



Winter 2005

Gatherings

Celebrating 20 Years – In Their Own Words...

Celebrating 20 Years

Following our festive anniversary dinner at St. Thomas Seminary & Archdiocesan Center on September 23, 2005, the 350 celebrants gathered for a program in the St. Thomas chapel. Along with song and music, there was a program of reflection. Deacon Bob Pallotti, chairperson of the department's advisory board was emcee. The program began with several personal reflections on the small church community experience. After acknowledgments and some thoughts expressed by Bro. Bob Moriarty, S.M., Fr. Art Baranowski made the main presentation. Archbishop Henry Mansell brought the evening to a close with several reflections of his own. What follows here are excerpts from these various offerings...

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The Basic Ecclesial Community of Eastern Indonesia (Part II)

by Father Eugene Schmitz, SVD

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Worth Repeating

Small church community calls forth tremendous generosity on your part; generosity in giving of your time certainly, but more, generosity in giving yourselves, in sharing your deepest, innermost sentiments and assisting one another. That's at the heart of small church community...It's really at the heart of being church.

Gatherings...

Small Community Happenings...

Core Teams

The core teams from St. Bridget, Manchester, St. Timothy, West Hartford and St. Bernard, Enfield have now completed the basic core team formation process. With Fr. Art Baranowski of the National Alliance of Parishes Restructuring into Communities here to facilitate, these three parishes participated in the two and a half day, Called to Be Church workshop in November. They now join the other fully-fledged core teams in our Alliance of parish core teams. Core teams from the Alliance parishes meet three times a year for mutual resourcing.

January Alliance Meeting

Hosted by St. Thomas, Southington, the Alliance parish core teams met on January 24, 2005. St. Thomas core team chairperson, Bob Burke, introduced the group to a particular approach to the spiritual reading of scripture. He proposed the process of lectio divina as a way for small community members to prepare for their meetings.

Advisory Board

The department's advisory board welcomes three new members: Kelly Knotts, St. Bridget, Manchester; Larry O'Neal, St. Thomas, Southington and Sue Talanski, Sacred Heart, Suffield. They join members already serving: Jim Birmingham, St. Mark, West Hartford; Gena Evans, St. Martin de Porres, New Haven; Andrée Grafstein, St. Ann, Avon; Fr. Jim Gregory, Torrington Cluster; Fr. Ron May, St. Patrick, Collinsville; Deacon Bob Pallotti, St. Joseph, Bristol and Lynn Tidgwell,

the heart of being church.
And for all that, I thank you all so very much.

Archbishop Henry J. Mansell, September 23, 2004.

Celebrating 20 Years – In Their Own Words...



ARCHBISHOP HENRY MANSELL

Archdiocese of Hartford

I really come here to applaud you and to thank you for being small church communities and for being leaven in the Archdiocese of Hartford...to congratulate you and all who have made possible the experience of small church communities for twenty years. What you have are intentional communities... and intentionality is so much more important these days than it has been. We can't presume on the culture...we can't presume on automatic supports and affirmations. There is a need for reflection; there is a need for interaction; there is a need for initiative; there is a need for intentionality. Small church community calls forth tremendous generosity on your part: generosity in giving of your time certainly, but more, generosity in giving yourselves, in sharing your deepest, innermost sentiments and assisting one another. That's at the heart of small church community...it's really at the heart of being church. And for all that, I thank you all so very much.



PHILIP KENNEY

St. Thomas
More Chapel, Yale University

Small church communities have strengthened my faith, and in doing so they have given direction to my life. They have enabled me to be a part of a wonderful community of friends united by a shared commitment to God. And beyond that, they have strengthened the community at St. Thomas More and added immensely to Catholic life at Yale. I believe that small church communities should be an integral part of every parish...And I hope that after I leave Yale next year, I'll be able to find a church that offers them. They're simply too important a part of my spiritual life to give up.



NANCY BABCOCK

St. Patrick, Collinsville

After hearing about small church communities for some time from Bro. Bob Moriarty, Fr. Bob Beloin and the folks at Our Lady of the Lakes, I remember thinking on the ride home one night, "What have I got myself into?" Well, what I got myself into was just being an ordinary person meeting with other ordinary people regularly to talk about our faith and life. In our busy lives we were taking a moment to pause, to reflect and to share some of that reflection with one or two others in

St. Joseph, Bristol and Lynn Tidgwell, Sacred Heart, Southbury. Bob Pallotti serves as chairperson.

NAPRC Conference

In the heads up department! The National Alliance of Parishes Restructuring into Communities (NAPRC) will be holding its annual conference on the east coast this year. It will be held at St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Cinnaminson, New Jersey July 28-30. The theme will be Cultivating a Communal Spirituality for Parish. The keynoter will be Fr. Ronald Rolheiser, O.M.I. Conference brochures are now available from the office. For more information go to naprc.faithweb.com/conference2005.htm

New Book On Small Christian Communities

Fr. Joseph Healey, MM (Africa) and Jeanne Hinton (England) have just finished co-editing a new book that focuses on the worldwide experience of small Christian communities. Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment will be published in September 2005 by Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY. This is a multi-authored, ecumenical book that captures the life of small Christian communities today across six continents – Latin America, North America, Europe, Africa, and Asia/Oceania. The seven USA-related chapters include Imaging Initiation (RCIA) in Small Church Communities by Bro. Robert Moriarty, S.M. The book includes a "Foreword" by Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, the Archbishop of Westminster, England and a user-friendly, practical section on "Resources and Annotated Bibliography (including "How to Use This Book")."

Buena Vista Convocation

The 2005 Buena Vista small Christian community convocation will take place at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, MN

moment to pause, to reflect and to share some of that reflection with one or two others in the small group. What happened over the course of time was that as we shared our stories we developed new habits or strengthened others such as daily prayer. We look time out of our busy lives with our families to talk over the important things of life, like our faith and how that impacted the decisions that we've made. We also learned new skills such as listening. When it was my turn to share, that meant that someone was listening to my joys, my sorrows, my tears, my fears – the stuff of life. But they weren't judging me; they weren't trying to fix my broken parts. This was not just a group that got together like other friendship groups because it felt good and we bonded. The basis is that we were a small church community and that came out of our faith and our sharing our lives with one another. We carry on the work of the faith and reach out to the rest of the parish by having an autumn walk by the river, an annual event, and Breakfast with Santa. The money raised from that goes to support the children in our sister parish in Haiti. And some of our small church members are also involved in taking RCIA members and breaking open the word with them. Small church has helped me make faith central in my life so that it is a part of my every day and of those people with whom I live.



FR. THOMAS SAS
St. Ann, Avon

The value that small Christian communities bring to parish life is immense. I've seen it, as you have. I would encourage anyone, any pastor to jump in because it is a wonderful way for people to support one another, to help one another and to grow in their faith... From my own perspective, small Christian communities have been nothing but good. Personally and pastorally, they have been energizing, challenging...At the same time, they have provided a vision that is terribly important in our church and parishes today. I am proud to be a part of small Christian communities.



FR. ARTHUR BARANOWSKI
National Alliance of Parishes

Re-Structuring into Communities You are doing something here that is significant for the rest of the country – the number of small communities, the amount of years you've been at it, the kind of office you have – speaks to the rest of the country. It is good to be here.

The great thing I find about small church communities is that, besides the RCIA people, a lot of Catholic people begin to feel that God calls me to be church. "God actually calls me." There's a kind of an acceptance of a calling – it's not just going to church on Sunday; there's something more: God's calling me to be the church and these small communities help me find that, a personal call to be church. Other than the RCIA, I don't know anything else that does that better than small communities. Small communities put us in touch with the basics, with the basic that life, as the catechism puts it, is all about communion with God. Given the way we're living today, the hurried pace, the amount of information, we're

the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, MN August 4-7, 2005. Speakers will include Latin American specialist in basic ecclesial communities, Fr. Jose Marins. For more information go to buenavista.org.

Joint SCC Website

www.smallchristiancommunities.org

Several small church community related organizations across the country have joined together to participate in a combined website that provides quick and easy access to a variety of small church community resource centers. Our Hartford archdiocesan office (sccquest.org) participates in this linking effort.

St. Dominic PowerPoint Program

St. Dominic (Southington) core team member, Dan Lucia, has designed a PowerPoint presentation that – with some adaptation – can be used by other parishes to promote small church communities. It is incorporated into the St. Dominic parish website (saintdominicchurch.com). Click first on programs and ministries, then on Small Christian Communities. You can reach Dan at his e-mail address: dan.lucia@cox.net.

God. Given the way we're living today, the hurried pace, the amount of information, we're always on the go, always caught up with activity – what the small community does is to provide a counter culture, a way for church to happen. We live in a culture that is so busy and so noisy that it is almost impossible to hear God. The small communities make it possible to hear God and to make the church possible. The small communities provide a different kind of culture, of quiet, of silence, of mutual respect, of listening. It's a great thing you do for the church.... These small communities are happening in parishes everywhere in the world for a reason.... Being Catholic is a way to look at life; a way to come at life; it is not just a bunch of teachings. There's a whole world view to being Catholic.... Small church communities are a God-given way in which people help each other take the great Catholic tradition as a way to look at their life experience. There is great hope for the church and one of the great marks of hope for our church are the small church communities.



BRO. ROBERT MORIARTY, S.M.

Small Christian Communities

In his recent book, *A People Adrift*, Peter Steinfels, makes so bold as to say in the opening words of his introduction, "The Roman Catholic Church in the United States is on the verge of either irreversible decline or thoroughgoing transformation." And he bases this statement on an analysis not just of one issue, but rather a whole range of issues.

If he is anywhere near the mark, for a people of faith, the first alternative is totally unacceptable. If he is anywhere near the mark, we are facing a profound challenge, but a challenge that addresses us not just institutionally, but a challenge that addresses us in the depths of our personal beings and in the depths of our local communities. If these acutely unsettled and unsettling times challenge us in a special way to profound transformation, it is finally, simply the ages old call of the gospel to conversion with which we are being confronted. And this is the vocation of small church communities. What we are about pure and simple is the transformation of our hearts and lives, the transformation of our parishes and our diocesan church. What we are about is becoming ever more richly and fully a church in Southern New England that is a sign and instrument for the transformation of God's wonderful, if fractured, world. Our twentieth anniversary is indeed a cause for celebration. Let it also be an occasion for us to take stock, an occasion to reinvest ourselves in our small church community vocation. What we do in small church communities, we do not just for ourselves individually. We are about a vision for parish, a vision where people regularly make a difference in each others' lives and faith. If we are to be a church that makes a difference in the world, we must first be a people who make a difference in each others' lives and faith within the church.

The Basic Ecclesial Community of Eastern Indonesia (Part II)

by Father Eugene Schmitz, SVD

Part I of this essay
appeared in the

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into being serving communities. Through the assistance of

appeared in the previous issue of Gatherings. As this issue was being prepared, we received word that Fr. Schmitz died recently of a heart attack in Indonesia. May he rejoice with the Lord and may his efforts to animate the development of basic ecclesial communities in the Diocese of Larantuka continue to bear fruit.

into being serving communities. Through the assistance of three main programs adapted from LUMKO (i.e., the South African small Christian community model), "The Kingdom", "God Renews the World through Us", and the "Amos Program", our people were made aware that a worshipping community needs to bring its faith into dealing with the local problems. Faith must be brought to bear, not just in the individual community context, but also in the larger community within which it lives and is a part. This new pastoral program was aimed at preventing the basic community from becoming a closed and inward-looking group concerned only about its own salvation. Rather, we encourage them to develop into open and salvific communities that bring the Good News to others, both those who have fallen away from their faith and those who are indifferent to any faith. This witness comes through the community's real concern and genuine social actions for the others. The Seven Step Gospel Sharing method was once again reintroduced to those basic communities which had not fully grasped its important role in creating an awareness of the whole community's mission to the world around them through the inspiration from the Word of God.

The Basic Communities in the 5 main urban centers of the Diocese of Larantuka were grouped together; usually 5-8 basic communities (some 10-15 families in each basic community) were grouped into a cluster known as Lingkungan, which would have the same administrative structure as the Parish Pastoral Council. Each Sunday a cluster group would be assigned to serve at one of the Eucharistic celebrations, both in the main parish church and the three chapels on the outskirts of town. Arrangements for choir, lectors, gift bearers and ushers are their responsibilities and usually they do a very excellent job in carrying out their ministry. In all the other farm/rural parishes the basic communities are grouped into a station cluster. Larger villages would have more than one station cluster.

In 1995 the new Asian method and materials for forming, developing, and sustaining the basic communities known as AsIPA (Asian Integral Pastoral Approach) was introduced in the Larantuka diocese. This formation methodology was based on the tried and proven method of LUMKO and it has since spread to some 19 countries in Asia. Some countries have both national and diocesan AsIPA teams. In 1999 the Deanery of Lembata began training lay facilitators from the 12 parishes on the island of Lembata, which has a population of 92 thousand

the island of Lembata, which has a population of 92 thousand people of which 80% are Catholic. This training was spread out over a four- year period. Each group of roughly 30-40 participants was involved in two AsIPA workshops over a two- year period. They were trained not only in creating their own awareness programs for special community concerns and needs but likewise to facilitate members of a basic community in deepening their awareness and understanding. This training involved: the steps in Gospel Sharing, the background, basic reasons for, and the main characteristics of the Small Christian Communities, the genuine meaning of a participatory church and a new understanding of leadership of the small Christian communities. This year a follow-up program for the lay facilitators is being conducted in each parish with an evening of recollection, an evaluation of their activities among the basic communities since their workshop. This is followed by a training with three new modules, the choosing of a parish coordinator, and the drawing up of a two- year action plan in conjunction with the parish priest and head of the parish pastoral council.

Before drawing up a Third Five-Year Pastoral Plan, the Diocese of Larantuka sent out a diocesan-wide questionnaire to all of the 2,037 basic communities, all of the 37 parish councils and priest teams. The 8 main areas of evaluation were: The Leadership of the Basic Community; The Role of Scripture in Building the Basic Community; Prayer Life and Worship of the Basic Community; The Sacramental and Eucharistic Life of the Basic Community; The Involvement in the Church Life (Station & Parish); The Involvement in the Local Community; The Relationship with Other Religions; and Social Awareness and Service. The results of the questionnaire were studied, analyzed and confirmed in the 4th General Assembly of the Catholic People of the Diocese of Larantuka in late October 1997. From this Assembly emerged the present, Third Five-Year Pastoral Plan for the improvement of our basic ecclesial communities. Leadership was found to be one of the weak areas in that many of the lay leaders tended to copy the government style leadership that has been heavily top-down. Few had moved towards a more Christ-like leadership of leading from within and together with all the members of the basic community. Consequently, the third pastoral plan focused on "The Empowering of the Leadership of the Basic Community". This formation was begun with a 5-session community awareness of the "Vision" in 1999, and is now being followed by "Developing a Spirituality". Three other programs will follow: "Personality Development"; "Basic Knowledge of the Faith"; and

"Leadership Skills". This training is being given to the whole community and not just the present leaders.

