

FACE TO FACE



The Face of Humanity
*A computer generated image of the human face
based on images of ethnic groups the world over*

THE REPORT OF THE BISHOP'S WORKING PARTY FOR ONGOING FAITH DEVELOPMENT AS MANDATED BY THE 2004 DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY

EASTER, 2007

Introduction:

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.¹*

From the relationship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, there springs into being every human bond. In God's image were human beings created. In God's image do we go on relating and growing.

Human persons, born of the loving gaze of the Creator, grow in faith and understanding through the face-to-face bonds of the human family. At every stage, from the silent mutual gaze of a mother feeding her child at the breast to the silent mutual gazes accompanying our dying, each is being called by God into a fuller personhood. The personhood of each is nurtured in the relationships of all.

So implicit are intimate relationships to our becoming persons that it might be said that our default mode is *face to face* – face to face with God and face to face with one another.

In Christ God has entered humanity. In the Nazarene, God stood face to face with the poor and the dishonoured, sat face to face with the wretched and the shamed. In Jesus God looked into the eyes of the broken and empowered them, touched the sick and healed them. In each case these people were brought into a fuller personhood through a face to face relationship.

Of Jesus' encounter with God on Mount Tabor the Gospels give us various perspectives. Mark² and Matthew³ speak of it as a "transfiguration" (metamorphosis). Luke,⁴ by contrast, simply says of Jesus, "His face was changed".

"By face, Luke means, personality. His personality was changed. The way Jesus was inside himself, the way he shone through to others - that became different. He became a different kind of person. This happened whenever Jesus prayed. The literal translation of Luke's Greek is: "the appearance of the face (of his countenance) was altered (was different) as he was in-the-praying (in a state of prayer)."⁵ The Hebrew Scriptures underscore the same point: "A person's heart changes his/her face, either for good or for evil. The mark of a happy heart is a cheerful face."⁶

¹ 2 Corinthians 3:13,18; 4:6

² Mark 9:2-10

³ Matthew 17:1-9

⁴ Luke 9:28-36

⁵ This point, from the work of Redemptorist theologian, Dr. Kevin O.Shea, is further explored in Appendix 1.

⁶ Sirach 13:25-26

Over the centuries the liturgy has faithfully acclaimed this face to face relationship: “Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face!”⁷ In the image of God, and in imitation of his Christ, the Church has desired to deal with people in the tenderness and intimacy out of which it was born. Alas! It did not always succeed. And it still struggles. But insofar as the journey is the destination, the Church continues in its efforts to be face to face with the world. Vatican Council II spurs the Church on still: “The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the followers of Christ”.⁸

In our eighteen month journey as a working party⁹ looking at *ongoing faith development*, it struck us afresh that the development of the human person is always in Christ and with each other. During the latter half of 2006 the working party moved through the diocese in a personal consultation with the people. In doing so we observed their abundant need for face to face accompaniment in their lives and in their faith development. We heard too their firm call to the diocese to facilitate such accompaniment, an accompaniment beyond structures and plans, an enabling accompaniment that puts flesh on the dry bones of management and routines,¹⁰ an accompaniment that breathes life into hoped-for outcomes and retrieves the desire to participate in the journey of world and Church.

This report endeavours to unpack the needs of the people in the spirit of the diocesan plan.¹¹ It makes recommendations for a more face to face faith development through the diocese.

Key Findings:

The diocesan-wide consultation with the parishes alerted the working party to the following:¹²

1. Nourishment for the faith

Firstly, the people were as one in attesting to *life experience* as the catalyst for their faith development. Their awareness of God in their (not necessarily religious) experience, and their mindfulness of faith in the underpinnings of that experience were, to say the least, both moving and inspiring. From frailty and vulnerability to joy and wholeness, from sorrow and loss to hope and healing, from daily routines to transcendent insight, from the fickleness of life to gratefulness and awe – faith was there, and they knew it; God was there and they felt it. They were on a faith journey!

Secondly, the people highlighted the importance of *groups* (Church groups and other) in helping their faith to grow. There was a widespread awareness that faith is born of the community, experienced there and finally celebrated there.

⁷ Liturgy for All Saints – response to the psalm

⁸ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 1, 1965

⁹ A full time-line of the working party’s explorations may be had in Appendix 2

¹⁰ The Prophet Ezekiel, 37:1-14

¹¹ Faith development is a life long process whose ultimate objective is discipleship with Jesus. God invites each of us, clergy and religious, lay men and women, youth and children into a personal, and communal, relationship of love. Growing to Christian maturity, we are enabled to participate more fully in Christ’s mission through formation that is faithful to the Scriptures and Tradition. We believe that “*formation is not the privilege of a few but the right and duty of all.*” - Diocesan Pastoral Plan – Theological Principle 3.3

¹² These findings are formulated from the various redactions of the diocesan-wide consultation. Those redactions are available in appendix 3.

Thirdly, for those who attend Mass, the *liturgy* was highlighted as the point where all of life's experience melted into a gratefulness that could find words and symbol only in Christ's great prayer. There was too for some a disappointment in the way communities celebrate Mass. And there is the further reality that some 85% don't regularly go to Mass.

2. The sparks that ignite faith development:

a. Groups: The people believe that faith development is best promoted through a sense of community. It was observed that parish life is directly proportional to the interaction between persons in their parish or faith community. This interaction has been traditionally experienced in groups. Lenten groups would be an example, though sometimes the most effective groups were ecumenical groups, ad-hoc groups, and group activities around persons and events.

The effectiveness of groups often depended on their number, variety, and the diversity of faith experience. At other times it depended on their immediate relevance, e.g. a parish outreach to the district's needy, a parish involvement with families in sacramental programmes.

At the same time it must be acknowledged that groups have become less significant right across society. The signs of the time require new thinking about groups and whether they will continue to serve the Church well in the future just because they have in the past.

b. Ministry: The opportunity for ministry ignites people's faith and actual involvement in ministry further fans what has been ignited. The sense of belonging that comes in doing ministry is an encouragement to persevere. Given the ageing of those parishioners who attend church, and given that the ministry load falls on fewer and often the same people, we observed a need to register what is actually happening. There will be a need for people to act as catalysts at the local level. The new *way-through* will likely come from the people themselves.

c. Mission: The difference between ministry and mission is not always well understood among the people. Nevertheless, many understand that without a mission there is no Church. A sense of mission can come from conviction and it often does. In most parishes the sense of mission that already exists may well be the starting point for re-imagining ourselves as Church. That will need to be complemented by the sense of mission that exists among Catholics outside usual parish structures and who seldom or never attend Mass. Faith education that unveils the primacy of mission is of special importance.

d. Leadership: Good leadership is essential if groups, ministry and mission are to flourish through the diocese. What is at issue here is not so much organisational and management skills, important though they be, but an imagination that enthuses the people, a trust and respect that empowers them, and an accompaniment that sustains them.¹³ In other words, when looking for leaders we are looking for persons who are part of the group and committed to the group.¹⁴

¹³ The working party's main recommendation is a leadership model to further facilitate faith development among the people and encouragement for those who are already working to that end. See recommendations below.

¹⁴ "We are looking for someone intrinsic to the group, not an expert from outside it; for someone who sees things, and enables others to do things; for someone who is positive and rejoicing, and so enabling of positive rejoicing in

3. Obstacles to ongoing faith development:

There are obstacles at the following three levels:

- **In the Parish:**
 - The complexities of modern life, especially the demands on time and family
 - A disconnection between life and faith in local ministry style and teachings.
 - Change occurring without facilitation or understanding, sometimes causing parishes to lurch from crisis to crisis
 - The struggle with the passing of present Church structures

- **Human resources / Structural resources**
 - *Human resources:* The main issues, felt by some people, were in reference to personal inadequacy and a lack of encouragement. This, coupled with an environment that sometimes neither acknowledges nor calls forth people's gifts, has on occasion led to a mood of depression and powerlessness. Small parishes in particular, while up to the challenge of being Church in their district, were nevertheless conscious of their limited resources. In small and large parishes alike an absence of effective face to face guidance was sometimes highlighted by the people.
 - *Structural resources:* In some parishes there are no meeting places. The people are aware that even sturdy buildings are often inadequate and not very inviting gathering spaces.

- **In the diocese:**
 - A breakdown in communication is seen and felt by the people. Often this resulted from ineffective communication rather than a lack of effort to communicate.
 - The people sometimes felt a tension between the micro and the macro levels of the diocese. They sometimes wondered about their informed participation or lack of it, about one size fitting all parishes in regard to structures, management and communication. They were aware of the need in each generation for face to face empowerment and encouragement.

4. Institutional Resources:

From the beginning of its explorations, the working party remained in dialogue with those institutions that can resource diocesan efforts in ongoing faith development. These institutions can particularly resource the formation of leaders.¹⁵

- ***Tenison Woods Education Centre, Lochinvar (TWEC):***¹⁶
 - This facility, launched in 1993, is a work of the Sisters of St. Joseph, Lochinvar

the group itself. The phrase I have chosen for such a model of leadership is "Intrinsic Visual Rejoicer". It is embodiment by joyful vision, rather than management by objectives and organization. Such a leader has flair in communicating group positivity. When dysfunction and conflict occur in the group, the leader as it were angles the mirror so that the group sees the underlying "goodness" in the conflict: only a group that was already strong and had a sense of its own belonging, would risk certain levels of conflict. What emerges from the vision is the amount of real concern and care that is going on in the group, and that realization triggers a new positivity." Kevin O'Shea, *Person in Cosmos – Metaphors of Meaning from Physics, Philosophy and Theology* (Bristol, IN: Wyndham Hall Press, 1995), p.186.

¹⁵ Further reflection on leadership appears below under "insights" and "recommendations to the DPC"

¹⁶ Refer to appendix 5 for an overview of TWEC's ministry. The web site for the Tenison Woods Education Centre is: <http://www.ssji.org.au/>

- It is managed by the TWEC Board which is responsible to the Sisters of St. Joseph
- Its strengths are:
 - A personal, hands-on, formation of persons for discipleship
 - A local understanding and dedication
 - An adaptability to meet diocesan, regional and local needs and a willingness to do so
 - A philosophy based on the very best principles of adult education.
- ***Broken Bay Institute (BBI):***¹⁷
 - This facility grew out of the Broken Bay Diocesan Plan, 2000-2005, and was launched in 2003. It evolved out of the Randwick Centre for Christian Spirituality
 - It is managed by the BBI Board and is responsible to the Diocese of Broken Bay
 - Its strengths:
 - It has an institutional base within the diocese of Broken Bay.
 - It is a member of the Sydney College of Divinity (SCD), a degree-granting college within the University of Sydney
 - It has a forty-year history of “distance education” with Catholic correspondence courses since 1969
 - BBI is not only committed to the Diocese of Broken Bay but other dioceses, and in a particular way to the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle.
 - BBI, as a member college of the SCD is able to procure federal government financial assistance, “Fee Help”, for degree students.
 - The focus of BBI is formation for ministry, adult faith formation, and clergy formation.
- ***University of Newcastle (UN):***¹⁸
 - This facility was set up in 1965 and is an independent university.
 - Its strengths:
 - It is a fully autonomous institution with its own powers, influence and accomplishments.
 - As universities go UN has a strong, well-resourced community base, particularly in the Hunter, Manning, Central Coast and Newcastle districts.
 - UN has from the beginning explored innovative learning
 - As of the second semester, 2007, UN will provide a respected theology degree programme that allows for a wide choice of courses.
 - As with BBI, students at UN have access to “Fee Help”

The working party envisages each of these institutes having a part to play in the formation of leaders at every level and in ongoing faith development. Institutions dialogue with institutions, and the opportunity is there for the diocesan institution to dialogue with each of these facilities.

¹⁷ Refer to Appendix 6a for a record of the working party’s conversation with BBI, and to appendix 6b for the BBI Strategic Plan, 2006-2010. BBI’s web site is <http://www.bbi.catholic.edu.au/index2.htm>

¹⁸ Refer to appendix 7 for the draft proposal for NU’s bachelor of Theology degree. The web site for the University of Newcastle (NU) is: <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/>

5. Further Resources:

a.) Personnel and courses. There are numerous courses in adult faith development in the diocese and there are competent, dedicated personnel delivering them. These resources remain to be tapped. The working party was asked to integrate the contribution of these courses. However, after listening to the people on the ground it has seemed best to us to let each course run independently. We nevertheless would encourage course leaders to communicate with one another.¹⁹

b. Spiritual Direction (or Spiritual Accompaniment): Within the diocese there are competent people available for direction and accompaniment.

c. Library Resources: There are significant facilities in the Resource Centre at Broadmeadow²⁰, the Dilley Library, Lochinvar²¹, the Newcastle Christian Library, Hamilton²², the Robert Rugers Library, Belmont²³, and the Maitland Parish Library²⁴. These and other are library resources are an important back-up for ongoing faith development.^{25 26 27 28 29 30 31}

d. I.T. and other Electronic Resources: With the notable developments in I.T., video-conferencing etc., there are new opportunities for bringing the diocese together which will minimise travel and isolation and maximise communication. Diocesan adult faith development might well use these new opportunities in dealing with every corner of the diocese. Taking these options will not negate face to face discourse with the people, but it will surely complement the face to face.

6. Summary:

In one way or another, and from a number of perspectives, people articulated to the working party some of their fundamental desires. Among them were these -

- That their faith make sense
- That their lives have purpose
- That they might belong to a community
- That they might make a difference to the world.

Key Insights:

1. Lived Experience:

Unmistakable was the conviction among the people that they engaged their faith through

¹⁹ Accompanying this report you may refer to the resource (separate from the appendices) entitled “Faith Development Providers in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, 2006-2007”. Listed therein are the various providers, a description of their ministry, and their contact details.

²⁰ Catholic Resource Centre, Phone: 4902 9100, 137 Broadmeadow Road, Broadmeadow. NSW.
E-mail: resourcecentre@mn.catholic.edu.au

²¹ Dilley Library, Lochinvar, Phone: 4930 9601

²² Newcastle Christian Library, Hamilton, Phone: 4961 1483

²³ Robert Rugers Library, Belmont. Phone: 4945 0200

²⁴ Maitland Parish Library, via parish office. Phone: 4934 1077

²⁵ In our recommendations we advocate this resource go on the road.

²⁶ Refer to appendix 9 – The Australian Bishops’ Committee for Mission and Faith.

²⁷ Refer to appendix 10 – “Towards Adult Faith”, commissioned by the National Catholic Education Commission.

²⁸ Refer to appendix 11 – “Principles of Adult Learning”, Australian National training Authority.

²⁹ Refer to appendix 12 – “Our Hearts were Burning within Us”, Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation, USCCB.

³⁰ Refer to appendix 13 – “Co-workers in the Vineyard of the Lord”, a resource for lay ecclesial ministry, USCCB

³¹ Refer to appendix 14 – “Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium”, Secretariat for family, laity, women and youth, USCCB.

their everyday lives.

- They desired assistance in living their faith in the everyday world.
- They are trying to find their own language in order to better understand God in the everyday, and they look for guidance in doing so.

2. Urgent Action:

The working party is as one in saying there is urgency in grasping the present moment. The need for faith development across the diocese is pressing. The meeting of that need, though in many ways momentous, requires focussed action. While the need is diocesan-wide and while diocesan resources and planning might be brought to bear, the action we envisage would be especially local and meeting the particular needs of unique communities.

3. Leadership Style:

While the need for faith development is pressing, we believe it can be met through the blossoming initiatives of

- *Face to face leadership* - local, encouraging and personal
- *Shared leadership* - congruent, participative, and according to one's call and gifts³².

4. Formation:

So that focussed action in faith development might get under way, there will be an ongoing requirement to form and educate future leaders. The future of faith development in the diocese, and in each local community, will depend on it.

To enable the formation of present and future leaders:

- Personnel and financial resources will be essential.
- A face-to-face leadership style, ready to engage the people locally, personally and encouragingly will be the centre-piece.
- It will be important to activate the formation process at all levels – parish, region and diocese



Trinity

Andrey Rublyov, c.1360 – 1430

Face to face relationship within the Holy Trinity

³² “Christ sends the laity into every town and place where He will come (cf. Luke 10:1) so that they may show that they are co-workers in the various forms and modes of the one apostolate of the Church, which must be constantly adapted to the new needs of our times. Ever productive as they should be in the work of the Lord, they know that their labour in Him is not in vain (cf. 1 Cor. 15:58).” Vatican Council II, *Apostolicum Actuositatum*, 33, 1965

Recommendations to the Diocesan Pastoral Council:

Our Recommendations are:

1. That in setting up plans, processes and methodologies for ongoing faith development it be done within the ethos of face to face formation and leadership styles.
2. That a full time diocesan consultant for Ongoing Faith Development be appointed and that this be a paid position;
3. That a regional or deanery consultant, full or part-time, for Ongoing Faith Development be appointed and that this be a paid position;
4. That consultants, diocesan and regional, be chosen for their ability for face to face leadership, people skills, other competencies and, in the case of the regional consultants, their local domicile.³³
5. That a role description for these positions include -
 - They work face to face with the people, accompanying and encouraging them.
 - They call forth leaders in each region and facilitate their formation in Christian leadership³⁴.
 - They maintain a close connection with the clergy, regional representatives and pastoral councils in their region.
 - They also maintain a close connection with the Vice-Chancellor for Pastoral Ministries, the Diocesan Pastoral Support Unit, and existing providers of faith development and education: diocesan programmes such as Stepping Stones, TWEC, Broken Bay Institute and the University of Newcastle.
 - They have detailed knowledge of resources, both within and beyond the diocese; and encourage the use of IT in reaching out to the diocese.
 - They promote among the people pathways to further faith education.³⁵
6. That a budget be provided for Ongoing Faith Development and for the individual consultants;
7. a. That while libraries in the diocese remain local, the diocese set up a single data-base and a single contact-office for the various libraries.
b. That a mobile van of resources from the Resource Centre visits regional or parish centres on a regular basis;
8. That these proposals be taken to the 2007 Diocesan Assembly.

³³ Local domicile enhances the possibility for frequent and effective face to face leadership and accompaniment.

³⁴ “Formation is not the privilege of a few, but a right and duty of all. ‘Suitable means to help each person fulfil a full, human and Christian vocation should be applied to formation’ For the purpose of a truly incisive and effective pastoral activity the *formation of those who will form others* is to be developed through appropriate courses or suitable schools. Forming those who, in turn, will be given the responsibility for the formation of the lay faithful, constitutes a basic requirement of assuring the general and widespread formation of all the lay faithful.” - John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 63, 1988

³⁵ Please refer to appendix 8 for a full list of Faith Development Providers in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle.

Conclusion:

Our diocesan-wide consultation has led us to believe that the present moment offers great opportunity for focused action. We say this not necessarily because of any failing in the past, but rather because of the accelerating change within a culture that sweeps the Church along in its wind. The extent of change makes a response more urgent. But beyond any quick-draw reaction, this is a time for a *creative* response. Our recommendations put flesh on such a response.

The needs of the people in this changing culture are as always a priority. In justice they have the right to formation in their faith and the leadership to make that possible.

These changing times also offer us fresh ways of implementing the Diocesan Pastoral Plan, of giving it traction especially through *ongoing faith development*. If some people feel confused about what the plan presently has to offer, this may well be a way to bring clarity through effective action.

Pressing though the need is, we don't want to violate the goal in getting to it. The Gospel way is the way of relationship. We point to face to face leadership through the regions as a way to reach our goals in the spirit of the Gospel. God has always dealt *face to face* with humanity³⁶.

We believe that whatever ways we can employ to connect parish and diocese will prove to be significant. Therefore we would hope for a regional 'consultant' who

- lives in the region
- is broadly competent
- has A1 personal skills
- is the face to face connection with the wider church
- encourages/empowers parishes and leaders, including clergy
- facilitates personal connections
- assists in calling-in resources and
- feels supported by the Diocesan 'consultant'

This report has been respectfully prepared for the Diocesan Pastoral Council at the request of the Diocesan Assembly of 2004.³⁷ We hope that it might contribute to a more face to face process of ongoing faith development through the diocese of Maitland-Newcastle.

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Easter, 2007

³⁶ The opening statement of this report.

³⁷ The Diocesan Assembly of 2004 authorises the Diocesan Pastoral Council to establish a representative working party, with a mandate to explore thoroughly the issue of our need for a more integrated and collaborative approach on ongoing faith formation and to make recommendations to the DPC – Diocesan Assembly 2004, Recommendation #2