

Gatherings

Vol. 21, No. 4

A publication of the Department for Small Christian Communities, Archdiocese of Hartford, Connecticut

Raskob Supports Small Communities

With the encouragement of Archbishop Mansell and some facilitating assistance from the Marianist Province of the United States, the department sought and has received a three-year \$30,000 grant from the Raskob Foundation for Catholic Activities. One of the major U.S. Catholic philanthropic foundations, Raskob has awarded this grant to support the work of small church community development in the parishes of the archdiocese. The Marianist endorsement also brings with it an additional \$3,000 to support the proposal's goals.

Speaking of their funding of our proposal, Raskob Foundation member, Kerry Robinson, said recently, "The small Christian community apostolate of the Archdiocese of Hartford has a wonderful reputation and is among the most promising and inspiring of its kind in the nation." Reflecting on her own involvement with small communities, Ms. Robinson went on to comment that "[h]aving experienced firsthand the value of belonging to a small church community [through Saint Thomas More Chapel at Yale], I can attest to their importance. It is enormously beneficial to living out an informed and mature faith in the world, being other-centered in one's focus, developing an intimate relationship with God and living a life of gratitude and generosity."



Archbishop Mansell, Raskob Foundation member, Kerry Robinson and Bro. Bob Moriarty, S.M. talk about Raskob's support for small Christian communities.

The grant will enable us to provide enhanced direct pastoral services here in the archdiocese (goal one) and also to promote the wider distribution of **Quest**, our lectionary-based reflection booklet to parishes and small communities around the country (goal two).

Parish core teams, priest networking, pastoral facilitator formation and general small church community enrichment programming will be the beneficiaries of this grant. We look forward to being able to invite a number of small church community pastoral specialists from around the country to spend some time with us here in the archdiocese.

A portion of this grant will also be used to bring **Quest** to a wider audience. Presently, **Quest** reaches close to

20,000 people. Word of mouth promotion alone has accounted for this. We have never had the kind of resources needed to be able to do advertising.

People can't take advantage of **Quest** if they don't know about it. And clearly, those who do have found it to be a very useful support for small communities. Our first aim, then, is to support and promote small church community development in the parishes of our nation by making **Quest** more available.

Of course, the happy additional result of a wider circulation of **Quest** will be the generation of additional resources that will allow us to provide yet further support for direct pastoral services to parishes and small communities here in the archdiocese. **G**

Small Community Happenings. . .

Around the Archdiocese, the Nation, the World

Global SCC Website

Fr. Joseph Healey has arranged to take over the management of a heretofore national small Christian communities website sponsored by RE-NEW. The new website will continue to feature all the North American components of the previous site, but will now be expanded to include SCC events and materials from every continent. Now renamed: Small Christian Communities: Global Collaborative Website, it will continue to be reached at www.smallchristiancommunities.org.

Fall Alliance Meeting

The fall meeting of Alliance parish core teams will take place on Saturday, October 13. It will be hosted by the core team at Assumption (Manchester).

Quest Support for Portland

In response to the request of the Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon, the spring '08 edition of **Quest** will be written with a special attention to lift up themes of reconciliation and healing in the Sunday scriptures for the weeks covered by the spring booklet.

Gatherings is a periodic newsletter published by the Pastoral Department for Small Christian Communities of the Archdiocese of Hartford.

Comments and/or suggestions for articles can be sent to:

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If you would like to receive an electronic version of **Gatherings**, please e-mail your request to info@sccquest.org.



Spring 2008 **Quest** is already being prepared. Team members include from left to right in the back row: Walter Twachtman (St. Dunstan, Glastonbury), Fr. Joe Donnelly (Sacred Heart, Southbury), Bill Walsh (St. Catherine, W. Simsbury), Bob Moriarty, S.M., Claire Dalidowitz (St. Paul, Kensington); in the front row: Sharon Krause (St. James, Manchester), Jeanie Graustein (Office of Urban Affairs), Jean Degan (St. Joseph, Bristol) and Elissa Rinere, C.P.(Pastoral Planning Office, Norwich).

Quest en Español

For the first time, a limited edition of **Quest** in Spanish will be produced for the Spring '08 season. Over the years we have received regular inquiries and requests about the availability of **Quest** in Spanish. If the need is there, we will continue to produce the booklet in Spanish. To guarantee the availability of the booklets for Spring, orders should be placed by November 15, 2007.

Called to Be Church Workshop

Fr. Art Baranowski returns to Hartford on September 27-29 to facilitate a workshop to consolidate basic core team development for St. Bartholomew (Manchester), St. Mary (Unionville) and St. Maria Goretti (Wolcott). Core teams that have previously done the workshop are welcome to send folks for a booster shot as needed.



Members of the department's Advisory Board gathered for a summertime overnight retreat at the newly renovated Immaculata Retreat House in Willimantic to reflect on our mission and work. From left to right: Jim Birmingham (St. Mark, West Hartford), Fr. Tom Sas (St. Peter Claver, West Hartford), Susan Trappe (Sacred Heart, Suffield), Bob Moriarty, S.M., Fr. Jim Gregory (St. Mary Magdalen, Oakville). Not pictured: Kelly Knotts (St. Bridget, Manchester), Fr. Ron May (St. Patrick, Collinsville), Larry O'Neal (St. Thomas, Southington) and Deacon Bob Pallotti (Office of the Diaconate).

AsIPA: The Church in Asia and Small Church Communities

by Robert K. Moriarty, S.M.

*(Editor's Note: In 2006, Englishman, Fr. Gerry Proctor, recently a member of the Latin American Marins Team for resourcing basic ecclesial communities, participated in the fourth international assembly of AsIPA, Asian Integral Pastoral Approach. This is the name given to the episcopal led continent-wide effort to establish SCCs/BECs throughout the church in Asia. Following the conference, Proctor prepared a summary and reflections on the conference and his visit to many small Christian communities in various parts of India. What follows is a combination of excerpts and summaries of that portion of his report that focuses on the AsIPA assembly itself. **Gatherings** readers will also note the photograph that accompanies this piece. While not directly related to this article, it features the five South Korean participants who attended the 2007 National Joint Convocation on Small Christian Communities in St. Paul this summer. They serve in various ways in AsIPA leadership in South Korea.)*

Under the theme, *SCCs/BECs: Toward a Church of Communion*, the fourth AsIPA international assembly brought together 277 delegates from 11 Asian countries and 5 European observers. They gathered at the Maria Rani Centre in Kerala in the Archdiocese of Trivandrum.

The Apostolic Nuncio to India, i.e., the pope's official representative to the country, Archbishop Pedro Lopez Quintana formally opened the conference with what Proctor describes as "a ringing endorsement of SCCs." He spoke of SCCs as the work of the Holy Spirit "inspiring ordinary Christians to return to the roots of their faith and find nourishment in the example of the early Christians." Acknowledging that the Basic Christian Communities "had their origins in the Latin American countries," the Nuncio suggested, that "it was only natural that the movement would find its echo in the hearts of the Asian people as well, for the two have very many similarities."

The archbishop noted the role of the poor in the origins of BCCs. "The

search for a response to these existential questions, especially from the cry of the poor, is what launched the Small Christian Communities in the first place in the 1960's." With the effects of globalization, he suggested, the situation is getting worse. "The Church cannot remain neutral here." For Quintana, small Christian communities represent "the positive, hope-filled protest of the poor against oppression and injustice of all sorts." They hold "immense potential for being catalysts for change in our Church and our society at large."

Bishop Thomas Dabre, chairman of the National Service Team for Small Christian Communities for the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India situated his reflections on small communities in the context of the theology of communion and John Paul II's own reflections on small communities. He drew attention to statements of support for small Christian communities from the Asian Bishops in general and the Indian bishops in particular. "Small Christian communities," he said, "effectively help to concretize and manifest the Church's nature as communion.... Thus, SCCs do offer space and opportunities to reflect the Trinitarian Communion which is the pattern of the Church." Proctor notes that Bishop Dabre's personal testimony as he closed his address was particularly moving. Said the bishop, "I have been personally associated with the Small Christian Communities for the last 16 years. I have seen how the many people who take SCCs seriously have found joy in their faith and have become active both in the



Participants from South Korea attending the National Joint Convocation on Small Christian Communities.

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AsIPA *(Continued from page 3)*

Church and society. As a result the Church too has become vibrant and revitalised. Personally, I have grown in my appreciation of the role of the laity in the Church because of my close association with the work for the promotion of the small communities."

Not wanting to intrude too much into Fr. Proctor's report, let me just observe how congruent his report of Bishop Dabre's reflections are with what I heard from him myself when we were together at the International Consultation on Small Christian Communities in Cochabamba, Bolivia in 1999. Bishop Dabre spoke then about his own walking about among the people to start roadside meetings that would lead to the development of small Christian communities.

In his remarks, the ordinary of the host archdiocese, Archbishop Soosa Pakiam "let it be known that he had... 'whole-heartedly accepted SCCs as our Archdiocesan Policy. With the introduction of SCCs, one can notice spectacular changes and gradual transformation in all walks of our ecclesial life'". Pakiam rehearsed some of the results of a survey done in 2003 by Bishop Bosco Penha, auxiliary of Mumbai (Bombay), himself a major, if not the major episcopal force behind SCC development in India. The survey indicated that 98 Indian dioceses have SCCs and that out of their total of 5539 parishes, 3349 parishes (64% of the total) have SCCs that are functioning well. Pakiam also observed that continuing qualitative development needs to keep pace with the quantitative increases.

At the inaugural Eucharist, the papal nuncio, Archbishop Lopez

Quintana had yet another opportunity to speak of small Christian communities. Proctor reports two particular excerpts from his homily: "The Christian Communities we are trying to build are simply the most local incarnation of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. In them the Church takes on flesh and blood in the life situations of people." It took him "a little by surprise," says Proctor, when the archbishop went on to say that "...the Small Christian Communities ...are not just another pious association, but affect the very structure of the Church, will affect our understanding of authority in the Church, and the sharing of this authority, our understanding of what it really means to be a 'participatory church.'"

In addition to presentations and national and regional sessions, reports Fr. Proctor, on one of the days, the host archdiocese had arranged for each of the participants to visit a parish where they could experience first hand the small church community in India. Proctor went to the coastal parish of St. Peter at Kannanthura. His extended description of this "wonderful experience" is unfortunately too long for this article. One piece of it must suffice.

"Lunch may well prove to be the meal I will never forget! It was a traditional Keralan feast, served on a banana leaf and consisting of over 20 different dishes/ingredients, all eaten with the fingers. It was unusual, spicy, challenging, but utterly delicious. Each element had to be eaten in the right order and we finished off with special food to aid the digestion. They had thought of everything! How I managed to stay awake and alert for the next round of meetings I

will never know! But we went straight to an encounter with SCC leaders, 95% of whom were women. It was very clear to us that the existence of SCCs in their community and their full integration into the structure of parish life had made an enormous contribution to the vitality and commitment that we found there. The personal witness of many of the women about how they had grown, matured and been empowered by the SCC process, was wonderful to hear."

The final part of this day, reports Proctor, was a visit to a neighborhood SCC. They gathered under some trees in a family's front garden. Following the Seven Step Bible Sharing method which originated in South Africa (Lumko), but used widely in AsIPA, it led those gathered to "a short, but interested discussion on what to do with the waste that the families were producing." Proctor observes that the entire community must have turned out to meet the foreign guests "because we had a most unusual turnout of men and youths."

Proctor concludes his report with some summary reflections. BECs, he writes, are really at their beginning in many countries, the Philippines being the Asian exception.... They have some advantages over Latin America: 1.) the on-going support of the hierarchy (which Latin America is struggling to maintain); 2.) the presence of the AsIPA Desk at the heart of the Asian bishop's official structures (FABC); 3.) an excellent team of resource persons many of whom are lay women; 4.) the good support of written materials in a variety of Asian languages

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The 2007 National Joint Convocation on Small Christian Communities: *A work very much still in progress*

by Robert K. Moriarty, S.M.

“Offered me a hopeful and exciting vision of the church...”; “Reaffirmed the vision and value of SCCs for the church...”; “Bolstered my energy to keep working in the church...”; “Enlightening and exhilarating”; “Unique, historic”; “Enriching, encouraging and affirming...”

These are but a few of the hundreds of overwhelmingly appreciative responses we have received to the recent National Joint Convocation on Small Christian Communities.

Participants from 25 states and 11 other countries from around the world (Australia, Brazil, Canada, Columbia, Holland, Kenya, Mexico, South Korea, Switzerland, Tanzania, and Uganda) gathered for the convocation at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul from August 9-12, 2007.

Hartford participants included Deacon Robert Pallotti, director of the Diaconate Office and chair of the

advisory board for the Pastoral Department for Small Christian Communities and Bro. Robert Moriarty, S.M., who both chaired the convocation planning team and served as co-moderator for the convocation. His partner in moderating was Estela Manancero, Home Mission Coordinator in the Hispanic/Latino Ministry of the Archdiocese of St. Paul-Minneapolis.

Prior to 2007, these convocations were sponsored by the three principal small Christian community organizations: the North American Forum for Small Christian Communities (NAFSCC), the National Alliance of Parishes Restructuring into Communities (NAPRC) and Small Christian Community Connection (SCCC),

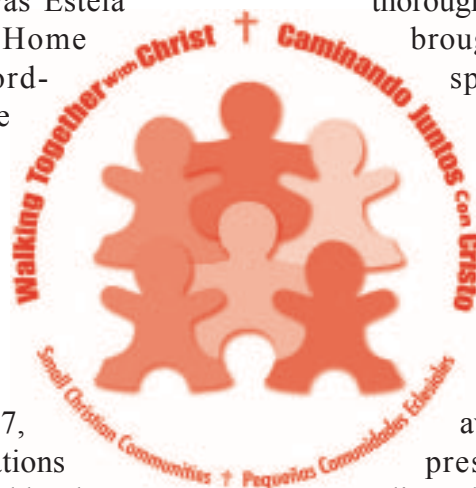
formerly known as Buena Vista. This year the Mexican American Cultural Center (MACC) and the Secretariat for Hispanic Affairs at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (SHA/USCCB) joined as sponsors. The happy result was a

thoroughly bilingual event that brought together English speakers and Spanish speakers under the guiding image: Walking Together with Christ – Caminando Juntos con Cristo.

Simultaneous translation was available for the plenary presentations and a bilingual speaker was present at each of the tables where both English and Spanish speakers were seated. Prayer services and Eucharist were also bilingual, but also included the participation of representatives of all the countries that were present. The convocation’s bilingual, indeed multicultural character, was acknowledged by many participants as a model of how to do things in the church in North America today.

The convocation was conducted as a process of practical theological reflection, i.e., a critical process that focuses on making connections between faith and life in response to a concrete question for consideration. The presenting question for the convocation was simply this: What must we do to deepen and promote small Christian communities in our church and for our world?

An adapted version of the



Plenary Session at National Joint Convocation on Small Christian Communities in the arena at the University of St. Thomas with Bro. Bob Moriarty, S.M. and Estela Manancero serving as co-moderators of the convocation.

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Convocation *(Continued from page 5)*

N.A.M.E. process provided the structure for the convocation: N – Name the experience of small Christian community, its opportunities and challenges; A – Analyze the situations of culture and church today in North America;



Convocation speakers, left to right: Fr. Ronald Rolheiser, O.M.I.; Elder Brian Rusche; Fr. Arthur Baranowski; Sister Katarina Schuth, O.S.F.; Fr. José Marins.

M – Make connections with the great Catholic

Tradition; E – Enact a process of identifying personal, communal action steps on the local, regional and national levels to deepen and promote small Christian communities in our church and for our world.

At each stage of the process the initial step involved participants first reflecting on and then speaking (in a twosome and then with their whole table) about their own experience. This was then followed by input from an invited pastoral specialist. The participants then resumed their table conversations on the theme of the particular step in the process under consideration.

Fr. Arthur Baranowski, a pioneer in small Christian community development in the U.S. church and a practicing pastor, spoke to the experience of small Christian community and the opportunities and challenges we face today in developing them. Brian Rusche, an elder in the Presbyterian Church,

executive director of the Joint Religious Legislative Coalition in Minnesota, reflected on the socio-cultural scene today. Sr. Katarina Schuth, O.S.F., a sociologist of religion and professor at the St. Paul Seminary School of Divinity addressed issues of

Fr. Jose Marins, one of the principal resource persons for basic ecclesial community development in Latin America extended the reflection on making connections to the Tradition by addressing the call to mission in big church and small church.

church and parish life today. Fr. Ronald Rolheiser, O.M.I., president of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio and well known spiritual writer and columnist reflected on the treasure of apostolic community as a resource for small Christian community development.

The convocation culminated on Sunday morning with participants personally and by table identifying proposed action steps aimed at the deepening and promoting of small communities in our church and for our world. A general hearing of these proposed action steps was held in

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The bi-lingual Fr. Bill Thaden from the Diocese of Cleveland (center) serves as an interpreter for one of the convocation table groups.

Convocation *(Continued from page 6)*

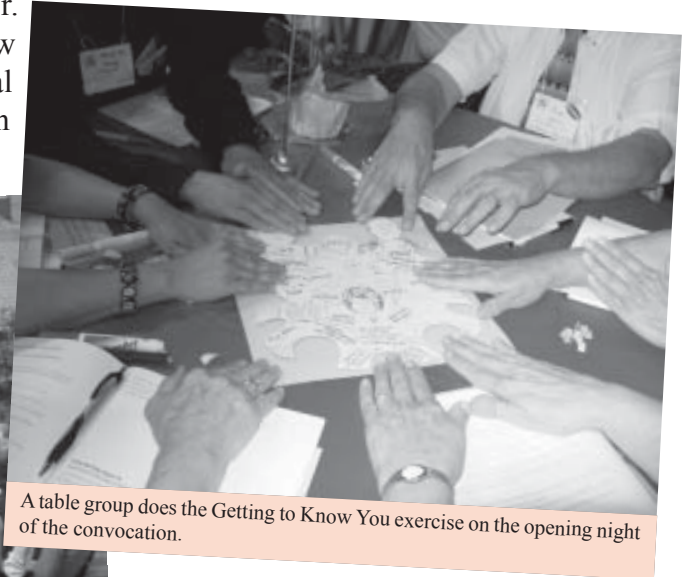
conjunction with the closing Eucharist. This great wealth of material will now be passed on to a follow-up conference that will sift and prioritize the proposals into a focused plan for action in the years immediately ahead. The sponsoring organizations will each name five people to participate in the follow up conference.

The **National Catholic Reporter** assigned a reporter to cover the convocation. Her initial news piece appeared in the August 31, 2007 edition of the paper. NCR plans to follow up with an additional 2,000 word article in the weeks ahead.

A DVD that will allow small communities in various parts of the country to replicate something of the convocation process is now being



Plenary session at the National Joint Convocation on Small Christian Communities.



A table group does the Getting to Know You exercise on the opening night of the convocation.

designed around the talks and other parts of the videotaped convocation. The action plan that will be developed at the follow up conference will be distributed to all the participants and published for general consideration. Stay tuned! **G**

AsIPA *(Continued from page 4)*

(mostly from Lumko); 5.) the example of the Philippine experience as encouragement and incentive to continue through difficult times; 6.) the presence of the great world religions giving a very different context for the growth of BECs and challenging them to develop a variant model or way of being BEC; 7.) the actual reality of the Catholic Church being an insignificant minority, and so, not needing to defend ancient inherited colonial structures, along with the potential humility and lack of political power, is an advantage in their pressing ahead with a totally new way of doing Church.

The disadvantages Proctor ob-

serves are related to their advantages. Being in a context of profound spirituality established by the other faiths, the BECs easily become content with being spiritual entities within the parish leaving the present structures intact and not reaching for the full potential of this new way of being Church. The Lumko methodology and materials are useful, Proctor notes, but are also limiting. There are other experiences and insights that could help on this journey of BECs.

Proctor concludes: "I also sensed that we have a spirituality that is quite different from that of the Asian religions on account both of the sig-

nificance of the incarnation and the extraordinary event of salvation (the active on-going presence of the Risen and Crucified Lord) which reveals the Trinitarian nature of God, characterised in essence by relationship. I constantly felt that we had at our disposal a real wealth of theological reflection that could lead to a renewed praxis within BECs/SCCs, focusing more on the quality of our relationships as our unique Christian spirituality, and not just accepting the received wisdom of the other faiths as good enough for us too. There is ample scope for Asian theologians to write and develop thinking in this area." **G**

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WORTH REPEATING

The church of the future will be one built from below by basic communities as a result of free initiative and association. We should make every effort not to hold up this development, but to promote it and direct it on to the right lines. . . . The church will exist only by being constantly renewed by a free decision of faith. . . in the midst of a secular world. . . for the church cannot be a real factor in secular history except as sustained by the faith on the part of human beings. . . .

Karl Rahner, **The Shape of the Church to Come**. As quoted in **The Catholic Experience of Small Christian Communities** by Bernard Lee, S.M., p.3.