

# Bringing the mission of Christ to those in need

## Mission and Outreach

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

*In this edition, Teresa Brierley and Beverly Zimmerman rsj discuss Mission and Outreach, the fourth of five foundations which underpin the Moving Forward Together planning document. This article, like its predecessors, is meant to assist the diocesan community prepare for the Diocesan Gathering on 5 (evening) and 6 November 2010.*

At our last two Assemblies (2005 and 2007) we were asked how we can be a more evangelising community. It was acknowledged that evangelisation is no longer considered solely a work of conversion and that it is intrinsically linked to Mission and Outreach.

Frederick Buechner offers us insights into evangelisation when he draws on the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. He writes, "Jesus tells us, the world has the Kingdom buried in it like a treasure buried in a field, like leaven working in dough, like a seed germinating in the earth, like whatever it was in the heart of the Prodigal Son that finally brought him home." (*Longing for Home* 1996 p 113). In these parables we see Jesus joining us in the mire and transforming us, and the world, from within.

A clear understanding of the importance of evangelisation is found in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (14): "Evangelising is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelise...for the Church, evangelising means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence, transforming humanity from within and making it new." (18)

*Redemptoris Missio* offers further insights: "The Church's task is described as though it had to proceed in two directions: on the one hand promoting such 'values of the kingdom' as peace, justice, freedom, brotherhood, etc, while on the other hand fostering dialogue between peoples, cultures and religions, so that through a mutual enrichment they might help the world to be renewed and to journey ever closer toward the kingdom." (No17)

These two Vatican Council documents, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* and *Redemptoris Missio*, remind us that evangelisation requires both religious and spiritual support and physical and economic development. Evangelisation needs to be Kingdom-centred and people-focused with an emphasis on sharing the Good News and supporting people, economically and physically. Evangelisation includes the promotion of peace and justice and the running of educational institutions, hospitals and working for the needy and poor.

The Vatican Council documents give us clear directions and challenge us to face critical questions around evangelisation and mission. What kind of church, what kind of house of God's people are we constructing as we shape our pastoral plans? How are we engaging with the world around us? Does our planning reach out to the world that is broken and in need of healing? These are questions we may need to address further at our Diocesan Gathering in November.

We know that the Catholic Church in Australia is the largest provider of education, health and welfare services outside government agencies. This outreach and mission is underpinned by an understanding of what it means to be a Catholic Christian. Our institutions and communities are "salt and light" in the wider community: identifying with the poor and marginalised, being a prophetic voice speaking out against greed and injustice, offering friendship to the lonely and remaining faithful in the face of opposition. These are all ways in which we can and do respond to the call of Christ.

## The Five Foundations (Acts 2: 42-47)



Certainly our school system and CatholicCare provide us with a strong example of our mission and outreach. We should be proud of their place in each of our communities and openly acknowledge and support them in their work. On the following pages Ray Collins, Director of Schools and Joseph McCarthy, CEO of CatholicCare, outline the work of their respective agencies.

For many of us there is a deliberate intention to bring the mission of Christ to those in need. However, questions remain: can we do this better and can more of us be involved? Our challenge is to focus on the mission to which each of us is called.

In our Diocesan Pastoral Plan 2010-2014 you will find the fourth foundation:

*Mission and Outreach engages people in the transformation of society - outreach through mercy and justice - to build the kingdom of God.*

You will also find a number of statements about what we want to achieve and strategies for achieving these. They may be accepted by you or used as a guide in the development of your local plans.

Finally, some thoughts from Clemens Mendonca who challenges and encourages us when he writes, "people of good will are the hope of this world and they do have a special 'mission' today. Their awareness of an inner quest for meaning in life, to commit their lives selflessly for the cause of justice, reconciliation and peace, to work relentlessly to bring about healing and wholeness on this planet is a sign of the breakthrough of God's Kingdom on earth. These people are able to cross the limits or barriers created by religion, caste, class, race, colour, gender and nations. They listen to the promptings of the Spirit and discern the signs of the times. Their concerns are universal."

## Catholic schools living up to high ideals

*Director of Schools Ray Collins reflects on the role of Catholic schools in terms of Mission and Outreach.*

The call to evangelisation as set out in the Mission and Outreach foundation of *Moving Forward Together*, the Diocesan Pastoral Plan 2010-2014, is one of the challenges and indeed purposes of the Catholic School.

Catholic schools have existed in Australia and in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle since the 1830s. Over more than 170 years they have fulfilled the evangelising and catechising role required of them by the parish and diocesan communities that established them. There are many wonderful stories of the desire of parish communities to establish Catholic schools and of the invitations of parish priests to the various religious orders to staff the schools established throughout the diocese. Amid challenging times a grand tradition of Catholic education developed that continues to this day.

Catholic schools have changed in many ways since the Second Vatican Council in the early 1960s. The number of Religious staff has declined and most Catholic schools now are fully staffed by lay people. However the nature and purpose of Catholic schools remains a constant reminder of the vision of our early bishops and priests.

Documents outlining the purpose of Catholic schools have provided a clear direction in relation to their evangelising role including *Gravissimum Educationis*, *The Catholic School*, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*, *Lay Catholics in Schools*, *Witnesses to Faith*, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* and most recently the pastoral letter of the Bishops of NSW and the ACT, *Catholic Schools at a Crossroads*.

The common thread running through these documents is the call to evangelise and to hold, as one of the school's first priorities, outreach to the poor and disadvantaged. The Vatican Council stated very clearly the role of Catholic schools:

*This Sacred Council of the Church earnestly entreats pastors and all the faithful to spare no sacrifice in helping Catholic schools fulfill their function in a continually more perfect way, and especially in caring for the needs of those who are poor in the goods of this world or who are deprived of the assistance and affection of a family or who are strangers to the gift of Faith. (Gravissimum Educationis)*

The Bishops of NSW and the ACT place particular significance on the role of the Catholic School.

*Put simply: the Catholic school is the principal educational arm of Catholic families, parishes and the wider Church for those generally aged under eighteen.*

There are 56 Catholic schools in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, 44 parish primary schools, one K-12 school, one special school and ten secondary schools. The schools are co-ordinated on behalf of the parishes and the diocese by the Catholic Schools Office. They form a system of schools that ensures an equitable distribution of resources and promotes the concept of sharing.

There are over 17,000 students enrolled in Catholic schools in the diocese with some 1400 teaching and non-teaching staff.

To encourage the evangelising and missionary role of the school, staff and students participate in range of activities including formal Religious Education lessons, liturgies within the school and within parish life, a variety of prayer forms, outreach to the disadvantaged in our communities, support for charities such as St Vincent de Paul, Caritas and Catholic Mission, social justice initiatives, immersion experiences in Third World countries, spirituality encounters and retreats. Many of these link today's schools with their heritage through contact with the various religious orders.



Irene Dorney with grandson Michael Dorney playing snakes and ladders on Grandparents Day at St Joseph's Bulahdelah.

As we celebrate the canonisation of Blessed Mary MacKillop it is important to reflect on the outreach of the Sisters of St Joseph and the various orders who have taught in our schools. Their commitment to evangelising and reaching out to those in need is fundamental to their charism. *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* sums this up when it says that the role of the religious orders...

*can be found again among those who have lost all sense of meaning in life and lack any type of inspiring ideal, those to whom no values are proposed and who do not know the beauty of faith, who come from families which are broken and incapable of love, often living in situations of material and spiritual poverty, slaves to the new idols of a society, which, not infrequently, promises them only a future of unemployment and marginalisation. To these new poor the Catholic school turns in a spirit of love. Spurred on by the aim of offering to all, and especially to the poor and marginalised, the opportunity of an education, of training for a job, of human and Christian formation, it can and must find in the context of the old and new forms of poverty that original synthesis of ardour and fervent dedication which is a manifestation of Christ's love for the poor, the humble, the masses seeking for truth.*

The challenge for Catholic schools is to live up to this ideal.

## CatholicCare Hunter-Manning, “that they may have life and have it to the full”

*CEO Joseph McCarthy reflects on the role of CatholicCare in terms of Mission and Outreach.*

CatholicCare offers quality holistic support to people of all ages and stages, inclusive of the most vulnerable in society. As an agency of the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, we seek to continue Christ’s mission that “they may have life and have it to the full”.

Our outreach in the diocese is achieved by 900 staff and volunteers through a variety of supportive and inclusive programs that nurture communities and respect the dignity and worth of each person. Services are delivered through three main business streams: Social Services, Community Aged Care including Independent Living and Residential Aged Care. Programs are either self funded or funded through local, state or federal government agencies and may include culture-specific programs for indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.

CatholicCare takes into account the financial, physical, emotional and spiritual needs of our clients in the delivery of services and endeavours to be compassionate and just in our dealings with people by being flexible and practicable in relation to costs and delivery of services.

Currently CatholicCare delivers to the people of the region:

- Counselling for individuals and families.
- Personal Helpers & Mentors Program to support people living with mental illness.
- Marriage and relationship education for couples before marriage and in later years to reaffirm commitments.
- Out of Home Care for children unable to live with their families.
- Parenting support programs and “Brighter Futures” programs to assist in the strengthening and maintenance of family relationships, including a specific program based in Taree for fathers and their children.
- Adoption support services for those who have been in care.
- Youth crisis accommodation and transition-housing where young people are assisted to develop essential life skills to enable them to live independently and contribute to their communities.
- Disability support services including supported accommodation for people

with a disability to enable independent living.

- The Men’s Shed program which supports men’s health and well-being by providing a place for men to gather. The Sheds also offer skill-sharing opportunities between men and youth within local communities.
- Job assistance programs such as Connect 200 where CatholicCare assists people to gain skills in the workplace and opportunities for employment.
- Community Aged Care teams providing a variety of low level and high-level clinical care as well as personal and domestic supports to older people in their own homes, supporting older persons to live independently. This could include assistance with high level nursing support, showering and dressing, housework or food preparation, shopping, medication-management and support to attend doctor and specialist appointments. CatholicCare currently delivers over 3,500 services each week through a variety of Respite options, Community Aged Care and Extended Aged Care at Home packages, including dementia-specific services.
- Community Aged Care day and cottage respite for clients and carers of older persons offering opportunities for carers and for those for whom they care to engage in activities that would otherwise be difficult whilst juggling this challenging and rewarding role. By utilising respite, carers are more able to juggle life commitments and return to their carer role refreshed.

- Nine Residential Aged Care facilities for older people requiring supported living. Residents are encouraged to maintain links with families, their communities and their faith. Staff support residents in a variety of activities and, in collaboration with pastoral support staff and clergy, include residents in worship. CatholicCare supports residents and their families with end of life choices and is a leader in the area of delivering quality palliative care and dementia care. Our residents are supported to “age in place” where increasing care needs are explored and implemented within the resident’s current location.
- Independent Living within a supported community. CatholicCare offers around 140 Independent Living units across the diocese.

In addition to the above services, programs and projects, CatholicCare has a well-developed volunteer program operating across the organisation. Volunteers enhance the programs and services CatholicCare is able to offer through the skills and time they generously share with staff and clients. Volunteers have also spoken of the joy and feelings of value that they receive from supporting the organisation.

CatholicCare works in collaboration with the Catholic Schools Office to deliver a range of projects which encourage children and young people to volunteer. Within Residential Aged Care, students spend time with and record stories of residents. Some students also visit those residing in our Independent Living communities.



Hunter Aged Care Achievement Award winners Kathy Yorke, Connie DeAntonis, Peta Peters, Stephanie Bee, Rebecca Brown, Mary Case and Bruce Thompson. Photo by Gary Daniels & Associates P 0417 299 683.