

Moving Forward Together
A Process of Renewal
In the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle

An invitation from Bishop Michael went out in last week's Dio Update for our Diocesan Gathering on 5th and 6th November. The Gathering is different to an Assembly because it is open to all those from across the diocese who would like to attend. I hope many of you are considering coming along and sharing in the conversations that will take place.

The Diocesan Pastoral Assembly/Gathering fulfils its role in pastoral planning by:

1. acting as a gathering place for the faithful of the diocese to celebrate their unity under the Bishop;
2. providing a representative forum for the interchange of ideas and issues amongst all members of the diocese; lay, clergy, and religious, church leaders and parishioners, and apostolic and administrative groups in the diocese;
3. accepting, rejecting or modifying draft Diocesan Pastoral Plans presented to it by the Diocesan Pastoral Council after consultation with the diocesan community;
4. hearing and responding to evaluations of Diocesan Pastoral Plans. (DPP 7.1)



The process being adopted for this Gathering is one of *Conversation – A Journey Towards Discernment*. This was the process engaged in the Assembly of 2007. The following document was produced for that Assembly.

Conversation from the Latin (*Con Versare*)

'Con' with
'Versare' to change,
 to dance.

'Real conversation catches fire.' We converse on topics we care about. Assume many others share your dreams. It is an experiment and we cannot predict the outcome. It is risky. It is an adventure we embark on together. So, be brave enough to start a conversation that matters:

talk to people you know
talk to people you don't know
talk to people you never talk to.

Togetherness is the point in any conversation. It is a dialogue, not a monologue. Be intrigued by the differences you hear. Be open to surprise. Treasure curiosity; don't demand certainty. It is the hearer, not the speaker who determines the meaning of your utterance. Therefore, you must determine how you are to speak so that the hearer is instep with you as real listening always brings people closer together. Trust that meaningful conversation can change our diocese and our world.

Orientation – Beginning the Journey

We are standing in:

- A moment of possibility
- A moment of change
- A moment of opportunity
- A moment of transformation

Our Task

- To review the past 20 years
- To assess the present
- To articulate a vision for the future that builds on our strengths
- To identify what needs to change
- To set broad directions for the next 2-5 years.

The Process involves:

- praying
- listening
- reflecting,
- discussing, and
- working towards consensus regarding the future of the Diocese.

We need to consider:

- What are the most crucial issues for us to consider at this time in our diocesan life and history?
- What am I hearing?
- What am I feeling?
- What is changing for me?
- What is most important to me?

Through our conversation(s), we call one another to ongoing conversion of mind and heart, through the common hearing of the Word of God and a common meeting with the Holy Spirit.

Ground Rules

Each person speaks only for his/herself: *I speak to people, not about them.*

A person's words are theirs alone: *I do not take them away and use them. (I can ask to quote another person).*

I respect each person's contribution regardless of whether I agree or not and I will try to understand where they are coming from.

I take responsibility for my participation in the process.



Conversations about the *Moving Forward Together* document have already begun in parishes, regions, schools and CatholicCare facilities across the diocese. To date more than 600 people have participated in this document being broken open with them. Our Gathering provides us with the opportunity to concentrate these conversations in one place with a large number of people from the many aspects of life across the diocese. These conversations may not be definitive and may need to continue in parishes, regions, agencies and councils after the Gathering. The Diocesan Pastoral Plan calls us **“to hear God’s people and empower them to participate fully in Christ’s mission”**. Therefore, conversations are ongoing and provide the links between Diocesan Gatherings or Assemblies. This connection back and forward in time creates a sense of journey for us. Of the past we have knowledge, of the now we explore and of the future we plan and are hope-filled. There can be anxiety and tension in the exploring as we bring our own gifts and flaws to the place of change and renewal.

Information for the Gathering is available on the diocesan website <http://www.mn.catholic.org.au/newsroom/whatsnew/Moving%20Forward%20Together%202.htm> or by going to the home page www.mn.catholic.org.au and clicking on the link - Diocesan Gathering 2010.

If you would like to attend the Gathering please complete the registration form so we can plan this get-together (available from your parish, on the website and by calling 4979 1111). For those of you who may be travelling significant distances the people of the Chisholm Region have offered to assist by providing accommodation. St Peter’s school community along with the parishioners of the Chisholm Region will be assisting with hospitality during the Gathering.

I finish with part of a reflection from Archbishop Oscar Romero:

This is what we are about.



We plant a seed that one day will grow.

We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will further development.

We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything; and there is a sense of liberation in realising that.

I hope you will consider joining with others at the Diocesan Gathering.

Teresa Brierley

Vice Chancellor Pastoral Ministries
21st September 2010