

Number 4 in our series

A process of renewal – Moving Forward Together

To hear God's people and empower them to participate fully in Christ's mission.

In this edition we continue preparing for our Diocesan Gathering on Friday 5 (evening) and Saturday 6 November. This month we look at elements of change, focusing on Faith Formation and Education. To read earlier articles, please visit www.mm.catholic.org.au and follow link on home page or contact the Editor.

A Process of Renewal

Last month we looked at the Planning and Renewal Process and identified the key questions to pastoral planning:

- Where are we right now?
- Where do we want to be?
- How are we going to get there?

The second question implies a process of change and renewal. Key to this is our ability to plan and manage change. Many people in our congregations today will remember a time when the church seemed unchanging and predictable and most of us felt secure in this. However, in the 1960s Pope John XXIII called a Vatican Council and a period of unprecedented change followed.

Parallel to changes in the church were significant changes in society as a whole. Secularism began to undermine what had been dearly held ideas about family life, the sacredness of life, religion, work, the role of women and so on. The sixties marked a turning point and began a rate of change that can still leave us overwhelmed.

The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle has chosen to plan in a time of ongoing change and for twenty years has attempted to involve the diocese in significant renewal. **Moving Forward Together** is just another step on that journey, providing parishes, agencies and the chancery with a framework for renewal.

Our pastoral planning, underpinned by the theological principles found in the Diocesan Pastoral Plan, has sought to involve as many as possible in managing change. The Diocesan Pastoral Plan calls for collaborative leadership and the involvement of the whole diocesan community. The hope is that as communities take on the policy, principles and framework of **Moving Forward Together**, the diocese will experience renewal. One of the five foundations of that framework is **Faith Formation and Education**.

Faith Formation and Education

The Diocesan Synod of 1992/93 recognised the importance of, and need for, faith education and formation throughout the diocese. In 1993 the Sisters of St Joseph responded to this need and launched the Tenison Woods Education Centre (TWEC).

It has played, and continues to play, a significant role in the education and formation of people in this diocese. Some 120 people have completed the Christian Formation Course and many others have availed themselves of the short courses offered by TWEC.

Many individuals and groups have also played their part in bringing faith education to the people of the diocese. To name a few: the Catholic Schools Office has been significant in presenting Faith Development programs to teachers; the Redemptorist Fathers have also offered a variety of programs and more recently Fr Geoff Mulhearn has initiated "Pearl Seekers" for all who are interested.

In 2004 the Diocesan Assembly recommended that a Working Party for Ongoing Faith Development be established. This Working Party delivered a report called *Face to Face* for consideration at the Diocesan Assembly of 2007. This report begins:

God has always dealt face to face with humanity. In fact we know little of God except the Divine's intimate relationship with creation.

*When we turn to the Lord, with faces unveiled,
we reflect in a mirror the brightness and splendour of the Lord.
We all grow brighter and brighter
as we are turned into the Image that we reflect;
this is the work of the Lord who is Spirit ...
God, who made light shine from darkness,
has shone in our hearts,
to give the light of the knowledge
of the glory, in the face of Christ Jesus.*

2 Cor 3:13,18; 4:6



The Faith Development Working Party noted that the development of the human person is always in Christ and with each other. People have an abundant need for face to face accompaniment in their lives and in their faith development, "an accompaniment beyond structures and plans, an enabling accompaniment that puts flesh on the dry bones of management and routines, an accompaniment that breathes life into hoped-for outcomes and retrieves the desire to participate in the journey of world and Church." (page 3)

Faith Development programs offered in the diocese have recognised the need for 'face to face accompaniment'. Individual presenters have travelled to all areas of the diocese so that local communities might gather in small groups to hear and to share more of their faith journey.

The foundation, **Faith Formation and Education in the Moving Forward Together** document continues in the *Face to Face* spirit. The foundation identifies the need to facilitate faith education and spiritual growth and to promote empowerment through education and formation. The document suggests some ways the diocesan community might do this. Individual communities will have insights into their own situation and needs and will, we hope, make their own suggestions. What is important is that all of us - parishes, agencies and chancery - address the foundation, **Faith Formation and Education**.

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