

# Parish Update

Franciscan  
Parish  
Committee

## September 2005

### Friar Bill Short ofm Working in Franciscan Ministries

Bill Short ofm from Calafornia, USA spoke to members of the Franciscan Parish Committee on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> August 2005. Bill spoke (or rather held a conversation) around the topic of what it is that the friars need to make explicit to those who work in Franciscan ministries in terms of the culture or style that distinguishes Franciscans.

He nominated five touchstones which distinguish Franciscans:

1. Focus on the person over a concern with the product
2. Generosity with gifts over a desire for ownership of earnings
3. Washing of feet over a need for the reserved seats
4. 'Cortesia' to people 'along the way'
5. Joy, cheerfulness, smiling countenance.

In focussing on the person there is an affectionate care of the person. It is the person who counts. In practice the tension then translates into finite resources against the infinite need of pastoral growth.

The gifts that each of us has been given are God given. Relationships are formed based on fundamental equality between the friars and secular Franciscans.

In the washing of feet lies the full revelation of what it means to be the 'image of God'.

Cortesia translates roughly as being courtly. It is more than good manners. It is about being noble to those who would normally not see this. An image of cortesia is when St Francis kissed the leper. Cortesia lies in those unexpected moments of generosity.

St Francis epitomises perfect joy. How often have you heard "you have to laugh"? When this joy is seen as a spiritual force it drives away doubt and despair. It comes from hope and allows us to surrender to God's plan.



Friar Bill Short ofm

At the basic level this means seeing God in the ordinary and marvelling at the surprise of how far beneath us that God is.

#### **Parishes in the care of the Franciscan Province of the Holy Spirit:**

St Anthony, Deeragun, Townsville

St Therese and St Anthony, Kedron, Brisbane

St Charles Borromeo and Mary Immaculate, Waverley, Sydney

St Francis of Assisi, Paddington, Sydney

St Joseph, Edgecliff, Sydney

St Francis Xavier, Box Hill, Melbourne

St Clare, Box Hill North, Melbourne

Catholic Parish of West Tamar, Launceston, Tasmania

St Anthony, Mangere Bridge, Auckland

St Therese, Mangere East, Auckland

St Mary of the Angels, Singapore



## National Franciscan Parish Gathering 2006

The National Gathering for Staff from Franciscan Parishes, including Parish Priests, Assistant Priests, Pastoral Associates, Parish Secretaries, Chairpersons of Parish Pastoral Councils and Principals of Parish Primary Schools will take place from Thursday evening 10 August until mid day Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> August 2006 at Chevalier Conference Centre, 1 Roma Avenue, Kensington NSW.

Please mark your diaries now so that you will be free to participate in and contribute to the future of Franciscan parishes.

We especially thank those who sent in suggestions and ideas for topics as well as possible guest speakers. The Committee will hold a further meeting on 26 September 2005 to continue the planning process.

## Managing Ministry in Challenging Times

Recently I had the opportunity to attend Christian Management Australia's annual conference for leaders and managers of Christian organisations. It

was a very interesting conference. The thing that struck me was the differentiation that was made between management and pastoral ministry. As Parish Priests we have managed parishes and ministered to people but as things are getting more complex I see the wisdom of separating them. Good management is important for maximizing ministry effectiveness and with our numbers going down I see it as a priority.

We are going through rapid changes with information technology and global economy, which is affecting our communities. People are more mobile, moving often because of work, busy with career and lifestyle, which affects commitment in many areas of life especially with family and church. In the past we depended on volunteers but many organizations are now suffering because lack of volunteer support. It is necessary for us to approach change with the hope of facilitating positive outcome.

The conference has challenged me to look beyond our present structures. We need to work together as a team. It is vital that our parishioners with experience and wisdom have a bigger say in the way we manage our churches. As a leader my challenge is make sure that we develop a culture where our values, which are Christian and Franciscan in essence, are articulated effectively.

*Anthoni Selvaraj ofm*

*(Parish Priest, Box Hill and Box Hill North, Victoria)*





## Let's Celebrate Marriage

At St Francis Xavier's and St Clare's in Box Hill, we set aside the month of July to celebrate marriage. The very cold wintry snap certainly needed an injection of warmth. Our celebrations were a great success, due to the involvement and enthusiasm of so many parishioners.



The purpose of the celebration was to thank God for the blessings of marriage and family life to celebrate long-term commitment to remember and renew marriage promises to pray with those who are widowed and separated to offer challenge and stimulation to the faithful couples who rarely have/take time to evaluate and nurture their relationships.

Marriage brings many blessings to our parish. In my work in the parish, I am deeply touched by the love and care I see in our senior couples who nurse one another through illness, infirmity and old age, drive to innumerable medical appointments and wait and wait patiently, spend large parts of each day at Nursing Homes, attending to their partner's every need, learn new skills like washing and cooking and cleaning as their partner becomes less able to cope (here especially, the men who take on these roles inspire me with their dedication and their pride in their new achievements). Watching this type of devotion is a marvellous witness to marriage.

The 'middle age' group in the parish – often our faithful ministers, volunteers for everything, also play an important

part in parish life, and in the community in general. They have a wisdom to impart after years of give and take, and the important role of showing others how to be married. They are concrete evidence that marriage is still relevant and attractive in today's world. Their love and support of their families, through all of life's ups and downs gives encouragement to those around them.

The couples from the school and the playgroup, and those taking part in the Baptism program also are encouraging signs to the rest of our community, as they grow in faith, in love, in parental skills, in a generosity of spirit.

Those coming to our church to be married, taking part in the FOCCUS program for engaged couples, also bring a freshness and a great sense of hope to those of us lucky enough to spend time with them.

So, we had much to celebrate.

Our first formal activity was afternoon tea for those married 40 years and more.

A combined total of almost 900 years of faithfulness and love came together to enjoy one another's company, a short lesson and a few jokes from Fr Ben, and a fine afternoon tea.

On a chilly Friday night, 12 couples (250+ years of marriage) took part in a



## Province of the Holy Spirit Parish Committee

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workshop that covered topics like communication, listening, affirmation, romance, making time for one another. This was not a solemn or hard work session – there was a lot of laughing, and a very warm spirit of respect for and enjoyment of married life. The supper was a luscious conclusion to a very interesting night.

The 6 pm Mass on July 23 focused especially on commitment and the treasure we have in marriage. The gospel for the day fitted in perfectly: about the man who finds a treasure in a field, hides it, and then sells everything he owns to buy the field – a little (or a lot) about what couples do to make their marriages successful. During Mass, couples renewed their wedding vows and celebrated the joy of their relationships.

The following Sunday was earmarked to pray for those in the parish who are widowed and separated – a growing number in our community. It was more difficult to find appropriate ways to celebrate this aspect of married life, but an emphasis on the joys that had been part of earlier relationships, and thanksgiving for the life lessons, for the children and families, for precious memories, became the focal point. A small group celebrated with morning tea after this Mass.

In the parish newsletter, we included a list of "Good Marriage Reads" as a

challenge to all couples to remember that marriage isn't just living and survival, that it requires hard work, that there are lots of good and precious aspects to marriage, and that there are places to go for help and support in making relationships work.

A foolhardy Pastoral Associate hopes that in the future we will focus on other groups in our community for our prayers, reflections and activities.

Let's Celebrate

- our singles (unclaimed treasures, they call themselves)
- ministry/volunteers
- youth
- our school
- vocation/commitment
- cultural diversity
- families
- an unending list!!

*Liz Clark*

*Pastoral Associate, Box Hill*

## Pilgrimage to Assisi and Franciscan Holy Places

This is to alert you to the fact that a committee has been formed to explore the possibility of a Pilgrimage to Assisi and Franciscan Holy Places for parishioners and school communities from Franciscan parishes. Further information will be distributed when available.