

**Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne**  
**Evangelisation in**  
**Parishes Outer Suburban Melbourne Project**  
**September 2010**

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**‘Gathering the Harvest - Encouraging Active Participation in the Life of the Community’**



- The Parishes of Outer Suburban Melbourne network was initiated in 2007 with a view to ‘facilitating support and the sharing of positive strategies and ideas with one another.’ I quote this, as a newcomer to the project, to remind myself that the second POSM gathering for 2010 – at the Cardinal Knox Centre - certainly enabled some of this to happen.

- The theme was ‘Gathering the Harvest – Encouraging Active Participation in the Life of the Community’. There were 30 representatives from 12 outer suburban parishes and a guest speaker from the wider church, Bishop Gerry Kicanas from Tucson, Arizona.

- Once again 3 parishes ‘shared the pastoral model and strategies they are using to foster involvement and broad participation in the life of their parish.’ The variety of their responses was a reminder that ‘each parish is

unique and needs to find ways appropriate to their local area, history and cultural mix to draw people into the life of the Church.’

- Last November’s Forum saw presentations from Hoppers Crossing, Sunbury and Narre Warren parishes; this August we heard from Laverton/Altona Meadows, Mill Park and Werribee parishes. Many thanks to the presenters – and those who assisted them - from the 3 parishes: to Fr Ian Ranson from Laverton/Altona Meadows, to Ruth Lees from Mill Park, and to Jenny Toohey and Birgit Minness from Werribee.

- Key summary points of what they had to say - and what Bishop Kicanas had to say - are included over the page as a reminder of what we heard and what moved us. Feel free to contact the parishes concerned if you would like further information.

- Thanks too to the planning team – Richard, Margaret, Rose-Marie, Arthur, Fran, Anita - and to all those who attended the day.

- At the day’s end there was a suggestion about a first Forum for next year –more about it on the back page - and an invitation to anyone who’d like to be part of planning for it to contact me. You can do that in a couple of ways: [damian.coleridge@cam.org.au](mailto:damian.coleridge@cam.org.au) or 0407 330 404

- I’d love to hear from you.

**Damian Coleridge**  
**Parish Support Coordinator**  
**Archbishop’s Office for Evangelisation**



### **3 Responses**

**To Christ belongs the seed**

**To Christ belongs the harvest**

*A response we prayed in the opening prayer of the Forum*

**We stand before you, Holy Spirit.**

**Come to us, remain with us, and enlighten our hearts.**

*Another response in the opening prayer: words prayed each day at the Second Vatican Council*

**Sow the seeds of love**

**And come to harvest them.**

*Said as we made the sign of the cross on each other's foreheads.*



### **BISHOP GERRY KICANAS**

*Bishop Gerry Kicanas was born in Chicago where he was ordained and taught in the seminary and became an auxiliary bishop. He has a particular interest in formation and in lay ministry and is currently vice president of the US Bishop's Conference. In 2003 he became bishop of Tucson in southern Arizona on the Mexican border. He recently appeared before the US Senate to speak on the undocumented immigrant issue.*

- 'Little things make all the difference. Do the little things in an exceptional way. I have a custom of writing a hand written note to every family who has lost a loved one. It's a little thing but it means so much. Why not call a family who has lost a loved one - sometime afterwards - just to ask 'how are you going?'.
- 'If you want a parish to come alive it's simple, it's not complicated. You have to be welcoming, inviting, hospitable; the liturgy must be engaging; the homily must engage people; people need to be listened to. It's not exceptional, or grand. It's the opposite of no one cares, no one seems interested.'
- What enhances? Time together – 'familiarity brings understanding.' Sharing frustrations. Planning together. Celebrating together. Praying together – 'we have a monthly day of

prayer in Tucson'. Working together – 'we do some work together every other month.' Learning together – 'all Las Vegas priests came to the US-Mexico border to understand better.' Laugh together – 'we have to enjoy being together.'

- '25-50 people come to a faith formation session. On Sunday there are 2,000 people in church. That's when we help people to grow. We have a catechetical Sunday once a month which includes a 25 min homily on the themes of the day.'

#### Questions asked of Bishop Kicanas:

- There were questions asked about the use of the word 'lay' as in lay ecclesial ministry and comment on the significance of baptism for all of us.
- Comment too on the sense of not being worthy that many people expressed when invited to be part of things. The bishops spoke of the need for invitation and preparation and the need to get through the message of our baptismal priesthood: 'what does it mean to be washed in these waters?'
- Questioned about border control in the US and the Church's support for undocumented arrivals, Bishop Kicanas said there was opposition to this from amongst Catholics and many others. The Church's document 'Welcoming the Stranger' hadn't hit home: 'how do we frame our message so we touch the head and heart?'



*Bishop Kicanas spent the Friday and weekend after our Forum in the St Albans parish as a visitor to the Faith Festival being held there. He learnt quite a bit about outer suburban parishes in Melbourne in his time here! He was so struck by the Faith Festival that as he wrote in his Monday memo on his return, 'I am thinking we might try such a weekend of events in one of our vicariates.'*



## LAVERTON /POINT COOK/ ALTONA MEADOWS

St Martin de Porres, Queen of Peace - Fr Ian Ranson

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*'I am in a multiplying parish, rather than a multiple parish.'*

### What is a Parish?

*This was a continuing question asked and answered through the presentation.*

- ... it's the first ecclesiastical hand that rocks the organized religious cradle.
- The parish is where the church lives.
- Parishes are the place where God's people meet Jesus in word and sacrament.
- People will enter into the mysteries of birth, marriage, sickness, death via the parish.
- Parish = communion and mission.

### 1. First Emphasis is on Sunday

- Here we find our committed people – not the only ones – the important ones. From these people the parish gets its main support. This is where the parish celebrates Church.
- 'The parish is a community of communities which gather together on Sunday mornings to celebrate the Eucharist and go forth from there.
- Priests say Mass in the 4 areas of the parish with school children attending each week.

***“Many were struck by the connection of schools and parish”***

### 2. Second Emphasis is on Education.

**Four primary schools – 1,700 + pupils – a secondary school and a campus of another with 1,500 + pupils.**

- The parish priest and the principals meet every 2 weeks. There is a business manager of the 4 schools who comes to the team meeting when required. There's an REC of the 4 schools with each school having its own REC.
- The same model is used for pastoral care: there's a pastoral care department in each school with a pastoral care person over the 4 schools.
- RECs and Pastoral Care people are invited to the fortnightly meeting as necessary.
- Twice a year there is an in-service gathering of principals, deputies, priests, coordinators.
- Once a year there is a planning day for the next school year.
- Each school has its own education board and the parish is re-developing its education board.



Fr Ian Ranson and Julia Gillard

## **Priests and Co-Workers**

The co-workers include a youth minister, 2 religious sisters and different liturgical and social service teams. Clearly priests and co-workers work in collaboration.

## **Parish Future**

Ian emphasised that the future parish will not depend entirely on the priest 'but, at present, it needs his momentum to encourage and support lay leadership.'

## **MILL PARK**

St Francis of Assisi – Ruth Lees

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One of the keynotes of Mill Park parish is its diversity and ability to invite people to be part of that diversity. As Ruth reminded us this is 'all hard work' which aims to see 'faith come alive.' She spoke at one point of seeing someone come alive and noted 'that's just spiritual growth that's happening.' This growth was at the heart of what she had to say.

## **30 Groups**

There are 30+ groups at work in the parish ranging from the well known – St Vincent de Paul and Legion of Mary - to Alpha, Couples for Christ, a Cancer Support Group and an Italian Visiting Group. Many flowers are encouraged to bloom. There is something, if not for everyone, then for many different people and groupings in the parish. Ruth spoke of the parish as 'allowing things to happen.'



## **Parish Cells – the engine of the parish**

The parish has encouraged the development of parish cells over a number of years and they are ongoing. One of Ruth's slides spoke of cells as 'a new and exciting parish vision fostering a faith journey and experience of a close Christian community in all those that participate in them.' Ruth reminded us that the 36 cell groups are 'the engine of the parish.'



## **Parish Evangelisation Team**

There's a parish evangelization team which 'promotes and co-ordinates evangelization by providing the opportunity of programs and training to develop our relationship with God.' It seeks to 'develop the scriptural basis and skills needed for effective evangelization. To supplement programs not replace them. To help parishioners develop a more intimate relationship with Jesus.' A key function of the Team is to link up the various programs with the cells.

***"That's just  
spiritual growth  
that's happening"***

## WERRIBEE

St Andrew's - Jenny Toohey and Birgit Minness  
[staparish@optusnet.com.au](mailto:staparish@optusnet.com.au)  
[www.standrewswerribee.org.au](http://www.standrewswerribee.org.au)

“Developing relationships  
- it is time consuming,  
but critical”

The parish is divided into 4 geographical areas – Wyndham Vale, Werribee North, Werribee South, Werribee Central – with a primary school in and a pastoral associate involved with each area. There are 2 Catholic Regional Colleges. At the last census there were approx 4,600 Catholic families.



### Developing Relationships

- Jenny suggested that a key to the parish encouraging active participation in the life of the community was the developing of relationships.
- As she reminded us this was time consuming, but critical.
- She emphasized that relationship was about being ... 1) accepted and respected 2) valued 3) having a sense of belonging 4) and ownership
- It's the first of 4 Values mentioned in the Vision/Mission/Values statement: Relationship – nurturing an evolving relationship with God, connected in faith and love with others and with the whole of creation.' (The other values referred to are community, celebration learning and outreach.)

### Vision, Mission, Values Statement

The 13 members of the Parish Team take seriously the Vision, Mission and Values Statement.

### Baptism Program

Developing relationships may begin with answering phone calls to and door enquiries at the parish office and extends out into the 50 + groups and programs running in the parish. Jenny spoke about the Baptism Program, with its 6 stages, as alerting us to the long term, intense work involved in welcoming people:

- Home Visit chat coffee, baptism pack
- Re-visit families particularly if needs have been discerned
- Families attend preparation program
- Welcoming Mass of family's choice
- Baptism parish Mass or baptism service
- 12 month Follow Up phone call or visit
- Yearly Social Gathering

The **GodStart Playgroup** for pre-schoolers emerges from the Baptism Preparation Group and builds into the Children's Liturgy and the Rite of Christian Initiation for Children and Secondary School Students.

Jenny also spoke of the program for **Welcoming New Families** and the **Ministry to the Sick and Housebound** as ways in which the parish invites participation in its life.

The Sunday liturgy then gathers together this life as do the various means of disseminating parish information.



**In the first POSM newsletter there was reference to 2 characteristics of outer suburban parishes:**

- Large and growing Catholic school populations, often in multiple schools.
- High proportion of Catholic children not attending Catholic schools.

Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne  
*Evangelisation in Parishes  
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 Project*  
 December 2008

**And in the same newsletter Fr Maurie Cooney wrote this in an article on the approach being taken in Epping, Mernda, South Morang, Whittlesea.**

**Welcome**

This is the first newsletter of the Catholic Outer Suburban Melbourne Project. Like all POSM newsletters it is a work in progress. The content is shared for sharing as an example and challenge of sharing and growing in our outer parishes. The Diocese for the ABC, Faith in Practice, offers a model based on the school of evangelisation, seeking relevant leadership resources from the POSM network. In the absence of relevant leadership resources a session for participants to share examples, ideas and begin to develop resources for evangelisation, pastoral care and mission.

POSITIVE NEWS: The Archdiocese in 2008 and 2009 has been successful in securing parishes and major roles leading various projects, roles by creating networks and opening up spaces for evangelisation in the future. One of the main challenges is to find a way to share resources and support in the future.

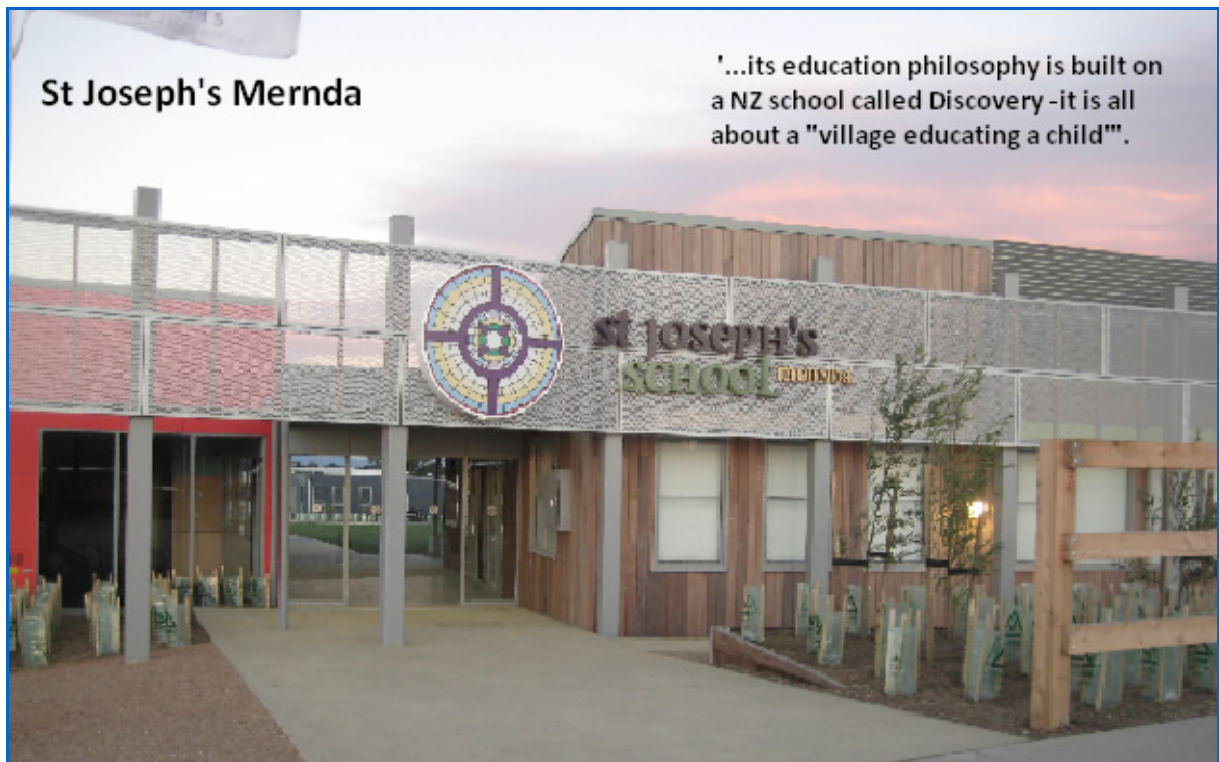
WE CAN DO IT: There are many ways to share resources and support in the future. One of the main challenges is to find a way to share resources and support in the future. One of the main challenges is to find a way to share resources and support in the future. One of the main challenges is to find a way to share resources and support in the future.

This newsletter includes some background to the project, photos and comments from the POSM members, in order to inform the Archdiocese of the project, and to inform the wider community and a selection of the information provided by Bob Dixon.

**Community Development**

*‘This is a new area for the Catholic Church, to be part of the wider plans for the community. Gathering people together is what we do for Catholics, but now we have to be a real player in the wider community. ‘Share our resources’, ‘don’t re-invent the wheel’, learn from others so that everyone feels equal and welcomed at our sites’ - these are some of our mantras.*

With the development of the new Catholic Parish primary school at Mernda we have an opportunity from day one to build community as we have the only ‘public’ space on the estate. This may take the form of providing for play groups, inviting guest speakers to talk to the mums, holding functions for St Joseph’s community – as the Church is a small blue stone half a kilometre from the school and we want the connection noted from day one: that we are part of Church together, whatever our first point of contact may be.’



**Bob Dixon had this to say in his recent thesis on Catholic parishes:**

*‘A particularly important form of creating bridging social capital involves building networks that include Catholics who do not attend church. The parish school has an important part to play here ...’*

## The Next Forum



The POSM planning team

*When the first POSM newsletter was produced in December 2008 there were quite a few references to schools, including the need to continue the discussion about ... 'better connection between parish and school.'*

### SCHOOLS – MARCH - MERNDA

- At the end of the forum, Margaret Harrington and Richard Hallett suggested a theme – Schools in Parishes - for the next Forum which is proposed for March 2011.
- Some matters for consideration were mentioned: how priests meet with principals, how leadership is seen and the role of the teachers in parishes. It's a start.
- Margaret proposed we might like to meet at Nazareth House Mernda. How does that sound? On Thursday March 10?
- See how you're situated. You might let us know what you think about Mernda, March 10, to start at a sensible hour.
- Once again, you're welcome to be a part of the planning team. Contact Damian if you're interested.