



Viewpoint

By Bishop Christopher Saunders DD

A Living Parish – an Imagination in Faith

What constitutes a 'living parish' in the Kimberley is a matter for on-going conversation. Some parishes are relatively stable in their make-up, whereas others are in a state of flux; some are evidently peculiar geographical conglomerates that span several isolated settlements and include a variety of languages and interests. Just the same, the question of what is a 'living parish' is worth pursuing, if for no other reason than to keep the objective of developing a living faith in each parish alive and ever before our eyes.

I have conducted two reviews of parishes now, one in Broome and the other in Derby. Interestingly enough these two parishes are vastly different in their construct yet many of the opinions and expectations of parishioners are remarkably the same. They share a similar joy regarding their successful liturgies and religious celebrations and have the same hope that these waning elements that define 'the family of faith' might be restored and redeveloped. They lament the fracturing of their parishes over the past decades and their community's inability to include all age groups in parish life. They feel that they share wonderful prayerful moments together but feel there is room for improvement and innovation and imagination!

When you run through the review carefully there are seven areas that stand out as parts of parish life that require urgent attention: Parish community-

building activities; adult faith education; care for the poor and marginalized; concern and pastoral care for youth; prayer life for the community outside of Mass; the visitation of homes;

and, a welcoming process to help people to come back to the practice of their faith.

The reviews also conducted included a number

of individual and group submissions.

What is most heartening is that the groups and individuals are as concerned about the life of their parish as are the priests and religious. In other words, concern is not coming from above only, but is a real reflection of those who share a practising faith and know what value there is in such vibrancy.

The challenge for every parish is to do something about the matters in need of urgent attention. To put it another way – how to start to translate the concerns into action and where to start. Without a doubt imagination is the first step to any useful innovation.

Given the limited resources available to each community, a workable pastoral strategy must begin with those areas that are most easily addressed. Gathering the limited personnel resources together may not appear easy but it is certainly possible given the good-will and enthusiasm evident in the review submissions.

Parish community-building activities seems to me to be the

most sensible place to begin a process of revitalization. Each parish has good grounds and good facilities to bring people together with a view to developing healthy parish family relationships. Growing people together begins with planting love in common activities and interests. Emphasizing the sanctity of the family, not only as the basic unit of society but as the foundation of the faith community, is a realizable goal on the way to a living parish.

The great enemy of innovation, imagination and community-building is the residual school of inactivity that says "we've always done it this way" or

"we've tried that before and it didn't work". Such obstacles need to be looked over and placed to one side. Nothing inspires achievement more than

Growing people together begins with planting love in common activities and interests.

Nothing inspires achievement more than enthusiasm for a stated and agreed goal.

enthusiasm for a stated and agreed goal. Nothing dampens hope and energy more than negativity and its accompanying self-perpetuating lethargy.

With this in mind I encourage all parish councils and heads of ministry groups to develop a pastoral strategy with the aim of developing 'a living parish' according to their own gifts and talents and resources. The greatest ally in this quest is the call to a new imagination in faith.

WYD08 WORLD YOUTH DAY

The WYD Cross and Icon are well into their journey through Australia. Reports and photos from different locations can be viewed here http://www.wyd2008.org/index.php/en/journey_of_the_wyd_cross_icon/journey_in_australia

SPEAK TO YOUR PARISH PRIEST NOW! IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN ATTENDING.

Deposit of \$500 is required by 31 October Total cost \$2000

For further info. contact Erica at the Kimberley World Youth Day Office at St Mary's College (old Kindy)
Ph: 08 9193 5032
Mobile: 0427 970 028
Fax: 08 9192 2599

Email: kwycd@stmarysbroome.wa.edu.au
WYD Sydney 2008 Website: www.wyd2008.org

