heartfelt regret that we announce this is our last Issue of New Evangelisation. We have both reached an age where we are slowing down and now hoping someone will come forward and continue to produce a newsletter, covering a range of evangelisation topics. We extend our sincere thanks to our supporters and for the encouragement, we have received by readers in NZ and overseas.**

**From 1997 to 2000 we produced 30 issues of Catholic Evangelist . Then in 2001 we changed the heading to New Evangelisation with 35 issues being published.**

*Post-World Youth Day 2008 there will have been a sea change in the way young people understand their faith. Their faith will be dynamic and influencing many areas of Church life. Young people will be trusted, welcome and involved in the life of the Church at all levels.*

*Our communities will be embracing an increased number of committed families who are nurturing the faith. Marriages will be increasing as young people come to deeper understanding of its significance. The Tribunal will be adequately staffed to meet the needs of those who are turning to it for assistance.*

*Catholic Schools throughout the country will be faith -filled , and proud of their Catholic identity. They will be places of holiness, led by staff and supported by parents who are centred on Christ. Our Schools will be changing mindsets, with Gospel values permeating the lives of all those associated with them, and evangelisation as a natural outcome. Parishes and schools will be very conscious that they belong to one another— that the school is- "an arm of the parish"- and will be seeking to support and express this crucial relationship in many practical ways.*

***Prophetic Lay people***

*Lay people will be prophetic in their commitment to Gospel values in homes, schools, society, business and politics. Catholic leaders who embody these values will be providing leadership in society, and will have been well prepared for this role.*

*The Church will be listened to as people realise that a secular society does not mean the removal of religion from public life. Our society will be becoming more spiritual, and people will be looking to Christianity to meet their personal spiritual needs. New technologies will be working for us, with media and information technology proficiency giving the Church a high profile. A strong Catholic voice will be heard in support of quality family life and a human and compassionate society. There will be Catholic leadership in issues related to environmental stewardship, human rights, bioethics, relativism, and interfaith relationships.*

*A culture of life will be growing stronger in our society.( End of Vision Statement)*

*The Bishops Vision is an inspiring Statement and we sincerely hope and trust it will receive the full endorsement and support of all our Religious and Laity. To help the Vision become a reality we suggest a Prayer Campaign be launched to generate the power needed for these dynamic new plans. We need to join forces in begging the almighty God to move thousands of human hearts to make this vision a reality. We join with you Bishops, and others of goodwill on the front line, to build, to restore, to plant and to harvest.*

Pat Clegg and Frits Bergman

To send this Issue No. 35 or previous Issues to a Parish or friends, visit our Website to email.

[www.newevangelisation.wellington.net.nz](http://www.newevangelisation.wellington.net.nz)

## A Plain-English guide for turning your parishioners into Good Samaritans

Luke tells us that when confronted with the question "Who is my neighbour?" the answer that Jesus gave was to tell the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 9:29-37). That parable proposes our definition of neighbour ought to be expansive, extending beyond boundaries of family, nationality, religion, and class. All people are our neighbours deserving our care and compassion.

### The test of a good parish

The parable's imagery provides a useful criterion for examining a parish. A good parish creates a community of Samaritans who serve their neighbours. The test of a good parish is not how well it ministers to me, but how effectively it calls and equips me to minister to others. The parish is meant to be a centre of ministerial activity inviting its members to become ministers themselves.

This is so because the primary sacrament of ministry is not holy orders but baptism. Through baptism all are called to discipleship, which entails service to others. One of the ongoing challenges for catholic parishes is to break down the divide between those who think of themselves as ministers and those in the pews who see themselves as the object of ministry,

When we look at our neighbourhoods, cities, nation, and world it is evident that many are in desperate need. People are denied basic justice; human rights are violated; human dignity is demeaned. Many Samaritans are needed to heal the pain, protect the vulnerable, and build the communities that will serve human well-being. A parish that fails to inspire and form good Samaritans in the face of so many needy neighbours is falling short of the gospel's vision.

### How to be a good Samaritan

There are a variety of ways that parishioners can be good Samaritans who minister to others. The tradition of social Catholicism includes:

- \* prayer,
- \* direct service to others,
- \* political activism on behalf of just causes,
- \* and changes in personal lifestyle.

For example, one group of parishioners may no longer have the energy for physical activity. They can still pray the Rosary for Peace, or contact a public official to give their support to a useful public policy.

Others in the parish may come together to learn methods of parenting that integrate the values of social justice and peacemaking in the way they raise their children.

Yet another segment of the parish can establish a relationship with a "sister parish" in a poor part of the diocese or in another country. Still another group may assist at a food pantry.

Essentially, a good parish will integrate justice and peace ministry into the overall parish's mission. It ought not permit education, worship, finances, and social justice to be treated as separate areas of interest, thereby dividing discipleship into discrete realms. Far better is to seek ways that the social dimension of the gospel gets expressed in our liturgical life, our education programmes, and our use of financial resources.

## Three ways a parish can become leaven in the world

When people join the parish they can be ushered into a network of individuals and organisations that lead to deeper engagement with the issues that are part of Catholic social teaching.

1. **The parish can be a centre of communication** and information that alerts people to needs and existing ways that one can be of service. Organisations like Bread for the World, Habitat for Humanity, and Amnesty International are examples of helpful organisations. Every parishioner should know about these and similar groups as well as know how they might become members. There is no need for every parish to establish its own version of these organisations, however. Local chapters may already meet in other churches, synagogues, the local library or town hall.
2. **The parish can assist in matching people with others who share a social concern** or putting them in touch with a diocesan network. For this to happen, the parish staff members need to know the people of the parish. Do staff members know the names of the parishioners most concerned about race relations? Or those interested in helping immigrants? Parishioners committed to caring for the environment? Or the people actively working for peace? We should bring people together around social concerns.
3. **Parishes can make their resources available to social programmes.** Access to a Xerox machine, a phone list, a microphone, a meeting room, some start-up funding, an assembly of people—all these are valuable and much-appreciated resources that can make a difference in the success or failure of a programme.

If our parishes play these roles, then they may become the leaven in the world that followers of Jesus are expected to be.

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FOR A "LITANY FOR THE CHURCH'S SOCIAL MINISTRY," GO TO [WHOLECOMMUNITY.BLOGSPOT.COM](http://WHOLECOMMUNITY.BLOGSPOT.COM) AND SEARCH ON "SOCIAL MINISTRY."

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### FIVE IMPORTANT INSIGHTS of Catholic social teaching

1. We protect human dignity as we promote and defend the human rights of all.
2. We establish justice when the basic needs of the marginal receive more attention than the wants of the powerful.
3. We build peace by working for justice and overcoming poverty.
4. We strengthen the bonds of community when our solidarity with others includes the weak, neglected, and poor.
5. We care for God's creation by seeing the beauty and value of all that God has made and play our role as good stewards.

## The good diffuses itself

It's an old theological principle. When we find a good restaurant, a good movie, or read a good book we want to share it with our friends. It's a curious fact that many Catholics, however, that there is one good thing we are reluctant to share: the good news of faith in Jesus Christ. For one reason or another, our culture tells us that it is selfish to keep good things to ourselves, but rude to share the good news of Jesus Christ. And, for one reason and another, we have grown comfortable with this double standard. We have believed what our culture has told us. The time has come to challenge our culture, and ourselves. The time has come to stop following our culture, which tells us to keep God out of the public square, and start following the Lord, who tells us that we will be his witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). If sharing the good news about worldly things is an expression of joy, then it just makes good sense that we should show our love for those same people by sharing with them the joy of following Jesus Christ. It's time for us to stop conforming to the world, and start transforming it. It's time for a new springtime of evangelisation..."

*From Bishop Robert J Carlson, Pastoral Letter on Evangelisation, Diocese of Saginaw, Michigan*

*Do not fear what may happen tomorrow.*

*The same loving Father who cares for you today will care for you tomorrow and everyday.*

*Either He will shield you from suffering or He will give you unfailing strength to bear it.*

*Be at peace then, and put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginings.*

*St Francis de Sales*

## BIGGEST MISTAKES IN MANAGING CHANGE

- 1. Not understanding the importance of people**  
Organisations don't change. People do—or they don't buy into the reason for change, or aren't included in the planning, there will be no successful change, regardless of how brilliant the strategy.
- 2. Not appreciating that people throughout the parish will have different reactions to change**  
Expecting everyone to handle change in the same way or within the same time frame is unrealistic. Consistent and repeated coaching and direction is required of effective pastoral leadership.
- 3. Treating transformation as an event, rather than a mental, physical, and emotional process**  
Large scale organisational change usually triggers emotional reactions ranging from denial and negativity to acceptance and commitment,. Leadership can either facilitate this emotional process or ignore it—at the peril of the transformation effort.
- 4. Being less than candid**  
Communicate openly and honestly. Not everyone will thank you for your candour, but they will never forgive you for anything less. You need to proactively, even aggressively, share everything—the opportunities, risks, mistakes, potentials, failures—and then invite people to work on these challenges together.
- 5. Not appropriately “setting the stage” for change**  
Prepare parishioners by giving them pertinent information in a timely manner (external vs. internal change).
- 6. Trying to manage transformation with the same strategies used for incremental success**  
Understanding the effects of asking for external versus internal change on parishioners is a key element in effectively managing change.
- 7. Forgetting to negotiate the new contract between pastoral leadership and parishioners**  
You need to make sure that while parishioners may understand what they are losing, they might not have a clear picture of what they are gaining.
- 8. Believing that what you thought you communicated is what parishioners heard**  
Make sure your communication strategy is consistent with your actions.
- 9. Underestimating human potential**  
Trust in the innate intelligence, capability, and creativity of your parishioners.
- 10. Forgetting to include God in the changes**  
Pray...pray...pray...in small groups, in large groups, on prayer lines, everywhere, all the time. Make the presence of God felt and known throughout all phases of change and transformation.

*Taken from Today's Parish Minister, March 2009*