



The Witness

Catholic School of Evangelisation Australia Newsletter
May 2009

THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING CHURCH Adrian Commadeur

A Melbourne Church Report shows that at present trends, the number of Catholic churchgoers will drop from 150,000 in 2006 to 84,000 in 2026. In contrast the weekly number at Pentecostal churches will increase from 30,000 to 45,000. These figures are just some of the many we could extract from a very thorough report launched on 1 April 2009. Prepared over a period of two years, it was the brain child of Rev. Rob Isaachsen, head of Transforming Melbourne, a network of pastors, and carried out by the Christian Research Association. Philip Hughes, noted researcher, presented the report to about 150 Christian leaders. The report says that about 8% of all Christians attend Church weekly, whilst for Catholics it is 14%.

Catholics may be tempted to sit back and relax knowing that 150,000 of the 300,000 people who attend church weekly, are Catholics. But there are worrying trends too.

The report tells that over the last 10 years some denominations have been losing members: Church of Christ, Uniting and Anglican, whilst others grew: Catholic (7%), Baptist (10%), Pentecostal (36%). It seems to me that some of these changes are due to 'church-hopping'.

The most concerning aspect is how the younger generation is faring in relation to their connection with God. This is important for understanding how future generations will fill, or fail to fill, our churches. For example young people between 15 and 34 years have dramatically decreased in the Anglican and Catholic churches, but increased among Mormons, Pentecostal and Orthodox churches, as well as independent Christian fellowships. For young people religion is not im-

portant and 'the vast majority of Generation Y live for the moment,' says the report. Hence the projection that by 2026, only 84,000 Catholics will attend mass!

In general the Moslem, Hindu and Buddhist religions have increased in numbers in the last 10 years and so also the percentage of those who state they have no religion, which is now about 30%. I suspect that Melbourne reflects the wider Australian community, with local variations.

What do all these facts and figures mean to us who have at heart the gospel message of Jesus, who came to redeem all men and women, and desires that all be saved? To me it highlights two things: first: we always live in hope that Jesus will not desert his Church. Second: we need to continue to evangelise with greater fervour, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. One of the speakers at a workshop on Church Planting, Steve Addison of Church Resource Ministries, highlighted five requirements in changing the trends. We need to:

1. Be passionate about Jesus.
2. Commit to the cause.
3. Develop contagious relationships.
4. Develop rapid mobilisation.
(i.e. let new Christians bring others to the Lord) and
5. Adapt the gospel message to the present culture.

In Melbourne we have a chance of renewing our passion for Jesus, and commitment for the gospel on 30th May with a reunion and celebration. (See back page) We invite you to hear more about how we can make a difference in the Catholic Church. Meanwhile intercession for a revival in our land and in our Church will make a significant contribution to a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit.



WAGGA WAGGA TEAM

Bishop Gerard Hanna with members of the Wagga Wagga School Team and Pat Kelly (School Director).

On March 14th Bishop Hanna spent time sharing with the Wagga Team. Pat Kelly gave a report on his recent studies in Czech Republic and how they might benefit the SOE.

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This newsletter is published by the Catholic School of Evangelisation in Melbourne, Australia. It is published in April, August and December.

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Deadline for the next issue of

**The Witness
 31st October 2007**

The School of Evangelisation acknowledges the efforts of all Coordinators involved in the distribution of this newsletter.
 May God bless you!

School of Evangelisation
MISSION STATEMENT

To contribute to the formation of evangelising parishes by offering a formation program which:

- ▶ FORMS DISCIPLES
- ▶ TRAINS EVANGELISERS
- ▶ ESTABLISHES PARISH SCHOOLS OF EVANGELISATION.

“I HAVE OPENED A DOOR...” Rev 3:8

By Pat Kelly

One of our graduates has received a word of prophecy based around Rev 3:8. (see page 5) The Lord is saying to us that despite our weakness and lack of strength he has seen that we are trying to be faithful to his call to evangelise and that he has opened a door for us. If that is the case why is it that often we cannot see the opportunities that are before us so that we can be fruitful in this work of evangelisation?

I think the answer lies in John 12:24: *“I am telling you the truth: unless a wheat grain falls into the earth and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies it yields a rich harvest.”*

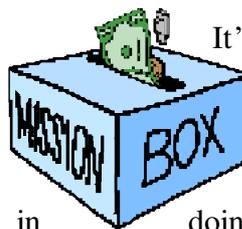
I am reminded of the character Alice in one of Lewis Carroll’s stories. In one incident Alice is trapped and the only way out is through a small door. She is too big to get through the door. The situation is resolved when she eats something that shrinks her so that she can get through the door.

Maybe we can’t see the door that the Lord has opened for us because we are ‘too big’, too focused on ourselves and our own problems and needs and not focused enough on following Jesus in humble obedience. Maybe we need to become small by dying to ourselves more so that we will indeed bear much fruit. How do we do this?

The key is the same one that the Church puts before us every Lent; Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving. (CC 1434) Jesus teaches us about this in chapter six of Matthew’s Gospel: When you give..... v 2

When you pray..... v 5

When you fast..... v16



It’s not a question of ‘if’ but ‘when’. Jesus expects us to give, to pray and to fast. This is not easy (especially fasting!), to do it we do have to die to self, but keep in mind the promise of Jesus that in doing so we will bear much fruit.

Prayer, fasting and almsgiving makes us smaller; prayer reduces our time, fasting reduces our strength, almsgiving reduces our money, we can no longer depend on these resources and instead we have to depend on Jesus.



These disciplines of Lent help us to celebrate Easter but we don’t cast them aside now that Easter is here. If we commit to them the Risen Lord Jesus can bless us every day so that we are able to take advantage of the doors he has opened before us.

THE RESURRECTION: HOPE FOR OUR TIMES

One of the most powerful scripture passages for me is found in the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians chapter 15 verses 12-18 *"If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is without substance and so is your faith.....in addition, those who have fallen asleep in Christ are utterly lost. If our hope in Christ has been for this life only, we are of all people the most pitiable"*. Strong words indeed. Our Catholic faith depends on the fact that Jesus, suffered, died, rose again and He is today glorified as we wait for Him to come again.

Moreover, Paul says that *"Jesus Christ is the first fruit of all those who have fallen asleep"*. What does this mean? The farmer is very keen to have a look at the first fruit of the harvest; because if the first fruits are good then the whole harvest will be good. If on the other hand, the first fruits are bad, then the whole harvest will be bad. The first fruits give us an indication of what is going to happen to the whole harvest. Now Paul is saying that Jesus is the first fruit of all those that have fallen asleep, of all those that have died. This means that whatever happened to Jesus is going to happen to all of us. If Jesus died then we are all going to die. However, Jesus rose again and we will be experiencing the same reality ourselves.

This is what has sustained the church for over two thousand years. This is what has kept our Christian faith going in the midst of so many trials, so much unbelief and in the midst of so much ridicule at times. This faith in the resurrection will also sustain us as a Catholic community, as a Catholic church as we journey into the future.

I am sure that at some stage we have all pondered and reflected on these three questions. Where did we come from? What am I doing living at this particular time? What is going to happen to me when this life finishes for me with death? We need to find an answer for these questions, because they have a

great bearing on the purpose and worth of our existence. Only Jesus Christ can give us the answers for these questions. We come from Him as created by God. We are called to live this life based on His teaching to reach our full potential and help others to do the same. We are destined to live for ever with our God after we die.

Today we may hear a lot of negative talk about the church. We are not perfect. We are very sinful because we are human. Every time we stop fixing our gaze upon Jesus we make terrible mistakes. Yet Jesus promised to be with us till the end of time. The Roman empire has come and gone, the British empire has come and gone. Hitler had the hope that his new order of government will last a thousand years. It barely lasted a few years. Yet the church has remained and will continue to do so because of the promise of the protection of the Resurrected Jesus.

Some years ago Mel Gibson released his film "The Passion of Christ". It was at first met with so much heated debate and some even ridiculed the whole project. The reality is that within six months it became the eighth largest money making movie of all time. People say young people are not interested in religion yet last year in Sydney half a million young Catholic people gathered around Pope Benedict XVI for a celebration of our Catholic faith. Again, it is estimated that 4.5 million Australians attended church services during the last Easter weekend. This is one in four Australians.

Moreover, the generation called "the Baby Boomers" like myself, grew up in a situation where the catch cry was "God is dead". There is no room for God in our culture and in our lives. Today's young people are rejecting this idea. 40% of young people surveyed said that religion is important for them, and this is double what was found in 1978. 56% of young people say that spirituality, or a relationship

with God is very important for them even though many do not go to church.



In communist China, about 8,000 worshippers, most of them young, will be attended the Easter Masses at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in South Beijing. The parish priest says that the church is thriving with two thirds of the congregation under 40. He says, *"There is a vacuum in China today, it's too materialistic. Young people are saying there's no purpose in their lives"*. This new wave of religious belief reflects a quest for meaning beyond the mere material that is so constantly emphasised around us. Our country, needs to continue to hear this message of hope and purpose for life. Our country will be definitely richer embracing the values and the ideals of Jesus. You and I are called to own the message of Jesus and make it part of our lives so that we can pass it on to others. For millions of people the Resurrected Jesus offers an answer to their deepest longings. Many more still need to hear this. Many more still need to come closer to Jesus. Build from today, let us live our lives in harmony with the teachings of Jesus. Let us ask for forgiveness by celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Let us give some time each week to be nurtured by our God through the attendance of Mass and receiving the Eucharist.

Dante Alighieri, the famous Italian writer who wrote the "Divine Comedy" describes very clearly our call in life.

"Christians be serious in taking action. Do not be like a feather to every wind. Nor think that every water cleanses you. You have the New and the Old Testament and the Shepherd of the Church to guide you. Let this be all you need for your salvation. Be men, do not be senseless sheep."

Happy Easter. God bless.

Bishop Joe Grech

THE BENEFITS of FORGIVENESS By Mike Dooley, Brisbane

In 1993 I slipped and fell down my work office stairs, sustaining four fractures in my left foot. This necessitated ten weeks off work with my foot upraised. Thus there was plenty of time to read, think and pray.

Sensing the leading of the Holy Spirit, I began to read charismatic books not looked at for fifteen to twenty years. This included the books of Merlin Corothers: "Prison to Praise", "The Power of Praise" and "Answers to Praise". Merlin's books centre on Romans 8-28 "All things work for good for those who love the Lord". To praise God for the circumstances of a problem situation seems crazy, however praise works. Occasionally the circumstances did change, but mostly it has been my own attitude that has changed.

At the same time my daily reading of the book "God Calling" showed the following phrase for June 3. "Drive fear and depression and despair and a sense of failure out with praise." It hit me like a thunderbolt and I began to try praising God in all circumstances. It was crazy for a while until the changes began to become apparent.

On June 25 1993, the Holy Spirit convicted me of what others had tried to tell me for years, i.e. that I was a very angry person who suppressed it. Jesus was invited to show me how to fix things up. He showed me that repentance and forgiveness were paramount.

The earliest memory of the past was the first day of school at five years of age. Then Jesus led me through every primary class, then secondary classes, tertiary studies, all work situations, sporting clubs, social clubs, and family situations, both immediate and more distant relatives. It was amazing the things that surfaced. There was much sobbing particularly for sexual abuse at eight years of age by a close neighbour. It took a bit longer to forgive this man, but I got there.

I used a 7 point plan for each memory that surfaced.

- ◆ Forgive the person/s concerned.
- ◆ Pray a blessing on him/her/ them.
- ◆ Praise God for permitting the incident to occur. (Romans 8:28)
- ◆ Repent to God for the anger and resentment held for "X" number of years,.
- ◆ Request forgiveness from God for my sin of anger.
- ◆ Accept that God had forgiven me.
- ◆ Forgive myself for my sinful reaction.

It took two whole days to go through the experience. As the anger and resentment left me, so my arms that were always tightly folded, began to fall loosely by my sides with fingers open. Jesus took so much tension from me that my wife told me I was fifteen years younger.

The next day, June 27, as I praised God in tongues, laughter began. This was new to me. In the next couple of weeks it happened occasionally, then every time for the next four months, including when I praised God in English. As I praised God, joy welled up within me. I had to be careful

where I The "God reading for 22 reads as "Sing unto glad heart. praise my Praise is tribute to you praise, s u r g e your being, learn some- joy of the

praised God. Calling" September follows: me from a Sing and Holy Name. man's joy- Me, and as thrills of joy t h r o u g h and you thing of the Heavently

Host."

Memories of the past still surface. No doubt they will for the rest of my life. Jesus is asked daily to surface all memories that I need to deal with and then I swing into action with the 7 point plan.

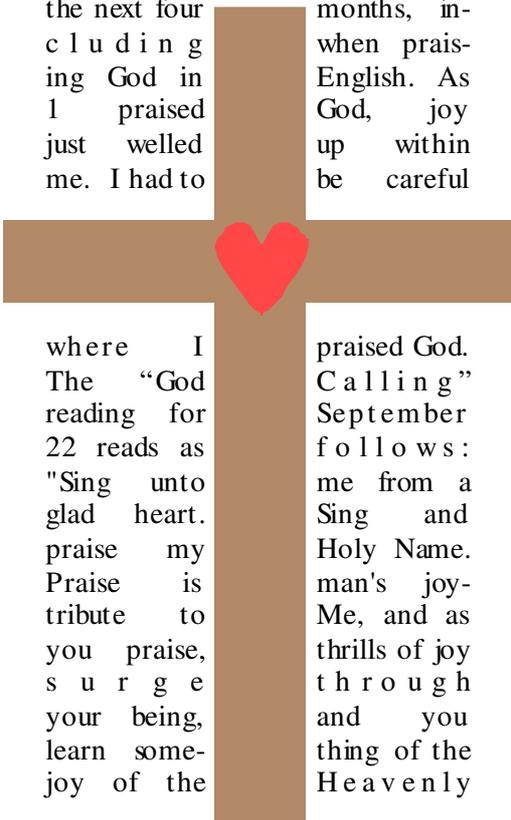
Based on my own experiences, it is my considered opinion that praise, forgiveness and repentance bring healing. To think more deeply, when we have been hurt by someone we have been hurt once. However, when we do not forgive, we have a deal of resentment and bitterness carried ongoing in our hearts. Thus we are hurting twice for the same thing, one inflicted, the other, self inflicted. The person who perpetrated the hurt always remains the victor.

How often does a person visit a doctor only to be asked the question, "What's eating you?" It is often the effects of ongoing resentment from earlier hurts. Several types of arthritis are attributed to lack of forgiveness. A person's face normally shows the effects of inner bitterness of spirit. They can become complainers. Thus at a minimum, it is in the self interest of the aggrieved person's personal health to forgive.

At one time, my wife made comment about one of my own family members. I was incensed, as I did not agree. My back became so sore that I was forced to lie on the floor to sleep as the bed was too painful. One evening at a conference, the speaker related unforgiveness to arthritis. It was a bolt out of the blue for me. At that instant I realized that my wife was correct. I went through the seven point plan and was able from that night to sleep normally in bed.

Falling down the office stairs has been one of the most significant happenings of my life. (Please form an orderly queue at the top of the stairs.)

May the name of Jesus be praised forever.



Behold, I have put before you an open door"

Revelation 3:8 Josephine Baluyot, Adelaide.

We are, by nature, creatures of habit, easily lulled into complacency. However, God wants more from us so He nudges us forward, compelling us to change and to see the world through His eyes. As He does this, He reveals new opportunities to grow in Jesus Christ and share Him with others. He brings people and situations to our awareness, opening doors for the ministry of the Gospel. These are open doors of obedience to God's plan.

In the first three chapters of Revelation, Jesus, speaking through the Apostle John, exhorts and rebukes the seven churches in Asia. Of these, the church in Philadelphia receives a commendation: "I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name" (Rev. 3:8).

Jesus knew that this church was weakened by continual attacks from unbelieving and hostile Jews. Even so, they were faithful to God. Jesus could have said, *"Take a breather. Strengthen yourselves for*

the fight." Instead, He pointed them to an open door of opportunity that only He could open and shut. He challenged them to stand firm and to seize opportunities provided by the open door. Today, Jesus presents open doors of opportunity for His faithful saints to walk through. No matter how tired, weak, or overwhelmed we may be, we must walk through them. Jesus could have said that the sufferings of this church were enough. Instead, He indicated that His grace was sufficient to meet the opportunity He had given to them. Each of us has been given an open door. How faithful are we to do the work that God has entrusted to us? God has given us many points of contact with others through our jobs, our family, in our community, our neighbourhood, or even our church to make Him known. We each have special talents and experiences that God has allowed us to have, so that we can reach those people He intends us to influence for the good. Every one of us were each made for a purpose in God's kingdom. If this purpose does not come immediately to our mind,



then we can begin by looking at the spiritual gifts described in Romans 12:6-8. These gifts are listed as prophesying, serving, teaching, encouraging, contributing to the needs of others, leadership, and showing mercy. God will give us opportunities to serve Him through the spiritual gift or gifts He has given us. We can respond first to general opportunities that are in keeping with our gift, and God will soon reveal specific situations for our involvement.

No matter what we do, we can't ignore our open door of opportunity. We can't let procrastination or indifference steal our time, instead, may we seek God's strength as our step forward. When we embrace our God-given opportunities in obedience, we will see God's glory in our life, and in the lives of other.

Lenten Retreats in South Australia

.... Carmen Sylvester

The team from Adelaide with back up from Pat Kelly feel especially blessed to have been given the privilege of presenting Formation of Disciples in the northern suburb of Modbury and New Life in southern suburb of Noarlunga both offered as Lenten retreats.

With a new format of one weekend and four evening sessions the Formation of Disciples returned favorable evaluations. It was a mixture of joy and sadness to come to the end of our proposed two year period of Formation in Modbury.

With only one weekend in between the two courses it was to say the least a mad rush to finish preparation for the first retreat ever presented at Noarlunga. With words like awesome, moving, productive,

excellent, healing, informative, enriching from both retreats, and even with all the things going wrong in the background the Holy Spirit did his bit perfectly.

The dynamics moved people into a deeper participation and appreciation of the message being presented.

Continued P.7



Photo: Formation of Disciples course, John XXIII Modbury S.A.

ADELAIDE ROARED by Carmen Sylvester

March 21st 2009 the Clipsal 500 roared around the streets of Adelaide and the Holy Spirit roared into the Faith On Fire Seminar with our Guest Speaker Fr Peter Dunn, himself obviously under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Forty-Five people attended our first Faith on Fire seminar for 2009. No one left there disappointed as we heard inspired teachings on the power of the Cross and Resurrection. Not just the suffering of Jesus but the power behind our own suffering and the hope we have of our resurrection.

Here is a condensed extract from just one of Fr Peter's teaching.

"Through the teaching authority of the Church we can speak about an incredible God who would love us in this way to the point where from death and suffering would come life. That is not the human experience, and this is why God's revelation of himself is so different and why generation after generation had a difficult time with God because God always turns things upside down.

The Church clearly teaches that this person Jesus who died on the Cross was God himself. It was actually God who became a part of his creation not just as an act of humility but as an act of perfect love.

For us the challenge is that Jesus said that if we want to love we have to love like he did. To the point of picking up our cross and follow him down the path of death. This means we have to empty ourselves of our own egos. Difficult to do. For a person with a deep faith the cross is about doing what Jesus did, that is emptying

ourselves for another. That is what marriage is about and that is why Catholic understanding of marriage is not popular because marriage for a lot of people is about doing your own thing. But that is not what love is. Love is about total self giving in all of its aspects, all of the time. That is what God did and that is why Jesus is important not only as a teacher but also as a model. We've got to model Jesus Christ in our own lives. We need to model Jesus to our children and grand children. Teaching our kids by this incredible example of Love.

No greater love has one person for another than to lay down his life for that other person is what Jesus said. We can give our life to each other when we commit ourselves to each other, whether as a married person, a single person or whether you are a priest or religious. It is

all about love, always about love.

The way that I can love God is to be able to find where I am in my life at this moment and fulfill that life that I am living. We have all exactly the same way of doing it, that is by dying for another. Not comprehensible by most people but that is what the cross is all about. That is why we celebrate Good Friday because it is an act of love.

So as we think of this extraordinary moment of the Cross let us see it as something that has happened in our lives. It may not be good. It may be pretty hideous. It may be a loss of a loved one, an illness that is hard to come to terms with, a spouse that does not love you as he/she should, at times you may find yourself rejected by your own children, misjudged, misunderstood, mistreated. All of that, that is the Cross. That is precisely why God took on human nature to let us know that this God who created us knows how we feel, not because he is God only but because in his human nature which he adopted he experienced it all. That is why God is so extraordinary.

As Christians we have got the ability to bring our sufferings and pain to bear fruit of perfect love. We can enter into the salvation of Jesus Christ by offering our life as he has done on the Cross. Don't underestimate yourself don't underestimate the power of Faith and the power of love because if you unite that with death on the Cross then you are extending the power of Jesus to the world through your love. Believe it or not but that is a fact."

A memorable day indeed, and many thanks to Fr Dunn and to the team for their hard work.



The Vestment Fr. Peter Dunn is wearing was made for him by a woman in his Parish who had a vision of our lady of Guadalupe before she had even seen a picture of it or heard of her.

SAUL SAUL PAUL PAUL

.... By Therese Hummel, Sale Diocese.

As a graduate of the School of Evangelisation, I have a journey to share with all my friends of S.O.E. I have completed many courses over the years and the old saying of 'When one door closes another one opens' has been quite apt.'

Some of the wonderful God given opportunities that I have been and are still involved in are: Reader, Eucharistic Minister, Catholics Returning Home, Cells of Evangelisation, Charismatic Prayer Groups, Choirs – sometimes solo singing, Children's Music Ministry, The Melbourne Passion Play, Prayer support for the "Call of Guadalupe" and most recently "Saul Saul Paul Paul".

For many years now my husband Ed has been involved in the Melbourne Passion Play and it was through this that my husband got our son Jason involved as a small child. Eventually I also got involved as a chorus singer and totally enjoyed it.

After the Passion Play had finished I was asked again would I like to take part in a new play called "Saul Saul Paul Paul." This time I said Yes and so Jason and I sang and acted in this incredible play, which was directed by David Lemewu, produced by Geraldine Lee, playwright is John Lee and the Musical Director is Peter Foster.

The first day I went with Jason for rehearsal I felt very strange and not to eager to expand my horizons. I felt very self conscious and didn't believe in myself a great deal. Through working with David and Geraldine, they made me feel very

welcome and genuinely accepted me for who I am.

I worked closely with David, helping in the Office with typing, keeping a Rehearsal Roll. There were always times of joyful laughter. He helped me to get my actions right and Peter worked with me with the singing, my timing was never that great, but both David and Peter persevered with me. I would often think that I just couldn't do it. David was always positive and never negative.

Before every rehearsal and at the end of each rehearsal we all got together and prayed. David used to say always that the family that prays together stay together.

Time was getting closer, it just didn't seem to be gelling, often there were people away which made practice hard, but still we persevered.

Then there was more fun, we started to have dress rehearsals and timings, how much time between scenes and was there enough time for people to change from one garment to the next. Tensions were growing and yet through it all David remained cool, calm and collected, he knew what to do every step of the way. Before we knew what was happening it was time for the major dress rehearsals at the theatre. The count down was on, excitement and frustration rolled into one, our Musical Director hopping around like a mad rabbit, Geraldine with so many things on her mind, is this going to be done or not etc. Back drops needed to be done, Ed pitched in and helped John Lee with the painting, Saturday was

fast approaching and not everything was completed, stress levels soared but still we kept positive.

My nerves were building, first night jitters, David was pumping himself, he came and sat next to me, it was like we new each others hearts and the Holy Spirit guided me to make the sign of the cross on his forehead and say a little prayer for him and immediately I knew the presence of the Holy Spirit was there and I was more calm myself. The Play started in front of a Full House.

The last show was a performance to remember with audience participation. The whole show was full of lively music, artistic dancing and a wonderful story about the conversion of Saul to St. Paul. What more can I say other than it was fantastic. There were many friendships made. When the curtains closed we all gathered around David Lemewu and gave him a huge massive hug from all the cast .

David is now in Canberra studying to be a Priest with the (Missionary of God's Love). We miss you and love you. Go David you are going to make an awesome Priest.

I thank God for giving me this wonderful opportunity of singing and acting with the best. May God bless everyone in the cast and all the crew. It was truly a wonderful experience.

Editors Note: When you step out with the Lord and say "YES" to the work of evangelization you never know where it will lead and what gifts the Lord will bring forth in you life and the life of your family.

Lenten Retreats in South Australia continued p.5

The twelve who came to receive New Life at Noarlunga welcomed us into their Parish with open arms. The Parish priest Fr Gauci has been guest speaker at our Faith on Fire Seminar and members from the Antioch group have been regular presenters at Celebrate Emmanuel, our yearly Christmas outreach.

Once again we felt that the signs and wonders we prayed for came to fruition. Tears of joy at the New Life received brought us to our knees in thanksgiving to the Holy Spirit. The

Spiritual maturity was varied among this group and yet God can still work miracles into everyone's lives. It never ceases to amaze me that God in his incredible wisdom can throw us into a frenzy of unpredictability to keep us always aware that this work is not ours but that of his Holy Spirit.

The openness of the participants and willingness to share openly about their lives, their struggles and especially God's goodness and mercy in their lives was refreshing and revitalizing.



Our Parish representatives Frank and Pat Austin see the New Life as a wonderful tool of formation in their Parish and decided right there and then that the Parish will host another New Life in late July or early August. We pray that one of the great suggestions in the evaluations of putting on this New Life for a state wide youth groups formation weekend will come to fruition. Blessings of Easter to all.

SECRET of PAUL - Mini Retreat

... Jane Wiedersehn, Wollongong



On the Friday night and all day Saturday 13th & 14th of February, the Wollongong School of Evangelisation (WSOE) presented a mini retreat of 'The Secret of Paul' course to the participants of St. Paul's Parish Albion Park in Wollongong. The course was attended by approximately 40 eager participants of mixed age groups.

The retreat was a great success as the following testimony showed: "I now have been inspired to read the Scriptures and am now appreciating and starting to understand them."

This was further supported by many more inspiring testimonies,

showing how the course empowered others through the Holy Spirit, to grow in their faith and closer to Jesus.

The course was powerfully presented by Pat Kelly and Adrian Commadeur who led us into the times and life of St. Paul, his character, attitudes and the strategies of kerygmatic evangelisation.

Parish priest Fr. David Catterall who has been tirelessly supporting the Pauline year and keeping the spirit of the World Youth Day alive through various teachings and parish activities was very keen to have the course presented as a prelude to the pilgrimage he is leading to the Holy Land, following the mission-

ary route of St. Paul. Fr. David was very happy with the response of his group and is eager for WSOE to hold more courses in the future.

This was also a rewarding and joyful time for the WSOE team as it showed some progress and signs of new possibilities for us to bring the good news, through 'The Schools' to God's people, especially those in Wollongong.

St. Paul was a strong and remarkable evangelist. We ask him to pray and intercede for us, the Schools in Australia and worldwide so we can do God's work and bring more people to know, love and serve His Kingdom.

FORMATION OF (YOUNG & OLD) DISCIPLES

... By Emil Perosh

The "Formation of Disciples" course was held as part of our Lenten Program at St John's Park. Our community is of Croatian background, where English is not the first language. The teaching techniques of the School are simple, graphic, and dynamic, yet at the same time extremely profound, allowing for the spiritual development of each person from within. One thing I have seen from the people attending these courses has been the development of a spiritual maturity. That is a confidence and understanding of their faith with a deep connection with our Lord.

Jesus spent most of his time with his disciples, giving them an example on how to develop their relationships, with God, each other, with themselves, and towards material things, and the attitudes to have, as a disciple. Hence this course reflected that. The teachings were all delivered professionally, dynamically and effectively, and each topic seemed to touch somebody.

What touched me the most were the recurring themes and the importance of togetherness and friendship, whilst a popular topic was the relationship with oneself (more than one tear was shed). Most dynamics used

were done in the spirit of fun, for example in one of the dynamics we got to play with some clay, and build our "inspired masterpieces!", there was a lot of laughter and fun, but when reflecting on the exercise, one had to ask the question: Does my relationship and attitude allow me to be moulded by God? Simple exercise, yet profound, a mental picture I can draw on in the future.

On the Sundays we had a parallel program for the children, the best way I can describe the success of this program is to say, several of the children gave up their soccer commitments to come to the course. Surprisingly! A genuine excitement to be at the course.

To conclude, the Sydney School of Evangelisation is truly a gift from our Lord, and I cannot emphasise enough the positive impact it has had on our lives. Thank You.



A NEW ENCOUNTER WITH THE RISEN JESUS through the 'Secret of Paul' Course.

"I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me; It is no longer I who live but it is Christ who lives in me." - Gal 2:20

The 'Secret of Paul' Course was widely advertised through the Deaneries in the Parramatta Diocese. Being the Year of St Paul and as directed by Pope Benedict XVI there was a great interest to reflect and discover Paul in a new way.

At Our Lady of the Rosary Parish, St Marys, we walked the pathway of St Paul. The presenters,

Lucy & Eddie Grasso and Fr Bob Bossini, SDB, PP, conducted the 'Secret of Paul' course as a six-week Lenten Program with morning and evening sessions repeated. Fifty interested participants, some from neighbouring parishes, gathered each week eagerly to follow the pastoral journey of Paul in the image he himself has chosen to describe his vocation, his life, his ministry and even his death: THE RACE IN THE STADIUM OF HIS LIFE.

The 'Secret of Paul' is the ideal course to discover so much about

Paul, his background, his trainers and how he was equipped to accomplish the Mission Jesus assigned to him to be the Apostle to the Gentiles after his conversion on the way to Damascus. One of the participants commented: *"I have a better understanding of the life of St Paul and how a touch from Jesus completely changed his life."* This course reveals the secret of pastoral fruitfulness and effectiveness in the Letters that Paul wrote, how he trained and enabled others to continue carrying the lit torch, so that the light of the true Gospel would

reach the ends of the earth.

*"What you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others also."
2 Tim 2:2*

Eddie Grasso,
Sydney S.O.E.



'NEW LIFE' for CHILDREN - Wallsend parish

.... By Deidre Herring

Following a request from Fr Tony Brady from Wallsend-Shortland parish (Newcastle Diocese) for a 'New Life' course for children we revisited the draft of this course that had been given for the Croatia community at St John's Park in 2007. Taking the feedback from the children there, the course was adjusted with more involvement of the children and less 'sitting' activities.

Lucy and Eddie Grasso and I set out very early on the Saturday morning to present the new and improved version. We were under the disadvantage of going to an unknown venue which presented a few challenges but with the help of the Holy Spirit we managed to overcome these. The course was given over a weekend in November 2008 and 12 children attended between the ages of 3 and 12.

The children were very receptive and joined in the activities wholeheartedly. Their responses showed a real knowledge of their faith and an interest to learn more. We looked at the six main kerygmatic themes: God's love, Man's fall from grace, Salvation, Conversion, Community



and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. From the children's point of view the sections that they enjoyed the most were:

- The Prodigal son dramatisation where they truly realised the gravity of the son's actions and the great forgiveness of the father.
- The salvation of Jesus death where they used a large cardboard cross as the bridge from sin to grace.
- The conversion game where they had to move forward or backward depending on choices made – from this they acknowledged that they need to renew their conversion to God every time they turn away.
- The time spent in front of the blessed sacrament.

This group were so aware of their faith and so receptive of the course that they were baptised in the Spirit and one boy spontaneously asked could he kneel before the tabernacle to thank Jesus and several others followed his example.

The course had its difficulties, but on the whole it was great with the children asking us to come back.

S.O.E. Report, Cape Town, South Africa

... By Deacon Basil Sampson

We had the Initial School of Evangelisation conducted by Joe O'Callaghan of the Irish SOE during July 2006. Thirty-two people attended the course which lasted twelve days. It was a very intense course and very informative.

After a few hiccups and teething problems we eventually had the launch of our Cape Town S.O.E. on 31st May 2007. Archbishop Lawrence Henry celebrated Holy Mass in St Mary's Cathedral. The Archbishop delivered an inspiring and encouraging homily to the congregation. Nine other priests concelebrated, assisted by two deacons. In the congregation were two deacons, five religious sisters, representatives from various parishes, family members and liturgical dancers from four parishes.

The SOE Team, in their freeze portrayed Gospel values

of caring for those who were sick, impoverished and imprisoned. On this cold, wintry night the liturgical dancers brought warmth to our souls, especially at the end, to the tune of 'Rejoice in the Lord always' accompanied by vibrant singing. Archbishop Henry thanked the Team for their initiative in starting the School, for choosing the patronage of Our Lady of the Visitation and expressed the hope that the Church in Cape Town would be supportive

and ready to make use of the programmes offered.

The Mass was followed by a reception at the Chancery Atrium. More information about the S.O.E. and the courses was provided while the guests enjoyed a delectable finger supper.

The rest of 2007 was utilized to visit several parishes where we made presentations to each. We were invited to do a presentation to the College of Deans and we also work shopped the material we brought back from Australia. Replies from parishes started trickling in and we started our first New Life course in February 2008. We have not looked back. The Lord has really opened doors for us over the last year, so much so that we have a courses booked in several parishes up to November of this year. Praise God!



SOLDIERS FOR GOD – GIDEON'S ARMY

"Yahweh then said to Gideon, With the three hundred who lapped the water, I shall rescue you." Judges 7:7

Would you consider becoming a new member of the Gideon's Army appeal? \$100 annual subscription. New soldiers urgently needed!

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Thank you again to all those who financially support the work of the School through Gideon's Army. I repeat this in every issue of the Witness and I cannot repeat it enough, after all I know how much we depend on your generous giving.

For those who are members please check your cheque book to see if there is

an entry for 2009, for those who are not members please consider enlisting in Gideon's Army. Remember almsgiving is part and parcel of being a disciple, giving blesses us because it make us more dependant on the Lord. Remember every time we give we build up treasure in Heaven which is far more secure than treasure on Earth.



Pat Kelly

SCHOOL OF EVANGELISATION PROGRAM 2009

| DATE | COURSE | LOCATION | CONTACT |
|--|-----------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Apr 23 rd & 30 th May 7, 14, 21, & 28 th | Secret of Paul | Wagga Wagga N.S.W. | Kay, 02 6933 1444 |
| April 25 th —26 th | Prayer—John the Baptist | Brisbane, Qld. | Elmer, 07 3345 8430 |
| May 22 nd —23 rd | New Life | Bennettswood, Vic. | Adrian, 03 9337 2051 |
| June 12 th —13 th | Prayer | Bennettswood, Vic. | Adrian, 03 9337 2051 |
| June 27 th —28 th | New Life | Numurkah, Vic. | Gerri, 02 6056 2442 |
| July 10 th —11 th | John the Baptist | Bennettswood, Vic. | Adrian, 03 9337 2051 |
| August 7 th —8 th | Good News | Bennettswood, Vic. | Adrian, 03 9337 2051 |
| September 4 th —5 th | Share Your Faith | Bennettswood, Vic. | Adrian, 03 9337 2051 |
| October 2 nd —4 th | 'Parish on Fire' Conference | Bennettswood, Vic. | Adrian, 03 9337 2051 |
| October 2 nd —3 rd | Prayer | Traralgon, Vic. | Cathy, 03 5174 3001 |
| November 6 th —7 th | John the Baptist | Traralgon, Vic. | Cathy, 03 5174 3001 |
| December 4 th —5 th | Good News | Traralgon, Vic. | Cathy, 03 5174 3001 |

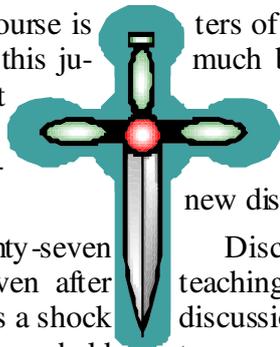
The Pymble Parish School of Evangelisation By Jill Seymour.

The Secret of Paul course is a great way to celebrate this jubilee year dedicated to St Paul. We presented it over five weekday evenings during Lent.

We started with twenty-seven participants and lost seven after the first night, which was a shock – but thereafter the numbers held steady.

Paul came alive for us during the unfolding of the course, presenters and participants alike – what an inspiration he is! We encouraged everyone to read the Acts of the Apostles during the five weeks, a couple of chapters every day, and we all came to appreciate the enthusiasm, the difficulties and the active motivation of the Holy Spirit in those early years of our church. One of the participants became so enthused that he found, and shared with us, a Jerusalem Bible website which gave further insight.

I have started reading the let-



ters of St Paul. I know him so much better now and read his letters as though he is writing to me in my community, which is a new discovery.

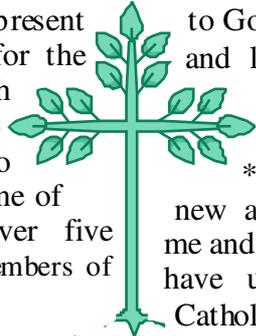
Discovering Paul in the teachings, we found that in the discussion groups, we were able to concentrate on how we could become like Paul – how do we evangelise?

.....
We tried something different in New Life this time. We have found that very few parishioners around the forty year old age group attend our courses. We decided to design and present New Life specifically for the mothers of our two parish schools - to restrict the participants to ten - to hold it in the home of one of our team members over five weekday mornings. (Members of the team were all women)

Four days to go and we only

had two participants! Lauren, the daughter of the house, stepped into the breach to look after toddlers and the Lord brought us nine mothers who opened their hearts to all the Lord blessings. This was a beautiful, loving, spiritual, growing time for all of us. We have two team members trained in the healing ministry who were able to give additional ministry, where needed, at the end of each session.

Comments:
* "I approach life in a different way now. I have spent many hours thinking and reflecting."
* "My relationship feels closer to God. It is easier to 'plug in' and listen to the Holy Spirit. There has been a flow on to my children also."
* "Every week something new and different would move me and grab my attention. I feel I have understood things in the Catholic faith I never knew before." **Praise God!**



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THE WITNESS

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'Parish on Fire' Conference

2nd—4th October 2009

**St Scholastica's Parish
Bennettswood, Vic.**

Three Days of Formation, Outreach, Testimony, Prayer.

Enquiries: Adrian Commadeur, 03 9337 2051

Melbourne S.O.E. REUNION & CELEBRATION

**Saturday 30th May 2009 from 12.30 to 3.30 pm (free lunch)
New C.C.R. Centre Assembly Hall, 101 Holden St, Nth Fitzroy
(Enter Dean Street, plenty of parking)**

You are invited :

- To celebrate 15 Years of the School in Melbourne.
- To look forward to renewed Parish Evangelisation Activities
- To hear a report on the State of the Church in Melbourne to 2026

Bookings for lunch essential by 20th May to Adrian 93372051 or
acommade@bigpond.net.au

Jesus, the Church, the School, all need you. Please come.