

## Dear Friends

Pentecost has always been celebrated by the Church as a period of stimulating change, upheaval and growth. In this year 2012, the residents of Hougang constituency, in Singapore seem to be having a similar kind of 'pentecost' as they prepare to go to cast their vote in the Hougang by-elections that happen to take place on Pentecost weekend itself. Hougang has a strong concentration of heartlanders who are Teochew-speaking and their loyalties have traditionally run deep with the Workers Party (WP). The kopi tiams (coffee shops) and wet markets are abuzz with the pros and cons of the two contenders – Desmond Choo (PAP) and Png Eng Huat (WP).

As I drove past and witnessed the spirited rallies of the WP on my way back to my parish (Nativity) it suddenly struck me that the Pentecost gathering may have been something like this. Christianity did not begin as the accepted religion of the Roman Empire indeed it was looked upon with suspicion because of its emphasis on equality for all persons – including slaves. Such counter-cultural stances made this fledgling religion stand out from the others especially with its claim that its founder, one 'Jesus Christ', whom the Romans had crucified, was claimed to be risen from the dead! For these reasons the apostles were locked in the Upper Room 'for fear of the Jews'. The situation seemed hopeless and yet they were told to wait for something to happen to them. The odds seemed to be against them, they were the underdogs and yet something drew them to that upper room to gather and pray and support each other. Have you ever wondered what is it about the human spirit that causes us to 'hope beyond hope'? What is it that causes a Singaporean to sacrifice economic benefits and estate upgrading for the sake of challenging the government to more transparency and accountability? This sacrificial image of a Singaporean certainly shatters the stereo typical 'kiasu' (self-centered) Singaporean image that we have been fed. Maybe as Singaporeans we are capable of thinking for ourselves and responding courageously to the Spirit of God.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) states that

"The human person: with his openness to truth and beauty, his sense of moral goodness, his freedom and the voice of his conscience, with his longings for the infinite and for happiness, man questions himself about God's existence. In all this he discerns signs of his spiritual soul. The soul, the "seed of eternity we bear in ourselves, irreducible to the merely material", can have its origin only in God." (CCC 33)

Our belief as Christians is that we live in one graced world not two separate ones. For true authentic happiness we as persons cannot truncate our desire to the material – we would be playing false to our inherent dignity. Christian revelation maintains that God became a man, the divine and the human are fused together in the God-man, Jesus Christ. Authentic happiness is now inextricably tied up with the response or the lack of it that we make to Jesus's invitation: 'Come follow me'.

In this edition of e-news we as a church are challenged to be more authentic to our true selves within the church as well as society. "Can we not accept the action of the Holy Spirit beyond the bounds of the clergy?" Peter Tyler asks in his article on the Age of the Laity. While Daphne Leong in her article, 'Of Stones and Sand' invites us to 'put relationship before tasks'. The Spirit of change also invites us to sadly bid goodbye to our colleague Jarvis Tan who follows the lead of the Spirit in order to be true to himself. Jarvis will leave the RCIA desk in June to pursue further studies in Perth, Australia. Jarvis we shall miss your buoyant presence and energetic mind and we wish you all the best in your future endeavors! On behalf of all the staff at the pastoral institute we wish all readers a spirit-filled Pentecost.

**Erbin**

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# The Age of the Laity

***This article redresses the balance away from a viewpoint that would see the lay vocation as of secondary importance, and draws our attention to its dignity, and to its role as the future of the Church.***

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***Peter Tyler***

## **All Are Involved**

**I**n their 1965 Decree on the Lay Vocation, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council declared:

“With a constantly increasing population, continual progress in science and technology, and closer relationships, the areas for the lay apostolate have been immensely widened, particularly in the fields that have been for the most part open to the laity alone. These factors have also occasioned new problems which demand their expert attention and study.” (AA, #1)

As with so many of the Vatican II documents, a rereading of *Apostolicam Actuositatem* reveals how forward-thinking and innovative the Council Fathers were. Almost fifty years later, I teach pastoral theology around the country to lay Catholic adults and find that they are often still of the mindset that the priestly ministry is the most important in the Mystical Body of Christ and that the laity's role is there to support this ministry.

I would imagine that most readers of *The Pastoral*

*Review* would have a more enlightened view. However, it is from my own sense of incredulity as to how the lay vocation continues to be regarded by both clergy and laity alike that I felt prompted to write this article. In this respect, the key scriptural text for any consideration of the lay vocation is in St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians:

“Christ is a single body which has many parts; it is still one body. even though it is made up of different parts...there are many parts but one body...There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit gives them. There are different ways of serving, but the same Lord is served...The Spirit's presence is shown in some way in each person for the good of all...As he wishes he gives a different gift to each person.” (1 Cor 12)

As St Paul makes clear, we must all consider our vocation for the building up of the Body of Christ. All are involved and no one is excluded.

## **The 'Authentic Self'**

Having said that, the next question many lay people ask is: ‘Well, what exactly is my vocation? - How do I discern it?’ This, of course, is a different and trickier question and refers to the whole nature of discernment.

Over ten years ago, I was asked to write an article for *The Way* journal about vocation and commitment for the contemporary generation (1). As I thought about what to write in that article, I felt myself drawn to the figure of Thomas Merton (1915-1968) and thought of how he, too, had struggled with a vocation to the celibate monastic life, especially in the light of his (then) recently published journals which showed his intimate relationship with a woman known as ‘M’.

What Merton's journals revealed to me at the time was what St Ignatius of Loyola would call ‘indifference to all created things’. Merton, through his discernment of

vocation, began to understand that the most important thing for him as a human being and member of the Body of Christ was to find God in his own authentic self. This 'authentic self' was the key to vocation, as opposed to what he called at the time - the time of the Second Vatican Council - a 'false self', or even (and shockingly) a 'religious self'. What he meant by this was our strange desire as humans, as Christians, as Catholics, to do what we think we *ought to do*, for some (usually imaginary) fictional entity. As a psychologist, I would call this nowadays the 'super-ego' - that residue remaining from our parental upbringing which encourages guilt and 'driveness' in our desires and actions.

### Laity - The Future of the Church

How difficult it is for many of us to get some distance from this 'religious' or 'false' self. Indeed, it can become a demon driving us into false alleyways. I believe, too, that this can be one of the factors that blurs the spiritual perceptions of lay people when they consider vocations in the building up of the Body of Christ. It is that subtle sense of somehow being spiritually a second-class citizen: 'The priest will always come first, I must take second place. The irony is that, having worked with priests for many years now, I find that this false deference is usually the last thing they want from the laity. It puts them on a pedestal and distances them from the very people they need to be working with. I say 'false deference', as I think that this too might be a subtle way of letting us off our own responsibilities. 'Let's leave it to Holy Fr So and So - he can sort things out.' Perhaps twenty or even ten years ago, the Catholic laity would have gotten away with this. But not any more. The dramatic fall in clergy in the western world, together with the child abuse scandals, have eroded what remained of this kind of deference towards priests.

Yes, this is the age of the laity. And in the west, at any rate, unless the laity assume their proper role within the Body of Christ as outlined by the Council Fathers fifty years ago, there will be no future for the Church in the west.

### Model of the Lay Vocation

A couple of years ago, I was asked to give a talk to a group about Christian spirituality. However, when it was discovered that I was not an ordained priest the invitation was withdrawn. I tried to contain my irritation with this by consoling myself with thinking

of the good company I was in: St Benedict of Nursia, founder of monasticism; St Teresa of Avila, reformer of Carmel and Doctor of the Church; St Therese of Lisieux, Doctor of the Church; St Edith Stein, Patroness of Europe - I could go on. What is it about us that we still want to find holiness only amongst the clergy? Can we not accept the action of the Holy Spirit beyond the bounds of the clergy?

When I examined the list of non-ordained saints, I began to see that this was often a question of power, too. Many of them were women and had been marginalised in some way or other. It seemed to me, then, that an embrace of the 'lay vocation' might also involve an embrace of vulnerability or 'woundedness'. In this, my great inspiration has been the French Canadian founder of the L'Arche communities Jean Vanier. I lived with the L'Arche communities for many years and met Jean on several occasions. In my twenties, when I first met him, I was struck by the humility of the man. Here was someone who had no need for his titles or position (although his own background would have entitled him to many grand titles and powerful positions in society). It seemed as though I was in the presence of an 'authentic self': someone who had gone beyond the trappings of the 'religious self' to see God in God's self.

### A Lay Disposition

It is this stripping, this *kenosis* if you like, that has remained for me a model of the lay vocation in the Church today. Lay people, I believe, must today strip themselves of all seeking after dignities, titles, and positions. They must indeed take up Christ's cross, so as to enable God to work through them. It is almost like being a bullfighter - an image from St Teresa's Spain: we must step niftily aside while the bull of the Holy Spirit rushes past us to work what the Spirit wills! As St Teresa of Avila reminds us in the First Mansion of *The Interior Castle*, what is required for spiritual progress is *self-knowledge and humility*. True humility, yes, but not 'doormat humility' - rather, the self-willed humility that lets us say with Meister Eckhart: 'God's in, I'm out!'

This, I believe, is the proper disposition for lay people in today's Church and society. Once we have this disposition right, then the nature of our vocation - or indeed 'work' in the Church - becomes a matter of indifference. In fact, the temptation is get hooked up on 'achieving results'. We may never know the consequences of our choices and actions; only God can know. However, what we can do is cultivate, through

prayer and contemplation, the correct *disposition of the self* that allows us to be open to the action of the Holy Spirit. From my encounter with L'Arche over twenty years ago, this has been the disposition of the spirit or self that I have tried to cultivate in all my decisions; and it is from here that I believe the authentic lay vocation and lay spirituality must arise.

## Finding God in the Other

To end this article, I would like to highlight one final aspect of this 'lay spirituality' which I believe must become more important as we travel together into the twenty-first century. I would call this 'finding God in the other'. I write this in London after a year when we have seen extensive rioting in the streets. As the current economic crisis deepens and spreads, the sickening images of disaffected youngsters attacking, looting and robbing shops and properties may be something we will have to become accustomed to in the coming years. What, as Christians, can we make of this? Do we outlaw perpetrators? Do we scapegoat them? Do we condemn them? This is the kneejerk reaction, but is it what is called for from Christians?

Emphatically *no!* One thing twenty years of practice as a psychotherapist and spiritual director has taught me is that we must 'embrace the other'. No matter how difficult or strange this may appear, we are counselled throughout the Gospels and in the lives of the saints to find Christ in all people. St Benedict, our great lay patron, asked his brothers and sisters to see Christ in all strangers. St Francis (deacon but not priest!) embraced the leper in Assisi and so began a new life in the Lord. Without this, they would never have found the peace of Christ, and *neither will we*. For our salvation and the salvation of others are intimately connected. We find Christ in each other, and each contributes a 'word' to the conversation of the Spirit which is the Body of Christ. As we need to rebuild our communities in the light of the economic and social devastation in the coming years it is clear that lay people will have a special role to perform in the work of regeneration. Let us pray that they will rise to the challenge and we will be able to equip them for this essential task.

## The True Vocation

Some years ago, I asked the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, what he understood by Merton's

notion of the 'authentic self' which I discussed earlier. His reply was fascinating: he felt that, ultimately for Merton, there *is* no self. At the time this troubled me, but now I see clearly that the true vocation lies in getting out of God's way so that God can act through us in the manner that God wishes. The authentic lay vocation, then, will remain the same as the vocation of a priest or religious: it is, to paraphrase St Augustine, to love Christ and then do as you will. For, as St John of the Cross reminds us: at the end, we will be examined in love (cf. *Sayings of Light and Love* 60). It is this deep feeling of God's love that will draw us where he wills. As his servants, I suppose our role is to listen, be informed, look after ourselves and then 'sniff' which direction the Spirit is blowing in our lives. This may sometimes be in strange and unexpected ways. We live in a time of great change for society and the Churches. The Holy Spirit has not abandoned us. Rather, she is alive and actively guiding us in new ways to rebuild, renew and reshape our shared faith communities. At St Mary's I teach Master's programmes in Pastoral Theology to both clergy and laity. Whereas it is satisfying to see clergy deepening their sense of vocation and ministry, ultimately I am most surprised to see how God uses this course to let lay adults discern new ministries in our Church today. Enlightened bishops in our dioceses are responding to this at the same time and entrusting lay people with wonderful mission and catechetical roles in their churches. I write this on the Feast of St John the Divine having had to sit on the floor at Midnight Mass in a packed central London church two days ago. In fact the priest in his sermon claimed to have 'too many' parishioners! What is certain is that as our economic crisis deepens, a transvaluation of values is occurring and we are witnessing a return to the spiritual at all levels of western society. The harvest will indeed be rich, but, as we are told, many labourers will be required. In this fiftieth anniversary year of the Second Vatican Council, like so many Conciliar documents, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* now appears breathtakingly prophetic as it ushers in the 'age of the laity'.

Notes:

(1) Tyler, P., 'Thomas Merton: Ikona of Commitment for the Post-modern Generation' in *The Way Supplement*, no. 98, 2000, pp. 76-86.

This article was reprinted with the kind permission of The Pastoral Review. It first appeared in *The Pastoral Review*, Volume 8, Issue 2, March/April 2012.

# Of Stones And Sand

*Daphne Leong*

Recently I heard about how some parents enroll their children for enrichment classes to learn values. Honestly, I am quite amazed by this. While I am sure values can be taught in lessons but I also believe that we learn values through modeling from our parents first and foremost. The values we learn through modeling help shape us into the persons those values represent. When we learn values in classes, they remain in our head until we witness someone modeling for us how those values look like in life. Usually, this modeling falls on parents who have the greatest influence on their children. So to send children for enrichment classes to learn values is good but I wonder if it is a case of putting sand before the stones.

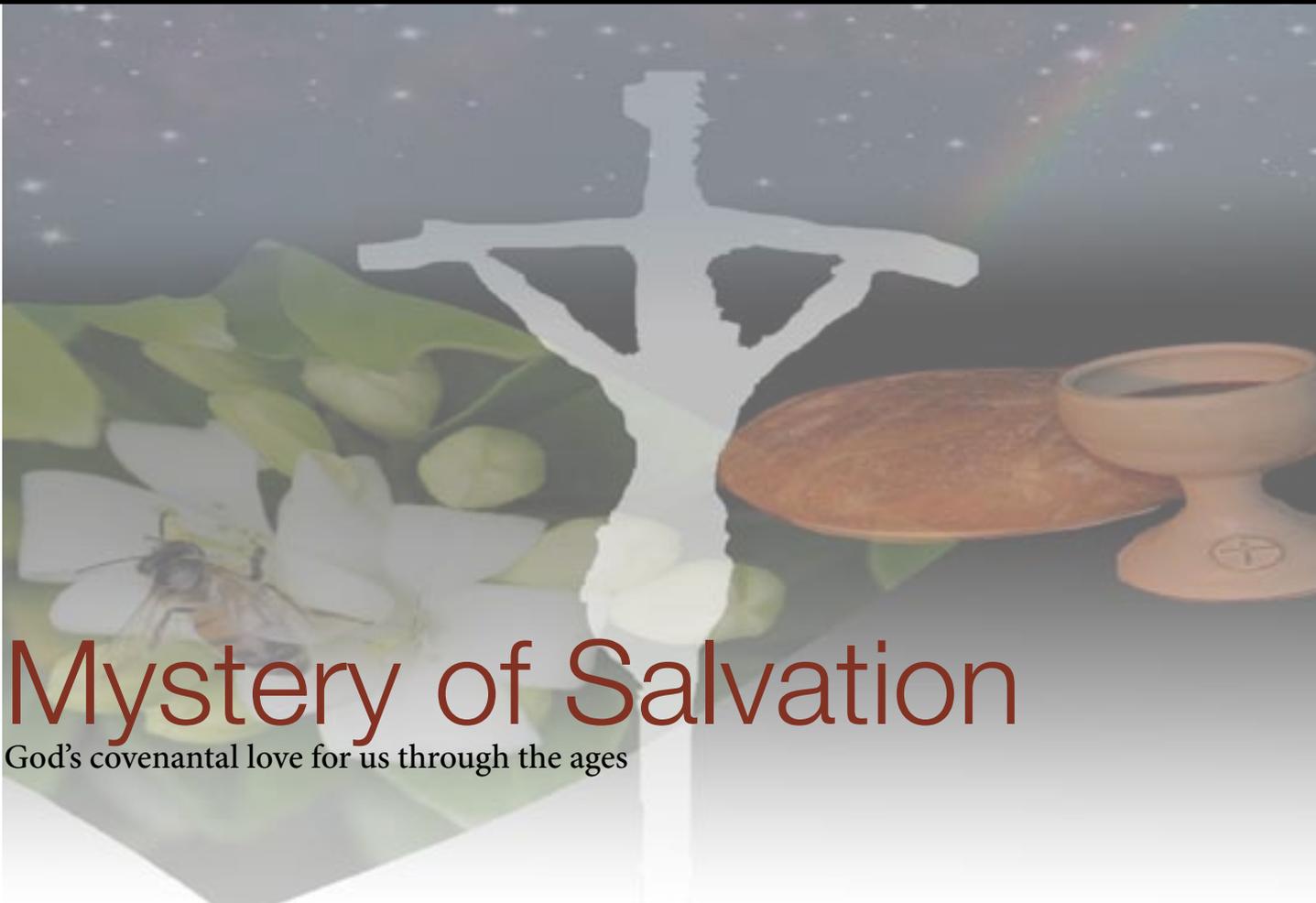
I have been reflecting on the story of the stones, pebbles and sand lately. For those not familiar with this story, it is about having to put in stones, pebbles, sand as well as water into a container. What do we put in first? For those of us who pour in the sand first will discover that the sand fills up the container quickly and we are left with little space for the stones and pebbles not to mention the jar of water. Even if we try to pack the sand in by shaking the container, we will not find enough space for everything. But when we put the stones into the container first, followed by the pebbles, we will find the sand fits into the spaces between the stones and pebbles and there is enough space to hold the jar of water too! The moral of the story is really about prioritizing in life - to look at what is important in our lives and put those things in place first.

For me, to recognize passing good values to children is good, but to outsource to a provider instead of taking up the job ourselves seems like we are relinquishing our parenting role to others. The result is that our fundamental unit in society, the family will look very different. Parents are no longer the ones shaping the children but the 'bank' that will discharge money

to the 'professionals' to get the job done. So if the child gets into trouble say with the law, parents can turn to the 'professionals' to demand some kind of compensation for non-satisfactory job done. Everything becomes transactional and human relation is relegated to economic terms instead of love.

As Christian disciples, we profess that we are followers of a relational God. A God who loves us, and we need to put our relationship with God first. From this angle, things look rather different. When I begin to put my relationship with God first, I am called to recognize Christ in other people around me. This means that I need to put relationship before tasks. We tend to mind our own business and only converse with another person if we need something to be done - a very transactional type of relationship. As followers of Christ, we are called to love and care for others. This caring involves knowing and relating. If we are too wrapped up with our own needs and concerns, we missed the opportunity to know and build relationship with others thereby being Christ to one another. We have also missed the opportunity to witness God's love to others. In the end, we might find ourselves in the situation we heard in scripture where we will ask the Lord on the last day "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty?" The cost of being a follower of Christ includes being different from society's norm so as to evangelize the culture. That is what we are sent forth after every Eucharistic celebration to do.

When we place this relationship with God and others as our priority - the stones in our container, we will find that our family and work life becomes more satisfactory because we become the values of love, peace, justice, kindness, etc. The human family can enjoy peace and prosperity for all and many of the world's problems today may not exist when we have our stones first, the pebbles, sand and water will all fit in eventually.



# Mystery of Salvation

God's covenantal love for us through the ages

As the course title suggests, it is the understanding of how the Bible tells the story of God the Father's love for His children and His plan to fashion all people into one holy family. God unfolds this plan of salvation through a series of covenants, culminating in the New Covenant He makes in Jesus.

As we explore the various covenants that are the key to how we read the Bible, we will see how the 5 main covenants that God makes in the Old Testament are fulfilled in Jesus and the Church.

This foundational course will introduce participants to appreciate our Catholic faith within the wider context of Scripture, liturgy and prayer.

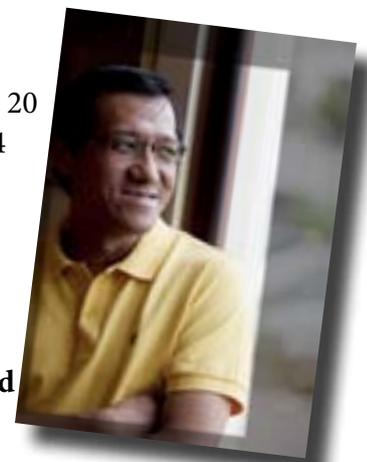
Join Fr Aloysius Ong for 20  
Wednesdays beginning 4  
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Time :  
**7.45pm - 9.45pm**

Venue :  
**CAEC, 2 Highland Road**

Fee :  
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Call 6858 3011 or  
email [admin@catholicspi.org](mailto:admin@catholicspi.org) to register.





## From Mannheim & Freiburg



*A large crowd gathers at the Toulonplatz for a concert.*

May 16-20 saw nearly 80,000 people descend on the German city of Mannheim where the 98th biannual *Katholikentag* or “Catholic Day” was being held.

Organized this year by the Archdiocese of Freiburg, *Katholikentag* was traditionally a festival to celebrate Germanic Catholicism, now it has evolved to become an elaborate showcase of religious art and music as well as the missionary work and religious initiatives of the institutional Church. Societies like Missio, Caritas, and Adveniat set up booths among the numerous venues all over the city to provide educational information and to recruit interested parties to

become involved in their activities.

To address the crisis of faith occurring in Germany and all over Western Europe, this *Katholikentag* hosted many forums and seminars exploring diverse pastoral questions and the future of the Catholic faith in the 26 dioceses of Germany.

In 2010, a delegation from Freiburg Archdiocese visited Singapore to study the Neighborhood Christian Communities. Wendy Louis and Arthur Goh were invited this year to participate in two panel events during *Katholikentag* to share the Asian and Singaporean perspectives on small ecclesial



*Dieter Tewes, coordinator for small communities of Osnabruck diocese, with Arthur and Bishop Fritz Lobinger attending the opening liturgy at the University of Mannheim.*



*The Jesuit Church of Mannheim was one of the venues for organisation and group pavilions.*



*Wendy, Arthur, and some of the team from Freiburg that visited Singapore in 2010.*

communities. These two panels, which also included Bishop Fritz Lobinger of South Africa, Fr. Jose Marins of Brazil, and Fr. Christian Hennecke of Germany, drew large crowds who were curious to know the potential of small communities to rejuvenate the local Church.

After the frenetic activity of *Katholikentag* had settled, Arthur and Wendy were given the opportunity to spend a few days in Freiburg, and to speak with pastoral workers, seminarians, and priests. Because of the fewer number of priests, German dioceses are experiencing dramatic changes where parishes have to be merged to form larger 'pastoral units'. This is leading to greater emphasis on structural reform.

There is a consensus that while the structures of the institutional Church are strong in Germany, there is yet to be an articulated vision by the leadership. While there are diverse perspectives on how to implement the small community concept in the context of Germany, people generally agree that the situation cannot be left as it is. A new paradigm for the experience of the Catholic identity is needed - one that develops the grassroot of the Church with a stress on community spirituality and the role of the lay apostolate in family, workplace, and society.

We wish our friends the best of God's inspiration and *eine neuen aufbruch wagen*; to "dare to make a new start" for Catholic discipleship in Germany.



*Exploring the neighbourhoods of Fr. Franz Wehrl's parishes on bicycle.*



*The beautiful city of Freiburg im Breisgau with its prominent cathedral.*



## Growing & Taking off

**Jarvis Tan**

“**A**ggiornamento”, was the Italian word used by Pope John XXIII to describe his desire and intention for summoning the Second Vatican Council. In English, it means “bringing up to date”. This word too, best expresses my time of nearly two years, serving as Coordinator of Christian Initiation with the Singapore Pastoral Institute.

I can still recall vividly, a conversation I had as a teenager with an adult parishioner which left a deep impression, as from it arose, one of my earliest sense of how I wanted to live out my discipleship as a Catholic Christian. We were chatting about matters of faith and happenings in the parish when he said something to this effect, “I’m looking forward to my retirement, because when I do, I will then have the time to serve the Church”

In my youthful and simplistic enthusiasm, I remember praying to God after this conversation, “Lord...I do not only want to offer you the golden years of my life...I want to offer you the first fruits...the best years of my life...in the use of my energy, talents, time and material goods in building up your Kingdom”. As an adolescent, my understanding of serving

God primarily meant serving in a parish ministry, and helping to organise activities and programs. I solely equated serving the institutional Church as building up the Kingdom of God, and that this was the privileged form of exercising my Christian faith and identity. Looking back, this initial mind-set and attitude towards discipleship wasn’t the result of any particular explicit catechesis, but lay rather implicitly; in the way that parish organisations, activities and communications were arranged and carried out.

As a saint once said, God meets us where we are. And through Divine Providence, I’m glad that God allowed me to go beyond a parochial sense of the faith. Through the desire He planted in me to continue to grow in love and service to Him, I pursued wider exposure and participation in various pastoral ministries and apostolates, formation opportunities, both locally and overseas, reflecting on these experiences and teachings of the faith helped me to make better faith and life connections, constantly challenging me to live out my faith in a deeper way.

By the time I started full time pastoral work in the parish of the Holy Spirit in my late 20’s, I had thought that my understanding of Church and the role of the Laity had been sufficiently updated. At that point, if I had entered into a similar conversation like the one I had as a teenager with the adult parishioner, my response would have been quite different, I would have affirmed my friend that he was serving God primarily by working and providing for his family; the domestic church, and raising his children well in the faith, and that he expresses his Christian identity and discipleship first and foremost by bringing Christ in whatever station of life he is at, amidst the challenges of life in the secular world.

Coming on board the team at SPI as coordinator of Christian Initiation seemed a natural transition, here, was the diocesan role that was instituted to assist and support parishes in fulfilling the Great Commission in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 28; to go make disciples for Jesus and His Church. In this role, I came to a deeper understanding and appreciation of God’s Will for the ministry of Christian Initiation, the vision of the Council Fathers for the restored Catechumenate which was practiced in the early Church, and how the RCIA is meant to be period of conversion towards deeper intimacy with Jesus Christ and an apprenticeship into Christian living which requires synergising the efforts and charisms of the entire community. It could be seen as a rather tectonic shift in how the Church initiated new disciples when

the RCIA was promulgated after the Second Vatican Council, which reversed a millennia old initiatory practice.

In order for us to better assist in the work of the Church in forming the laity as envisioned by the Second Vatican Council, my colleagues and I would regularly meet to study, discuss and reflect upon the documents that came out of the Council. Feelings of awe and discomfort accompanied my time of study and reflection; awe, in the wisdom of the Council Fathers in interpreting the signs of the times as they sought to adapt the Church in meeting the challenged conditions of modern times, discomfort, because the Council asked for a different kind of religious performance from the People of God, a deeper understanding of what it means to be holy, one that moves us out of our comfort zone of what religious activity means, that salvation had a social dimension to it, and a call to build God's kingdom of love, justice and peace, not in the afterlife, but in the here and now. The gift of faith now seems to have a higher cost, it seems to demand more; one of my favourite images of discipleship is the image of salt and light, but for a candle to give off light, it must endure the burning.

The Second Vatican Council invited the laity to a greater participation in the life, liturgy and mission of the church, and perhaps we have placed too much of focus on the first two aspects; the life and liturgy of the church – I understand how the inner life of the parish needs help and assistance - and that there never seems to be enough people to do the things we need to do in the parish. But for us to have a greater participation in the mission of the church, I believe it would call for a re-norming of the practice of our faith. One that would visibly express the Communion and Eucharist we participate in every Sunday at Mass in the way we exercise relationships in our family life, in our neighbourhood, in our parish, in our society, and in the economic and political sphere. As succinctly expressed in the Decree of the Apostolate of the Laity “Since the laity, in accordance with their state of life, live in the midst of the world and its concerns, they are called by God to exercise their apostolate in the world like leaven, with the ardor of the spirit of Christ.” The primary apostolate of the laity is the sanctification of the temporal order. That the mission that God the Father gave to Jesus Christ, the Son now gives to us to complete, in bringing about the restoration of the original values of creation, together with Christ and in Christ, we bring

it all back to the Father.

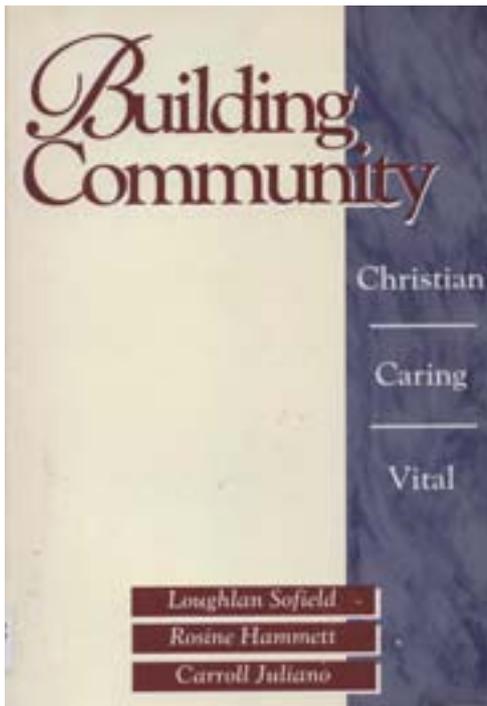
I've always felt that my time in SPI has been very much a time of apprenticeship, somewhat like being in an incubator, a cocoon, perhaps that is why our logo is a butterfly, that it wasn't primarily about the work I've been doing, but the work that God has been doing in me.

With gratitude in my heart towards my colleagues, who have exemplified what it means to exercise relational justice in the office, and the many priestly, religious and lay collaborators from around the diocese whom I've encountered and communicated with in the course of this work. Thank you all for your friendship and partnership in the ministry of Christian Initiation.

I pray that each of us would continue to have a very deep awareness that God is at work within the lives of each one of us. And within our world, that the reign of God is happening, and it will happen in its fullness. We are invited to keep on doing something to help make that happen. We can't do it all, but we can do something. The reign of God is breaking forth. God is always doing something new.

*Nicholas Jarvis will be furthering his studies in Behavioural Science in Notre Dame, Perth*





**Title:** Building Community  
**Author:** Loughlan Sofield, Rosine Hammett and Carroll Juliano  
**Publisher:** Ave Maria Press, 1998  
**Pages:** 181

**Patricia Ang**

God calls us to community. Through community we can be helped to discover our truest and deepest selves. The community is a place where we grow in holiness, experience the healing power of Jesus and are challenged to live our vocation as holy women and men.

Community encompasses various forms: prayer groups, support groups, Renew groups, small faith communities, church organisations, religious congregations, any gathering of committed Christians.

A Christian community is a small group of persons who come together on a regular basis to foster their spiritual, personal, and /or apostolic growth. Every community experience has the potential to be life-giving or life-draining. The outcome depends on how well the members understand the very normal group dynamics that occur in any community.

The first section of the book discuss the dynamics of community. Chapter 1 describes the development stages of community. Basic Group theory focuses on

the individuals in the group and the other approach is to focus on the group as a whole.

Effective community leaders continue to increase their knowledge of the group as a whole and to employ the skills of group dynamics in order to further the movement of the group toward growth. There are also different community stages. This comprises Orientation, In/out, Up/down, Conflict, Cohesion, Faith –Sharing, Near/ Far and Termination.

Chapter 2 provides a model (Kantor Four-Player System) for understanding the interdynamics that occur in communities. There are 4 types of behaviour where a *move* provides direction, a *follow* enables completion, an *oppose* creates correction and a *bystand* offers perspective.

Chapter 3 explores the beliefs about the community that directly affect the development of community. The more consciously and clearly articulated these beliefs are, the greater the freedom and hopefully, willingness to commit to community. Experiences determine beliefs. Beliefs produce emotions. Emotions influence behaviour.

The second section of the book deals with specific elements of group development, e.g., the importance of listening, dealing with conflict and confrontation, understanding the role of anger and forgiveness, building trust, the effects of transition and termination, and a variety of other issues and dynamics that affect every community.

Community can be life-giving and it can be draining. One of the greatest drains on a community is attempting to integrate members who do not possess the desire, maturity, or gifts to participate fully in communal life. The vocation of every Christian is a four-pronged call : to holiness, to community, to ministry/ mission and to Christian maturity.

In every chapter are questions for reflections, supplementary readings on the subjects, and a suggested process to facilitate discussion and growth. This is a book for communities as a whole or for individual members who are concerned for both the health and mission of their community.

***This book is available for borrowing at the Pastoral Institute Library, call number 262.2 BUI.***



The Pastoral Institute was established in 1978 to assist the Archbishop in providing faith formation for the Catholic Archdiocese in Singapore. Today, the Institute continues to carry out this responsibility in the catechetical, biblical, and pastoral aspects of Christian ministry. In addition, the Institute looks to the preparation of those who serve the Church in various ministerial capacities, and identifies emerging issues that have pastoral import on the life of the local Church.

This newsletter is published monthly for internal circulation within the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Singapore.

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## TRAINING FOR PRIMARY CURRICULUM

For the second group of parishes implementing the new primary level curriculum in 2013.

**Saturday, June 9 to Sunday, June 10, CAEC, 2 Highland Road.**

Contact [Sylvia Stewart](#) for registration details.

## GOD'S COVENANTAL LOVE THROUGH THE AGES

Join Fr Aloysius Ong to unfold God's salvation through a series of covenants. A foundation course for Bible studies.

**20 Wednesdays, 4, 18, 25 July, 1, 8, 22, 29 Aug, 5, 12, 19, 26 Sep, 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 Oct, 7, 14, 21, 28 Nov. 7:45pm to 9:45pm, CAEC 2 Highland Road. Registration \$105 (Early Bird \$100, sign up with payment before 27 June)**

Contact [Melinda Reyes](#) for registration details.

## PREIST & LAITY - AN INTERRELATIONSHIP FOR LIFE

Fr. Timothy Radcliffe will speak on the roles of the ordained priesthood and the common priesthood of the baptized, sharing his understanding of their inter-relationship as outlined in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church.

**Sunday, July 8, St. Mary of the Angels, St. Clare Hall, 3:00pm-5:00pm. Registration required. Free.**

Contact [Melinda Reyes](#) for registration details.

## ANNUAL STAFF RETREAT

**The SPI office and library will be closed from June 6-8 for our annual retreat.**